

Environmental Impact Assessment

Screening according to Schedule III of S.L. 549.46

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| ERA Reference no.: | EA/00020/25 |
| PA Reference no.: | PA/06080/24 |
| Project Title: | Extension of established pig farm including construction of independent modern fattening/breeding facility as has been approved in outline permit PA3395/20. Application includes installation of pv panels on new units and the addition of a substation. Landscaping to be added around new additions. |
| Location: | Site at San Blas Farm, Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug |
| Screening date: | August 2025 |

I. BACKGROUND

1. Outline of Proposal

PA/6080/24 is a full development permission proposal for the extension of an established pig farm including construction of independent modern fattening/breeding facility. Proposal has a site area of approximately 10,500m² and forms part of a larger site of approximately 23,000m². The entire property is subdivided into four major components, namely:

- the existing San Blas Farm, which is the production facility,
- the Farm to Fork butcher shop which is the front-of-house of a post-slaughter meat processing facility,
- a parcel of land to the west of the production facility, for which a separate application PA 5129/25 regarding the use of this tract has been submitted, and
- the proposed extension (Figure 1) is made up of two tracts, namely A and B. Tract A is allocated for the production unit and feed storage, whereas tract B is proposed to be used for the management of the whole production operations.

The production unit will be made up of 11 sheds and will be housing 265 mature pigs, including 5 boars, and 80 gilts.

A total of 2,200m³ of excavation is required for the underground reservoirs and the foundations of the buildings.

The proposal also includes the planting of 6 Judas trees, 10 Bay Laurel, 1 Olive tree, 10 Aleppo Pines, 8 Pomegranate trees, 8 Sandarac Gum Trees; and replanting of 9 Olive trees on site.

An underground reservoir of 1,000m³ will be constructed on site for the harvest of runoff from roof. This reservoir will be topped up from a metered borehole used under the Groundwater Abstraction (Metering) Regulations (S.L.549.166). It will provide circa 18,500L of daily drinking water for the pigs, and circa 1,500L daily for washing (total: 20m³). It is also intended to supply irrigation water for the proposed trees.

An underground slurry pit of approximately 300m³ shall be constructed under the pens through which the slurry will be transferred from the pen floors to the slurry pit through channels by gravity. The channels would be of the rounded U-type with a smooth and impervious finish. The slatted flooring above the channels would be composed of steel grills, designed for the efficient floor-to-channel

passage of faeces and urine, and for facilitating channel flushing when necessary. The slurry will then be transported to a WasteServ facility in Marsascala. Within the extended farm, the slurry tanker would be driven along an internal road between the existing and proposed facilities. Presently, three 17m³ slurry tanker loads per week are being disposed. The disposal slurry tanker trips is expected to increase to eight per week.

The current farm operations entails sending 80 pigs weekly to the Marsa public abattoir, namely 3 outbound and 3 inbound heavy vehicle trips (maximum capacity per vehicle: 30 live pigs). The extension is expected to contribute to an increase of another 40 pigs per week. This would therefore require an additional two outbound and inbound heavy vehicle trips per week. Carcasses are also transported to the processing facility adjacent to the existing farm, thus also requiring refrigerated heavy vehicles (each carrying 100 carcasses).



Figure 1: Proposed site (Source: Extract from PDS)

2. Site context

The site is located in an area known as Hal-Qdieri, west of Haż-Żebbuġ and lies adjacent to a country lane that connects it to Triq il-Buskett. This road links Haż-Żebbuġ with the Buskett area, passing by the northern boundary of the Il-Palazz ta' Verdala grounds. The surrounding land uses consist of fields, farm buildings, greenhouses, livestock farms, and a small number country villas.

Most of the site is located within the 300m buffer zone of the Groundwater safeguard area, as well as the watercourse of Wied San Anton. The site is also circa 250m away from the Ta' San Blas (limiti Tar-Rabat and Haż-Żebbuġ) - Tree Protection Area (Published under G.N. 473 of 2011) (refer to Figure 2).



Figure 2: Illustrating site marked (shaded in blue), tree protection area (shaded in brown) and groundwater safeguard buffer zones (Source: PA Geoserver)

3. Case history

The site was previously subject to the following planning applications:

- PA/04428/22: Extension of approved offices to meat market and small alterations to existing butcher shop. Farm Meat Market, Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug. Approved.
- PA/03647/20: Office extension to approved meat processing facility. Existing pv panels moved up to new roof level. San Blas Farm, Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug. Approved.
- PA/03395/20: Extension of established pig farm including construction of independent modern fattening/breeding facility. Application includes installation of pv panels on new units and the addition of a substation. Landscaping to be added around new additions. San Blas Farm, Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug. Approved.
- PA/00870/17: Proposed solar PV panels on metal supports - engineering development. San Blas Farm, Hal- Qdieri, Zebbug, Malta. Approved.
- PA/07003/16: Proposed new layout to approved meat processing plant - PA 2585/15 in the adjoining empty part of farm, including slight increase in size, retaining same approved butcher shop. San Blas Farm, Hal- Qdieri, Zebbug, Malta. Approved.
- PA/02585/15: To convert part of the existing farm into meat processing plant and butcher shop. San Blas Farm, Hal- Qdieri, Zebbug, Malta. Approved.
- PA/00294/14: Construction of substation. San Blas Farm, Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug, Malta. Approved.
- PA/01131/12: To construct a residence for a full-time breeder. An outline development permission has already been issued under PA 146/07. Site at, Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug, Malta. Approved.
- PA/00146/07: Outline application to construct a residence for a full-time breeder. Site at, Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug (Malta). Approved.
- PA/06969/07: To sanction part of an existing pig farm, extension and upgrading to conform with EU standards. San Blas Farm, Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug (Malta). Approved.

