

19 July 2022

Project: Proposed upgrading of existing airfield including the extension of the runway, construction of a concrete-surfaced apron, three grass-reinforced aprons and perimetral retaining walls, shifting of security fence and new landscaping.

Location: Site at Triq ta' Lambert, Xewkija, Gozo.

Project Description Statement

This report is being prepared in accordance with Schedule II (Regulation 12) of the EIA Regulations, 2017. Note that this report supersedes a preceding version dated 15th October 2019 which related to a previous proposal within part of the site in question (works were however not implemented).



Photomontage of the proposal for the Gozo Rural Airfield

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1. Project Description

1a. Introduction

The Ministry for Gozo is embarking on an infrastructural project of national interest that seeks to upgrade the existing Gozo Heliport in Ta' Lambert, Xewkija. The main objective of the project is to improve air-transport accessibility to Gozo, with the following aims:

- Addressing Gozo's double insularity;
- Consolidating Gozo's accessibility avenues;
- Introducing an enhanced inter-island connectivity service;
- Directly connecting Gozo with other international regions;
- Attracting quality tourism;
- Further enabling Gozo's promotion as a distinct destination;
- Attracting relatively specialized foreign direct investment;
- Enabling further job opportunities.

Leverage on the eligibility of European Structural and Investment Funds. The project masterplan envisages the extension of the existing runway (which is currently 174m long) by a further 271-metres, to reach a total length of 445-metres (by 20-metres) wide, including a safety area of 30-metres on each side (at each end) of the airstrip. The envisaged upgrades are planned predominately within the airfield-designated territory. Currently the heliport is only used in cases of emergency by the air ambulance helicopters.

The proposed airfield will enable the introduction of an inter-island service between Gozo and Malta International Airport (MIA). The runway dimensions preclude the operation of medium and large-sized aircraft. General aviation aircraft operations shall be limited to daytime only (i.e. 30 minutes past sunrise until 30 minutes before sunset), whilst the inter-island air service aircraft will be limited to flights between 06:00 hours and 01:00 hours.

The upgrades are being planned with due consideration of the context within which this airfield is located. To this effect, three areas for parking facilities for light aircraft (Aprons 2, 3 and 4) shall be surfaced with a reinforced-grass paving system, a permeable solution complementing the rural setting. The perimeter retaining walls, which are required in order to relevel the land, such that the runway and aprons have the gradients in accordance with statutory aviation regulations, shall be stepped to avoid sheer heights along the public roads and allow for the introduction of landscaping around the periphery of the site.

Given the sensitivity of the site and the proximity to the nearby residential units, special considerations have been made to mitigate noise and artificial light pollution. Due consideration to the effect on avifauna has also been made. These aspects are explained in detail in Section 3 and Appendix 6.

The majority of the works will occur within the airfield designated site as identified in the Gozo and Comino Local Plan. The existing passenger terminal building will be maintained. No buildings are being proposed as part of this development.



The archaeological site along the southern boundary of the airfield shall be fully protected and retained. The project will also address a long-standing enforcement issued by the Planning Authority for illegal dumping that had occurred during the past years within part of this site.

As shown in the drawings annexed in Appendix 3 and the photomontage in Appendix 7, the project mainly comprises the construction of:

- i. Resurfacing of the existing runway (174-metres long);
- ii. Extension of the runway by 271-metres, to reach an overall length of circa 445-metres (the useable length of the runway, excluding the safety distance at each threshold end, shall be circa 415-metres);
- iii. Re-levelling of the existing site in order to respect maximum gradients in accordance with ICAO regulations, including roofing of part of existing car-parking facility;
- iv. Soft-standing areas for fixed wing and rotary wing general aviation aircraft parking (Aprons 2, 3 and 4);
- v. Hard-standing area for the inter-island air service aircraft parking (Apron 1);
- vi. Construction of perimetral retaining walls;
- vii. Shifting of security fencing to the site perimeter;
- viii. Relocation of windsock;
- ix. Landscaping around site periphery.

1b. Physical characteristics of the project

The project is located on a site area of circa 75,000 sq.m and aims to enhance the airside operations of Gozo Heliport to facilitate accessibility, and comprises the following components (refer to Appendix 3):

- **Extension of the existing runway:** the existing runway (which shall be resurfaced) shall be extended with an asphalt construction in order to attain a total length of circa 445-metres, including a 30-m safety distance at either end of the runway. The layout shall ensure conformity with all aircraft landing and access considerations including paths and turning circles, as well conformity with ICAO recommendations and EASA regulations;
- **Apron 1:** this apron shall serve as a parking facility for two 15-m wingspan aircraft and shall cover an area of circa 2400 sq.m., with a hard-wearing concrete surface. This apron lies closest to the main terminal and will therefore accommodate the aircraft pertaining to the inter-island operator, to facilitate access to the passengers;
- **Apron 2:** this apron shall serve as a parking facility for small aircraft, covering an area of circa 12,000 sq.m. with a grass-reinforced finish. Since the maximum permissible gradient for aprons is 1%, and the departing point is the level of the runway, the level of the apron will be circa 8-metres higher than the road along Triq Tal-Kanal. A stepped retaining wall incorporating



landscaping (refer to Section-03) is being proposed which ensures an aesthetically pleasing design when viewed from the public road;

- **Apron 3:** this apron shall serve as a parking facility for small aircraft, a helicopter hover training area and a VTOL drone test site, covering an area of circa 18,000sq.m. and having a grass-reinforced finish. In view of the limitations in the slope of the apron, as well as in the limitations of the graded areas from the centreline of the extended runway, this area (which is currently partly backfilled with dumped inert material) will require to be lowered (i.e. excavated) and levelled at a gradient of 1% from the runway surface. This will result in the northern-part of this apron being circa 3-metres lower than the external dirt road (refer to Section-04). Once again, this change in level shall be detailed by means of a stepped design incorporating landscaping;
- **Apron 4:** this apron shall have two stands for air-ambulance helicopters together with a small-scale fuelling mobile depot, coving a total area of circa 3200 sq.m. The apron shall be finished in reinforced-grass except for the helicopter stands and the fuelling depot which shall be hard-surfaced. An emergency gate and ramp at the North-East corner of the site are being proposed to ensure that vehicular ambulances can directly access the air-ambulances, with refuellers (fuel bowsers) accessing directly the fuel depot without infringing the active runway;
- **Roofing over existing car-park:** The existing car-park next to threshold-28, which is currently 3-metres below the runway level, needs to be levelled flush with the runway;
- **Re-grading of surrounding levels:** this intervention comprises the levelling / soil clearing of the areas along airstrip surroundings and compacting of material within the heliport to ensure correct gradients in accordance to statutory requirements (ICAO and EASA) and eliminate air-borne debris;
- **Landscaping:** this shall be introduced within the identified locations to complement the proposal and screen the aviation activities (both visually and acoustically) from the surrounding areas.

