



Architectural, Archaeological, Historical & Cultural Heritage and Related Material Assets Study for the proposed Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)

WASTESERV MALTA LIMITED

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SERVICE TENDER FOR THE ENGINEERING, PROCUREMENT
AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW MATERIALS RECOVERY
FACILITY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Project Description.....	1
1.2	Scope of document	1
2.0	Terms of Reference	3
3.0	Methodology	5
3.1	Area of Influence.....	5
3.2	Literature Review	5
3.3	Site inspection.....	6
3.4	Evaluation	6
4.0	Legislation and statutory protection	7
4.1	Development planning act 2016.....	7
4.2	Structure plan for the Maltese islands 1990.....	7
4.3	Cultural Heritage Act 2002.....	7
4.4	Local policy.....	8
5.0	Baseline Survey.....	13
5.1	Desktop study	13
5.1.1	Prehistory.....	13
5.1.2	Antiquity.....	16
5.1.3	Middle Ages	16
5.1.4	Early Modern.....	16
5.1.5	Modern	17
5.2	Site Inspection and Discoveries	17
5.2.1	Scheduled Sites	17
5.2.2	Surveillance Exercise Results	21
5.2.3	Cultural Material	39
5.2.4	Cultural Features.....	39
5.2.5	Cultural Landscape.....	39
6.0	Impact Assessment	45
6.1	Construction phase	45
6.2	Operational phase.....	47
7.0	Monitoring and Mitigation Measures	48

7.1	Construction phase	48
7.2	Operational Phase.....	48
8.0	Summary of impacts	49
	Bibliography	51
	Appendix 1	53

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of proposed site and Area of Influence	5
Figure 2: Policy Map Cv1 (Source: Central Malta Local Plan)	10
Figure 3: Policy Map CV2 (Source: Central Malta Local Plan).....	11
Figure 4: Policy Map CV3 (Source: Central Malta Local Plan).....	12
Figure 5: Land bridge between Sicily and Malta (Source: Furlani, et al, 2013)	14
Figure 6: Progradation of the Burmarrad ria, showing the progressive decline of the bay. (Source: Marriner et al. 2012).....	15
Figure 7: Location of listed archaeological sites within Aol	17
Figure 8: General view of Ta'Hammud dolmen with capstone still in place, looking West. 19	
Figure 9: General view of Ta'Hammud dolmen collapsed, looking West.....	19
Figure 10: General view of Ta'Hammud dolmen reused, looking S-SW	20
Figure 11: Ta'Hammud site view from Triq ir-Ramla, looking West	20
Figure 12: Internal road to WasteServ Treatment facilities, looking N-East	21
Figure 13: Internal road to Wasteserv Treatment Facilities, looking North	22
Figure 14: Fences and wall delimiting the North side of Aol, looking West	22
Figure 15: agricultural land with rubble wall within Aol, looking N-East.....	23
Figure 16: Agricultural land with rubble walls within Aol, looking N-East	23
Figure 17: Overgrown area within Aol, looking North.....	24
Figure 18: Overgrown area within Aol, looking S-East	24
Figure 19: Aerial shot of overgrown area, Western end of site.....	25
Figure 20: Aerial shot of overgrown area in the Western end of site	25
Figure 21: Aerial shot of S-West End of site	26
Figure 22: Aerial shot of central part (West side) of site	26
Figure 23: Aerial shot of Northern end of site	27

Figure 24: Aerial shot of central area (East side) of site	27
Figure 25: Aerial shot of Southern end of site.....	28
Figure 26: Aerial shot of Southern end of site.....	28
Figure 27: Aerial shot of central area (East side) of site with Features B and C visible	29
Figure 28: Aerial shot of Northern end of site with Feature A visible.....	29
Figure 29: Aerial shot of central part (N-East) of site with Features A, B and C visible	30
Figure 30: Aerial shot of eastern end (N-East) of site	30
Figure 31: Aerial shot of eastern end (central) of site with features B, C and D visible	31
Figure 32: Aerial shot of Eastern (S-East) end of site.....	31
Figure 33: Rubble wall in very poor conditions within AoI, looking N-East.....	32
Figure 34: Feature B, Corbelled stone hut (girna) in the central area of site, looking N-West 32	
Figure 35: Feature B, Corbelled stone hut (Girna) in the central area of site, looking North 33	
Figure 36: Feature B, Intern of corbelled stone hut (Girna)	33
Figure 37: Rubble wall in poor condition within AoI, looking N-East.....	34
Figure 38: Feature A, Stone hut (Girna) in the N-East area, looking South	34
Figure 39: Feature A, stone hut (Girna) in the N-East area, looking west	35
Figure 40: Feature A, Intern of stone hut (Girna), looking West	35
Figure 41: Feature C, drystone enclosure, looking S-East	36
Figure 42: Feature C, Drystone enclosures forming a passage, looking East	36
Figure 43: Feature C, drystone enclosures forming a passage, looking west	37
Figure 44: rubble wall in fair condition in the Eastern area of site, looking south	37
Figure 45: Rubble wall in fair condition in the Eastern area of site, looking N-East	38
Figure 46: external wall of a drystone hut (Feature D) at the eastern limit of AoI	38
Figure 47: Location and states of Cultural Features identified within AoI	41
Figure 48: Location of cultural features within proposed development.....	42

Figure 49: Viewpoint 5 – Triq il-Kosta, Qalet Marku.....	43
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Figure 50: Cumulative view showing Ta' Hammud site and photomontage of MRF, TTF, WTE and OPP plant only at viewpoint 5	44
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TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: List of scheduled Sites within Aol buffer zone	18
Table 2: List of cultural features within AOI	39
Table 3: Classification of Significance of Cultural Heritage Feature.....	45
Table 4: Summary of Impacts table – Archaeology & Cultural heritage features	49

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This technical study identifies the Architectural, Archaeological, Historical & Cultural Heritage and related Material Assets, and assesses the impacts caused in relation to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed Materials Recovery facility. The facility is being proposed to treat source-separated and co-mingled dry recyclables collected in Malta, and is hereafter referred to as 'the Scheme'. The proposed development will form part of the ECOHIVE Complex and will operate in conjunction with the other waste management facilities at Magħtab. The proposal also includes ancillary office space, staff quarters and parking spaces.

1.1 Project Description

Site of the proposed MRF project is located at ECOHIVE Complex, Tul il-Kosta / Triq ir-Ramla, Triq ta' Saverja, Naxxar (Figure 1). The development footprint covers 21,373m² and comprises agricultural land and low-lying trees and vegetation.

Source separated recyclable waste streams including paper, cardboard, plastics and metals were previously processed at a Material Recovery Facility at the Sant' Antnin Solid Waste Treatment Plant in Marsascula. This MRF operated between February 2008 and May 2017 but was destroyed during a fire. In the absence of such a facility, the processing of the aforementioned waste streams has been restricted to a manual sorting line and a more recent makeshift line at the Malta North Facility within the ECOHIVE complex.

The Scheme is being proposed to meet the provisions of Malta's Waste Management Plan and achieve recovery and recycling targets stipulated in the Circular Economy Package. The proposed Scheme aims to minimise as much as possible all landfilling and increase the recovery efficiency of recyclables' thus rendering them more suitable for sales/export. The facility will also be designed in such a way to ensure that any emissions and environmental impacts arising from operations are in conformity with the latest requirements and standards stipulated in the EU Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU (IED). The Scheme also intends to have: a low processing cost per tonne of waste; good tolerance to contaminants in feed stock; low down time between failures; minimise extended periods when waste cannot be processed and sufficient contingency planning for planned (or unplanned) maintenance and downtime.

1.2 Scope of document

The specific aim of this assessment is to summarise the known and potential archaeological conditions within the Scheme area to subsequently inform the EIA process.

The objectives of the assessment are to produce details of relevant legislations, national and local planning policy, and best practice guidance and assess the significance of the known

and potential archaeological resources through weighted consideration of their valued components.



2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The ERA and the SCH issued the Terms of Reference related to the study on architecture, archaeological, historical & cultural heritage and related material assets for the EIA in April 2023. They are replicated hereunder.

APPENDIX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT (AS PROVIDED BY THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE, AS REVISED IN OCTOBER 2013)

1.0 Preamble

The proposed project would involve development over an extensive area and may lead to intensification of activity over a larger area. Potential impacts may occur within the footprint of the project, in the immediate environs, and along access routes to the site. Potential impacts may include direct and immediate material impacts, as well as subsequent impacts that might arise from the modification of the existing situation.

2.0 Scope and Definitions of the EIA

For the purposes of this document, cultural heritage is defined by Article 2 of the Cultural Heritage Act (2019). This includes movable or immovable objects of artistic, architectural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic, palaeontological, and geological importance.