The site was previously subject to the following DNOs:

- DN/00672/19: maintenance / building up of rubble wall and replacement of ceiling to existing room. Site at (Field), Hal-Qdieri, Zebbug. Accepted.
- DN/00706/15: Proposed solar pv panels. San Blas Farm, Hal- Qdieri, Zebbug, Malta. Accepted.

4. Screening Criteria

4.1 EIA Screening

(citations refer to S.L. 549.46, except where otherwise specified):

The proposed development falls within the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (S.L. 549.46), notably in terms of Schedule I, Category II, Section 8.1.2.10 Developments with a site area of 8,000m² or more. Therefore, the proposal was screened in terms of the EIA Regulations.

II. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

5. Assessment of Impacts and Ancillary Considerations

(Screening in terms of Schedule III of the EIA Regulations, S.L. 549.46)

Land and resource use

- 5.1 The proposal entails the removal of soil and excavation of bedrock for trenches and underground reservoirs. The volume of excavated rock material is minimal and will be transported off-site for disposal, thus no significant environmental impact is envisaged. In this context, the applicant is requested to take into consideration the provisions of Chapter 236 – *Fertile Soil (Preservation) Act* and consult with the Agriculture Department for further instructions on soil management.

Waste

- 5.2 Considering the nature and size of the proposal, the amount of waste likely to be generated during excavation and construction, is not considered significant in relative terms. Inert waste generated during excavation is to be disposed in facilities that are licensed to accept or recycle this waste, duly permitted by ERA and in accordance with the Waste Management Regulations (S.L. 549.63) and Waste Management (Activity Registration) Regulations (S.L. 549.45).
- 5.3 During operation, the slurry will be temporary stored in an underground slurry pit. The slurry will be then transported to a Wasteserv facility in Marsascala in 17m³ slurry tanker amounting to 3 tankers per week. A separate cesspit collects the waste from the existing toilet facilities used by personnel.

Ecology and hydrogeology

- 5.4 The proposal is located circa 250m away from the Ta' San Blas (limiti Tar-Rabat and Ħaż-Żebbuġ) - Tree Protection Area, however given the distance from the proposed site, no significant impacts are envisaged.
- 5.5 The farm is located within the buffer zones of the groundwater safeguard zone and also circa 170m away from Wied San Anton. This is a key valley in central Malta, forming part of the Wied l-Isqof sub-catchment, an important northern tributary of the Wied il-Kbir network. Originating in the Rabat-Dingli Plateau near Il-Palazz ta' Verdala, the valley flows eastward, joining Wied il-Kbir near Ħaż-Żebbuġ and ultimately draining into the Marsa area. Wied San Anton acts as an upper feeder valley, contributing to the larger natural drainage system of the island. The region is also notable for its complex cultivation and permanent, spring-fed watercourses.
- 5.6 The PDS states that proper design, construction, and maintenance of waste storage and drainage systems are essential to protect valley and groundwater resources. Therefore, animal waste management systems must fully comply with the Waste Management (Activity Registration) Regulations [SL 549.45], the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations [SL 549.66] and any necessary environmental permits.

- 5.7 In addition to the collection of surface runoff from the buildings' roofs, all discharges should be adequately contained by the appropriate waste management infrastructure.
- 5.8 Therefore, the appropriate mitigation measures and conditions as per Annex II are to be adhered to in order to limit the risks of contamination into this tributary. In this regard, no significant impacts are envisaged in terms of contamination to water bodies.

Air Quality & Noise, Vibration, Light and Visual Impacts

- 5.9 No significant impacts are envisaged during the construction phase given the scale and nature of the development and as long as construction works are to be in line with the Environmental Management Construction Site Regulations (S.L. 552.09).
- 5.10 As regards operations, no significant impacts are envisaged in terms of air quality and noise given the scale and nature of the proposal.

Visual Impact and Landscape Character

- 5.11 As shown by the plans (Doc P/A/06080/241n) and as stated in the PDS, although the proposed development will add to the massing of the entire complex, it would not be higher than the existing levels. In this regard, as well as taking into consideration the location of the site, no significant visual and landscape impacts on the surroundings are envisaged.

III. ERA CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

The above screening concludes that the impacts from the development are unlikely to be significant to the point of warranting an EIA, in accordance with Regulation 15 of the EIA Regulations (S.L. 549.46).

ERA does not object to the proposal from an environmental point of view. Conditions annexed with this document (refer to Annex II), are to be included as part of the development permission.

Screening Disclaimer

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