In summary, the project predominately consists of the extension of the runway together with the provision of associated airside facilities (refer to Appendix 3 for cross-referencing to drawings):

Total site area under consideration (circa):	76,000 sq.m.
Existing runway being resurfaced (174m long by 20m wide)	ca. 3480 sq.m.
Runway extension (including safety and maneuvering areas)	ca. 7900 sq.m.
Apron 1 (concrete-paved area)	ca. 2400 sq.m.
Apron 2 (reinforced-grass area)	ca.12000 sq.m.
Apron 3 (reinforced-grass area)	ca.18000 sq.m.
Apron 4 (mainly reinforced-grass area)	ca. 3200 sq.m.
Perimeter Landscaping	ca. 4300 sq.m.
Remaining areas within airfield extents (not affected by proposal)	ca. 24720 sq.m.

This infrastructural project is envisaged to be completed by year 2023. The airfield must remain operational during the course of the works in view of the requirement for air-ambulance helicopters to operate.

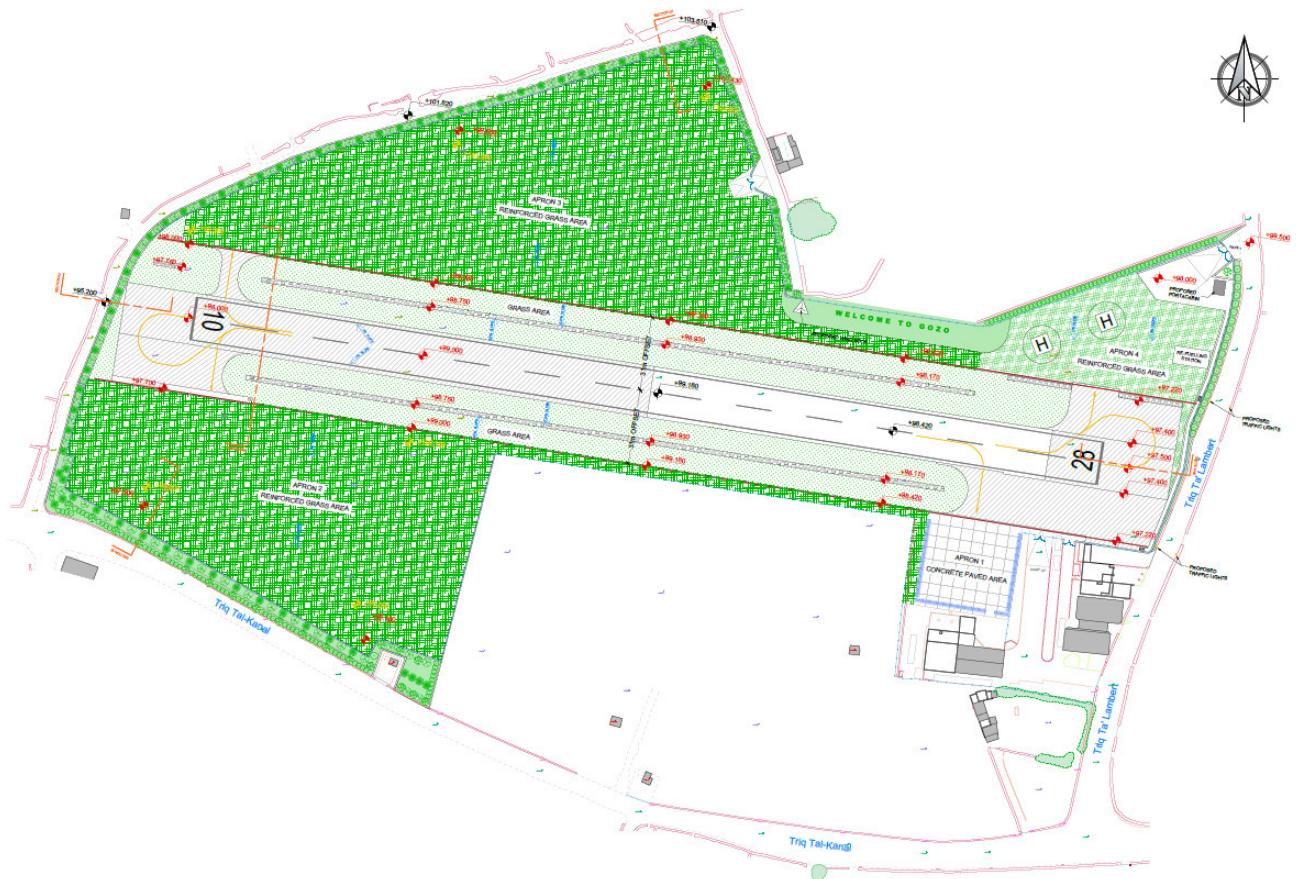


Fig. 1: Plan view of the Project (refer also to Appendix 3).

1c. Site Location

Gozo Heliport is located on the outskirts of the town in *Xewkija* within Triq ta' Lambert (refer to site plan in Appendix 1), which is directly connected to Gozo's main spinal route (named Triq I-Imgarr) that leads from Mgarr Harbour to Rabat (Victoria). It is therefore located off residential areas (with the closest residential cluster set circa 300-metres away at Triq I-Imgarr, but with the towns of *Ghajnsielem* and *Xewkija* located at a minimum of 1.0 km distance), yet very close to the main route in terms of vehicular connectivity.