2.1 The study area shall include the total footprint of the proposed development.

2.2 In the context of this particular application, cultural heritage considerations may include:

- Features of archaeological value and potential;*
- Military or civil architecture from the Knights period to British period;*
- Vernacular structures; and*
- Field systems and agricultural features such as irrigation systems.*

The above cultural heritage definitions and considerations are not to be considered as exhaustive. The EIA must consider all other forms of cultural heritage, both known and unknown.

2.3 The Environmental Impact assessment will:

- Describe the Cultural Heritage assets within the study area;*
- Analyse the cultural heritage features within the context of the cultural landscape;*

-Assess the physical, spatial and visual impacts of the proposed development on the cultural heritage assets; and

-Propose corrective measures for the protection of the cultural resources.

3.0 Methodology

In quantifying the cultural heritage assets within the study area, and assessing the impacts of the proposed development, the EIA will undertake:

-Description and assessment of the property;

-Desktop and archival research limited to the study area;

-Fieldwork and research, including “field walking”, topographic survey and remote sensing as may be necessary within the site. All fieldwork has to be authorised by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage as defined below under point 4;

-Consultations with any relevant bodies, including the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, Heritage Malta, the University of Malta, NGOs and Local Councils;

-Compilation of an inventory of the cultural heritage assets identified within the study area. The features of cultural heritage are to be described and plotted with grid references, on Data Capture Sheets, the design of which should be approved in advance by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The Data Capture Sheets will be presented as an appendix to the EIS. The analysis of the features will be included in the main report; and

-A cultural heritage Risk Assessment Map examining the various impacts of the proposed project is to be included in the EIA.

4.0 Authorisation by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

As per Cultural Heritage Act 2019, any form of investigation or prospection required for the identification of cultural heritage (including excavation, field walking, topographic survey and remote sensing) may only be undertaken by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage or with its written approval.



3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Area of Influence

The Area of Influence for the study comprises the immediate footprint of the new facility, together with a 100m buffer zone around the proposed site. The AOI is mapped in Figure 1. This area consists of exposed outcrops of Lower Coralline and Globigerina Limestone rock between cultivated terraced fields lying across gently sloping hills.



Figure 1: Map of proposed site and Area of Influence

3.2 Literature Review

The methodology employed for the assessment of the cultural heritage in this area first involved a desktop study. This stage included a thorough review of published literature and previous reports carried out in the area. A number of publicly accessible sources of primary and synthesised information were consulted, including:

1. National heritage datasets including the National Inventory for Malta and Scheduling (HS) constraints available on the Planning Authority (PA) Geoportal;
2. Relevant mapping including survey maps and Local Plans;
3. Relevant documentary sources, including Museum Annual Reports (MAR) and grey literature.

A bibliography of documentary, archive, and cartographic sources consulted is included in the References section of this report.

3.3 Site inspection

The Scheme area was surveyed on the 10th August 2023. The aim of the inspection was to systematically identify and record any cultural/historical features visible in the landscape and identify potential for unknown cultural heritage assets.

A photographic record using a Canon EOS 1100D camera with EF-S 18-55mm zoom lens and a DJI Mini 2 Drone was made for each area visited and any identified cultural heritage assets.

3.4 Evaluation

Archaeological artefacts or deposits recorded were identified as far as possible and their conservation importance given with reference to appropriate legislation, standards and guidance. These included the Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands, the SPED, the Cultural Heritage Act, 2002, as well as international conventions / treaties / standards applicable in Malta.

The results of the survey have been mapped in a GIS and catalogued following standard systems. Details, including descriptions of the cultural heritage features in the area, are available in Appendix I.

Copies of all documents and photographs related to this survey, as well as the final report, will also be deposited at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the scheme overlaps with two areas of the ECOHIVE complex previously submitted as part of recent Environmental Impact Assessment studies, namely: the Organic Processing Plant (OPP) and the Waste to Energy (WtE) facility. It was therefore considered necessary to include these proposed developments within the scope of the overall assessment, with particular emphasis on the specific context and elements of the scheme described herein. The section addressing the cultural landscape should be read in conjunction with, and as a continuation of, the Landscape and Visual Impact technical study.

4.0 LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY PROTECTION

The following section provides a summary of the national, regional and local planning, and legislative framework governing the protection and treatment of cultural heritage within the planning process.

The archaeological curator responsible for archaeological resources up to the 12 nautical mile limit, is the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. This unit is responsible for managing and ensuring that the protection and accessibility of cultural heritage as defined in the Cultural Heritage Act 2001, is carried out.

4.1 Development planning act 2016

This Act aims at implementing a comprehensive planning system by means of a Spatial Strategy which regulates “the sustainable management of land and sea resources covering the whole territory of the Maltese Islands” (44.1). As per Directive 2014/52/EU (which supersedes Directive 2011/92/EU), Environment Impact Assessments are required to provide high level protection to the environment and human health and ensure that projects which are likely to have significant effects on the environment are adequately assessed before any development consent is granted.

Relevant to this assessment is the Subsidiary Legislation 552.01 of the Development Planning Act 2016 dealing with Rubble Walls and Rural Structures (Conservation and Maintenance). Rubble walls and non-habitable rural structures are protected, *“in view of their historical and architectural importance, their exceptional beauty, their affording a habitat for flora and fauna, and their vital importance in the conservation of the soil and of water”* (2).

4.2 Structure plan for the Maltese islands 1990

The Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands was drafted in 1992, with the aim to control development and channel it into existing and committed urban areas and improve the quality of all aspects of the environment of both urban and rural areas. Heritage falls under Chapter 13. Tourism and Recreation. However, it is largely dealt with in Chapter 15. Conservation. This section clearly sets out criteria to determine areas/assets of cultural significance, including Urban Conservation Areas; Listed Buildings; Rural Conservation Areas; Areas and Sites of Archaeological Importance; and Marine Conservation Areas.

4.3 Cultural Heritage Act 2002

The management and protection of cultural heritage is legally covered by the Cultural Heritage Act 2002.

Cultural heritage is defined as *“movable or immovable objects of artistic, architectural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic, palaeontological and geological importance and includes information or data relative to cultural heritage pertaining to Malta or to any other country. This includes archaeological, palaeontological or geological sites and deposits,*

landscapes, groups of buildings, as well as scientific collections, collections of art objects, manuscripts, books, published material, archives, audio-visual material and reproductions of any of the preceding, or collections of historical value, as well as intangible cultural assets comprising arts, traditions, customs and skills employed in the performing arts, in applied arts and in crafts and other intangible assets which have a historical, artistic or ethnographic value' (Part 1.2)

Cultural Heritage Act 2002 states that the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) functions as the regulating body endowed with fulfilling the duties of the State in the protection of the cultural heritage. To this end, the SCH ensures the protection of cultural heritage by authorizing and regulating excavations and their surveillance (in the form of archaeological monitoring) to ensure that the best scientific methods are adopted for adequate documentation. It is within the role of the SCH:

'to ensure that adequate documentation is kept and archived in relation to excavation, exploration and search for antiquities, the conservation of cultural property and discoveries resulting from environment impact assessments;'

SCH has the power: *'to advise and coordinate with the Planning Authority action in safeguarding cultural heritage when considering applications for planning permission relating to development affecting objects, sites, buildings or landscapes which form part of the cultural heritage;'*

Any person who, even accidentally, discovers any object, site or building, to which this Act applies, must immediately inform the Superintendent and keep the object found in situ. Every movable object forming part of the cultural heritage discovered in any location within the Maltese Islands, whether found in authorized or illegal excavations or explorations or by accident in the course of any works or any other manner shall belong to the State. The person responsible for the excavation or exploration must give the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage all original records gathered in the progress of the excavation or exploration.

The Cultural Heritage Act states that the proper use and protection of national cultural property shall be in conformity with the provisions of international conventions ratified by the Government of Malta:

'The powers and duties under this Act shall be exercised in conformity with any international convention, treaty, agreement or instrument concerning the proper use and conservation of national or world cultural property to which Malta may be a party.'

Any persons who act against the protection of cultural heritage will suffer legal consequences, as stipulated in the Cultural Heritage Act.

4.4 Local policy

The Magtab area, within the Naxxar Council boundaries, is under The Central Malta Local Plan (CMLP 12.1.3), classified as Rural/ODZ Area with an existing Landfill site and an

Engineered Sanitary Landfill site towards the main transport Network route (arterial) CG38, (Map SE1 and NAM3 on PA Local Plan Details).

Next to the Area of Interest, the policy map CV1 (Figure 2), identifies listed Areas of Scientific and Ecological Importance (CG22), a protected Natural Coast with public access and a Scheduled Area/Sites (Ta Hammud dolmen) towards North-West, while policy map CV2 (Figure 3) and CV3 (Figure 4) show respectively the area of High Landscape Sensitivity and Archaeological features. The archaeological feature policy maps were consulted so as to assess the listed and known features in the area in question known as the Areas of Archaeological Importance (AAI).

