

Project Description Statement

PA/06080/24

Extension of Pig Farm
Fhal Qdieri – l/o Ffaz-Żebbuġ

07 July 2025

Project Description Statement
Extension of Pig Farm | Hal Qdieri l/o Haż-Żebbuġ

Assignment	Project Description Statement (PDS)		
Project	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.		
PA reference	PA/06080/24	Location	Hal Qdieri, Haż-Żebbuġ
Applicant	William Farrugia San Blas Farm Limited	Architect of record	Perit Emmanuel k.a. Noel Debattista

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Abbreviation	Meaning
AEI	area of ecological importance
AHLS	area of high landscape sensitivity
AHLV	area of high landscape value
BCA	Building & Construction Authority
CLC	Corine Land Cover
CoE	Council of Europe
DPA	Development Planning Act (Cap 552)
EDPA	Environment and Development Planning Act (Cap 504)
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIA	environmental impact assessment
ELC	European Landscape Convention
EPA	Environment Protection Act (Cap 549)
GoM	Government of Malta
MEPA	Malta Environment and Planning Authority (2002 to 2016)
NICPMI	National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands
NWLP	North West Local Plan
ODZ	outside development zone
OSA	Office of the State Advocate
PA	Planning Authority
PDS	project description statement
RPDG	Rural Policy and Design Guidance
SCH	Superintendence of Cultural Heritage
Spatial Strategy	Spatial Strategy for Environment and Development
SPED	Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development
SSI	site of scientific importance
VP	viewpoint

1.1 Development application

1.1.1 This *Project Description Statement* (PDS) outlines the proposed extension to a pig farm in the Ħal-Qdieri area, Vo Ħaż-Żebbuġ, as well as the site designated for the development (hereinafter, Site) and its context. The following is a description of the works presented in the development application submitted to the Planning Authority:

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. (PA, 2024)

1.1.2 The application was submitted by William Farrugia (Applicant) on behalf of San Blas Farm Limited. The architect of record, who is responsible for the design and realisation of the project under the *Periti Act* (Cap 622) (OSA, 2022a) is Perit Emmanuel k.a. Noel Debattista.

1.2 Location

1.2.1 The Site covers circa 10,500m² and is situated in the area known as Ħal-Qdieri, west of the town of Ħaż-Żebbuġ. It is adjacent to a country lane that connects it to Triq il-Buskett. This road links Ħaż-Żebbuġ with the Buskett area, passing by the northern boundary of the Il-Palazz ta' Verdala grounds (refer to Figure 1 below).

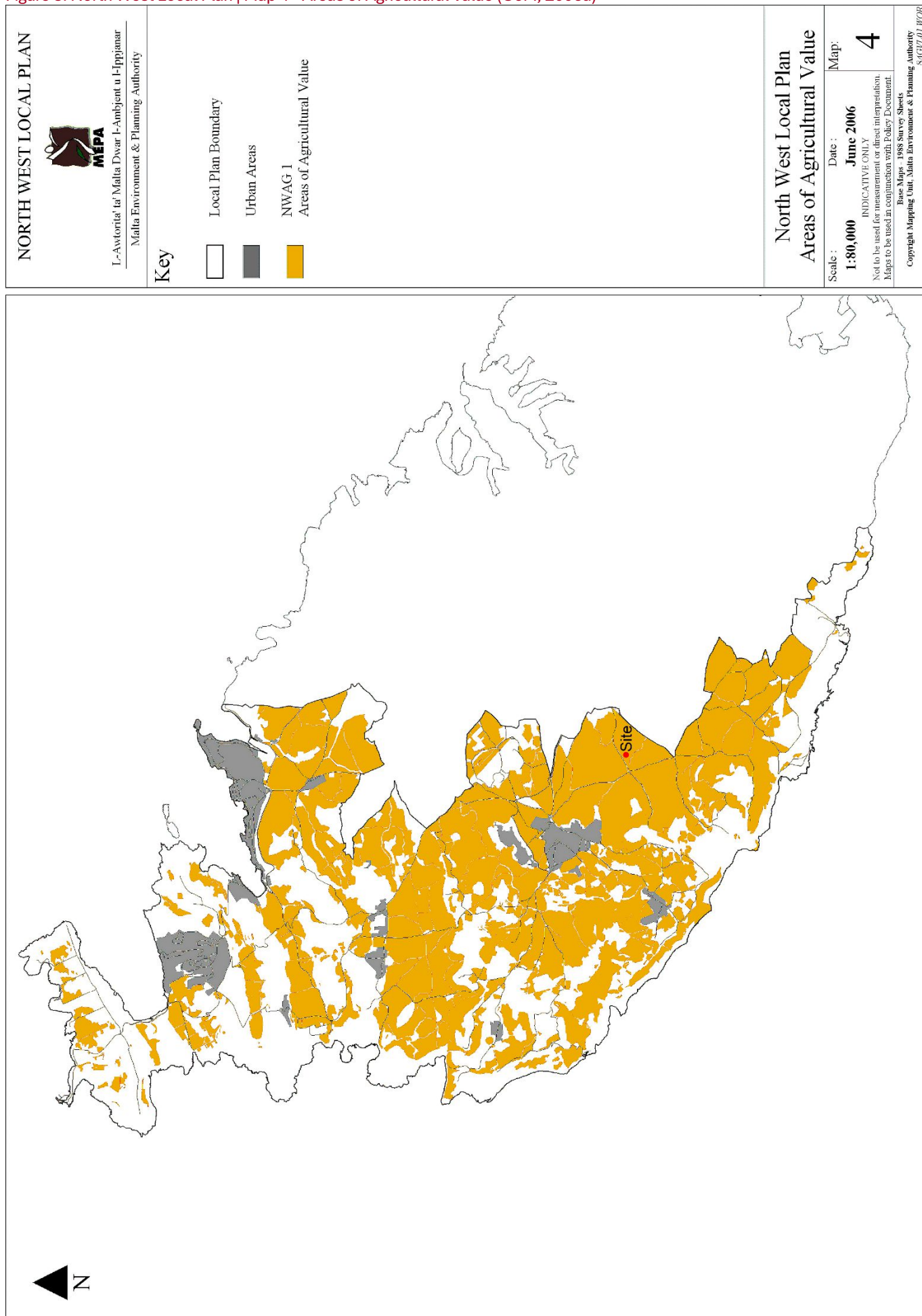
1.2.2 The Ħal-Qdieri area forms part of a relatively extensive rural zone which separates the towns of Ħaż-Żebbuġ, to the east (pop: 13,785), Is-Sigġiewi to the southeast (pop: 9,318), and Ir-Rabat to the northwest (pop: 11,936) (NSO, 2023, p. 20; Table 1.1). The protected properties/sites of Il-Palazz ta' Verdala and Il-Ġonna tal-Buskett are situated to the southwest.

1.2.3 The map in Figure 2 (on page 11) focuses on the Site and its surroundings (which include the Ħal-Qdieri, Tar-Remel, Ta' San Blas, and Ta' Sant' Andrija zones). It depicts an area which is mostly occupied by fields, farm buildings, greenhouses, livestock farms such as the Applicant's San Blas Farm, and a small number country villas identifiable by swimming pools in their gardens.

Figure 1: Location of the site allocated for the proposed extension (Site)



Figure 3: North West Local Plan | Map 4 - Areas of Agricultural Value (GoM, 2006a)



1.2.4 Figure 2 also refers to a *therapeutic community* complex operated by Caritas Malta which is situated circa 400m to the northeast of the Site (Caritas, 2025), and a complex of building contractors' yards located to the northwest of this complex. More details about the Site and its surrounds are discussed in section 3 of this PDS.

1.2.5 San Blas Farm (including the Site) is officially located in the Ғaḏ-Żebbuḡ locality (MaltaPost, 2025). However, the Ғal-Qdieri zone falls within the *North West Local Plan* (NWLP) area, as indicated in the NWLP *Areas of Agricultural Value* map in Figure 3 (on page 13) (GoM, 2006a).

1.3 Project Description Statement

1.3.1 This PDS has been prepared with reference to Regulation 12 of the *Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations* [SL 549.46], and, in addition to this introductory section, is made up of the sections which cover the following aspects:

- Project Description
- The Site and its Surrounds
- Comments

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This section refers to Perit Debattista's drawings which are reproduced in Figure 5 to Figure 9 (on pages 17 to 21). These drawings are preceded by site plan (see Figure 4, on page 16), which identifies the land uses in the immediate vicinity of the Site and within the Applicant's property.

2.1.2 In Figure 4 the Applicant's property appears to be 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. The Applicant has submitted a separate development application regarding the future use of this tract, and
- the Site, which in Figure 4 is shown to be made up of two tracts, namely A and B. The first, i.e., tract A, is allocated for the production unit and feed storage, while tract B would be used for the management of the whole production operations.

2.1.3 The spatial organisation of the existing and proposed production, storage, processing, and retail operations are illustrated in the project drawing in Figure 5 (on page 17).

2.2 The proposed extension

2.2.1 Production unit and feed storage in Site A

!A Spatial organisation

2.2.1.1 As is noted earlier, the Site covers an area of circa 10,500m². As is shown in the drawings in Figure 5 to Figure 8 parts of the Site shall not be built up, and will be allocated for the planting of 56 trees. Circa half of tract B would also be unbuilt.

2.2.1.2 As is shown in the Figure 5 and Figure 7 (on page 19) drawings the production unit is made up of 11 sheds as follows.

- **Shed 01** is used for feed storage. As is shown in the Figure 7-drawing, sheds 02 to 05 and 07 to 10 also contain feed storage facilities for day-to-day needs.
- **Sheds 02 to 05** are to be allocated for pregnant sows which would occupy 13 pens. Each pen would house 12 sows for a total of 156 head. Sheds 03 to 05 also include pens for boars; three head in all.
- A shed which would presumably be **Shed 06** contains 7 quarantine pens.
- **Sheds 07 to 10** contain pens for 131 head. Of these 104 would be used at any one time to allow for the cleaning and repainting of the unused ones.
- **Shed 11** is allocated for 80 gilts and two boars.

In all, the proposed extension provides the space to house 265 mature pigs, including the five boars, and 80 gilts.

2.2.1.3 The feed storage facilities shown in the drawings provide space for 40 tonnes of feed which is expected to last for a week. The feed would be delivered in bulk through two 20tonne deliveries.

!B Water use

2.2.1.4 The project drawings provide for the provision of an underground 1,000m³ reservoir. This is expected to be filled with runoff harvested from the roof. This reservoir will be topped up with collected from a metered borehole used under the *Groundwater Abstraction (Metering) Regulations* (OSA, 2010). It will provide drinking water for the pigs, circa 18,500L per day, and for washing, circa 1,500L per day (total: 20m³). It is also intended to supply irrigation water for the proposed trees (see, among others, the drawing in Figure 6 on page 18).

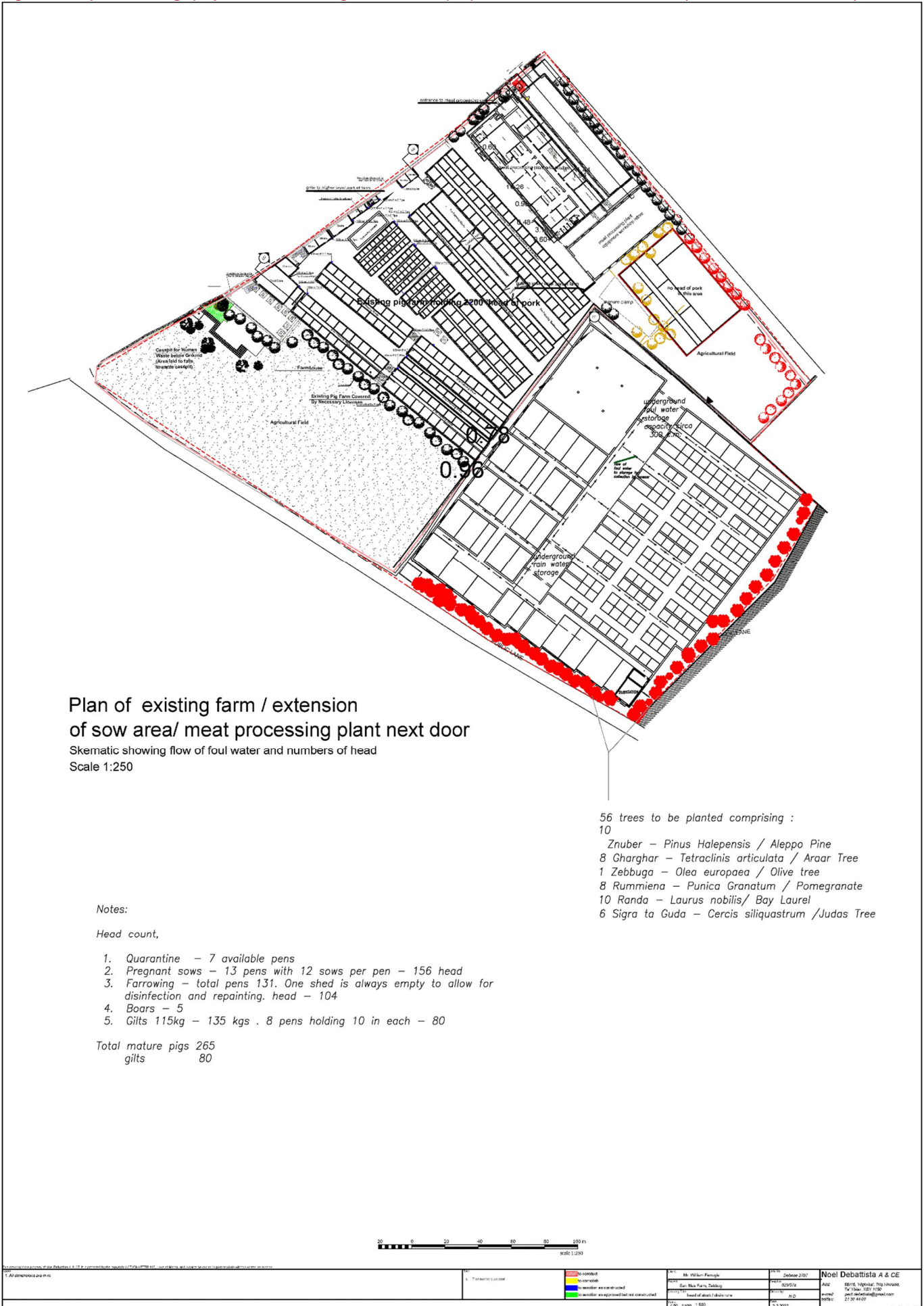
!C Temporary storage and disposal of slurry

2.2.1.5 The three layout drawings of the production unit (in Figure 5 to Figure 7) show directional lines along the aisles between the pens, leading to a 300m³ underground slurry pit, i.e., the *underground foul water storage* in the Figure 7 (on page 19) drawing. The main features of this slurry pit are provided in the Figure 9 drawing (on page 21) – refer to *Details of Manure cesspit*.