In 1943, American engineers built an airstrip with hardstandings in the vicinity of the proposed site. The wartime airfield was used temporarily during the invasion of Sicily. In 1973 the Armed Forces laid a 22-metre by 22-metre concrete helipad in the current location. In 1996 this pad was extended to 178-metres and new facilities were built by the Maltese Government to provide a safer environment for commercial



helicopter air transport, mainly comprising of scheduled helicopter flights between Malta International Airport and *Xewkija* Heliport. These were started by *Malta Air Charter* in 1990, which ceased to operate in 2004. From March 2005 until October 2006 the flights were done by *Helicópteros del Sureste*. Currently, no scheduled flights take place from the heliport, except for emergency purposes only.

The heliport consists of two 22-metre wide helipads, connected by an asphalt runway, to form a 174 meter long runway in the 10/28 direction. The Heliport was designed as a 'fixed-wing runway' for use by helicopters when standards and requirements were quite different. Changes have to be made so that the Heliport meets today's ICAO standards and also meet the operational requirements. The existing heliport cannot be currently utilised for scheduled helicopter flights as it requires upgrading to current regulations, and can at present only be utilised for emergency helicopter landings.

The actual site where works are being proposed consists of a grass area, partly within and partly outside the secured perimeter fencing. Significant parts of the site outside the secured fencing are characterised by dumped inert material, parts of which are now covered by vegetation.

This site has been previously subject to the following Planning Applications, Enforcement Notices and Development Notification Order:

- PA/01864/94; Extension of Helipad facilities Phase 1 - Construction of Final Approach & Take-Off Area (FATO) - Urgently needed in view of safety requirements. Phase 2 - Second Helipad, Taxiway, two helicopter parking areas, parking for fire vehicles, access road and fencing – Approved.
- EC/00424/95; Dumping of material without permit - Permission was granted to sanction the illegal development.
- EC/01171/95; Upgrading of Gozo terminal facilities without permit - Permission was granted to sanction the illegal development.
- PA/02774/95; Malta-Gozo Air Services - Upgrading of Gozo Terminal Facilities – Approved.
- PA/00158/96; For Malta - Gozo Air Services, upgrading of Gozo Terminal facilities – Approved.
- PA/06726/96; 1. Construction of fire station facilities. 2. Construction of observation room and underlying stores. 3. Relocation of the security fence 4. Asphalt paving access to fire station and helipad area – Approved.
- EC/00386/98; Heliport lounge without permit - Permission was granted to sanction the illegal development.
- DN/01609/13; Deposition of material or soil on existing agricultural land – Approved.



Fig. 2: Aerial view of the Gozo Heliport



Fig. 3: Aerial view of the Gozo Heliport

1d. Land Use Policy

As shown in Appendix 5, the majority of the site in question is specifically earmarked as Heliport in the Gozo and Comino Local Plan (Map 14.13A) as “area reserved for Aviation Facilities”, policy GZ-Tran-14. This policy states that that “as indicated in Structure Plan policy AVN 4, the land at Xewkija indicated on MAP 14.13-E is being designated as a safeguarded area for a possible extension of air transport facilities”.

Parts of the site in question (namely triangularly-shaped areas towards the north and south of the site, as shown in Fig. 4) fall outside the area marked as Heliport on the Local Plan, and are being proposed to become aprons forming part of this development. It must be noted that there are no other areas within the existing facility where such aprons may be accommodated. The north-east corner of the site (in the location of proposed Apron 4) is already an integral part of the Heliport is bound by security fence. It must be also noted that the area reserved for aviation facilities as shown in the approved Local Plan extends significantly more (both eastwards and westwards) than the site being proposed for development.

The importance of air-transport connectivity between Malta and Gozo is also recognized in the approved Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED) document.

The proposed use is therefore in line with the approved development policy documents.

