

The Executive Chairperson  
Planning Authority  
St Francis Ravelin  
Floriana

Date: 02/02/2024  
ERA Ref: EA/00032/22

Dear Sir,

**Planning Ref.:** PA/06860/21  
**Description Proposal:** Storm water relief tunnel to relieve flooding problems near Mater-  
Dei Hospital roundabout.  
**Location:** Site at, Triq Sir Anthony Mamo, San Gwann; Triq Sir Anthony  
Mamo, Birkirkara, Triq Dun Karm, Msida

**Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (S.L. 549.46)**  
**Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44)**

## 1. Introduction

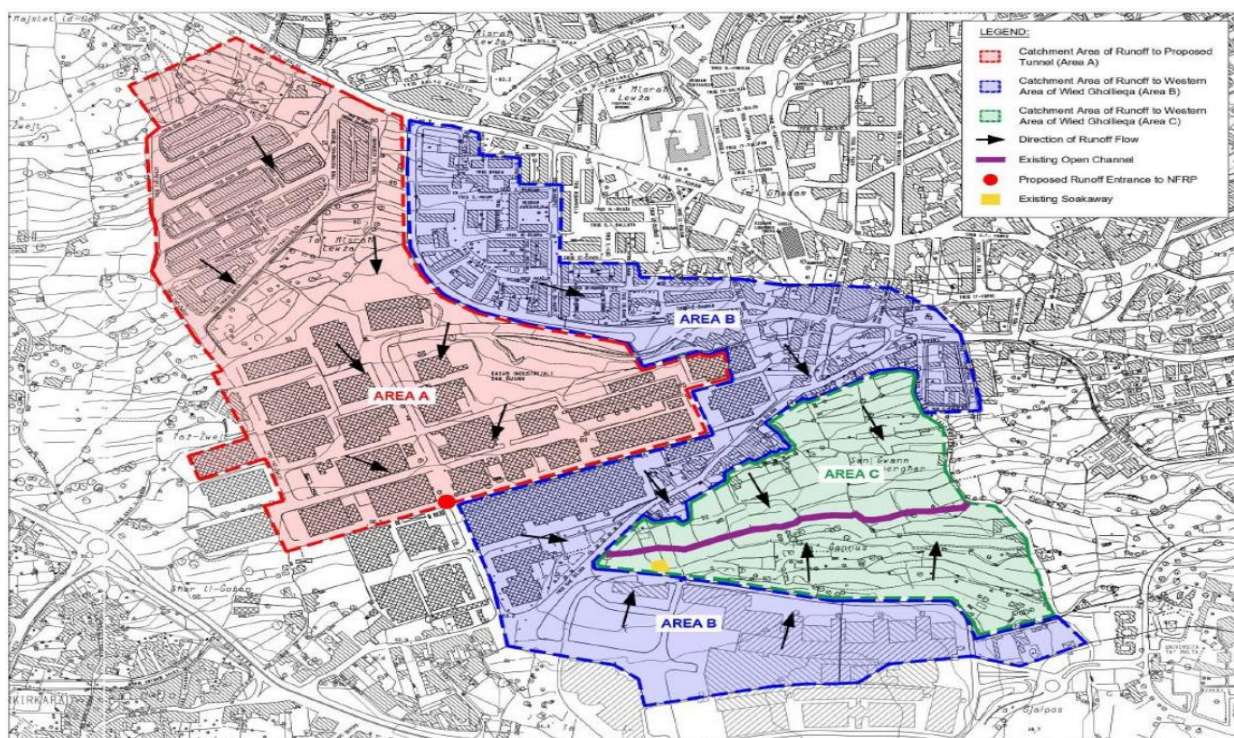
Reference is made to your consultation at Doc.98a and to ERA's Assessment and Recommendations, including annex, at EApps document PA/06860/21 – 72a-c. Following screening, ERA concluded that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required, however due to unclear impacts on protected species and habitats within the adjacent Special Area of Conservation of National Importance (MT1000003 – Wied Għolliëqa – Govt. Notice 683/2018), the submission of an Appropriate Assessment was required in accordance with the Flora, Fauna, and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44). The AA report was submitted to ERA on the 5th September 2023, following internal review, comments were forwarded to the applicant and architect on 13th October 2023. The final submissions of the AA report were received by ERA on the 14th of December 2023.