Figure 4: The designated Site and its immediate surrounds (Google Inc, 2023a)



Figure 5: Project Drawings | layout of the existing farm and the proposed extension in Site A & B (Debattista, 2020-2022)



Plan of existing farm / extension of sow area/ meat processing plant next door
 Schematic showing flow of foul water and numbers of head
 Scale 1:250

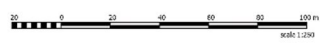
- 56 trees to be planted comprising :
- 10 Zhuber – Pinus Halepensis / Aleppo Pine
 - 8 Gharghar – Tetraclinis articulata / Araar Tree
 - 1 Zebbuga – Olea europaea / Olive tree
 - 8 Rummiena – Punica Granatum / Pomegranate
 - 10 Randa – Laurus nobilis/ Bay Laurel
 - 6 Sibra ta Guda – Cercis siliquastrum /Judas Tree

Notes:

Head count,

1. Quarantine – 7 available pens
2. Pregnant sows – 13 pens with 12 sows per pen – 156 head
3. Farrowing – total pens 131. One shed is always empty to allow for disinfection and repainting. head – 104
4. Boars – 5
5. Gilts 115kg – 135 kgs . 8 pens holding 10 in each – 80

Total mature pigs 265
 gilts 80



1. All dimensions are in m.	2. Technical notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ no construct ■ to be constructed ■ to be constructed but not constructed 	M. 101010 - Farming Date: 2022 Head of stock / stock units 1:50, 1:100, 1:500	October 2022 202510 202510 202510	Noel Debattista A & CE 55/15, 14/04/04, 7/10/10/04 74/104, 103/110 jnoel@debattista.com 27/30/04/22
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Figure 7: Project Drawings | layout of and sections thru the production and feed storage building (Debattista, 2020-2022)

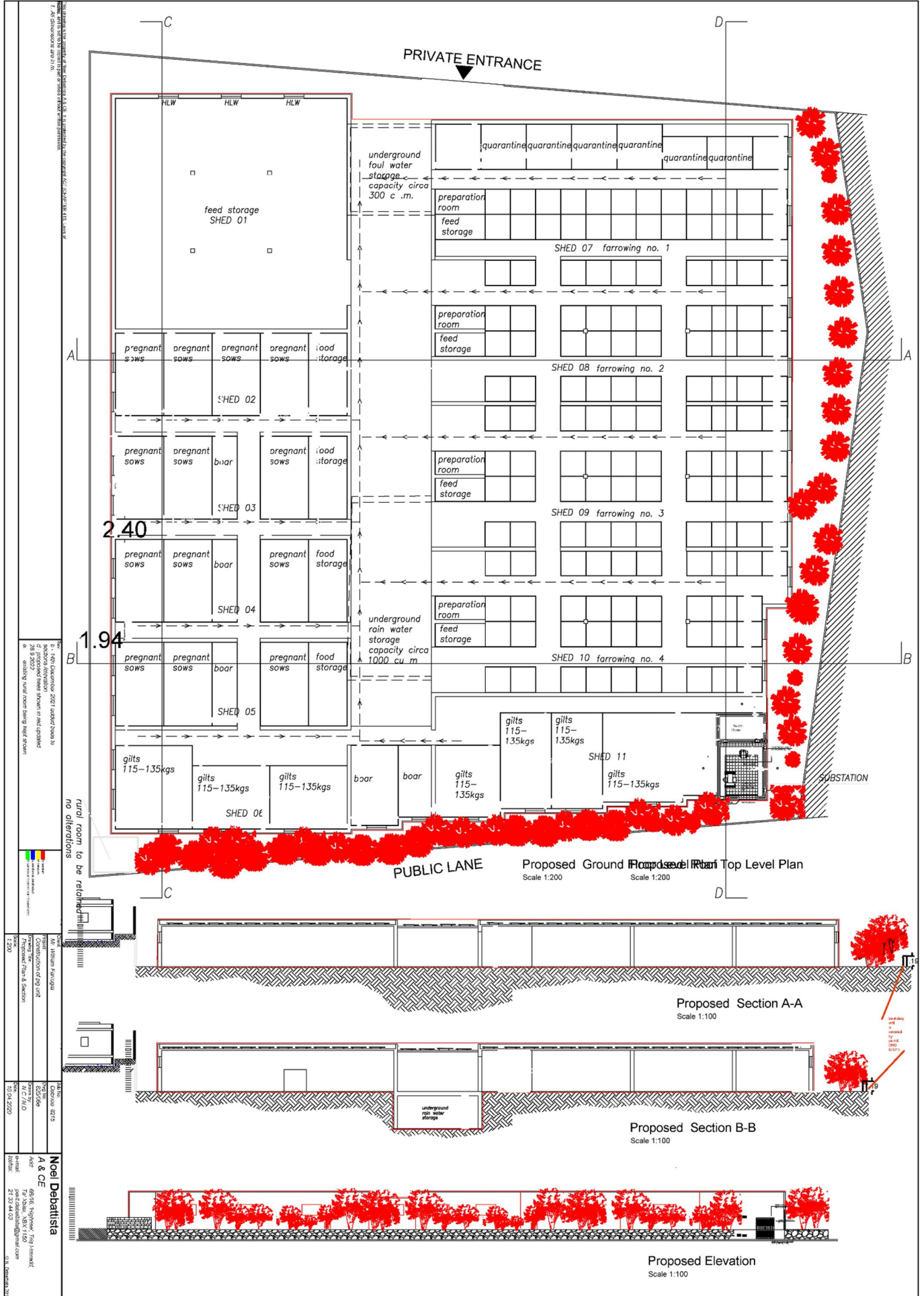


Figure 8: Project Drawings | roof layout of and sections thru the production and feed storage building (Debattista, 2020-2022)

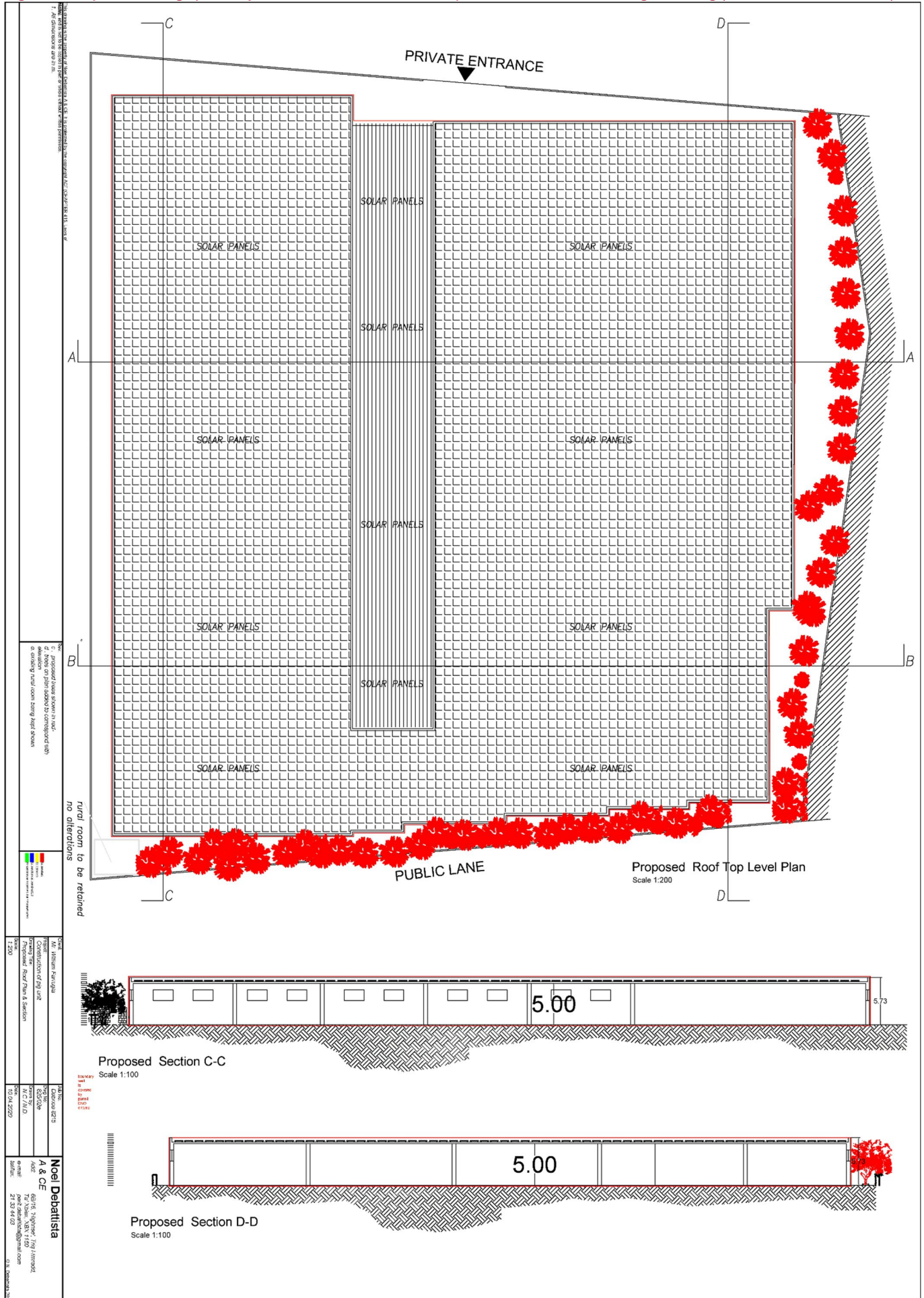
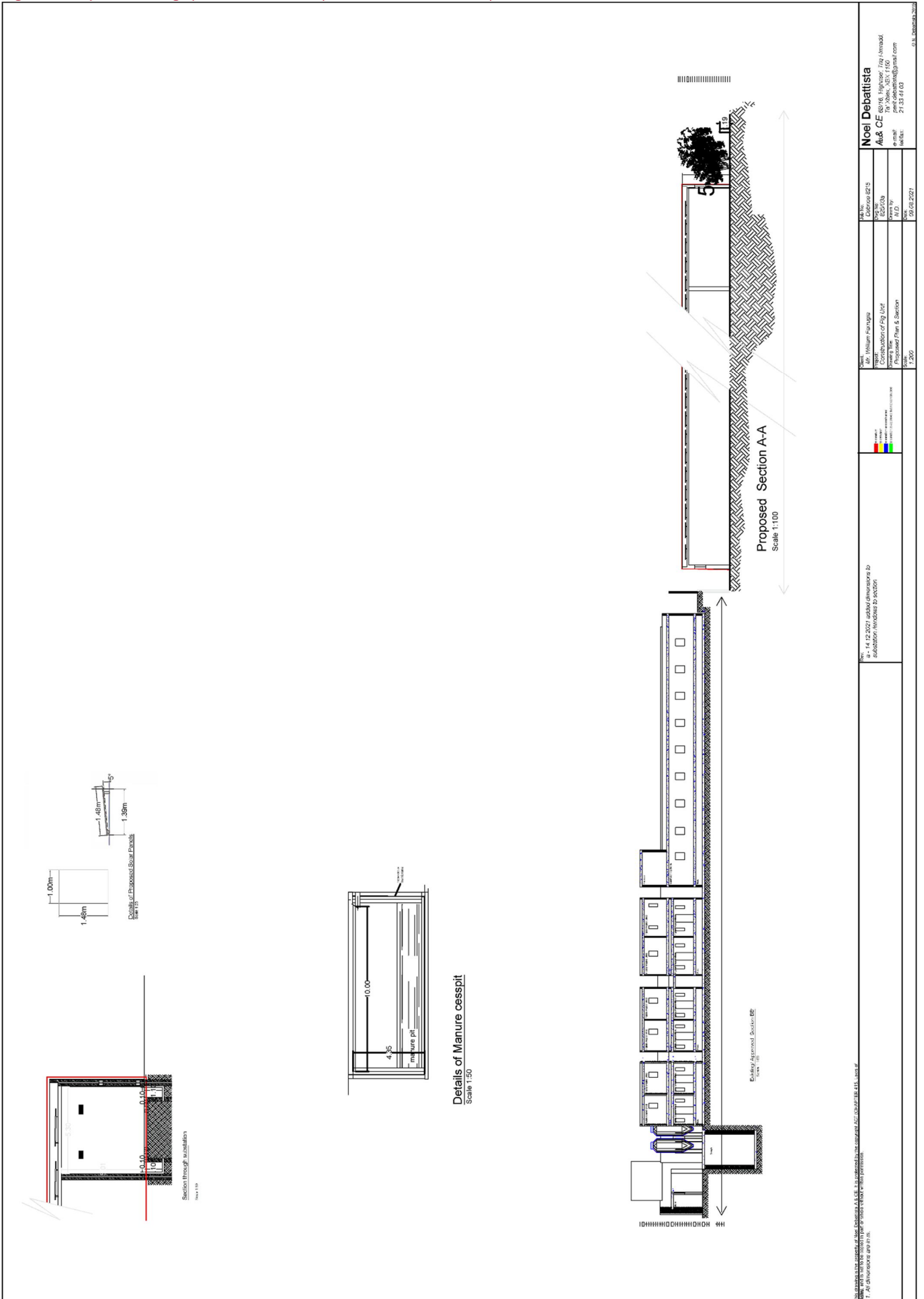