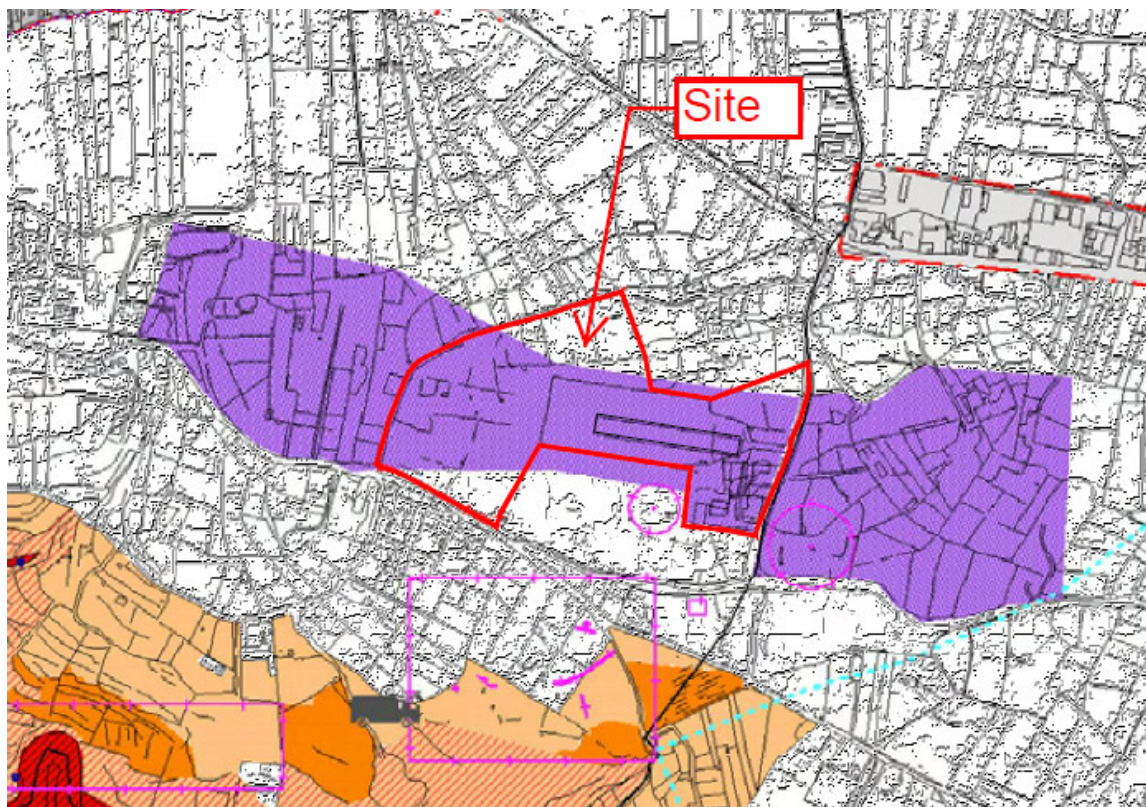


Fig. 4: Extract from Map 14.13A of the Gozo and Comino Local Plan



1e. Envisaged operations and process flow

The aim of this project is to upgrade the Heliport in order to facilitate accessibility to Gozo. The limitations and setbacks posed by Gozo's double insularity and current means of accessibility remain key weaknesses that impinge on the island's economic development. Once upgraded, the Gozo Heliport will be suitable for the operation of:

- Fixed wing aircraft seating up to nine (9) passengers;
- Helicopter/light aircraft training and sightseeing flights;
- Governmental/Military fixed/rotary flights;
- Air Ambulance flights;
- Research and flight test flights (Drones, eVTOL, Hybrid and electric aircraft).

The following are the salient operational provisions:

- There will be at least two inter-island air service fixed wing aircraft based in Gozo;
- Fuel will be supplied at Luqa (i.e. within Malta International Airport) – but a limited quantity of fuel will be stored on Apron 4 in a small towed bowser for use in emergency only ;
- The air ambulance will continue to operate from the Heliport, until such time the new Helipad is ready at the Gozo Hospital;
- The Heliport will be open to AFM helicopters for emergencies, VIP and other use;
- All general aviation aircraft will be on a Prior Permit Request basis;
- Passenger carrying flights will be both scheduled and chartered;
- Security and customs will be handled at Luqa;
- Fixed wing aircraft to be utilized for scheduled flights shall be modern types and up to fire category H2;
- Operations of general aviation aircraft shall be restricted to daytime (30 minutes past sunrise till 30 minutes prior sunset), and inter-island air service aircraft will be limited to flights between 06:00 hours and 01:00 hours. All flights will have noise abatement restrictions;
- Day/Night (24 hours) operations will be restricted to the air ambulance helicopter only;
- No flying over built-up areas (special approach and departure procedures), as explained below;
- It is estimated that there will be less than 15 aircraft movements daily including the scheduled flights.

These provisions will be confirmed and re-assessed once the operator will request an operational permit from the Civil Aviation Department within Transport Malta (TM-CAD).

The following provisions are specific to the aircraft take-off and landing operations:

A. Departure Runway 28 towards Xewkija (see Fig 5. below):

- Take-off and climb at Best Angle of Climb (Rx);
- Best Rate of Climb (Ry) on reaching height of 50 feet above aerodrome level;
- Immediate left-turn on reaching indicated altitude of 500 feet (height 200 feet above aerodrome elevation);
- Head initially 240° and then straight towards the coast until reaching altitude 1,000 feet;
- Fly towards the sea.
- Alternatively, on reaching 500 feet amsl, perform a circling climb to downwind leg.

B. Approach and land Runway 10 (see Fig. 6 below):

- Join Right downwind at a distance between the airfield and the coast.
- When abeam runway Numbers adopt best glide approach.
- Maintain a continuous circling approach until touchdown.

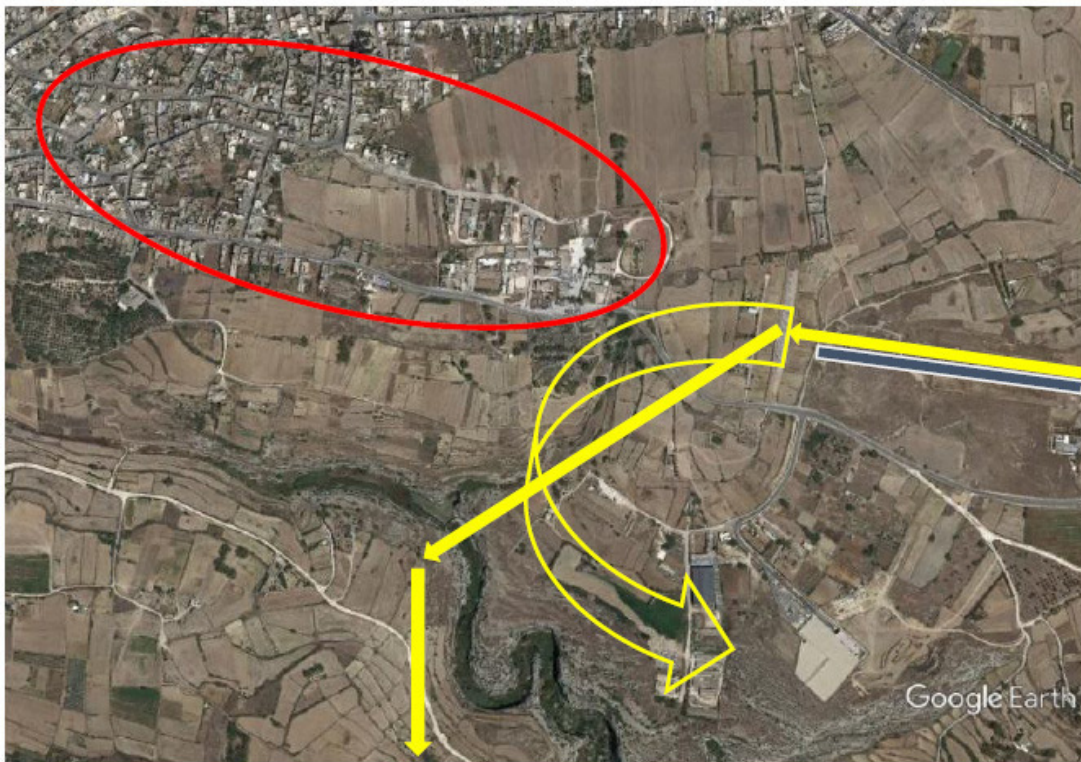


Fig. 5: Aircraft operational procedures upon take-off.