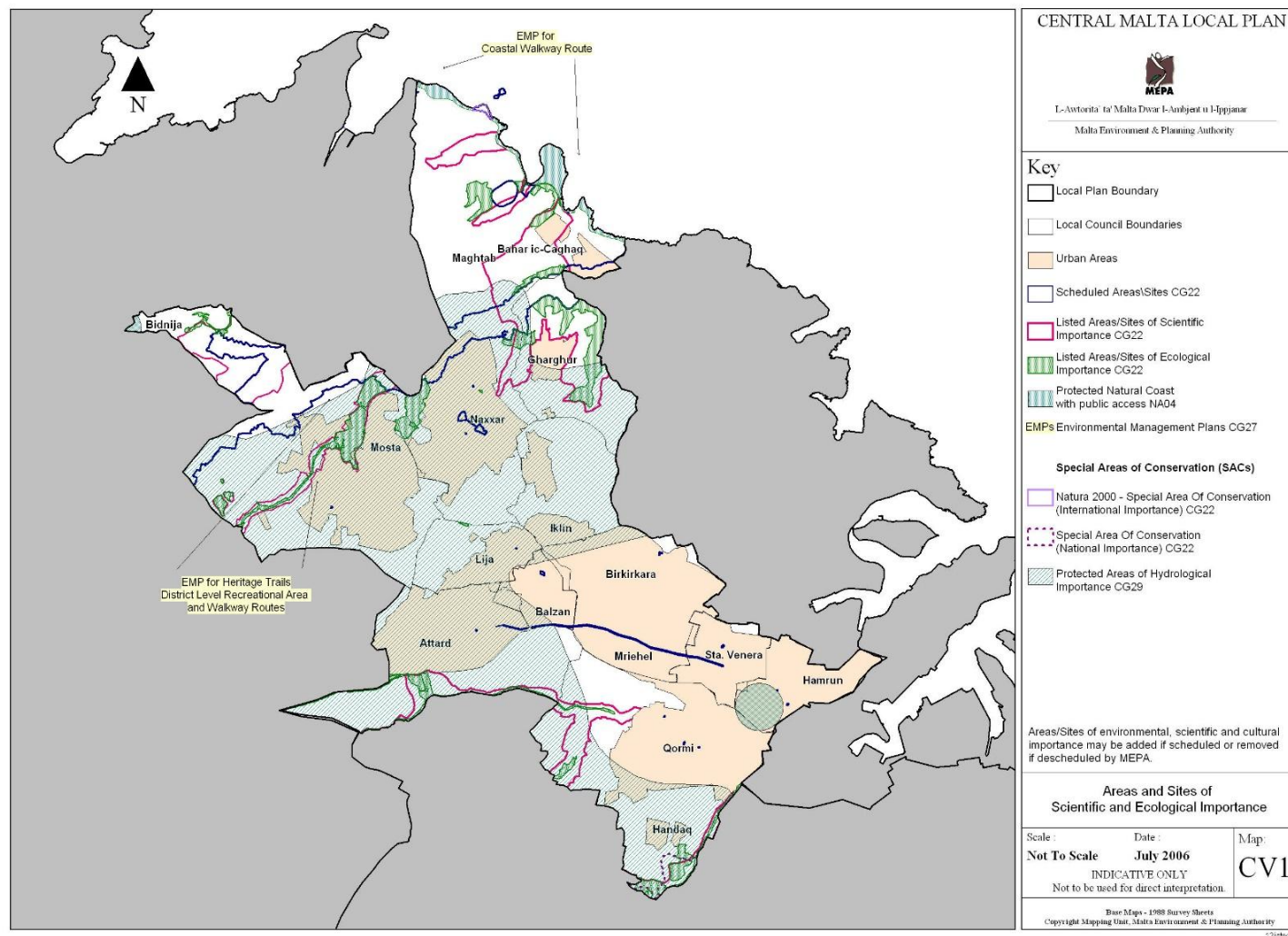


Figure 2: Policy Map Cv1 (Source: Central Malta Local Plan)

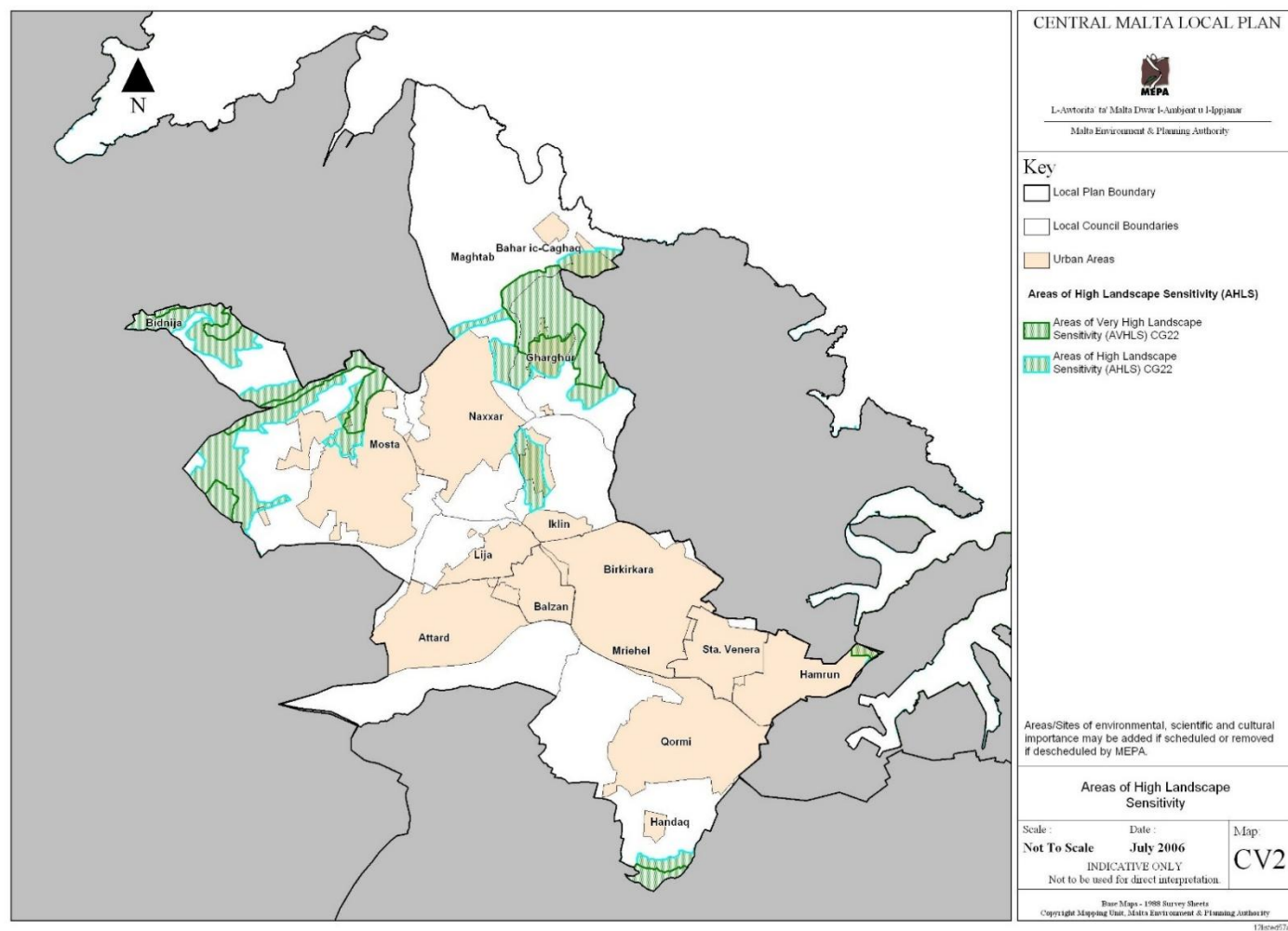


Figure 3: Policy Map CV2 (Source: Central Malta Local Plan)