Figure 9: Project Drawings | various sections (Debattista, 2020-2022)



<p>Scale: 1:200</p> <p>Scale: 1:100</p>		<p>Client: Noel Debattista</p> <p>Architect: Noel Debattista</p> <p>Project Name: Contribution of Pig Unit</p> <p>Project No: 2020/2021</p> <p>Date: 20.08.2021</p> <p>Scale: 1:200</p>
<p>Scale: 1:200</p> <p>Scale: 1:100</p>		<p>Client: Noel Debattista</p> <p>Architect: Noel Debattista</p> <p>Project Name: Contribution of Pig Unit</p> <p>Project No: 2020/2021</p> <p>Date: 20.08.2021</p> <p>Scale: 1:200</p>
<p>Scale: 1:200</p> <p>Scale: 1:100</p>		<p>Client: Noel Debattista</p> <p>Architect: Noel Debattista</p> <p>Project Name: Contribution of Pig Unit</p> <p>Project No: 2020/2021</p> <p>Date: 20.08.2021</p> <p>Scale: 1:200</p>

2.2.1.6 The design and construction of the cesspit would need to conform to the relevant provisions in the *Waste Management (Activity Registration) Regulations* [SL 549.45] (OSA, 2007) and the *Nitrates Action Programme Regulations* [SL 549.66] (OSA, 2011).

2.2.1.7 The above-mentioned directional lines in the drawing depict the routes of the gravity-fed slurry transfer system which connects the pen floors to the slurry pit. 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.

2.2.1.8 This consultant is informed that current waste-disposal practice involves the transport of the slurry to a WasteServ facility in Marsaskala, where the slurry would be deposited. Presently, three 17m³ slurry tanker loads per week are sent [to Marsaskala] for disposal purposes. Within the extended farm, the slurry tanker would be driven along an internal road between the existing and proposed facilities.

2.2.1.9 Once the proposed extension is operational, the number of *farm to WasteServ disposal facility* slurry tanker trips per week is expected to increase to eight.

!D Electricity consumption and production

2.2.1.10 The daily electricity consumption is expected to be in the region of 52 units per day (18,980 kWh/year) (Mizzi, 2024). All the electricity needs will involve the use electricity supplied by Enemalta Corporation. The extension proposal also provides for a transmission substation.

2.2.1.11 The Applicant plans to export to the national grid, under the *Electricity Regulations* [SL 545.34] (OSA, 2021), all the electricity generated from photovoltaic panels, which are proposed in Perit Debattista's drawing in Figure 8 (on page 20).¹ In all, the Applicant expects the combined (i.e., existing + proposed) power output of the panels to be in the region of one megawatt.

!E Heavy-vehicle trips generated by the final product

2.2.1.12 Currently, San Blas Farms sends 80 pigs to the Albert Town public abattoir. This would involve 3 outbound + 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.

2.2.1.13 The Applicant has all the carcasses transported to the processing facility adjacent to the existing farm (see the Debattista drawing in Figure 5). The means of transport would be refrigerated heavy vehicles each of which can carry 100 carcasses.

2.2.2 Administrative offices in Site B

2.2.2.1 The administrative facility in Site B is illustrated in the Debattista drawing in Figure 6 (on page 18). This facility is made up of two offices, one for the veterinary surgeon and the other for the manager, together with ancillary and storage facilities to cover the needs of the vet. The roof of this structure will also support photovoltaic panels. The personnel in this facility will use the existing toilet facilities, which are connected to an existing separate cesspit as the Water Services Corporation sewerage network does not pass through Triq il-Buskett. The electricity consumption is expected to be 78.56 units per day (28,674.4 kWh/year) (Mizzi, 2024). As noted above, the development application proposes a transmission substation in the Site.

2.2.3 Landscaping

2.2.3.1 The Debattista drawings in Figure 5 to Figure 8 propose the planting of 56 trees in the space between the production unit sheds and the boundary walls to the southwest and southeast of the Site. The following is the schedule of trees proposed in the drawings:

Table 1: Schedule of proposed tree species (Debattista, 2020-2022)

Scientific name	English language name	Maltese language name	Quantity
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	Judas Tree	Is-Siġra ta' Ġuda	6
<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	Bay Laurel	Is-Siġra tar-Rand	10
<i>Olea europaea</i>	Olive Tree	Is-Siġra taż-Żebbuġ	1
<i>Pinus halepensis</i>	Aleppo Pine	Is-Siġra taż-Żnuber	10

¹ The drawing in the subsequent Figure 9 shows that the panels are to be laid at 5° to the horizontal.

Table 1: Schedule of proposed tree species (Debattista, 2020-2022)

Scientific name	English language name	Maltese language name	Quantity
<i>Punica granatum</i>	Pomegranate Tree	Is-Siġra tar-Rummien	8
<i>Tetraclinis articulata</i>	Sandarac Gum Tree	Is-Siġra tal-Għargħar	8

2.2.2 The drawings provided recommend planting trees in Site B, near the administrative office. However, the proposed species are not specified. It is advisable that the tree species to be planted in this area match those listed in the schedule.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section discusses the Site and its current use, as well as the land uses and environmental aspects which characterise the Ħal-Qdieri area and other zones in the surrounds. It also refers to laws, regulations, and policies related to the area, which provide insights regarding the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development, which are outlined in section 4.

3.2 The Site

3.2.1 As is noted earlier in this PDS, the Site, as highlighted in Figure 1 (on page 11), encompasses an area of circa 10,500m². It consists of an abandoned field ('A' in Figure 4 on page 16) and an area ('B' in Figure 4) currently used for vehicle parking and open-air storage of equipment. As noted in the previous section, zone 'A' is allocated for the production shed and part of zone 'B' is assigned for the administrative building and ancillary needs concerning the physical health and well-being of the herd.

3.2.2 The abandoned field covers an area of 8,760m² and, this consultant has been informed that it was used for the cultivation of fodder crops until a few years ago.

3.3 Ħal-Qdieri and surrounds

3.3.1 Land use

3A General description

3.3.1.1 Figure 2 (on page 12) presents an excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server (PA, 2025a), illustrating the Ħal-Qdieri area and adjacent zones, including Ta' San Blas, Ta' Sant' Andrija, Tar-Remel, and Tal-Laring. The map indicates that this territory is predominantly comprised of fields interspersed with structures of different types and functions. The aerial image in Figure 10 (on page 26) confirms that the principal land uses are horticulture - both in open fields and within greenhouses - and livestock farming. Notably, livestock farms are identifiable by the extensive photovoltaic panel installations covering significant portions, and in some cases the entirety, of their roofs. In recent years, this characteristic has become a defining feature of the rural landscape in areas where such farms are situated.

3.3.1.2 Other land uses in the area include the following:

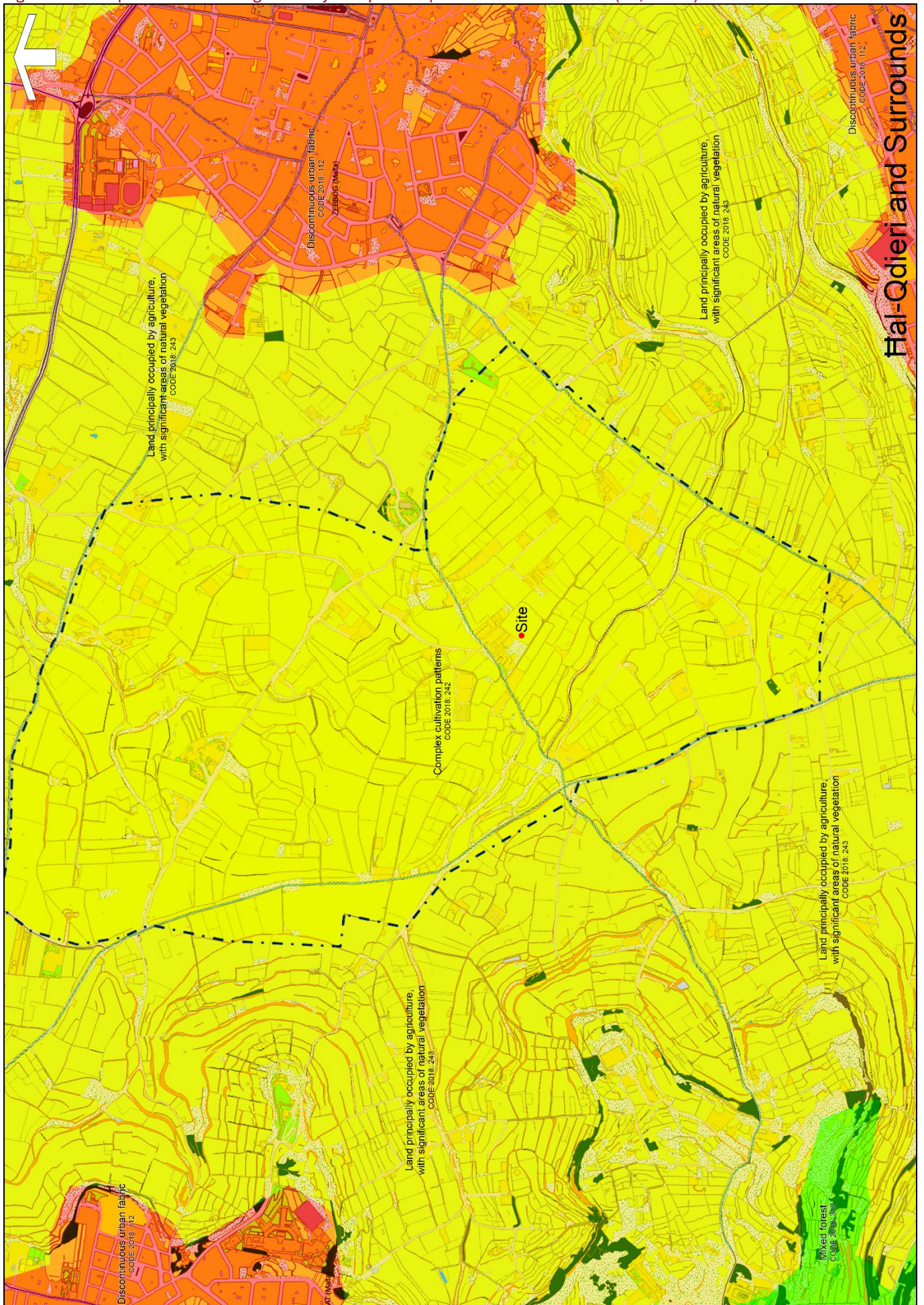
- **residential:** a number of dwellings, can be observed in the Figure 10 aerial image. Some residential properties are discernible by their relatively large gardens and presence of swimming pools in these gardens. These houses are likely to be occupied by farmers who cultivate the surrounding fields and may therefore form part of farm operations, while others may be owned or occupied by individuals residing in the area without being really involved in agriculture,
- **industrial developments:** in Figure 10, a cluster of three industrial operations are identified in Ta' Sant' Andrija area. Such operations would not be in conformity with NWLP Policy NWAG 1. In two of the yards pertaining to the said operations, one can note the presence of parked heavy vehicles used in the construction sector, and
- the other land uses of which Figure 10 identifies as one-offs:
 - a **cemetery**, i.e., the Sant' Andrija cemetery, in the Ta' Sant' Andrija area,
 - the above-mentioned Caritas **therapeutic community** complex (Caritas, 2025), also in Ta' Sant Andrija,
 - a **fireworks** factory, in the Tar-Remel area, and
 - a **religious** facility in the Ta' San Blas area, namely the St Blase (San Biagio) chapel.

3.3.1.3 The land use profile for the zone captured by the aerial image in Figure 10 is represented in the *Corine Land Cover (CLC) 2018* layer of the Planning Authority's map server. An excerpt of this layer is presented in Figure 11 (on page 27). The map identifies three *Discontinuous urban fabric* zones, namely Ir-Rabat, Ħaż-Żebbuġ, and Is-Siġġiewi and a *Mixed forest* zone, specifically the Il-Buskett area.

3.3.1.4 The area between the above-mentioned urban fabric zones and the afforested one, comprises two types of agricultural zones, namely:

- *Land principally occupied by agriculture, with significant areas of natural vegetation*, and
- *Complex cultivation patterns*.

Figure 11: Excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server | Corine Land Cover 2018 (PA, 2025a)



3.3.1.5 San Blas Farm and the Site are situated in the zone characterised by *Complex cultivation patterns*, which is defined as a “[m]osaic of small cultivated land parcels with different cultivation types - annual crops, pasture and/or permanent crops -, eventually with scattered houses or gardens.” (EEA, 2019, p. 59)

3B Spatial development planning and policy – land use

Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development

3.3.1.6 In the *Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED)*, *Rural objective 1* states:
To facilitate sustainable rural development and the diversification of activities within the Rural Area to sustain agriculture and safeguard its distinctiveness ...