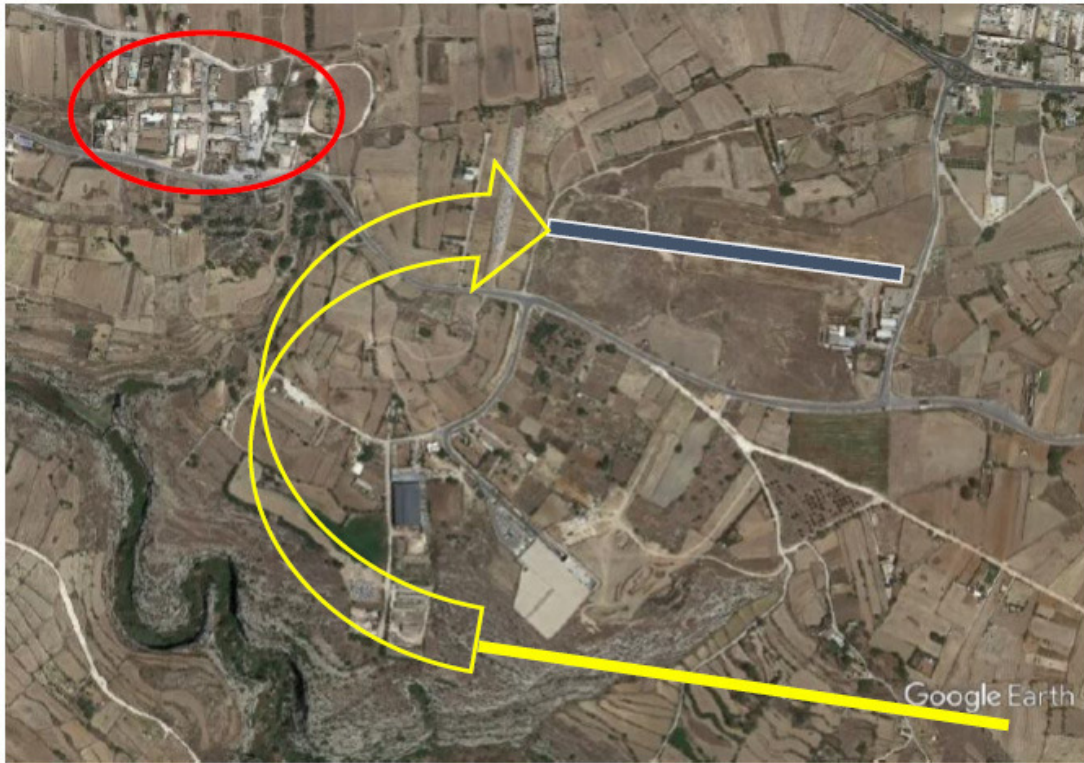


Fig. 6: Aircraft operational procedure upon approach and landing.

As explained above, the heliport must be licensed to cater for a scheduled service, and currently it cannot obtain a licence unless the proposed upgrading is carried out (from both a construction and an operations point of view).

1f. Access and Parking Requirements

This project relates to the provision and upgrading of airside facilities, and when in operation, will lead to a limited increase in vehicle parking requirements. The construction of an additional car-park is being avoided in this site in order to reduce development and retain the site's rural setting. For this reason, given that the two adjoining roads to the airfield, namely Triq ta' Lambert and Triq tal-Kanal, are wide enough, on-street parking is being proposed. These roads, particularly Triq tal-Kanal, provide adequate parking facilities that can meet the projected increase in vehicle parking requirements.

In terms of access, in view of the proximity of the runway to Triq ta' Lambert, it is being proposed that upon taking-off or approach of an aircraft, a pair of traffic lights on Triq ta' Lambert are activated such that any vehicular traffic is stopped during the taking-off / landing procedure. This is being proposed as a safety precaution.



2. Environmental Aspects

During this initial stage of the project, the following environmental aspects have been identified as likely to be affected by the project:

a. Effect on existing soil / vegetation:

The site is already void of any trees / vegetation both within the actual heliport as well as in its immediate vicinity (refer to orthophoto and aerial images). This is crucial in view of the operational requirements of the facility. The proposal shall therefore not require any uprooting/transplanting of trees or vegetation. As described above, a significant amount of dumped inert material was deposited within the site (outside the current security fence), which has resulted in an enforcement being issued by the Planning Authority (EC/00579/10, which is still active).

As explained in Section 1b, in terms of earthworks, the proposal shall require:

a. Re-grading of the terrain within the site extents:

- i. This shall be done by removing mounds of terrain/soil that currently do not respect the maximum gradients that such approach surfaces must have in accordance with ICAO and EASA standards. Effectively this shall mean that earth-moving machinery is utilised such that the earth mounds are removed from site for a more-level terrain to be achieved. There are no existing buildings / structures / rubble walls in the affected areas.

b. Runway/Apron areas:

- i. The existing soil / loose material lying beneath the proposed runway extension and apron areas shall be removed up to a depth of 1.0-metre (unless rock level is encountered before). Once the formation levels are formed, well-compacted subbase layers will be laid in preparation of the final surface, which shall consist of the following:
 - Runway Extension: Asphalt surface;
 - Apron 1: Reinforced concrete surface;
 - Aprons 2 and 3: reinforced-grass surface;
 - Apron 4: reinforced-grass with localised concrete hardstanding areas.
- ii. In the eventuality that rock is encountered at a level higher than the proposed formation levels across any parts of the site, rock cutting would be needed up to the proposed formation levels. This shall be particularly required for Apron 3, where the gradient of the site exceeds the 1% maximum allowable and therefore the existing terrain would need to be lowered by a maximum of 3-metres towards the northern



part of the site. Reference needs also to be made on Section 3-8 on this matter regarding archaeological monitoring.

As explained above, and tabulated in Section 1b, a very small portion of the entire site is hard surfaced (circa 23%), with the remaining areas finished in soil/grass. This is being done to ensure an environmental-friendly solution.