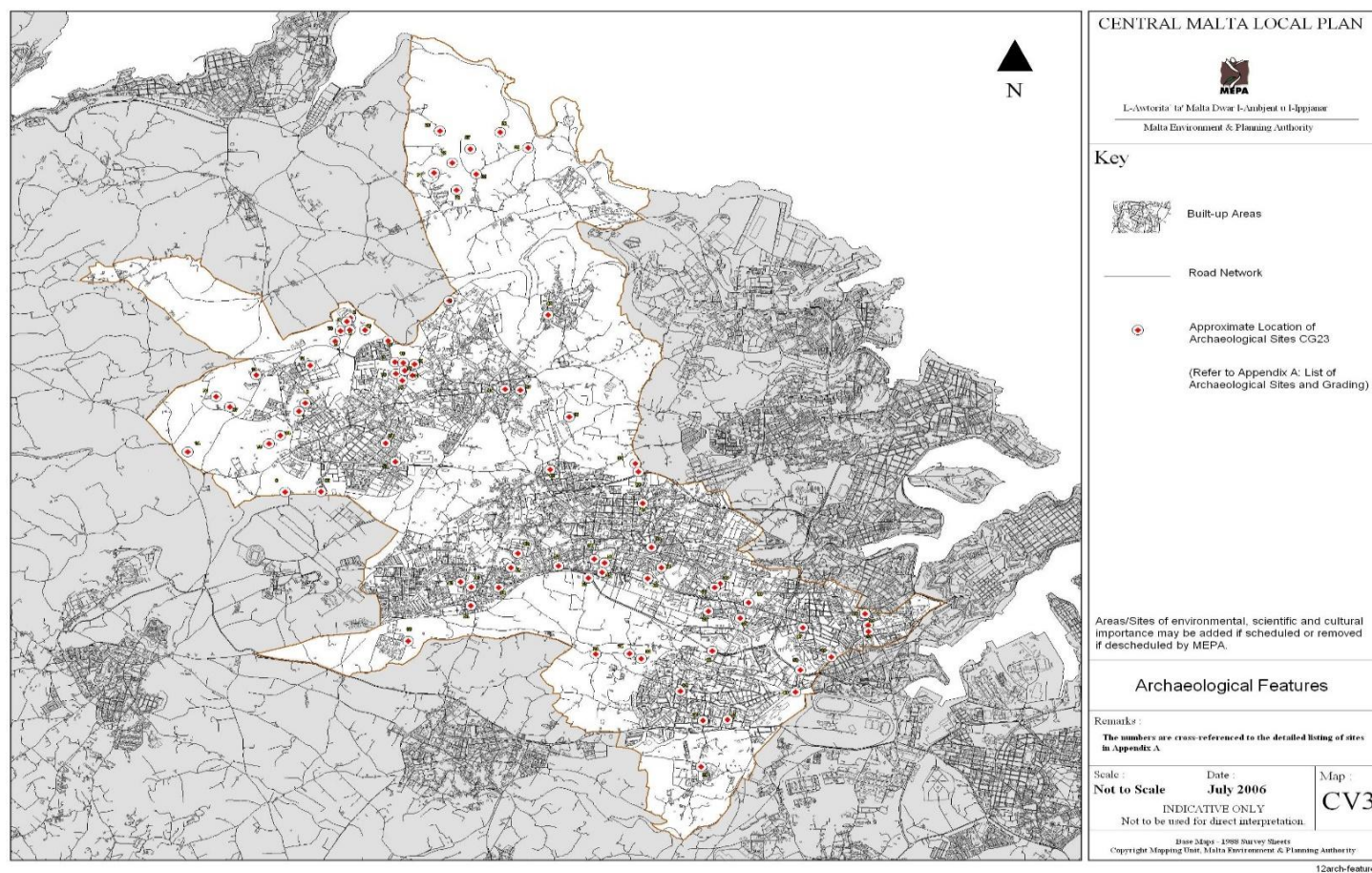


Figure 4: Policy Map CV3 (Source: Central Malta Local Plan)

5.0 BASELINE SURVEY

5.1 Desktop study

The following section of the report summaries the history of the Magħtab, Naxxar area. The main reported archaeological finds were examined with numerous sources of information consulted, such as:

- Documentary;
- Cartographic;
- Reports of any previously discovered archaeological material; and
- Existing literature related to the cultural heritage and history of the study area.

Data used to compile this report consists of secondary information derived from a variety of sources, only some of which have been directly examined for the purposes of this Study. The assumption is made that this data, as well as that derived from other secondary sources, is reasonably accurate.

The records held by the SCH on the geoportal are not a record of all surviving heritage assets, but a record of the discovery of a wide range of archaeological and historical components of the historic environment. The information held within it is not complete and does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown.

5.1.1 Prehistory

Due to the passage of time and the intensification of land uses in the area, it can be particularly difficult to reconstruct the coastal landscape in prehistoric times. Gambin (2005) demonstrates that the prehistoric landscape of Malta may well have been drastically different than that of today and the environment has experienced numerous and significant changes over the millennia (Mariner et al, 2012). In fact, archaeological indicators in Malta, including cart ruts and Garum production sites, indicate that modern sea levels are higher than those of prehistoric periods (Furlani et al, 2013). Sea level change has also factored significantly into the alteration of the prehistoric landscape of the Malta-Sicily Channel. During the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), Malta was connected to Italy via a land-bridge, however following sea level rise, Malta was subsequently cut off from the European mainland around 14500 years BP (Alexander, 1988; Furlani, et al, 2013). Prehistoric shipwreck assemblages of obsidian off of the coast of Pantelleria demonstrate the effect sea level change has had within the larger Sicily Channel (Abelli, et al., 2014). This is further demonstrated by the discovery of a submerged monolith within the Sicily Channel dated to the Mesolithic Period (Lodolo & Ben-Avraham, 2015).

Close to the Magħtab area specifically, other than sea level change, riverine sedimentation has had a significant impact on the coastline since Prehistory, as the Modern Burmarrad plain formed over time replacing a once much larger Salina Bay (Marriner et al., 2012). This larger inlet was once more sheltered and is thought to have been an important port in ancient times (Marriner et al., 2012).

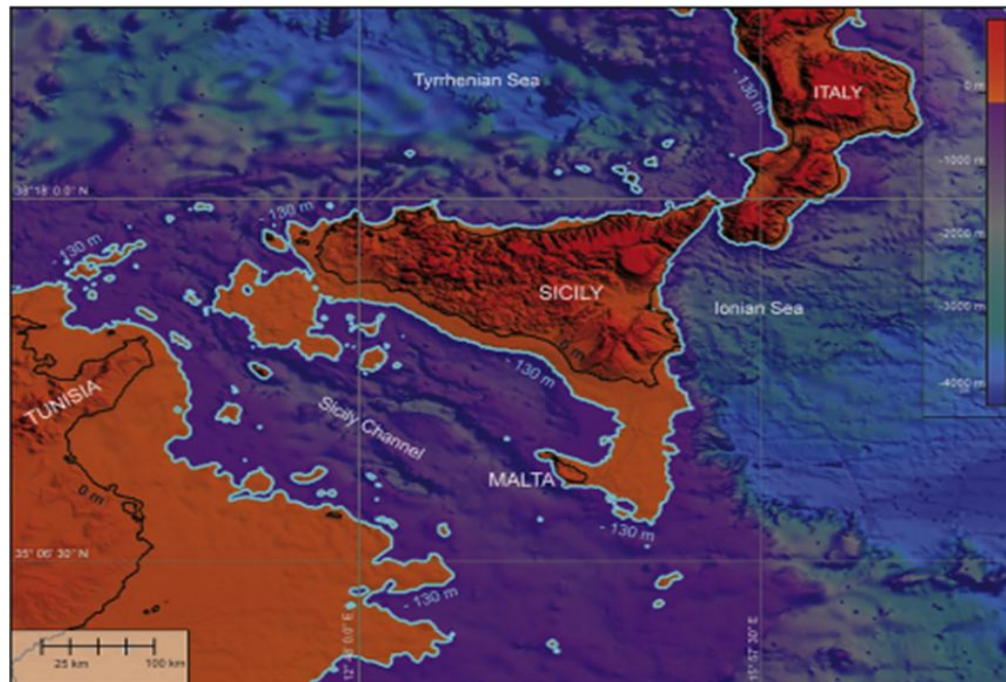


Figure 5: Land bridge between Sicily and Malta (Source: Furlani, et al, 2013)