3.3.1.7 Among other things this objective is to be attained through support for “... the modernisation of existing animal and arable farms located away from sensitive areas.” (GoM, 2015, p. 25)

North West Local Plan

3.3.1.8 The *North West Local Plan (NWLP)* policy map presented in Figure 3 (on page 13) indicates that the area encompassing the Site is officially designated an *area of agricultural value*. Under NWLP Policy NWAG 1, which is referred to in the map, only structures and land uses essential to agricultural needs, should be permitted in such areas, provided that (i) they do not adversely affect water supplies, soil, and the landscape and (ii) other NWLP policies are followed (GoM, 2006b, p. 57).

Rural Policy and Design Guidance 2014

3.3.1.9 *Policy 2.3A* in the *Rural Policy and Design Guidance (RPDG)* delineates the criteria required for obtaining development permissions for new constructions, redevelopment projects, or extensions of existing structures related to animal breeding, production, waste management, and/or associated storage (GoM, 2014, p. 12; Section 2.3).

3.3.2 Landscape and visual impact

3A Landscape description

3.3.2.1 As noted in the preceding section, the aerial image in Figure 10 (on page 26) illustrates that the landscape surrounding the Site is predominantly shaped by horticultural activity, both in open fields and within greenhouses, alongside livestock farming. To a considerable extent, the fields evoke the traditional Maltese rural landscape that existed prior to the modernisation of the national economy, the consequent population growth, and the increasing affluence observed in certain sectors of society. These fields are characterised by irregularly subdivided plots, typically bounded by traditional dry rubble walls - many of which now show signs of neglect - or by walls constructed from *franka* limestone blocks.

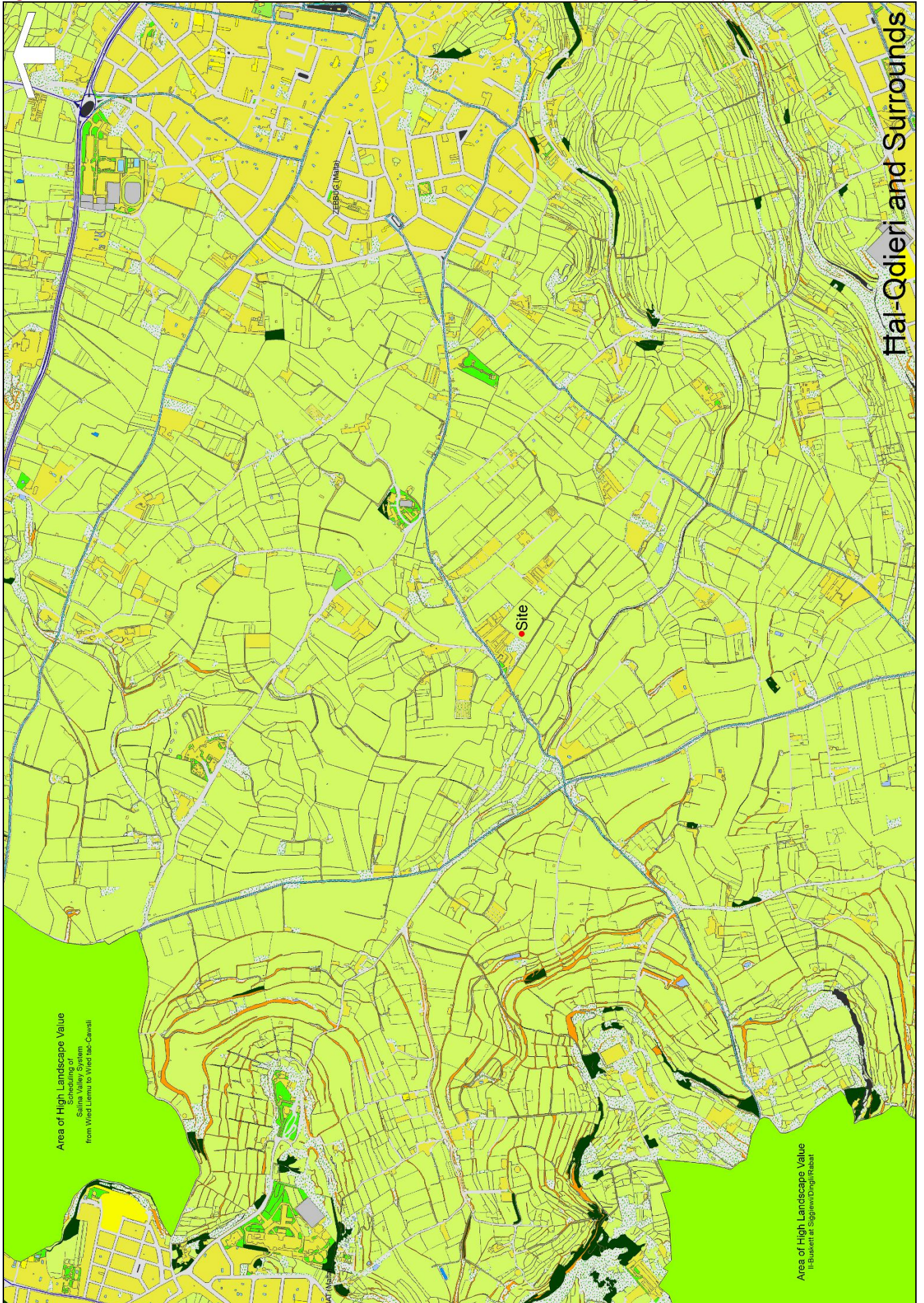
3.3.2.2 The most visually prominent architectural features within the area are the larger glasshouses and livestock farms, distinguished by their relatively substantial footprints and building heights, which stand in marked contrast to the remnants of traditional rural settlement patterns. This visual distinction is further heightened by the juxtaposition of contemporary construction materials - such as glass, plastics, and steel - with the rustic character of the surrounding countryside. The glasshouses are predominantly constructed from glass panels mounted on steel frames, while the roofs of the livestock farms are largely, and in some cases entirely, clad with photovoltaic panels. These developments reflect not only the ongoing modernisation of Malta and the resultant population growth, but also the significant increase in the numbers of tourists and expatriate workers. This demographic shift is placing substantial pressure on Maltese food producers, who must now contend with rising demand for food and increased competition from food importers.

3.3.2.3 The previous section also refers to residential properties, some of which are identifiable by their relatively large gardens and the presence of swimming pools. As noted above, these dwellings are likely to be occupied by farmers who cultivate the adjacent fields and may therefore form an integral part of farm operations, while others may be owned or occupied by individuals residing in the area who are not directly involved in agricultural activities. Although these houses tend to be designed in a pastiche of traditional architectural styles, they are distinguished from the remaining authentic farmhouses by the conspicuous features of modern living. Despite their outward appearance, they are fundamentally suburban residences presented in the guise of rural dwellings.

3.3.2.4 Additionally, the preceding section refers to other notable land uses within the area:

- A cluster of developments labelled ‘industrial’ in the Ta’ Sant’ Andrija zone. The land uses in this cluster are incompatible with the prevailing rural character and are not in conformity with the spatial development policy for the area. The vehicles parked in the yard are mostly used in the construction sector. Their presence appears to be visually incompatible with the context.

Figure 12: Excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server | Landscape value scheduling (PA, 2025a)



- A fireworks factory - one of three situated in the countryside surrounding Ħaż-Żebbuġ and Is-Siġġiewi - occupies a deliberately dispersed layout over a relatively large area for safety reasons. Although fireworks factories in Malta are small-scale industrial operations that, in principle, might be expected to locate within designated industrial zones, safety imperatives require their placement in relatively isolated sites on the outskirts of towns and villages. Fireworks factories are regarded as important components of the cultural identity of Maltese towns and villages; indeed, many localities maintain their own, sometimes more than one per settlement. For this reason, it is considered essential that such factories remain close to their parent communities yet sited at a sufficient distance to mitigate risk in the event of an explosion.
- A cemetery and a countryside chapel, both of which are modest in scale and visually compatible with the surrounding landscape.
- A therapeutic community complex operated by Caritas is also present in the area. While, strictly speaking, this form of land use may appear incompatible with the typical uses expected in an agricultural zone, the nature of the activities undertaken at this facility necessitates a rural setting. As evidenced by the aerial imagery, the design and layout of the complex are sensitively integrated with the surrounding landscape.

!B Landscape value scheduling under the Development Planning Act

3.3.2.5 The excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server presented in Figure 12 (on page 29) identifies two areas in the surrounds of the area characterised by *Complex cultivation patterns* in Figure 11, which are scheduled as *areas of high landscape value*, under article 57 of the *Development Planning Act* (Cap 552) (OSA, 2016, p. 36). The designations were issued through *Government Notice No 403 of 1996* in the case of *Il-Buskett at Siġġiewi/Dingli/Rabat* (GoM, 1996, pp. 4149, 4151 (map)) and *Government Notice No 1236 of 2012* in the case of *Salina Valley System from Djar il-Bniet and Wied Liemu to Wied taċ-Ċawlsli, limits of Dingli, Rabat, Mosta, Naxxar, and St Paul's Bay* (GoM, 2012, pp. 13,622, 13,638 (map)).

!C Spatial development planning and policy – landscape value

Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development

3.3.2.6 In the SPED), *Rural objective 4* states:

To protect and enhance the positive qualities of the landscape and the traditional components of the rural landscape...

3.3.2.7 Among other things this objective can be attained through "... the control of location and design of development within the landscape and strengthen the existing framework for the protection of rubble walls" (GoM, 2015, p. 26).

3.3.2.8 The SPED *Strategic Proposals Map*, which is reproduced in Figure 13 (on page 31) distinguishes between areas of *high landscape protection* and *areas of landscape protection*. The former would include the scheduled areas highlighted in Figure 12. The implication of this hierarchy of areas of landscape protection is that attention to the quality of the landscape should not be confined solely to areas of high landscape value (AHLV). Rather, it underscores the importance of safeguarding and enhancing the landscape quality across all designated areas, recognising that even those not classified as being of the highest value contribute significantly to the overall character, integrity, and visual appeal of the wider environment.

North West Local Plan

3.3.2.9 The above-mentioned NWLP Policy NWAG 1 submits that agricultural development should not adversely affect the landscape and that the proposed development would have "... [to] accord with all other policies within this Local Plan." (GoM, 2006b, p. 57).

3.3.2.10 In respect to AHLVs, Policy NWLA 2 states that developments for projects which have the potential to undermine designated AHLVs, would not be permitted. The policy map in Figure 14 (on page 32) identifies the areas where this policy would be applicable. The Site is located outside these zones.

Rural Policy and Design Guidance 2014

3.3.2.11 RPDG Policy 1.2H refers to the need for proposals for development maintain and enhance important landscape features (GoM, 2014, p. 7; Section 1.2).

3.3.2.12 The above-mentioned RPDG Policy 2.3A submits that the need for mitigation measures and soft landscaping would need to be "... considered on a case-by-case basis." (GoM, 2014, p. 12; Section 2.3).

Figure 13: Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development | Strategic Proposals (GoM, 2015, p. 31; Map 2B)