Aprons 2, 3 and 4 shall be surfaced in a reinforced-grass system (similar to that shown in Figs. 8 and 9), where a proprietary reinforced-plastic ground tiling system shall be laid and compacted into the prepared subbase, and which is able to sustain the loading imposed by small aircraft and emergency vehicles. This permeable surface allows grass to grow, thus preserving the character of the surrounding rural area. It must be also stated that such a surfacing solution is totally reversible. In summer months, it is being proposed that irrigation of the soft-areas will be carried out by new-water (recycled water) obtained from an approved facility very close to the site in question.



Fig. 7: Site (bound in red) is partly marked as an environmental protection area – Source PA Mapserver



Fig. 8: Typical installation of reinforced-grass tiles (Perfo® Interlocking Ground Reinforcement)

b. Storm-water management:

As explained, the development shall predominately consist of soft, permeable surfacing, with the exception of Apron 1, the runway and its extension and part of Apron 4 (emergency fuelling). The storm-water management is being proposed as follows:

1. **Apron 1 and Runway area:** These hard-surfaced areas are only subjected to manoeuvring / parking of aircraft, with no activities that could potentially lead to contamination. In this respect, the proposed storm-water management system shall consist of a longitudinal soakaway along either side of the runway, comprising a 2-metre deep trench infilled with graded aggregate and covered by means of a geotextile and a soil overlay.
2. **Apron 4:** For the part of Apron 4 which shall house the small-scale fuelling mobile depot (refer to Section d below), specific treatment of storm-water shall be done, comprising:
 - Collection of storm water through catch pits/culvert;
 - Filtration of storm water through proprietary oil / fuel filter;
 - Connect filtered water to existing reservoir for re-use.



Fig. 9: Typical installation of reinforced-grass tiles (Perfo® Interlocking Ground Reinforcement)

c. Artificial Lighting:

The use of artificial lighting has been carefully studied to ensure minimal impact on the rural setting of the site in question. To this effect, the following design and operational factors are being proposed, namely:

i. Airfield lighting:

1. The airfield will be open to General Aviation single-engine light aircraft from 30 minutes past sunrise to 30 minutes before sunset. The inter-island air service aircraft will be limited to flights between 06:00 hours and 01:00 hours. Night-time operations are therefore strictly limited for air ambulance helicopter departures and arrivals and the inter-island scheduled air service early departures from Gozo and late arrivals from Malta;
2. For the runway, the following ground lighting is required:
 - a. Runway omnidirectional edge white lights;
 - b. Runway end bi-directional red/green lights.

The runway lights shall be plot-activated, with a 15-minute duration and three possible intensities (low, medium and high). Pilots shall be encouraged to switch on lights at low intensity;

3. For the aprons, only Apron 1 shall be equipped with apron lighting, since this will accommodate the inter-island air passenger service. This is located closest to the passenger Terminal and the main road. Similarly to the runway, the apron lighting shall be pilot-activated, to ensure that the apron is lit only when required;
 4. For the taxiways, no taxiway lights will be required, just the use of Taxiway blue reflectors for Apron 1 (inter-island air service aircraft) and Apron 4 (air ambulance helicopters).
- ii. Terminal lighting: No changes to terminal lights are being proposed, except that preferably all lighting is changed to LED.
 - iii. Boundary fence lighting: Fence security lights will be installed along the site perimeter, and will consist of low intensity, downward facing LED warm lights.

d. Fueling depot:

An open-air small-scale fuelling depot is being proposed on Apron 4, to be used particularly for emergency purposes, but also extended for normal use by the general aviation aircraft. Two 1000-litre capacity mobile tanks are being proposed to be placed on an impermeable concrete surface, similar to the setup shown in Figure 10 below. The two tanks shall be equipped with a hose, nozzle and filters, together with a flow meter, and shall each contain:

- a. Mogas (Unleaded fuel): For Rotax type 4-stroke piston engines (small helicopters and general aviation fixed wing aircraft) and can be replenished by any fuel station in Gozo;
- b. Jet A1 (Kerosene): For Turbine powered helicopters or larger fixed-wing aircraft (Inter-Island Air Service aircraft), and shall be replenished by Enemed.



Fig. 10: Typical fuel tank to be placed on Apron 4.



The fueling depot will be equipped with all safety measures, including firefighting equipment, firefighting alarm, fuel catchment and perimeter screening along the road.

e. Raw Materials:

During the construction phase, the main materials that are required to carry out and complete the development phase will be selected to have minimal impact on the environment. The possibility of using recycled materials will be considered as well as salvaging or reclaiming the material for reuse.

The following is a list of plant/equipment that should be used during the construction works:

- tipper trucks
- wheel shovels
- track shovels
- backhoe excavators
- rock rippers
- concrete pumps
- telescopic cranes
- fuel bowsers
- water bowsers
- delivery trucks
- concrete delivery trucks

The principal raw construction materials that will be used during construction are listed below but are only indicative:

- Concrete (Apron 1 and part of Apron 4): 625 m³;
- Asphalt (Runway extension and resurfacing): 2,720 m³;
- Type 1 unbound material (Runway extension and base preparation beneath Aprons): 13,050 m³.

Type 1 unbound subbase material may be obtained from good-quality crushed (recycled) rock material.

It is not expected that any raw materials will be utilised during the operational phase, except for grass cutting and trimmings which shall be recycled.

3. Effects on the Environment

3a. Potential Project Impacts

An assessment of any potential environmental impact is important so as to better define the effects that a proposal may have on its receiving environment. Although the proposal falls under the scope of Schedule I of the EIA Regulations, 2017 (S.L. 549.46), as per Categories 1.0.2.1 (Development with a site area of 2ha or more) and 2.2.2.1 (Expansion of an airport, airstrip or airfield, not falling within Category I), it is our considered opinion that the project impacts are limited. This is because the site



is already earmarked and prepared for the proposed use, and the interventions being proposed are minimal.