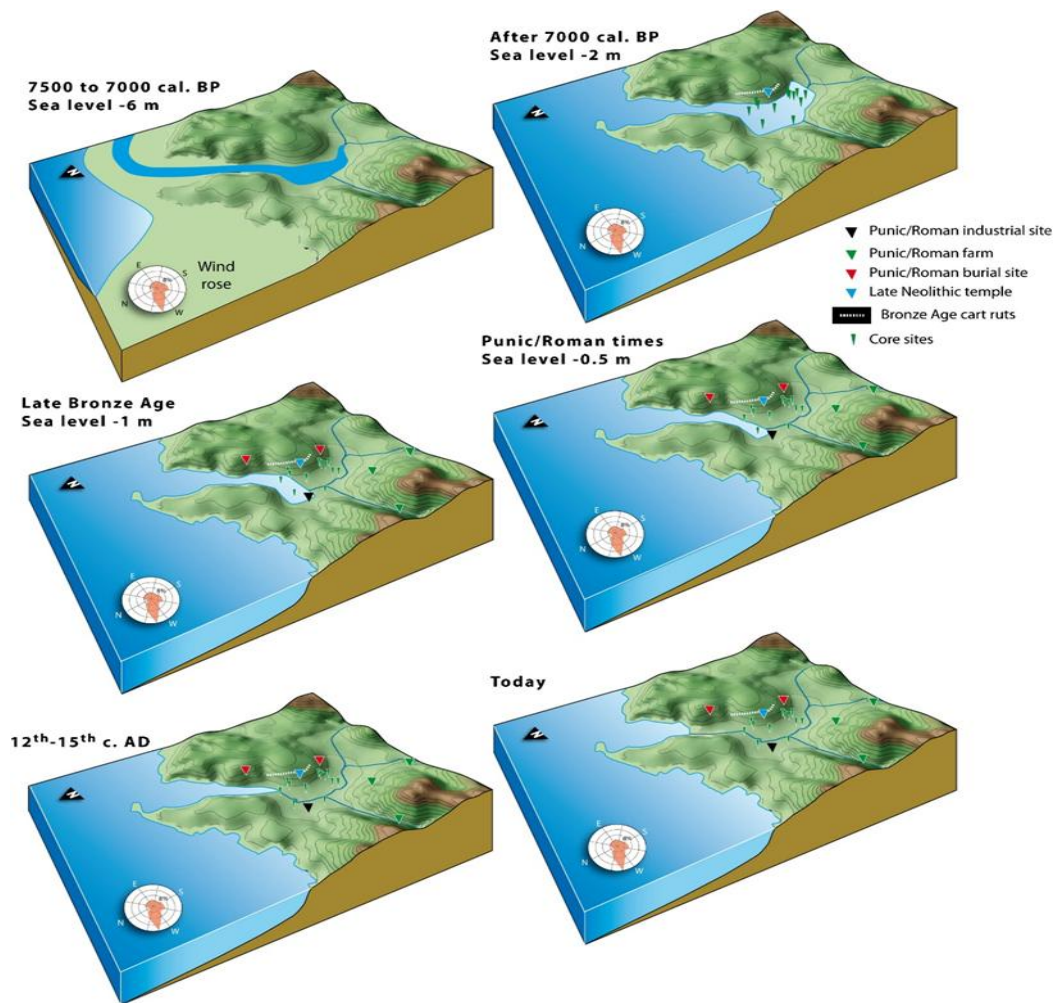


Figure 6: Progradation of the Burmarrad ria, showing the progressive decline of the bay. (Source: Marriner et al. 2012)

The most conspicuous element of Prehistoric activity in the Magħtab area are the several remaining dolmens (Bronze Age megalithic burials), which date to the period (mar 1927-28; Trump 2004). These preserve very scant traces of dateable cultural remains, and hence are difficult to date and interpret comprehensively. The area between the Magħtab area and Salina also contain the characteristic cart ruts, which possibly also date to the Prehistoric period, however this has never been confirmed (Trump 2008). The function of these ruts is still disputed, however the generally accepted interpretation views them as remnants of ancient trackways. The ruts which have been discovered in this area have also tentatively been traced to progress towards and over the great fault, disappearing beneath residential areas in San Pawl tat-Tarġa (Trump 2008). Also in the Salina Bay area is the Tal-Qadi megalithic temple, which despite being smaller than its more well-known contemporaries (e.g. Ħaġar Qim and Ġgantija), nevertheless demonstrates that this area was also an important centre of activity during the Temple Period. This site was also the location for the discovery of several important cultural artefacts, including an ancient carved representation of the night sky (Trump 2004; Sagona 2015).

5.1.2 Antiquity

The aforementioned Salina Bay is thought to have been an important port in Antiquity, having been much larger even in Classical times, and thus very sheltered (Marriner et al. 2012). Surviving historical documents demonstrate the use of Malta's natural harbours in antiquity, when during the mid-first century BC, Diodorus Siculus described their use. Linking the use of the harbours and the Phoenicians, he states that Malta "possesses many harbours which offer exceptional advantages" (Gambin, 2015, p.7). He continues to draw a comparison between the prosperity of the islands' inhabitants and the fact that Malta is "well supplied with harbours".

The Ancient utilisation of Salina Bay as a harbour is attested by the several ancient shipwrecks and anchors discovered in the Bay, as well as the prevalence of ancient pottery scatters which have been found on the seabed

The Magħtab area also contains notable traces of activity from Antiquity, namely made up of surface stone quarries and many rock-cut chamber tombs and catacombs. These are in many cases related, with rock-cut tombs being excavated in the sides of quarries, which present ready surfaces for rock-cutting (Bonanno 2005). The quarries are difficult to date directly, and many of the tombs in this area were looted before their discovery in modern times. Nevertheless, the Salina catacombs are known to date to the Late Roman and Byzantine periods (between the third and 6th centuries AD) (Bonanno 2005). The quarries which these catacombs were cut into, hence date to an earlier time.

5.1.3 Middle Ages

Traces of activity from the Medieval period are rather scarce for the Magħtab area. The closest evidence comes from the San Brincat (Għargħur) troglodytic settlement, situated in a valley set within the Great Fault (Dalli 2006). This site is located in close proximity to a natural freshwater spring, and is thought to have possibly been a centre of Medieval Siculo-Greek monasticism (Dalli 2006).

5.1.4 Early Modern

During the Late Medieval and Early Modern periods, numerous attacks were made on Malta by North African corsairs, rendering the coastline largely bereft of settlements (Freller 2010). As a result, the low-lying coastline around Il-Magħtab and the sheltered bay of Salina, saw a drastic increase in the investment in coastal defenses, particularly by the Knights of St. John (Freller 2010). Many of these survive, including the Għallis Tower, at the tip of the promontory, opposite Qawra, the Għallis Battery, the Qalet Marku Battery, as well as the Ximenes Redoubt and the associated rock-hewn mortar (fougasse).

Apart from its increased military significance, the Salina area played an increasing importance in the local economy as the salt panning industry was expanded under the Knights of St. John. This included significant investment in the salt panning facilities by the Knights, which are in use till this day (Marriner et al. 2012).

5.1.5 Modern

Following the takeover of the Maltese Islands by the French and subsequently the British, the area retained its defensive importance. As a matter of fact, during the Second World War, several new defenses were built in the area (including numerous beach posts), and others, including the Għallis Battery were reinforced and augmented with modern anti-aircraft weaponry. A bomb shelter was also excavated in the Salina hamlet.

5.2 Site Inspection and Discoveries

This section summarises any archaeological remains discovered during the course of the desk-based assessment within the Area of Influence.

Figure 7 shows the location of the listed archaeological sites within the Aol.

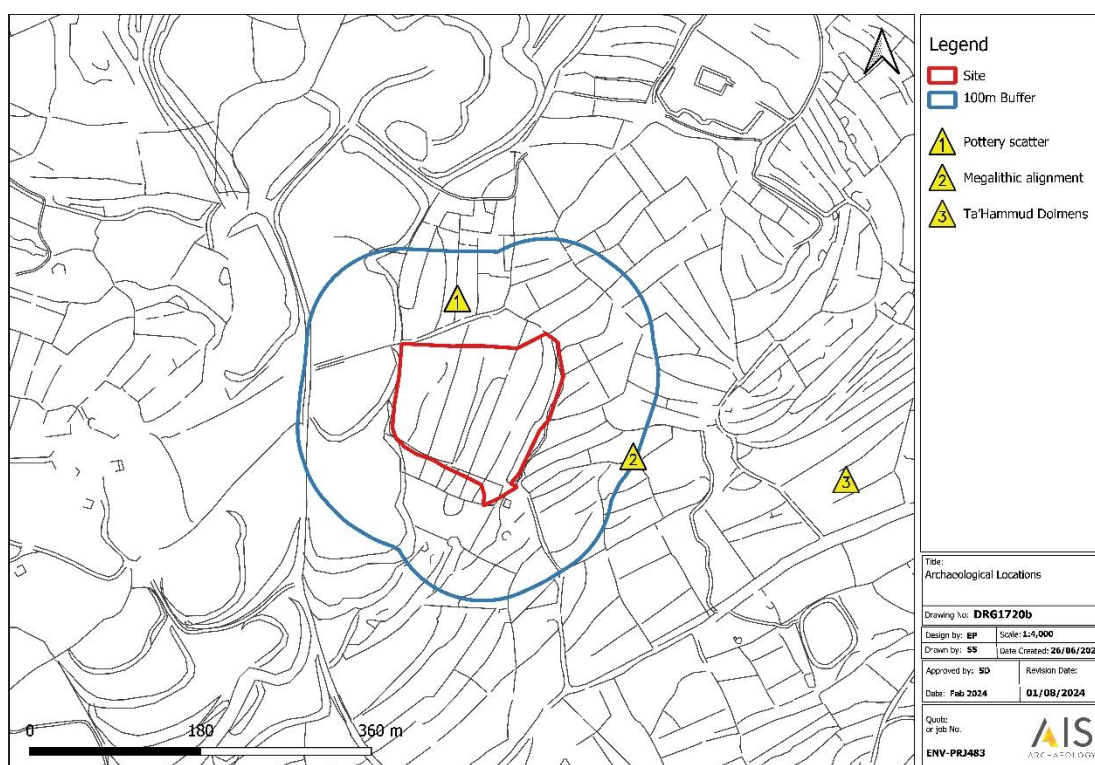


Figure 7: Location of listed archaeological sites within Aol

5.2.1 Scheduled Sites

The 100m buffer zone around the Aol encompasses two scheduled cultural heritage features, located North and N-West to the Wasteserv main Entrance, namely a pottery scatter discovered during archaeological monitor not yet published (SCH site code: NXR2014) and a Megalithic alignment (SCH site code: QLT1935), scheduled as Class B Taz Zebugija megalithic remains, recorded by MARs (MAR 1927-8:3-4; MAR 1935-6:18). These reports describe the surviving remains as a small dolmen still standing, along with another that has been displaced and scattered in the vicinity. Additional megalithic remains were noted as being dispersed across the surrounding fields, often reused within rubble walls and other