The proposal is an extension of the existing Birkirkara Catchment Flood Relief Tunnel system which consists of a bored tunnel circa 600m in length with an average diameter of 3.6m. The proposed extension will receive rainwater coming from the area known as Taż-Żwejt. Thus, it is estimated that between 20-30% of the total catchment area shall be diverted into the existing National Flood Relief Project (NFRP) tunnel.

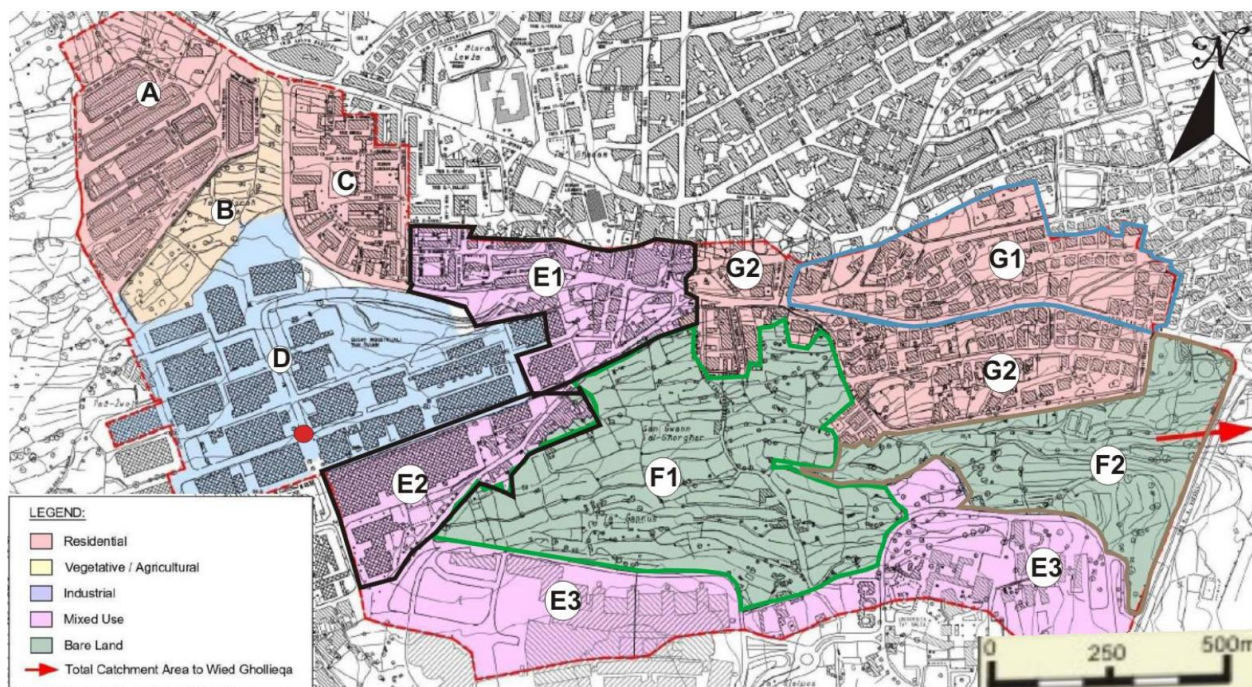
The site is located within the footprint of the existing road network, underneath Triq Sir Anthony Mamo, San Gwann - Birkirkara and Triq Dun Karm, Msida and intersects with the existing tunnel system. Part of the site lies within the San Gwann Enterprise Hub – Industrial Area, to the west of Mater Dei Hospital and to the East of the Birkirkara residential area. The site lies in the vicinity of the aforementioned Special Area of Conservation – National Importance.

The AA along with all the relevant documentation can be accessed from the ERA website (Ref: EA 00032/22), through the following link: <https://era.org.mt/era-project/pa06860-21/>.





**Figure 1:** Plan showing the catchment areas of runoff to the proposed tunnel & runoff to the west of Wied Għolliieqa (Source: AA Report, December 2023).



**Figure 2:** map showing the area that contribute to runoff in wied għolliieqa during operation phase (Source: AA Report, December 2023).



**Table 1:** Table showing areas and runoff generated for a 100m rain event occurring in 2 hours (Source: AA Report, December 2023).