Nevertheless, should ERA proceed in requesting and an EIA process, this shall be undertaken complete with an identification of impacts, the determination of their significance, a comparison with the baseline condition, and consideration of alternatives. The need for an EIA is, however, dependent on the screening of the likely impacts of the proposed development.

A preliminary list of potential environmental impacts of the Scheme are being identified below. The list identifies only those impacts that may be significant. The level of significance would need to be assessed as part of an EIA should the screening exercise conclude that one is required. The potential impacts of the Scheme are considered to be:

1. Impact on the geo-environment:

The majority of the site in question is earmarked and designated for airport-related activities. The area that will be intervened upon is predominately already part of the facility and void of any vegetation. As described in previous sections, the scheme will involve the hard-surfacing of currently-soil areas over an area of circa 10,300 sq.m. and re-levelling (re-grading) of soil over a further 60,000sq.m. The excavated topsoil (estimated at circa 6000 cu.m.) shall be stored in heaps and partly re-integrated in the development (for the proposed aprons) and partly removed from site for re-utilisation in nearby agricultural land. It is not envisaged that there shall be any impact on groundwater during construction.

2. Impact on landscape and visual amenity:

The scheme site is located Outside the Development Zone (ODZ) but predominately within the area reserved for Aviation Facilities. The proposed development is in line with the approved land uses in both the Gozo and Comino Local Plan and SPED document.

The proposal shall not be obtrusive in so far as the vast majority of the proposal shall be soft-surfaced, within the only hardstanding areas being the runway and one apron. The site is void of any vegetation and therefore landscape impacts are minimal. A number of measures have been adopted to ensure that the proposal retains the rural setting of the site, namely:

- a. Adopting permeable, soft-surfacing to the proposed aprons;
- b. Terraced perimetral retaining / boundary walls;
- c. Elimination of any buildings from the proposal;
- d. Introduction of landscaping on the site boundary.

3. Impacts arising from construction activities:

The potential impacts arising during construction in relation to noise, vibration, dust, and surface water management are likely to be low, short-term and temporary. The site is located quite offset from the nearest residential communities and is specifically designated for airport-related use.



4. Vehicular traffic impacts:

The potential impacts arising from construction traffic emissions and other related disturbance are likely to be short-term and temporary. During the excavation phase, it is expected that there will be around 10 HGV trips per day. During construction, there shall be need for average-amounts of concrete (estimated at circa 625 m³) and asphalt (circa 2720m³) to be delivered to the site on a one-year implementation program.

Post-completion, the additional vehicular traffic impact resulting from this project shall be mitigated by the provision of a park-and-ride facility to the Heliport, as described in Section 1f.

5. Impacts on noise and air quality:

During the construction phase, the impact on noise and air quality is considered to be low in view of the type of envisaged construction activities.

Post-completion, the impact of the aircraft operations shall be in line with the approved use of the facility. As described in Section 3b below, a number of design and operational procedures shall be adopted to ensure that the impact on noise and air quality are minimised.

6. Impacts on avifauna:

The site lies within the 200m groundwater safeguard zone and is designated as a Bird Sanctuary, 'Ta' Lambert' scheduled under Legal Notice 41/03. The 'Bird Sanctuary' is only nominally an environmental constraint and is related to the establishment of a no-shooting zone for the purpose of heliport safety.

A detailed study carried out by ornithologist Dr. Natalino Fenech of the potential effect of this development on avifauna, including mitigation measures, is included in Appendix 6.

7. Impacts on energy and water resources:

The Scheme shall not make any further demands on the power and potable water supplies, other than the upgrading / provision of the ground and apron lighting (which are for which energy-efficient luminaires/lighting systems will be adopted in the design).

One aspect that is being considered is the provision of charging points for the use of electric vehicles (both airside and landside) as well as for electric aircraft. This will render this facility one of the most environmentally-friendly facilities of its kind.

With regards to storm-water conservation, the development makes use of a predominately permeable-flooring solution, with the use of soakaways, as described earlier in Section 2 above.



8. Impacts from waste:

As mentioned above, the scheme will generate the following excavation waste:

- a. There is no demolition waste involved in this project;
- b. Soil volumes (estimated at circa 3200cu.m.) shall be reutilised in the project and nearby agricultural land or as directed by the Department of Agriculture;
- c. Rock excavation volumes are envisaged to amount to circa 54,000 cu.m., mainly arising from the area of proposed Apron 3;
- d. Scarification of the asphalt surface (estimated at circa 174 cu.m.), which will be re-utilised as Type 1 unbound material.

During the operational phase, there will be no increase of waste resulting from the proposed operations.

9. Archaeological Monitoring:

The Superintendence for Cultural Heritage (SCH) has already carried out extensive studies in the site in question.

The site of archaeological importance towards the south part of the runway has not been included within the area for development (and is therefore outside the site in question) and are being proposed to be integrated in a Heritage trail covering the southern tip of Gozo, comprising Mgarr ix-Xini, Sannat and Xewkija.

For the area of Apron 3, further discussions are to be held with (SCH) in view that rock excavation is envisaged. Therefore, it is being recommended that at an early stage, an application is filed with SCH such that approval is given for the agricultural soil / loose material to be diligently removed from the site to expose the rock surface, and hence allow for the time-consuming detailed cleaning and archaeological monitoring prior to commencement of actual works. This is being done in view of the area involved and the urgency of the project. The soil shall be left in heaps on site and shall not be removed until the full development permission is obtained.