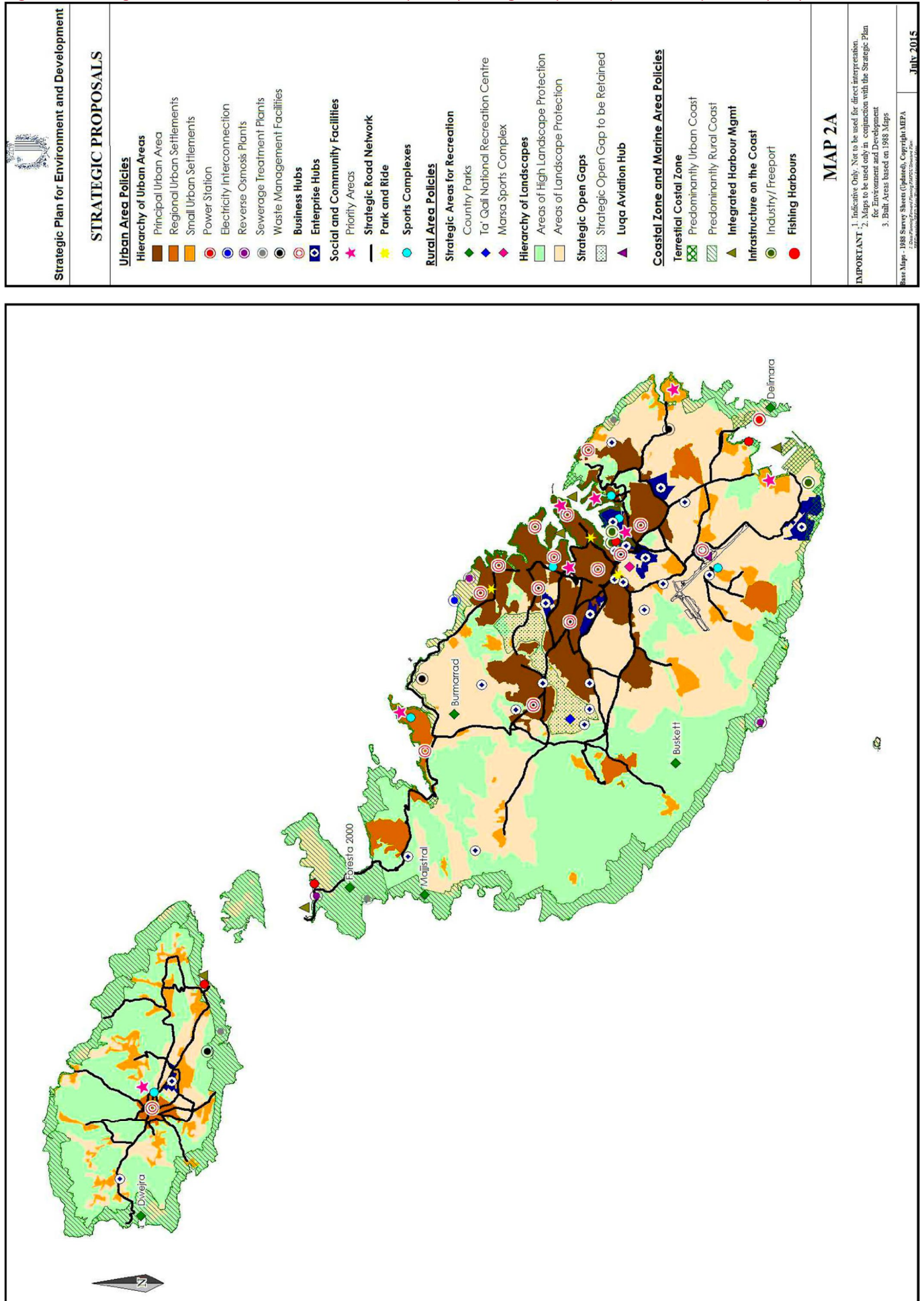
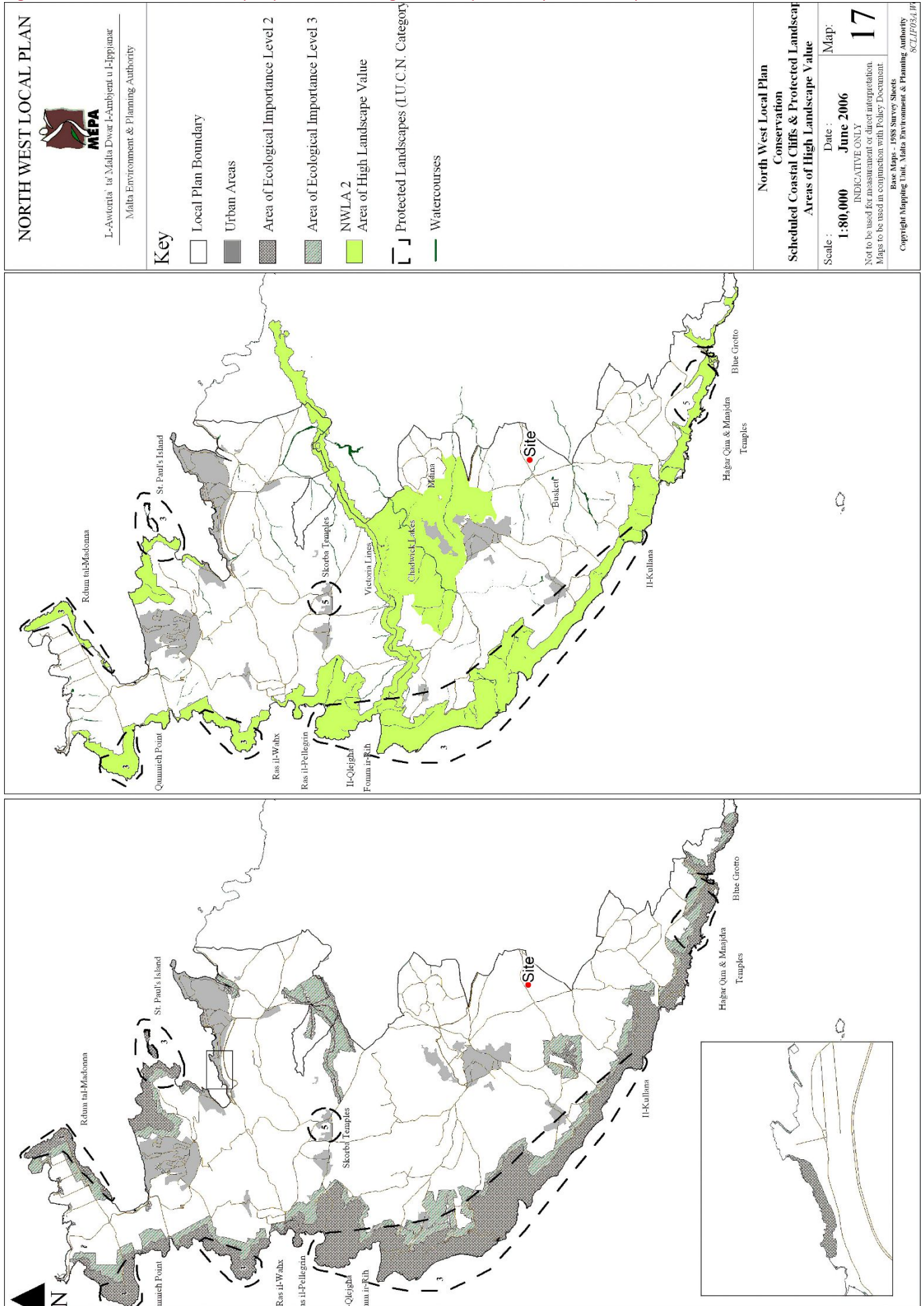


Figure 14: North West Local Plan | Map 4 – Areas of High Landscape Value (GoM, 2006a)



!D Council of Europe Landscape Convention

3.3.2.13 Recently, it was announced that Malta recently ratified the *European Landscape Convention* (ELC) (CoE, 2025a). CoE Member States which ratify this convention are committed to the following:

- recognise landscapes in law as vital aspects of people's surroundings, and shared cultural and natural heritage,
- establish landscape policies with the participation of the public for protection, management, and planning,
- enforce legal commitments,
- integrate landscape considerations into spatial planning, along with cultural, environmental, agricultural, social, infrastructure, and economic policies,
- raise public awareness of the value of landscapes and their changes,
- identify, assess, and set quality objectives for landscapes with public and stakeholder involvement,
- implement landscape policies using legal, administrative, and financial tools, and
- cooperate internationally on landscape issues, including mutual assistance, information exchange, and specialist collaboration, and encourage cross-border cooperation (CoE, 2000).

3.3.2.14 The ELC considers landscapes as living environments shaped by ongoing natural and human processes. This perspective is articulated in the following ways:

- a landscape is defined “... as an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”,
- landscape policy means “means an expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes”,
- the attainment of a quality objective for a specific landscape implies “... the formulation by the competent public authorities of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings”,
- the protection of a landscape necessitates “... actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity”,
- the management of a landscape involves “... action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes”,
- the activity of landscape planning entails “... strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.” (CoE, 2000, pp. 2-3; art: 1)

3.3.2.15 At this stage it is not clear how the plans and policies described and discussed above will be affected by the said ratification; the Maltese ratification is expected to enter into force on September 1 of this year (CoE, 2025b).

3.3.3 Geo-environment – hydrology - water use

!A Descriptions

Reference is made to the images/maps presented in Figure 15 to Figure 17 (on pages 34 and 35).

Exposed geological formations

3.3.3.1 The map in Figure 15 illustrates the **exposed geological formations** in the Ħal-Qdieri area and its surrounds. The Site is situated in an area where the exposed geological formation is the **Middle Globigerina Limestone Member**. This material is generally not considered suitable for construction purposes, except as backfill. It is softer, less durable, and more susceptible to weathering than the widely used Lower Globigerina Limestone Member. Furthermore, its marly nature and relatively high clay content render it unsuitable for any structural applications.

3.3.3.2 As is indicated in the project drawings in Figure 5 to Figure 9 (on pages 17 to 21), the Applicant has proposed the construction of two underground reservoirs for the temporary storage of slurry (300m³) and second-class water (1,000m³). The total volume of excavation required for these reservoirs, together with the trenches for the slurry channels described in the previous section and the foundations for the proposed buildings, is estimated to be approximately 2,200m³.

Figure 15: Excerpt from the Geological Map of the Maltese Islands (ESRI, 2016)

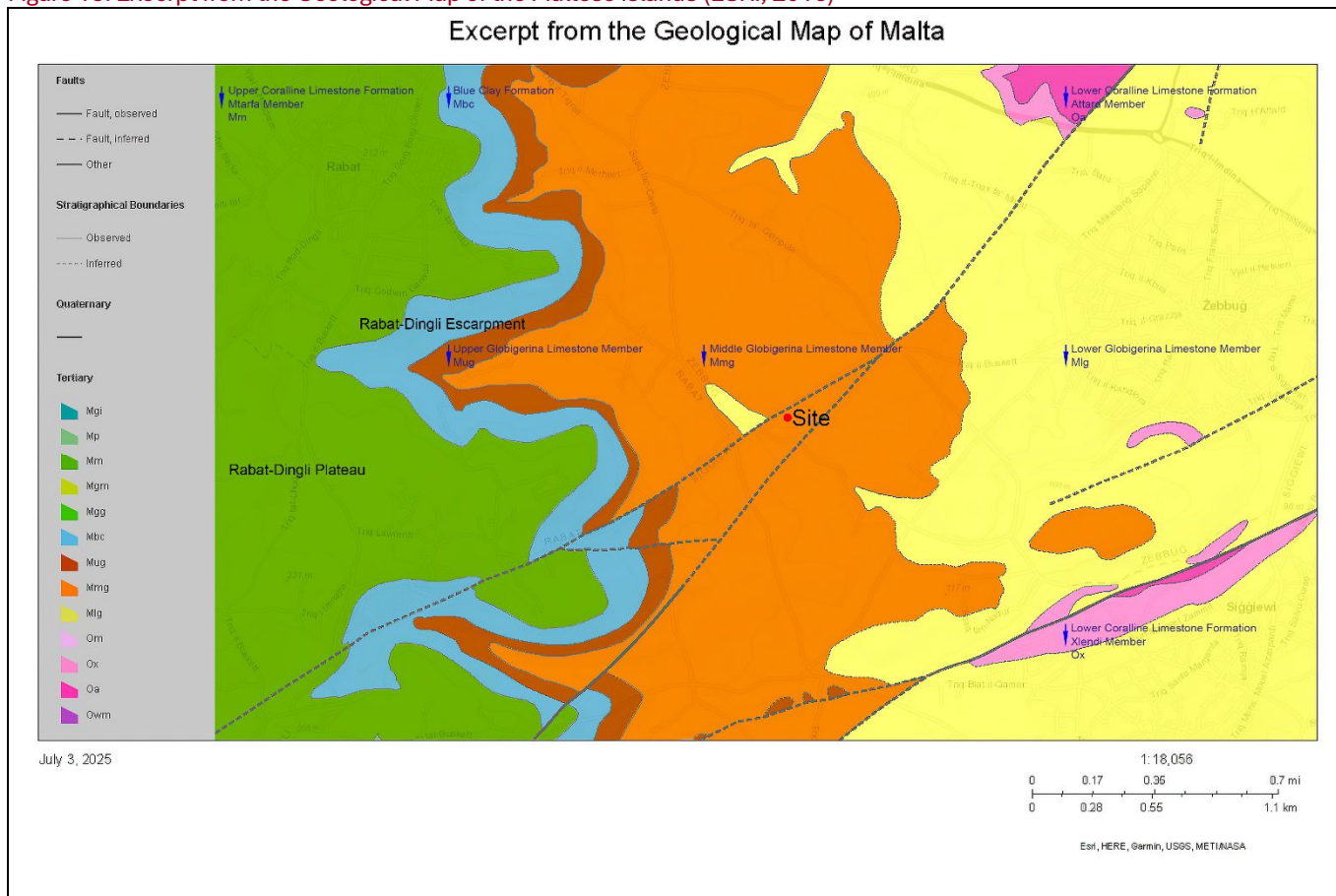


Figure 16: Excerpt from the map of the Soils of Malta and Gozo (Lang, 1960)