later structures. Consequently, although their locations are recorded in the National Inventory of the Cultural Heritage of the Maltese Islands (GIS Interface), their integrity has been significantly compromised by human activities over the centuries. Nevertheless, in order to properly understand their significance and function, these prehistoric remains should not be considered in isolation, but rather as components of a broader system of prehistoric burial sites.

It's therefore worth to mention another important prehistoric site known in the vicinity, the Class A scheduled Ta'Hammud megalithic dolmens, which are located approximately 350m from the eastern boundary of the site, 250m East of the AoI including the 100m buffer zone, down a minor road (Triq ir-Ramla) leading from the coastal road at Qalet Marku (Figure 11). A total of four dolmens, interpreted as burial chambers, are preserved *in situ*. One of these retains its capstone (measuring approximately 2.4 × 1.2 m), which rests on small megalithic boulders about 0.50 m above the bedrock surface (Figure 8). Two further dolmens are collapsed, one with its capstone lying directly on the exposed rock (Figure 9). The fourth dolmen has been reused over time as a bird-shooting blind and retains this adapted form (Figure 10).

Table 1: List of scheduled Sites within AoI buffer zone

Property address	Category	SCH site code and Feature Type	Degree of protection	Reference to figure 7
Tul il-Kosta Naxxar	Archaeology	NXR2014 - Pottery scatter	N/A	1
Taz Zebbugija, Naxxar	Archaeology	QLT1935 - Megalithic ruins	B	2



Figure 8: General view of Ta'Hammud dolmen with capstone still in place, looking West



Figure 9: General view of Ta'Hammud dolmen collapsed, looking West



Figure 10: General view of Ta'Hammud dolmen reused, looking S-SW



Figure 11: Ta'Hammud site view from Triq ir-Ramla, looking West

5.2.2 Surveillance Exercise Results

The Area of Influence was comprehensively surveyed as indicated within the methodology. A detailed description of all the identified cultural heritage features is given in Appendix 1.

The area proposed for development is found within a rural landscape S-East of the Magtab landfill containing a number of presently used agricultural fields containing typical local rural structures and rubble walls. The Aol is delimited on its South and West by a recently built road that leads to the WasteServ treatment facilities (see Figure 12 and Figure 13). This is separated by a fence and a modern rubble wall (Figure 14). Its central and East side is composed by used agricultural fields which include rural vernacular features typical of a Maltese landscape and all related to agricultural activity (see Figure 15, Figure 16, Figure 24 and Figure 32), while its Western part, next to the mentioned road, is an overgrown area with no visible presence of rural features (refer to Figure 17, Figure 18 and Figure 23).

The central and Eastern side of the Aol include drystone/rubble walls from very poor/poor (Figure 33 and Figure 37) to fair/good state on conservation (Figure 44 and Figure 45); a squared corbelled stone hut (Feature A in Figure 47) still in good state of conservation (see Figure 34 to Figure 36), buttressed to a N-S oriented rubble wall; a stone hut (Feature B in Figure 47) without roof, probably recently altered for hunting purposes since a number of shotgun cartridges have been found in the proximity (Figure 38 to Figure 40); drystone enclosures forming a sort of passage (Feature C in Figure 47) in fair state of conservation (Figure 41 to Figure 43) and another drystone hut with no roof in good state of conservation (Feature D in Figure 47), located at the Eastern limit of the Aol (Figure 46).



Figure 12: Internal road to WasteServ Treatment facilities, looking N-East



Figure 13: Internal road to Wasteserv Treatment Facilities, looking North



Figure 14: Fences and wall delimiting the North side of Aol, looking West



Figure 15: agricultural land with rubble wall within Aol, looking N-East



Figure 16: Agricultural land with rubble walls within Aol, looking N-East



Figure 17: Overgrown area within Aol, looking North



Figure 18: Overgrown area within Aol, looking S-East



Figure 19: Aerial shot of overgrown area, Western end of site



Figure 20: Aerial shot of overgrown area in the Western end of site



Figure 21: Aerial shot of S-West End of site



Figure 22: Aerial shot of central part (West side) of site



Figure 23: Aerial shot of Northern end of site



Figure 24: Aerial shot of central area (East side) of site



Figure 25: Aerial shot of Southern end of site



Figure 26: Aerial shot of Southern end of site



Figure 27: Aerial shot of central area (East side) of site with Features B and C visible



Figure 28: Aerial shot of Northern end of site with Feature A visible



Figure 29: Aerial shot of central part (N-East) of site with Features A, B and C visible



Figure 30: Aerial shot of eastern end (N-East) of site



Figure 31: Aerial shot of eastern end (central) of site with features B, C and D visible



Figure 32: Aerial shot of Eastern (S-East) end of site



Figure 33: Rubble wall in very poor conditions within Aol, looking N-East



Figure 34: Feature B, Corbelled stone hut (girna) in the central area of site, looking N-West



Figure 35: Feature B, Corbelled stone hut (Girna) in the central area of site, looking North



Figure 36: Feature B, Intern of corbelled stone hut (Girna)



Figure 37: Rubble wall in poor condition within Aol, looking N-East



Figure 38: Feature A, Stone hut (Girna) in the N-East area, looking South



Figure 39: Feature A, stone hut (Girna) in the N-East area, looking west



Figure 40: Feature A, Intern of stone hut (Girna), looking West



Figure 41: Feature C, drystone enclosure, looking S-East



Figure 42: Feature C, Drystone enclosures forming a passage, looking East



Figure 43: Feature C, drystone enclosures forming a passage, looking west



Figure 44: rubble wall in fair condition in the Eastern area of site, looking south



Figure 45: Rubble wall in fair condition in the Eastern area of site, looking N-East



Figure 46: external wall of a drystone hut (Feature D) at the eastern limit of Aol

5.2.3 Cultural Material

No pottery or cultural material was noted during the landscape assessment at the location and surrounding areas.

5.2.4 Cultural Features

Figure 47 shows the location of the Cultural Features within the AoI identified during the site assessment in Maghtab, Naxxar, while Table 2 lists these features. Furthermore, Figure 48 shows the listed features within the proposed development. As per ERA terms of reference, Data capture sheets for any identified Cultural Heritage/archaeological features are presented in the appendix of this Technical study.

Table 2: List of cultural features within AOI

Reference to Figure 47	Typology	Function	State of Conservation
A	Vernacular – dry stone Hut	Agricultural/Hunting	Fair/Good
B	Vernacular – dry stone Hut	Agricultural	Fair/Good
C	Vernacular – dry stone Enclosures	Agricultural	Fair/Good
D	Vernacular – dry stone Hut	Agricultural	Fair/Good

5.2.5 Cultural Landscape

As outlined in Chapter 4.4, the scheme is located in proximity to an area of High Landscape Sensitivity and Archaeological Features (Map CV3 in Figure 4), which includes the scheduled site of the Ta' Hammud dolmen. Consequently, the assessment of the proposed development must take into account the wider Cultural Landscape surrounding the Area of Influence (AoI).

This paragraph should be read in continuation of the Landscape and Visual Impact technical study. One of the photomontages (Viewpoint 5) presented in the aforementioned study is shown below (Figure 49 and Figure 50). The image has been edited to indicate the location of the Ta' Hammud archaeological site, in order to assess the cumulative impacts of the proposed MRF development in combination with the wider ECOHIVE complex. As such cumulative impacts can only be properly assessed by considering the broader landscape context of the scheme, it was deemed necessary to include the existing landfill and

associated infrastructure within this assessment, also including any other proposed development within the area, namely: the WtE, the TTF and the OPP facilities.