AREA/ S	RUNOFF COEFFICIENT	AREA (M <sup>2</sup> )	RAINFALL (MM/H)	INTENSITY (M/S)	VOLUME (M <sup>3</sup> )	RATE (L/S)
A	0.85	68,900	50	0.0000139	0.813	813
B	0.34	31,590			0.149	149
C	0.8	45,400			0.504	504
D	0.9	167,200			2.090	2,090
G1	0.85	114,300			1.280	1,280
G2	0.85	94,600			1.050	1,050
E1	0.8	70,310			0.781	781
E2	0.8	77,260			0.858	858
E3	0.8	192,900			2.140	2,140
F1	0.2	176,000			0.489	489
F2	0.25	90,120			0.313	313
All areas	0.72	1,019,800			10.200	10,200
To tunnel (A+B+C+D)	0.9	313,090			3.910	3,910

## 2. Assessment in terms of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, (S.L. 549.44)

Preliminary screening did not satisfactorily eliminate significant, negative impacts that impinge on the integrity of the Special Area of Conservation (SACs) and the full implications of the proposal on the integrity of the habitats and species of the protected site were deemed unclear. In this regard, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) was requested by ERA in accordance with the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44).

### 2.1 Construction phase

The impacts during the construction phase are expected to have minimal to no effect on the Wied Għollieqa valley system. This is in view of the distance between the proposed works and the valley system and since most construction will be below ground. The AA report outlined that the requirements outlined in the Environmental Management Construction Site Regulations (S.L. 552.09) should be properly adhered to.

### 2.2 Operation phase

Throughout the operational phase, measurements of the catchment area show that 27% of the total catchment area shall be diverted to the Birkirkara Catchment Flood Relief Tunnel.

The reduction of runoff discharge may impact the western part of the valley, which is primarily agricultural in nature. Due to the reduced surface water runoff, it is expected that fluctuations in the microclimate of the valley take place, leading to a decrease in intensity and time for

plant transpiration. The AA also outlines that the runoff passing through the valley is less likely to be polluted in view that the runoff to be diverted from the project passes through the San Ġwann Industrial Area, which is likely to be polluted. It is to be noted that the western area of the valley is still supplied with significant runoff discharge from surrounding catchment areas (labelled as 'Area B' in figure 1 above). With regards to the central and eastern areas of the valley system, these consist of the most ecologically sensitive areas of Wied Ġħollieqa. These areas are also supplied by alternative watercourses that are situated along the perimeter of the valley, noting that these areas are located at a considerable distance from the San Ġwann Enterprise Hub – Industrial Area. The aforementioned areas which supply the central and eastern parts of the valley include E1, E3, G2, F1 and F2 as illustrated in figure 2 and table 1, above.

The reduction of runoff water volumes towards Wied Ġħollieqa from the west of the valley is acknowledged, however deemed to be not significant on the valley's ecological systems.

The AA recommends monitoring to verify that the predicted absence of significant effect on the ecologically sensitive areas of Wied Ġħollieqa or observe any long term effects that may occur throughout operation phase.

### **2.3 Appropriate Assessment Conclusion**

The Appropriate Assessment report identified the following insignificant residual impacts:

- reduction in stormwater runoff volumes towards the valley system; and
- light modification in microclimate conditions due to reduced transpiration effects.

The AA report concludes that the aforementioned impacts are not significant and therefore the proposed development is not expected to have a significant effect on the integrity of the Special Area of Conservation.

### **3. ERA's conclusion and recommended way-forward**

On noting the overall findings of the AA report, ERA is in agreement with the conclusion of the AA report and that the proposal is unlikely to affect the integrity of Wied Ġħollieqa – MT1000003.

In light of the above, ERA does not object to the proposed development from an environmental point of view. This is as long as mitigation measures and pre-emptive safeguards are implemented. The conditions annexed with this document (Annex I) are to be included as part of the development permission.

Yours sincerely,

Daryl Saliba  
Assistant Environment Protection Officer  
f/Director Regulatory Affairs

### **Screening Disclaimer**

*The above screening results, the ensuing conclusions and recommendations are without prejudice to any required changes or updates should the development proposal be eventually modified or should the information/assumptions provided turn out to be incorrect. Any deviations of the proposal from this submission would need to be re-assessed and the merits of this screening would need to be re-opened.*