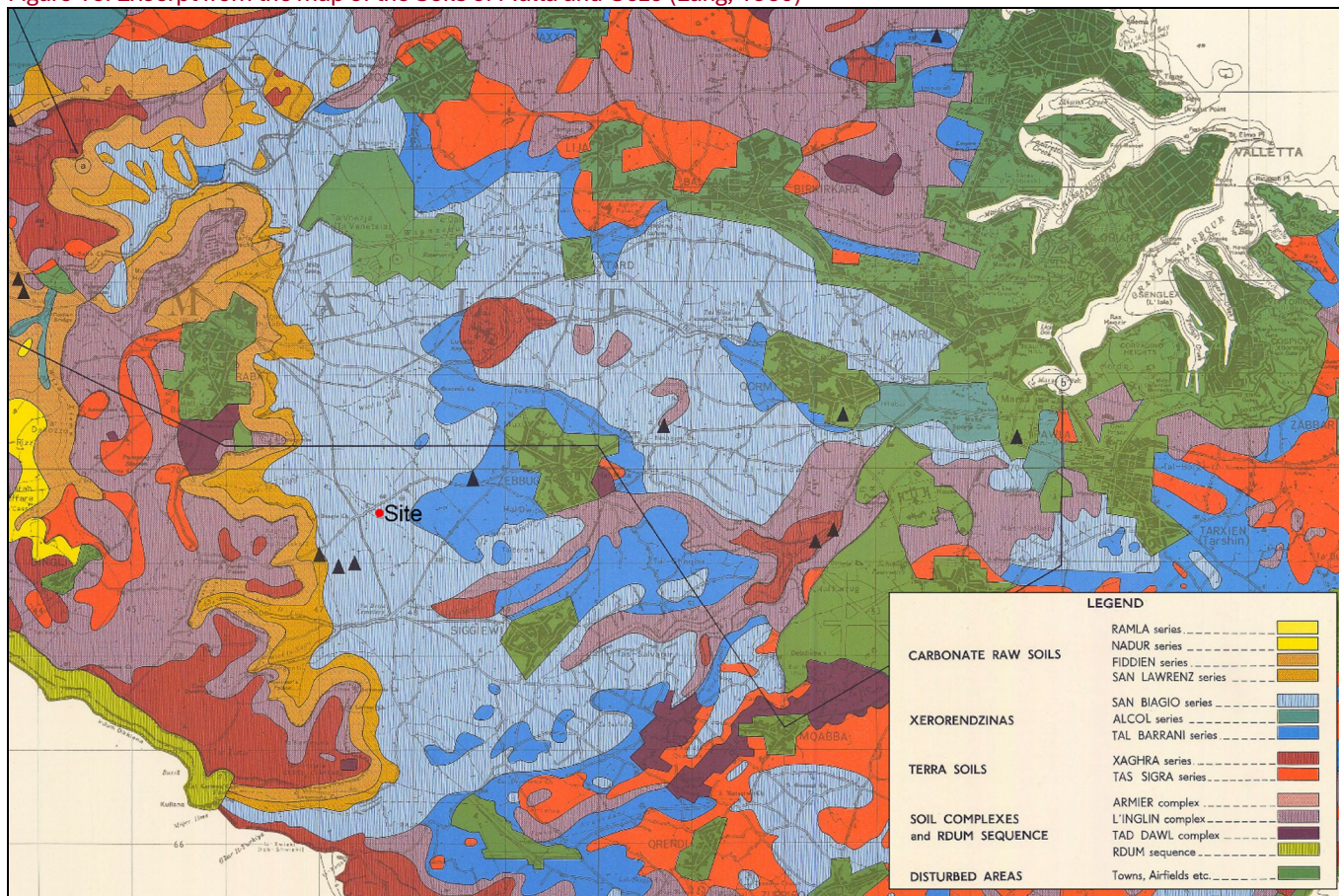
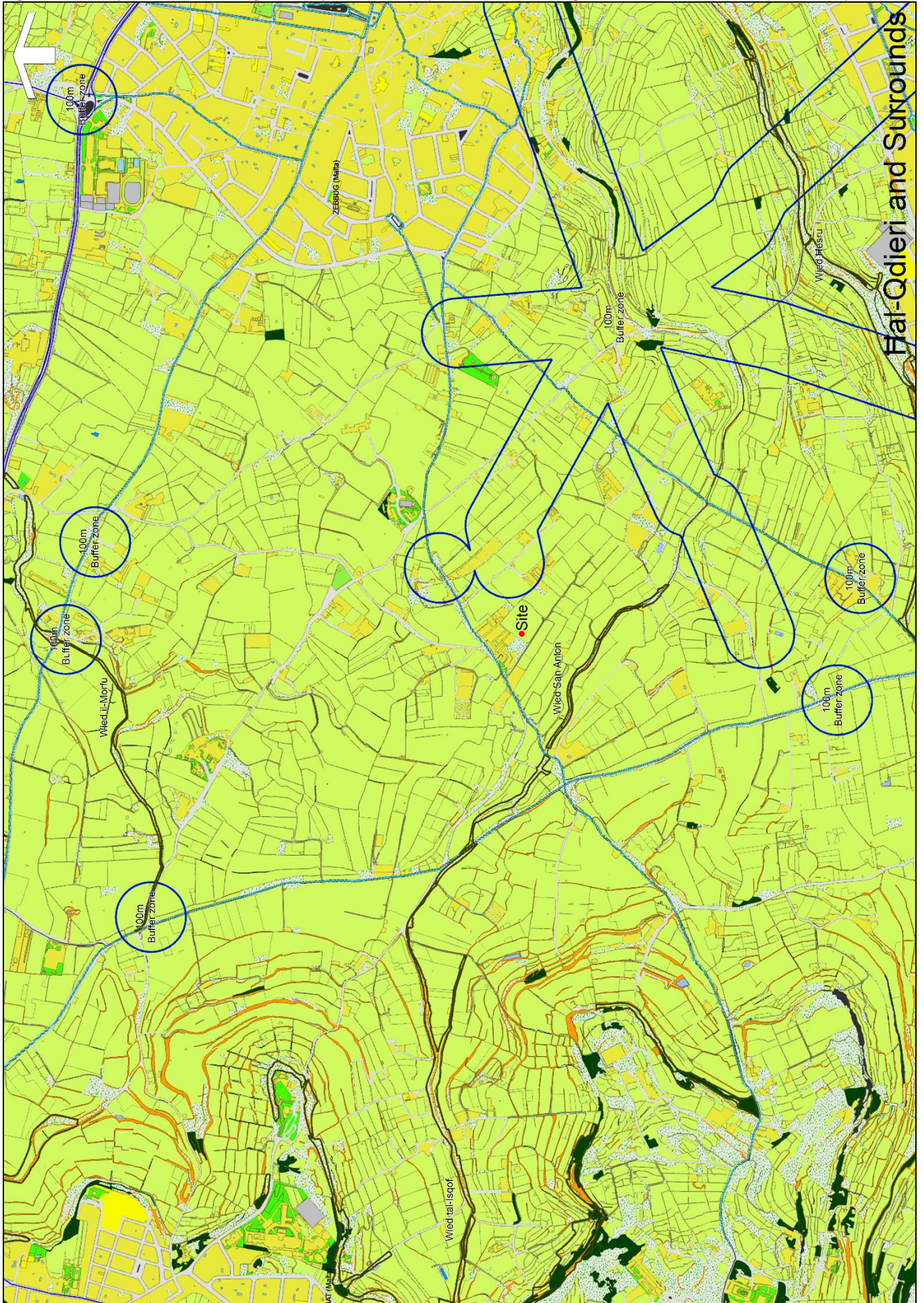


Figure 17: Excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server | Ground Water Safeguard – 100m buffer zones (PA, 2025a)



3.3.3.3 Given the properties of the Middle Globigerina Limestone Member, as outlined above, the excavated material would need to be transported off-site for disposal. Assuming the use of heavy vehicles with a load box capacity of 20m³, this activity would generate 110 outbound trips for the removal of material, as well as a corresponding 110 inbound trips.

3.3.3.4 It would be important for the loading of and transport of excavated material to be carried out in a manner through the dispersion of dust is controlled (OSA, 2022b).

Topography

3.3.3.5 The excerpt from the geological map of Malta in Figure 15 (on page 34) provides a clear representation of the area's topography. The legend to the left of the map details the colour codes assigned to the various lithostratigraphic units that characterise the geology of Malta, arranged in order according to their stratigraphic sequence. The Mtarfa Member of the Upper Coralline Limestone Formation is exposed along the Rabat-Dingli Plateau, located to the west of Ħal-Qdieri. This plateau is recognised as the highest on the Maltese Islands, with elevations in the Dingli area exceeding 250 metres above sea level. The plateau exhibits a gentle north-eastward dip, reflecting the regional tilting of the Maltese landmass (MEPA, 2004)

3.3.3.6 The transition from the plateau to the lowlands is marked by the Rabat-Dingli Escarpment, which forms a distinct geomorphological boundary with the eastern foreland (MEPA, 2004). In this lower-lying area, such as Ħal-Qdieri, elevations are typically in the range of 60 to 70 metres above sea level, resulting in a pronounced difference in level of approximately 180 to 190 metres between the Rabat-Dingli Plateau and the Ħal-Qdieri lowlands. Here, the predominant exposed strata are the Middle and Lower Globigerina Limestone Members, as illustrated in Figure 15.

Soils

3.3.3.7 The excerpt from the *Soils of Malta and Gozo* map in Figure 16 (on page 34) indicates that the Site is situated within an area characterised by San Biagio series soils. These soils are notable for their high calcium carbonate content and are typically found on ridges, plateaux, and plains (erosion surfaces) throughout Malta. They are generally shallow, with depths ranging from 20 to 60 cm. The development of these soils is strongly influenced by the underlying calcareous bedrock, the Mediterranean climate, and centuries of human intervention, including terracing, manuring, and quarrying (Vella, 2001; Stellini, et al., 2023).

3.3.3.8 As noted above, the Site comprises a field with an area of 8,760 m². While the precise depth of soil on the field is unknown, it is evident that a substantial volume of soil would need to be removed during the construction works. Such removal must be carried out in accordance with the *Fertile Soil (Preservation) Act* (Cap. 236) and the *Preservation of Fertile Soil Regulations* [SL 236.03] (OSA, 1973; 2020).

3.3.3.9 It would be important for the loading of and transport of the soil to be carried out in a manner through the dispersion of dust is controlled (OSA, 2022b).

Hydrology and water supply

Ground and surface water

3.3.3.10 The excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server in Figure 17 (on page 35) highlights the designated groundwater safeguard areas in the vicinity of the Site, as well as the course of Wied San Anton valley. This valley traverses an area characterised by complex cultivation patterns, as depicted in the excerpt from the Corine 2018 map in Figure 11 (on page 27). Wied San Anton forms part of an extensive network of valleys in central Malta which ultimately drain into the Marsa area, historically constituting a principal component of the island's natural drainage basin.

3.3.3.11 Wied San Anton is a fundamental component of the Wied l-Isqof sub-catchment, which itself constitutes the northernmost primary tributary of the extensive Wied il-Kbir valley network. The Wied l-Isqof system originates in the Rabat-Dingli Plateau, in the area of Il-Palazz ta' Verdala. Its watercourse flows in a generally eastward direction before its confluence with the main Wied il-Kbir channel near Ħaż-Żebbuġ.

3.3.3.12 Within the Wied l-Isqof sub-basin, Wied San Anton acts as an upper feeder valley. It is one of the initial watercourses that rises in the same elevated region as Wied l-Isqof. It subsequently joins the main channel, contributing its flow to form the larger tributary system that proceeds towards Marsa.

3.3.3.13 Wied l-Isqof forms part of a valley system in the Rabat-Dingli Plateau, which is distinguished by the presence of a permanent, spring-fed watercourse. The reader is referred to the maps presented in the Figure 18 and Figure 19 (on pages 37 and 38) which respectively (i) highlight the sources of the Wied il-Kbir network and (ii) identify the valleys which form part of the network either as tributaries or intermediate valleys (Haslam, 2007; Epsilon-Adi, 2014).

Figure 18: Wied il-Kbir from its sources to its Marsa mouth (Haslam, 2007, p. 2)