Figure 47: Location and states of Cultural Features identified within Aol



Figure 48: Location of cultural features within proposed development



Figure 49: Viewpoint 5 – Triq il-Kosta, Qalet Marku



Figure 50: Cumulative view showing Ta' Hammud site and photomontage of MRF, TTF, WtE and OPP plant only at viewpoint 5

6.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Following the completion of the desktop research study and cultural heritage assessment, the Impact Assessment was carried out to determine any effects that the project may have on the identified cultural features and the surrounding landscape. This evaluation takes in consideration local and international legislations and other relevant documents related to the protection of cultural heritage. Based on the National Protective Inventory for the Maltese Islands and the Structure Plan Policies on Cultural Heritage, Table 3 summarizes the significance of cultural features.

Table 3: Classification of Significance of Cultural Heritage Feature

Cultural Significance	Class	Grade	Protection
Major National Importance	A	1	To be preserved with 100m buffer zone
Local Importance	B	2	To be preserved with 50m buffer zone
Minor	C	3	It may be covered and preserved
Minor	D	-	It may be preserved or destroyed after proper recording
Uncertain	E	-	Further investigation required

6.1 Construction phase

This study indicates that the landscape has undergone a degree of change, which, based on the available evidence, has been predominantly agricultural in nature. At present, the Area of Influence (AoI) comprises agricultural land parcels that have gradually evolved into terraced fields, now largely overgrown, and containing agricultural features such as rubble or dry-stone walls and dry-stone huts.

The presence of megalithic remains in the vicinity of the proposed scheme, both within and beyond the 100 m AoI buffer zone, indicates that the area has been occupied since prehistoric times.

The only known heritage feature within the Area of Influence (AoI) is the *Taz-Żebbuġija* Megaliths (Feature 2 in Figure 7), located at the eastern limit of the AoI, approximately 100 m from the proposed development. Given this distance, no direct impacts are anticipated to arise from the construction of the proposed development. Similarly the nearby Ta' Hammud Megalithic dolmens located around 350m away from the Scheme are unlikely to be impacted

by the proposed construction activities. However, the surrounding area remains designated as a potential archaeological zone, reflecting its assigned level of protection within a 50m buffer zone. The dry-stone huts within the Aol are at risk of major adverse impact or damage, and they are considered a subject of architectural, cultural, and ethnic value.

As mentioned in Paragraph 5.2.1, the Class A scheduled Ta' Hammud megalithic dolmens are located outside the limits of the Aol buffer zone. Given the distance, no direct impacts are anticipated in terms of physical or structural damage or alteration arising from the proposed construction activities. Nevertheless, the surrounding areas remain designated as potential archaeological zones due to their cultural and heritage significance.

For both scheduled sites, the only potential adverse impact, considered here as minor reversible, is the indirect effect from vibrations caused by possible trimming works. This impact can be readily mitigated through the use of sensitive construction techniques.

With regards to the identified cultural features within the Aol, the dry-stone huts (Features A, B and D in Figure 47), one of which contains a corbelled roof (Feature B), are very likely to suffer an adverse impact or damage, as shown in Figure 48. In the past these structures were very common throughout the island of Malta providing shelter to farmers and herdsmen or their livestock. Nowadays, these features are located mainly in the northern part of the island. Many of them have collapsed over the years due to the elements or simple neglect. Since the ones located within the Aol, like the mentioned feature B, are still well preserved, they should be considered a subject of architectural, cultural and ethnic value, also in due of the legal notice entitled "Rubble walls and rural structures", last amended in 2007, which declared rubble walls and non-habitable rural structures to be protected.

According to these regulations, it is not lawful for any person to construct, make any additions to, or incorporated into, any rubble wall, whether or not bordering on any street, path or footpath, or any rural construction, structure or tenement, or any land, any drum, tank or any other object which is not constructed of rubble wall building material (S.L. 552.01 art. 6) The regulations continue to state that it is not lawful for any person to demolish or to endanger by any means whatsoever, the stability or integrity of any rubble wall or of any rural construction, structure or tenement, or to prevent free percolation of rainwater through the structure of a rubble wall, or to undermine the foundations of such rubble wall or rural construction, structure or tenement. However, the Planning Authority is declared in the law as the competent authority responsible for the administration and implementation of these regulations (S.L. 552.01 art. 6).

Finally, the results of this study show that there will be a direct and adverse impact on the cultural features identified in this study with minimal or no direct impact on the known cultural features present at the limit of the Aol. However, given the importance of the cultural landscape, the potential cumulative impacts on known cultural heritage sites within and adjacent to the Aol must be taken into account.

6.2 Operational phase

The area of Magthab is already severely affected by the visual impact of the waste disposal site located North and West of the AoI and other industrial activities. The proposed development and the simultaneous operation of other waste management facilities proposed in the proximity of the scheme, will cause a further deterioration of the cultural landscape and the context associated with the cultural heritage assets identified in this study, as shown in Figure 50.

As exposed in the Visual impact technical study, the sheer massing of the MRF is particularly evident from the shown perspective. In addition, the adjacent WtE, TTF, and OPP facilities are highly prominent, further exacerbating the visual intrusion and resulting in significant adverse impacts. These industrial elements contrast sharply with the rural and cultural features identified. Although the MRF does not pierce the skyline, given the dominating presence of the landfills in the background, the building, together with the adjacent OPP, TTF, and WtE facilities, contributes to a landscape characterized by industrial activity.

The greyish façade of the MRF emphasizes its dominance, as it lacks architectural or visual elements to soften its appearance. Consequently, the visual impact is deemed majorly adverse at this vista, reflecting the stark contrast with the area's aesthetic. As a result, the cumulative impacts of the MRF are expected to be major adverse.

The residual impacts, rated as major, are mitigated including landscaping around the scheme with the possible incorporation of the identified cultural features and additional elements at the periphery of the proposed development to minimise visual impacts. However, these impacts are primarily attributable to the permanent nature of the building and the use of rural land in the surrounding area. Despite the Applicant's implementation of a monitoring program and mitigation measures, some residual impacts are expected to persist.

7.0 MONITORING AND MITIGATION MEASURES

7.1 Construction phase

As mentioned in the impact assessment section, the identified Cultural or Archaeological features will be directly affected by the development. In light of the mentioned local legislations, it would be advisable to preserve these features (Features B and D in Figure 48) if technically possible, by relocating these features within other areas (Features A and D in Figure 48) in order to avoid any irreversible damage or loss. It is to be noted that, given the nature of the proposed works, scale of the project, and restrictions on site, relocation within the exact site boundary is not possible.

Due to the possibility of underlying cultural remains at undisturbed levels within the overgrowth and the underlying deposits, it is recommended that an archaeological monitor be present during any ground disturbance works, so as to ensure the preservation of any existing cultural features that might be uncovered during the course of the proposed works. It would also be advisable, during the mentioned works, to observe a distance from contact with the listed cultural heritage interests of at least of 50 meters to ensure their safety.

7.2 Operational Phase

As part of the finishing works, it is essential that the MRF building façades and structures are painted in neutral, earth-toned colours to harmonize with the natural aesthetics of the surrounding terrain. Additional landscaping should be implemented along the perimeter of the site, particularly in areas with greater visual exposure, to further integrate the development into the surrounding landscape and reduce its visibility from nearby receptors, including the dolmens.

8.0 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Table 4: Summary of Impacts table – Archaeology & Cultural heritage features

Impact type and source			Impact receptor		Effect & Scale							Probabilit y of impact occurring (Inevitabl e/ Likely/ Unlikely/ Remote/ Uncertain)	Overall impact significanc e	Proposed mitigation measures	Residual impact significanc e	Other requireme nts
Impact type	Specific interventi on leading to impact	Project phase (constructi on/ operation/ decommissi oning)	Receptor type	Sensitivit y & resilience toward impact	Direct/ Indirect/ Cumulativ e	Beneficial / Adverse	Severity	Physical/ geographi c extent of impact	Short-/ Medium-/ Long-term	Temporar y (indicate duration)/ Permanen t	Reversible (indicate ease of reversibili ty)/ Irreversibl e					
Loss of identified Cultural features	Excavation works – Superficial demolitio n/dismant ling of rural structures and dry- stone huts	Constructio n	Identified cultural features (A,B,C,D and rubble walls)	High	Direct	Adverse	High	Limited	Long term	Permanen t	Irreversibl e	Certain	Major	Relocation of significant features if technically possible	Moderate (Dependin g on the outcome of the proposed mitigation strategies)	N/A
Potential damage to cultural and/or archaeolo gical features below the ground	Excavation s works – Below the ground	Constructio n	Unknown potential archaeolo gical features	High	Direct	Adverse	High	Limited	Long term	Permanen t	Irreversibl e	Uncertain	Major	Constant monitorin g and use of sensitive constructi on methods. Maintain a distance of 50m from listed features to ensure safety.	Moderate (dependin g on the outcome of the proposed interventi ons)	N/A