3b. Mitigation Proposals

Preliminary potential mitigation measures associated with the identified impacts include:

- a. Ensuring the adoption of best practice environmental measures throughout the construction phase;
- b. Minimising lighting at the Scheme site and use of full-cut-off and downward pointing luminaires for any external lighting at the Scheme to minimize disturbance to the environment (and maneuvering aircraft);
- c. Minimising excavation to the minimum required;
- d. Reuse of excavated soil;
- e. Ensuring compliance with waste management regulations and the adoption of best practice in relation to operational waste management;
- f. Measures for mitigating noise, vibration and impacts on air quality during construction works through the preparation and implementation of a Construction Management Plan;
- g. Measures for mitigating noise and impacts on air quality during operation by the adoption of the following design and operational measures:
 - i. All general aircraft operating at Gozo fall within lower limit of the Noise classification. These are powered by Rotax, Lycoming, Continental and Jabiru four stroke piston engines which are certified at less than 70dB;
 - ii. The Inter-Island air service provider shall be encouraged to adopt an all-electric fleet by 2025. This will be done through the tender document for the selection of the prospective operator;
 - iii. Inter-Island air service aircraft to receive factory noise reduction modifications for both the propeller and the exhaust mufflers;
 - iv. General aviation aircraft operations limited to: 30 minutes past sunrise till 30 minutes before sunset;
 - v. No jet-powered aircraft shall use the facility;
 - vi. No low flying will be allowed;
 - vii. Clever use of vegetation to shield aircraft noise on the ground. Choice of indigenous trees, hedges and grass areas;
 - viii. End of runway taxi U-turns made towards the sea (one at each end);
 - ix. Engine run-ups in dedicated bays;
 - x. Grass Aprons and Taxiways designed to smother engine noise;
 - xi. Electric fleet of support ground vehicles;



- xii. Pilots to follow aircraft noise abatement procedures as published in the 'Pilot Operating Handbook' and Aeronautical Information Publication;
- xiii. Circuit activity to the south of the airfield;
- xiv. Circuit activity to the North of the airfield is prohibited (refer to Section 1e).

3c. Project Significance

As described in Section 1e, this project will carry out the necessary upgrades for the existing heliport to start operating again. As explained in section 1, such upgrades are sub-divided in two: (a) necessary improvements from a physical point of view (mainly the provision of a safety area, construction of an apron and runway resurfacing), and (b) improvements to the operational aspects (namely planning, operational procedures, equipment and training).

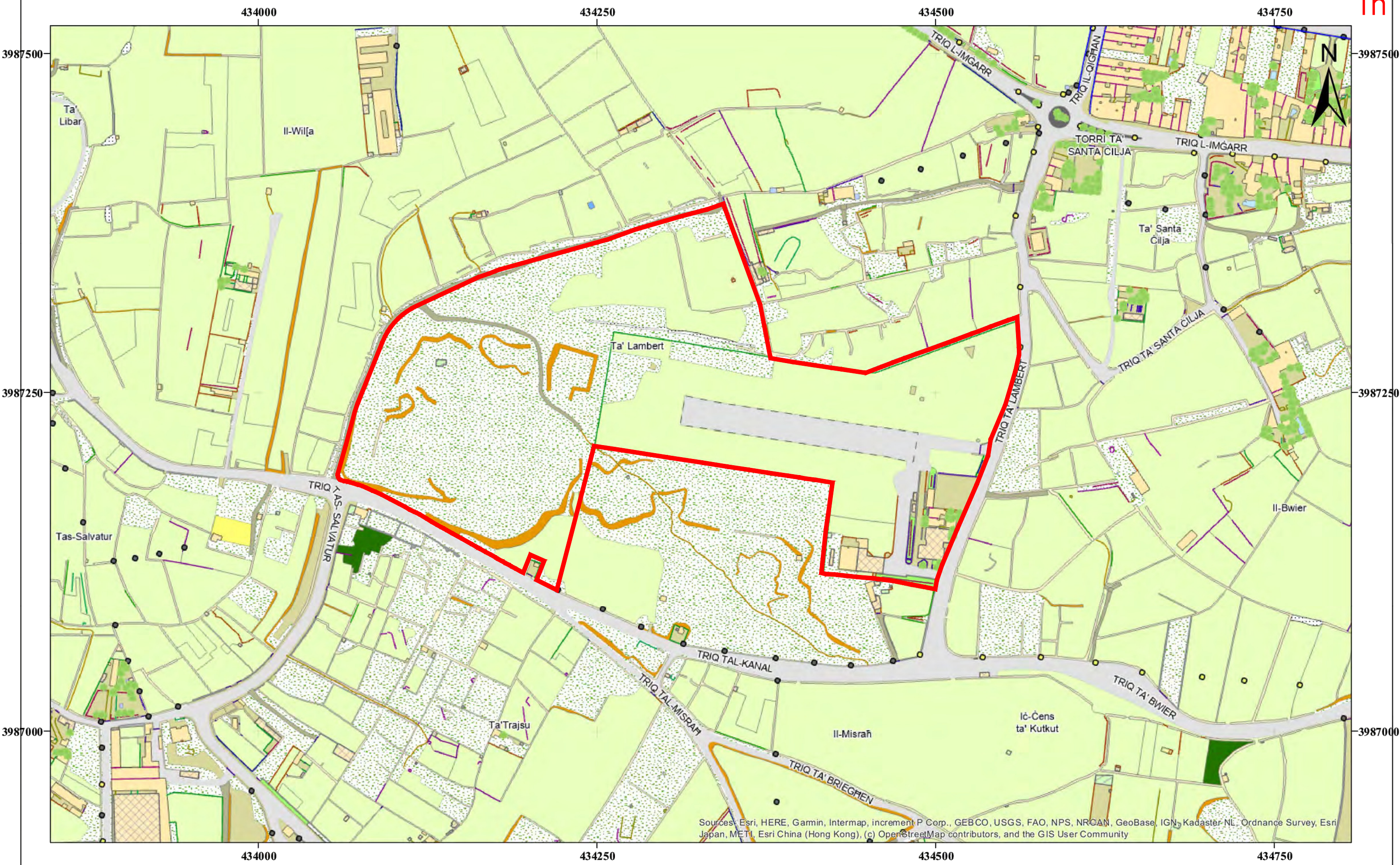
This project is of national significance and an important factor in the planned economic growth of Gozo over the next ten years.

Perit Ramon Fenech

QPM Ltd

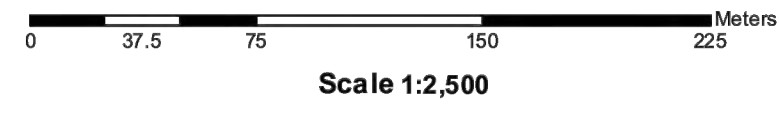


Appendix 1: Site Location Plan



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

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