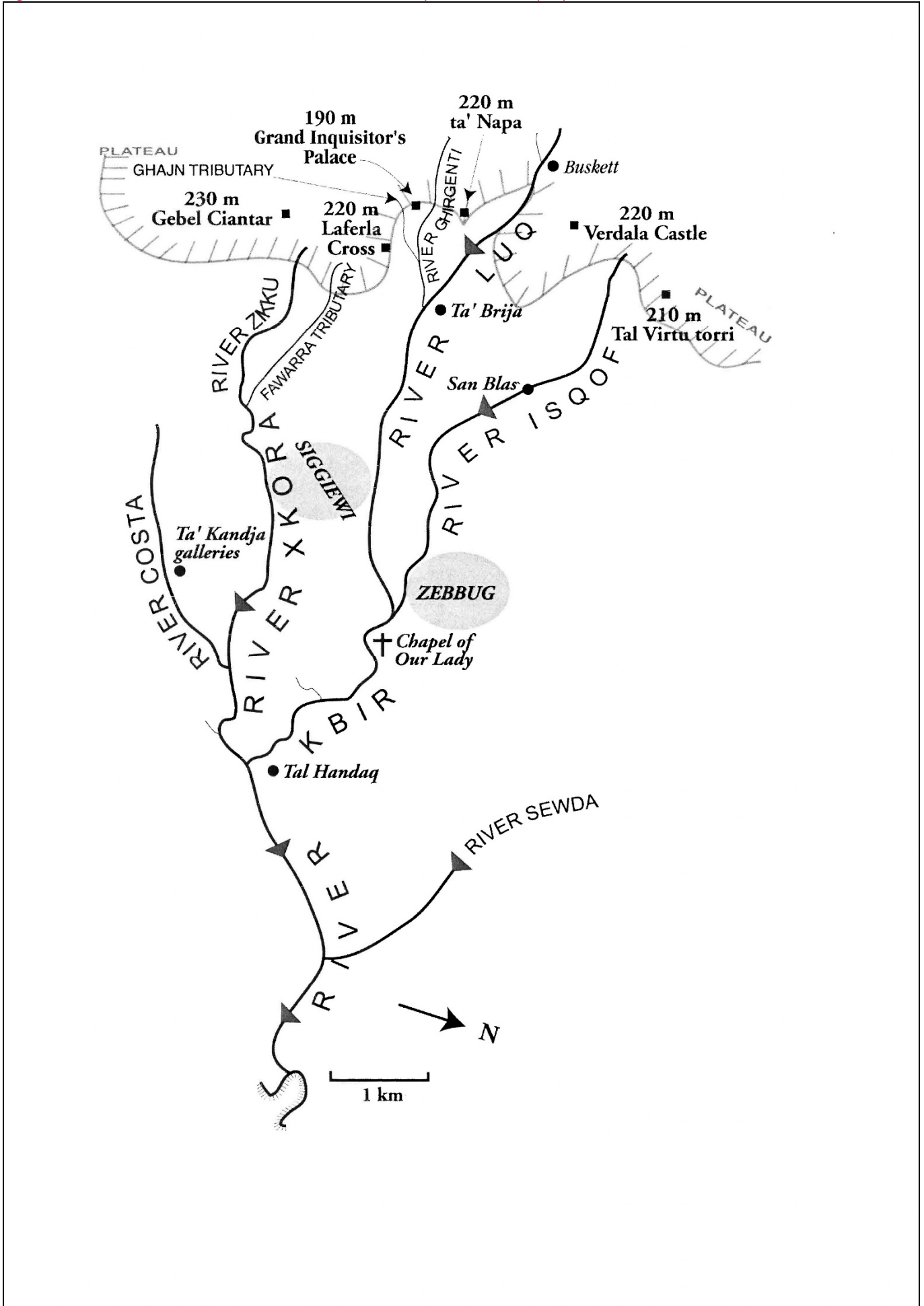
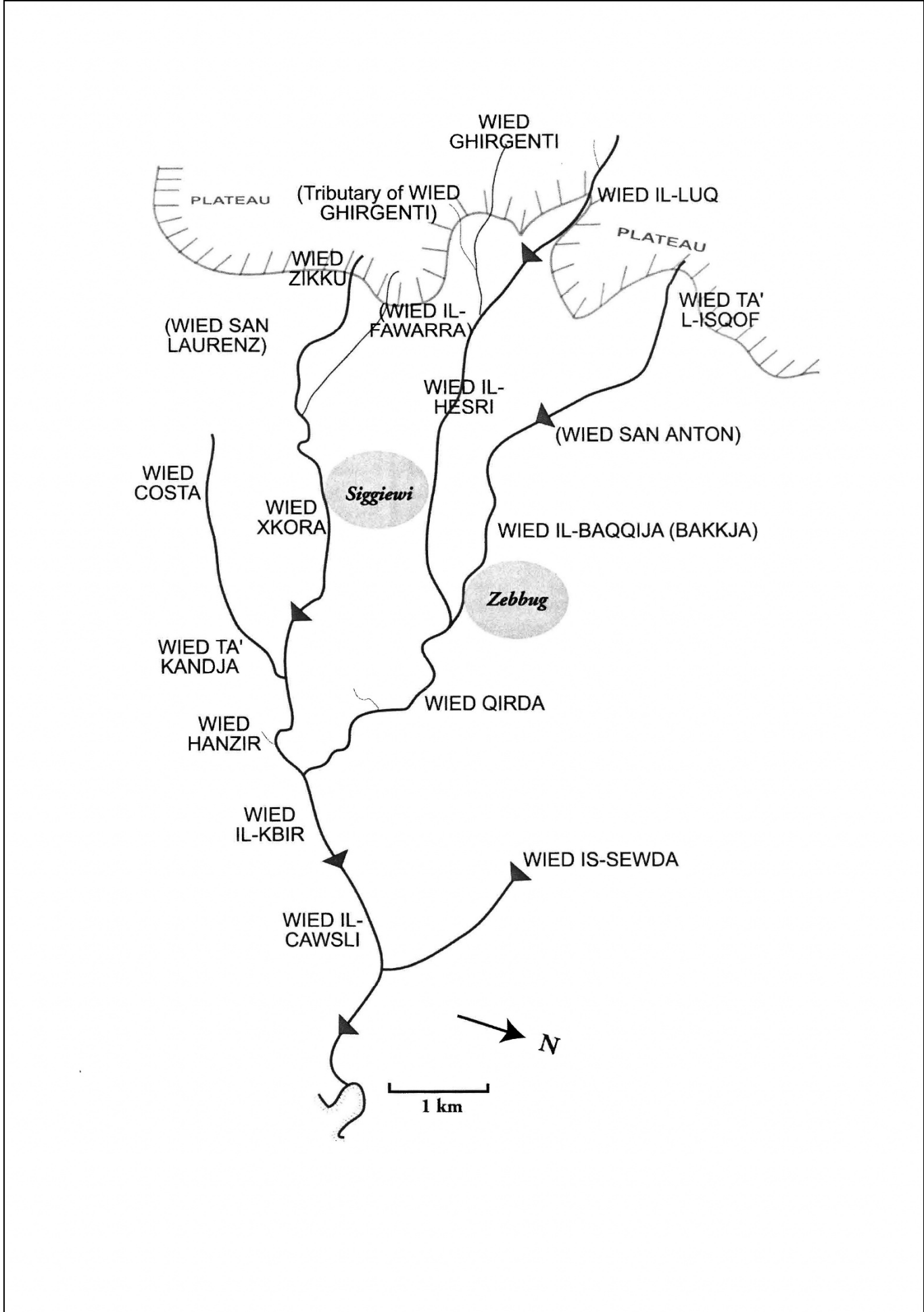


Figure 19: Wied il-Kbir from its sources to its Marsa mouth – wieden names (Haslam, 2007, p. 3)



Disposal of livestock waste

3.3.3.14 The considerations discussed above, underscore the critical importance of ensuring that the design, construction, and maintenance of the storage systems for both animal and human waste and of the flooring/channel systems provide for robust protection for the valley and groundwater resources. Consequently, the design and management of animal waste management systems must adhere strictly to the relevant provisions of the *Waste Management (Activity Registration) Regulations* [SL 549.45] and *Nitrates Action Programme Regulations* [SL 549.66] (OSA, 2007, pp. 20-23; Reg 42 and 43 ; 2011, p. 5; Reg 5).

3.3.3.15 As noted in the previous section (see pages 15 and 22), the combined operation of the existing and proposed pig production units would generate slurry volumes necessitating approximately eight trips per week to a WasteServ disposal facility, using a slurry tanker with a capacity of 17m³.

3.3.3.16 Sanitary arrangements for workers will include toilet facilities the waste from which would be directed to an existing domestic cesspit.

Water use

3.3.3.17 As previously noted (see page 15 and earlier in this section), the proposed extension will include a 1,000m³ underground reservoir for second-class water. This reservoir is intended to store runoff harvested from the roofs and water abstracted from a metered borehole, for use in providing drinking water for the pigs and for washing down the farm premises. The Applicant estimates that the daily water requirement for these purposes will be 20 m³. In addition, water would also be needed for the nutrition of the trees proposed, among others, in the Figure 6-drawing on page 18.

3.3.3.18 Based on a roof area of 7,500 m² and in accordance with *Technical Document F Part 2* (BCA, 2024, p. 26; Table 8), the reservoir would need to have a capacity of 3,375m³. However, given that the reservoir will be drawn down for the needs outlined above, the Applicant submits that the proposed capacity of 1,000 m³ will be adequate for operational needs.

!B Regulations covering excavations

- Construction Management Site Regulations [623.08] (OSA, 2022b)

!C Legal framework regarding the preservation of fertile soil

- Fertile Soil (Preservation) Act (Cap 236) (OSA, 1973)
- Preservation of Fertile Soil Regulations [SL 236.03] (OSA, 2020)

!D Legal framework and guidance regarding the protection of water bodies and wise use of water

3.3.3.19 In the previous and this section reference is made to the following regulations and guidance documents which cover both the protection of water bodies and the harvesting of runoff and groundwater:

- Waste Management (Activity Registration) Regulations [SL 549.45] (OSA, 2007).
- Groundwater Abstraction (Metering) Regulations [549.166] (OSA, 2010).
- Nitrates Action Programme Regulations [SL 549.66] (OSA, 2011).
- Technical Document F Part 2: *Non-Dwellings - Minimum Energy Performance and Building Envelope* (BCA, 2024).

!E Spatial development planning and policy – geo-environment, hydrology, and water use

Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development

3.3.3.20 *Thematic Objective 7* states:

To promote the efficient use of resources including local stone, water and soil, and manage waste in a manner that safeguards natural processes, and minimises impacts on cultural heritage, landscape and human health...

Among other things this objective can be attained through the following:

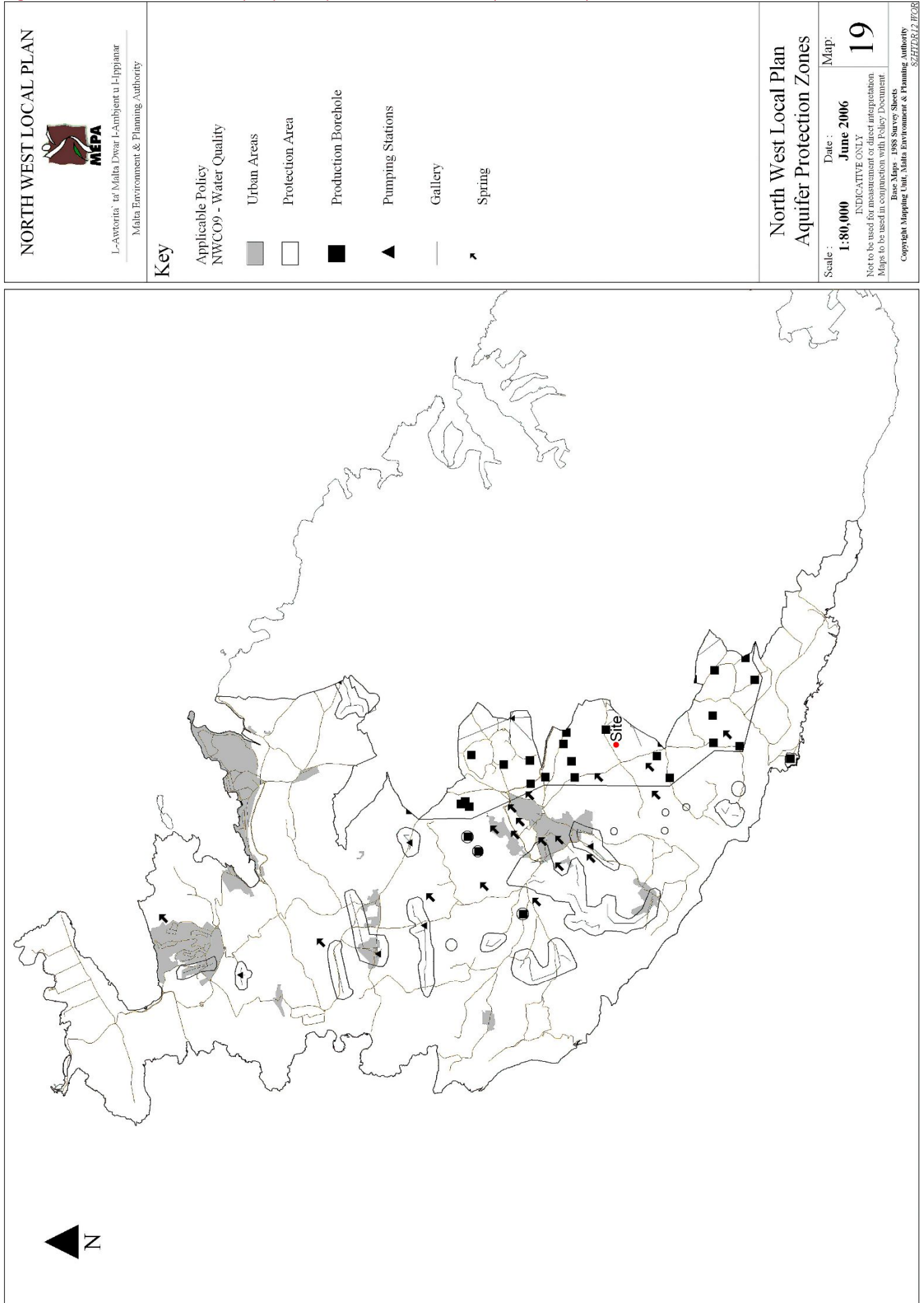
- the protection of natural hydro-morphological and hydrological processes, and
- the promotion of rain water harvesting as long as this does not result in adverse impacts on protected areas and species (GoM, 2015, p. 21).

3.3.3.21 *Thematic Objective 8* states:

To safeguard and enhance biodiversity, cultural heritage, geology and geomorphology ...

Among other things this objective can be attained through the following:

Figure 20: North West Local Plan | Map 4 – Aquifer Protection Zones (GoM, 2006a)



- the safeguarding of protected areas, and
- the protection of important ground water recharges areas (GoM, 2015, p. 22)

North West Local Plan

3.3.3.22 The *Introduction* to the NWLP section regarding *Agriculture, Fishing and Aquaculture* states in paragraph 8.1.1.7 that livestock farms needed to adopt European and International Standards in the design of farm buildings (GoM, 2006b, p. 56). This *Introduction* is followed by a section where the above-mentioned Policy NWAG 1 is presented. This policy states that agricultural development “... will not adversely affect the water supplies and soil ... and [will] accord with all other policies within this Local Plan” (GoM, 2006b, p. 57).

- Policy NWCO 9, entitled *Water Quality*, sets out the criteria regarding the location of different types of development with reference to the *Aquifer Protection Zones* shown in the map presented in Figure 20 (on page 40).
- The Ħaż-Żebbuġ NWLP area policy concerning valleys points out that:
The valleys of Wied Incita, Wied San Anton and Wied il-Baqqija are identified as a natural resource in terms of water resources, agriculture, wild life and soil conservation. The appropriate agencies will be encouraged to rehabilitate the valleys by the removal of rubbish and construction waste, and the creation of footpaths in appropriate locations. (GoM, 2026c, p. 257)

Rural Policy and Design Guidance 2014

3.3.3.23 The above-mentioned RPDG Policy 2.3A states that “... the upgraded farm will include significantly improved water conservation measures as well as mitigation measures against the pollution of groundwater.” (GoM, 2014, p. 12; Section 2.3).

3.3.4 Ecology

!A Outline description

Reference is made to the images/maps presented in Figure 21 to Figure 24 (on pages 42 to 45).

3.3.4.1 The Ħal-Qdieri area and its surrounds appears to be mostly taken up by agricultural development, except for pockets of what prima facie appear to be ‘natural’ or, as it were, ‘undomesticated’. The main except is Wied San Anton, parts of which are characterised by vegetated clusters of different species of trees and other including but not limited to the Aleppo Pines (*Pinus halepensis*, iż-Żnuber, Siġra tal-Prinjol) and the alien Great Reed (*Arundo donax*, il-Qasba).