Potential damage to Scheduled sites	Excavations works	Construction	Taz-Zebbugija Megaliths and Ta' Hammud site	High	Indirect	Adverse	High	Limited	Medium	Temporary	Reversible	Unlikely	Negligible	Use of sensitive construction methods.	Negligible	N/A
Deterioration of the cultural landscape value	Presence of MRF Building at ECOHIVE Complex	Operation	Ta' Hammud site, Taz-Zebbugija and surroundings	High	Direct	Adverse	High	Site and immediate surroundings	Long term	Permanent	Irreversible	Certain	Major	Earth-toned colors should be used on the building façade and introduction of elements of landscaping to reduce the impact of the building	Major (slight reduction)	N/A

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LEGISLATIONS:

Authority for Transport in Malta Act XV of 2009 (CAP 499)

Cultural Heritage Act 2002 (CAP 445)

Development Planning Act 1992 (CAP 356)

Occupational Health and Safety Authority Act 2000 (CAP 424)

The Environment Protection Act: 1991: Rubble Walls and Rural Structures (Conservation and Maintenance Regulations) 1997- Legal Notice 160, amended by Legal Notices 169 of 2004 and 426 of 2007. Available at [LEGISLATION MALTA](#)

CONVENTIONS:

European Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, Granada 1985 (Granada Convention) Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 121

European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised), Valletta 1992 (Valletta Convention) Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 143

UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris 1972

UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, Paris 2005

POLICIES:

Local Plans - Central Malta Local Plan (2006), Grand Harbour Local Plan (2002), North West Local Plan (2006), North Harbour Local Plan (2006)

Structural Plan for the Maltese Islands (1990)



APPENDIX 1

Cultural Heritage data capture sheets

Feature A

CULTURAL HERITAGE DATA CAPTURE SHEET: Ref. A Figure 43			
Site Location Maghtab - Naxxar	Category Architecture	Type Rural	Status Fair/Good
Eastings 449746.21	Northings 3977741.42	Feature Dry-Stone Hut	Period Unknown
Description Rubble/Dry-stone hut: Rubble and dry-stone vernacular single floor building, primarily used for storage/temporary shelter and possibly reused recently for hunting purposes. Constructed primarily of irregular natural dry stones, it has been altered, added or repaired with large roughly hewn cut limestones. The structure has a sub-squared shape with no roof and a single entrance facing East. It is approximately 1,15m high x 2,20m wide, with walls approximately 0.35m thick.			
Existing Legal Protection Legal Notice 160 of 1997,; Rubble Walls and Rural Structures (Conservation and Maintenance) Regulations of 1997 in which "rural structure" means any traditional rural construction		Comments: The regulations state that it is not lawful for any person to demolish or to endanger by any means whatsoever, the stability or integrity of any rubble wall or of any rural construction, structure or tenement.	
Site Map - Scale 1:2500 			

Archaeological Characteristics



Conditions Fair/Good. Abandoned	Degree of Protection Legal Notice 160 of 1997 prohibits dismantling of such walls except by permission from the competent authority
State of Security N/A	Proposed Utilization N/A
Basic Bibliography Din l-Art Helwa: Abandoned rural buildings available at https://dinlarthelwa.org/heritage-sites/managed-heritage-sites/	
Compiled by: Samuele Serini Date: 13/10/2023	Checked by: Vincenzo Cherubini Date: 13/10/2023

FEATURE B

CULTURAL HERITAGE DATA CAPTURE SHEET: Ref. B Figure 43			
Site Location Maghtab - Naxxar	Category Architecture	Type Rural	Status Fair/Good
Eastings 449743.19	Northings 3977687.13	Feature Dry-Stone Hut	Period Unknown
Description Rubble/Dry-stone hut: Rubble and dry-stone vernacular single floor building, primarily used for storage/temporary shelter, buttered to a N-S oriented rubble wall. Constructed primarily of irregular natural dry stones. The structure has a sub-squared shape with a corbelled roof and single entrance facing South. It is approximately 1,60m high x 2,20m wide, with walls approximately 0.40m thick.			
Existing Legal Protection Legal Notice 160 of 1997,; Rubble Walls and Rural Structures (Conservation and Maintenance) Regulations of 1997 in which "rural structure" means any traditional rural construction		Comments: The regulations state that it is not lawful for any person to demolish or to endanger by any means whatsoever, the stability or integrity of any rubble wall or of any rural construction, structure or tenement.	
Site Map - Scale 1:2500 			

Archaeological Characteristics

Conditions Fair/Good. Abandoned	Degree of Protection Legal Notice 160 of 1997 prohibits dismantling of such walls except by permission from the competent authority
State of Security N/A	Proposed Utilization N/A
Basic Bibliography Din l-Art Helwa: Abandoned rural buildings available at https://dinlarthelwa.org/heritage-sites/managed-heritage-sites/	
Compiled by: Samuele Serini Date: 13/10/2023	Checked by: Vincenzo Cherubini Date: 13/10/2023



FEATURE C

CULTURAL HERITAGE DATA CAPTURE SHEET - Ref. C Figure 43			
Site Location Maghtab - Naxxar	Category Architecture	Type Rural	Status Fair/Good
Eastings 449743.51	Northings 3977709.51	Feature Rubble and Dry-Stone Walls/Enclosures	Period Unknown
Description Rubble/Dry-stone walls/Enclosures: Rubble and other medium to large roughly hewn cut limestones retaining walls /enclosures forming a sort of passage approximately E to W oriented. The walls are in good/fair state of conservation. Dimensions of the mentioned passage are approximately 18mx3m with walls approx. 0.90m high.			
Existing Legal Protection Legal Notice 160 of 1997		Comments: L.N. 160/97 prohibits the dismantling of such walls except by petition from the competent authority	
Site Map - Scale 1:2500 			

Archaeological Characteristics



Conditions	Degree of Protection
Fair/Good. Abandoned. Some parts partially collapsed	Legal Notice 160 of 1997 prohibits dismantling of such walls except by permission from the competent authority
State of Security	Proposed Utilization
N/A	N/A
Basic Bibliography	
N/A	
Compiled by: Samuele Serini Date: 13/10/2023	Checked by: Vincenzo Cherubini Date: 13/10/2023



FEATURE D

CULTURAL HERITAGE DATA CAPTURE SHEET: Ref. D Figure 43			
Site Location Maghtab - Naxxar	Category Architecture	Type Rural	Status Fair/Good
Eastings 449760.66	Northings 3977659.66	Feature Dry-Stone Hut	Period Unknown
Description Rubble/Dry-stone hut: Rubble and dry-stone vernacular single floor building buttered to a N-S rubble wall and, primarily used for storage/temporary shelter. Constructed primarily of irregular natural dry stones, it has been altered, added or repaired with large roughly hewn cut limestones. The structure has a sub-squared shape with no roof and a single entrance facing North. It is approximately 1,40m high x 2,20m wide, with walls approximately 0,40m thick.			
Existing Legal Protection Legal Notice 160 of 1997,; Rubble Walls and Rural Structures (Conservation and Maintenance) Regulations of 1997 in which "rural structure" means any traditional rural construction		Comments: The regulations state that it is not lawful for any person to demolish or to endanger by any means whatsoever, the stability or integrity of any rubble wall or of any rural construction, structure or tenement.	
Site Map - Scale 1:2500 			

Archaeological Characteristics

Conditions Fair/Good. Abandoned	Degree of Protection Legal Notice 160 of 1997 prohibits dismantling of such walls except by permission from the competent authority
State of Security N/A	Proposed Utilization N/A
Basic Bibliography Din l-Art Helwa: Abandoned rural buildings available at https://dinlarthelwa.org/heritage-sites/managed-heritage-sites/	
Compiled by: Samuele Serini Date: 13/10/2023	Checked by: Vincenzo Cherubini Date: 13/10/2023



RUBBLE WALLS

CULTURAL HERITAGE DATA CAPTURE SHEET			
Site Location Maghtab - Naxxar	Category Architecture	Type Rural	Status Poor to Fair/Good
Eastings N/A	Northings N/A	Feature Rubble and Dry-Stone Walls	Period Unknown
Description Rubble/Dry-stone walls and other retaining walls: Rubble and other various retaining walls were/are field and/or property boundary walls, constructed primarily of irregular natural dry stones. The Area of Interest contained rubble walls built with traditionally rubble stones. The walls in good/fair state of conservation have been clearly altered, added to or repaired with the introduction of larger roughly hewn cut limestones.			
Existing Legal Protection Legal Notice 160 of 1997		Comments: L.N. 160/97 prohibits the dismantling of such walls except by petition from the competent authority	
Site Map - Scale 1:2500 			