3.3.4.2 The Ħal-Qdieri area and its immediate environs are predominantly characterised by extensive agricultural activity. As is noted above, the landscape is largely shaped by cultivated fields and managed plots together with the visually greenhouses and livestock farms, the roofs of which are largely or fully covered with photovoltaic panels. However, interspersed within this agricultural matrix are pockets of different sizes that, at first glance, appear to retain a more ‘natural’ or ‘undisturbed’ character. These areas stand in contrast to the surrounding farmland, offering glimpses of the landscape’s original ecological features.

3.3.4.3 The most discernible exception to the prevailing agricultural land use is Wied San Anton. The part valley captured in the aerial image in Figure 10 (on page 26) is distinguished by its clusters of diverse vegetation, which include a variety of tree species and other flora with the invasive alien, namely, the Great Reed (*Arundo donax*, il-Qasba), being among the more dominant. Wied San Anton shares in the ecological value of Wied l-Isqof sub-basin (of which it forms an integral part), which is primarily derived from its hydrological characteristics.

3.3.4.4 For this reason, this sub-basin is known for its rich and diverse habitats for both flora and fauna. On the other hand, it is also known for the invasive alien species that have been planted upstream, which have taken up the space which would otherwise be occupied by native species. In the past, it also experienced pollution from the overflow of contaminants in the Buskett/Dingli area (Haslam, 2007; Epsilon-Adi, 2014).

3.3.4.5 In summary, while the Ħal-Qdieri area is largely characterised by agricultural development as confirmed in the Corine land cover map in Figure 11 (on page 27), remnants of natural or semi-natural habitats appear to have persisted, most notably within the part of Wied San Anton, which is visible in the Figure 10 aerial view.

Figure 21: Excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server | AEI and SSI scheduling (PA, 2025a)

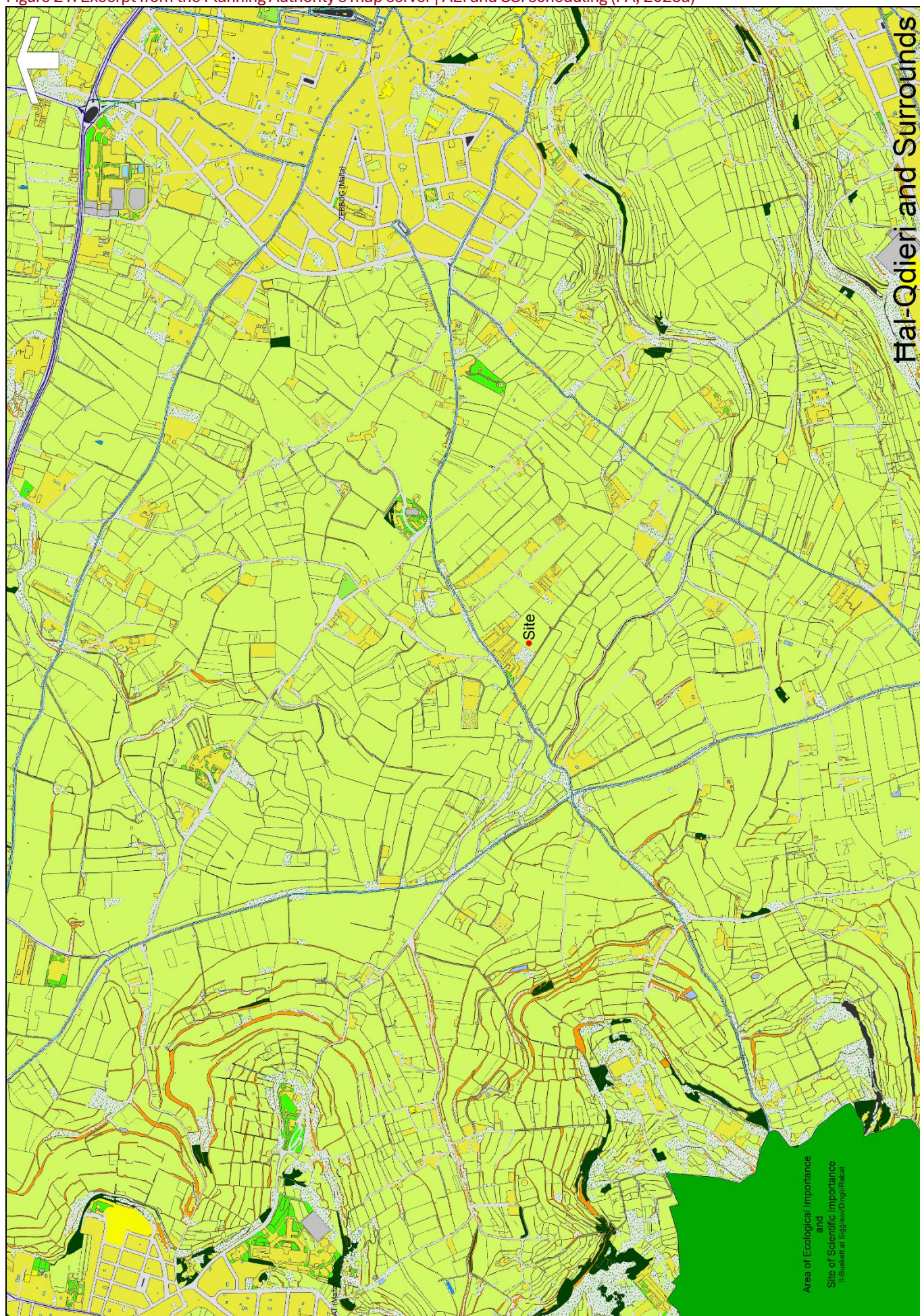


Figure 22: Excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server | Bird Sanctuary (PA, 2025a)

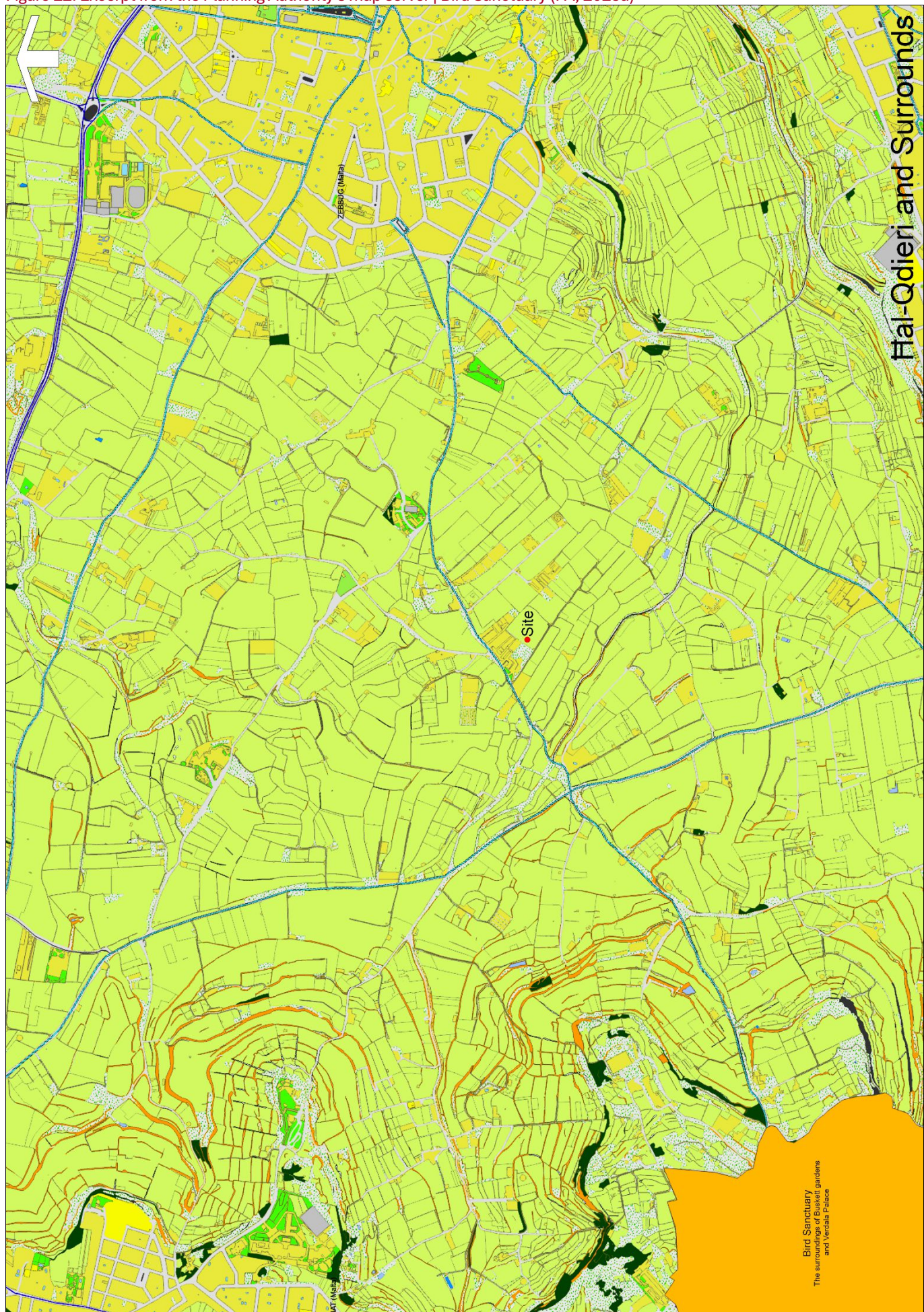


Figure 23: Excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server | SAC and SPA (PA, 2025a)

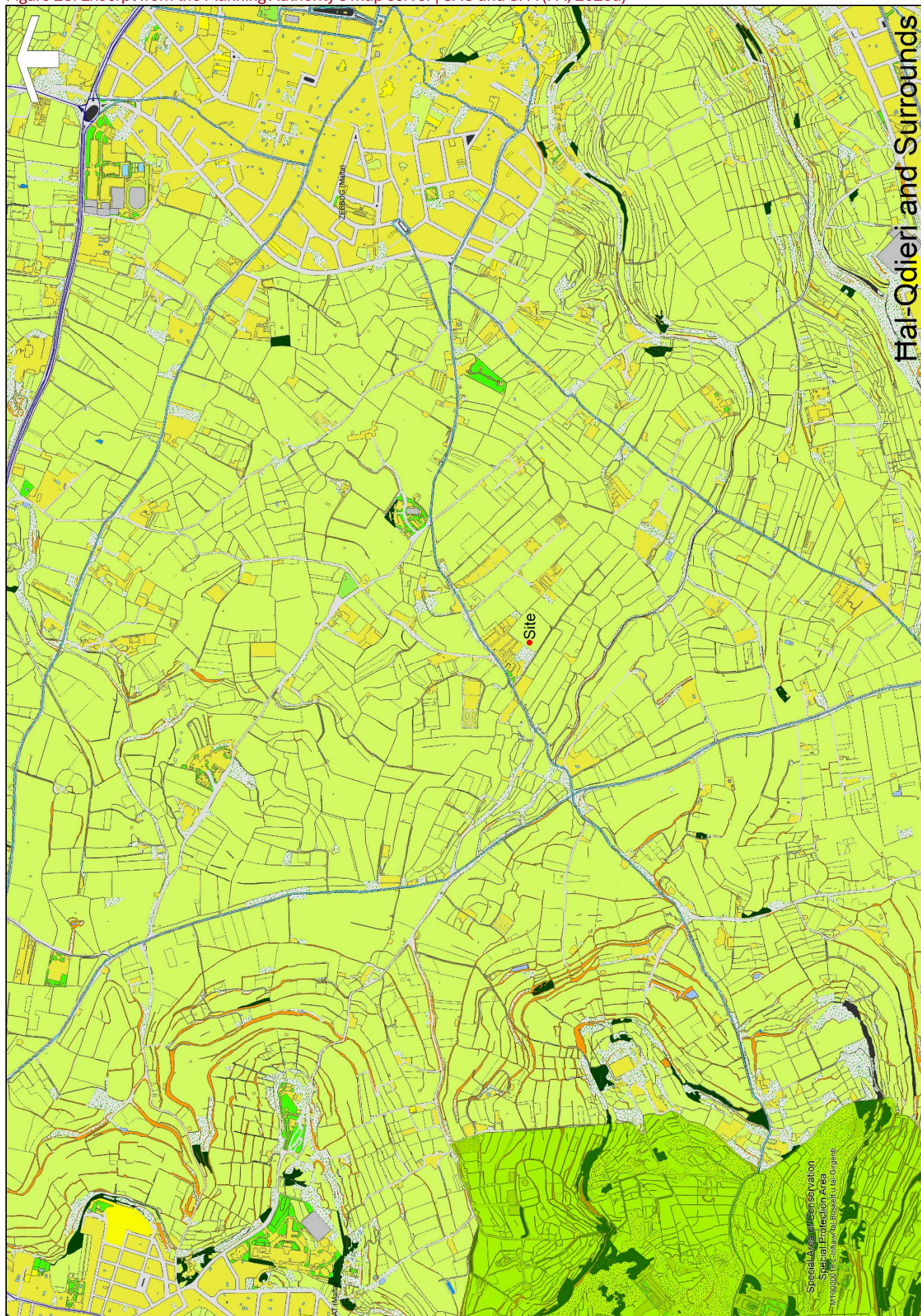


Figure 24: Excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server | Tree Protection on Areas (PA, 2025a)

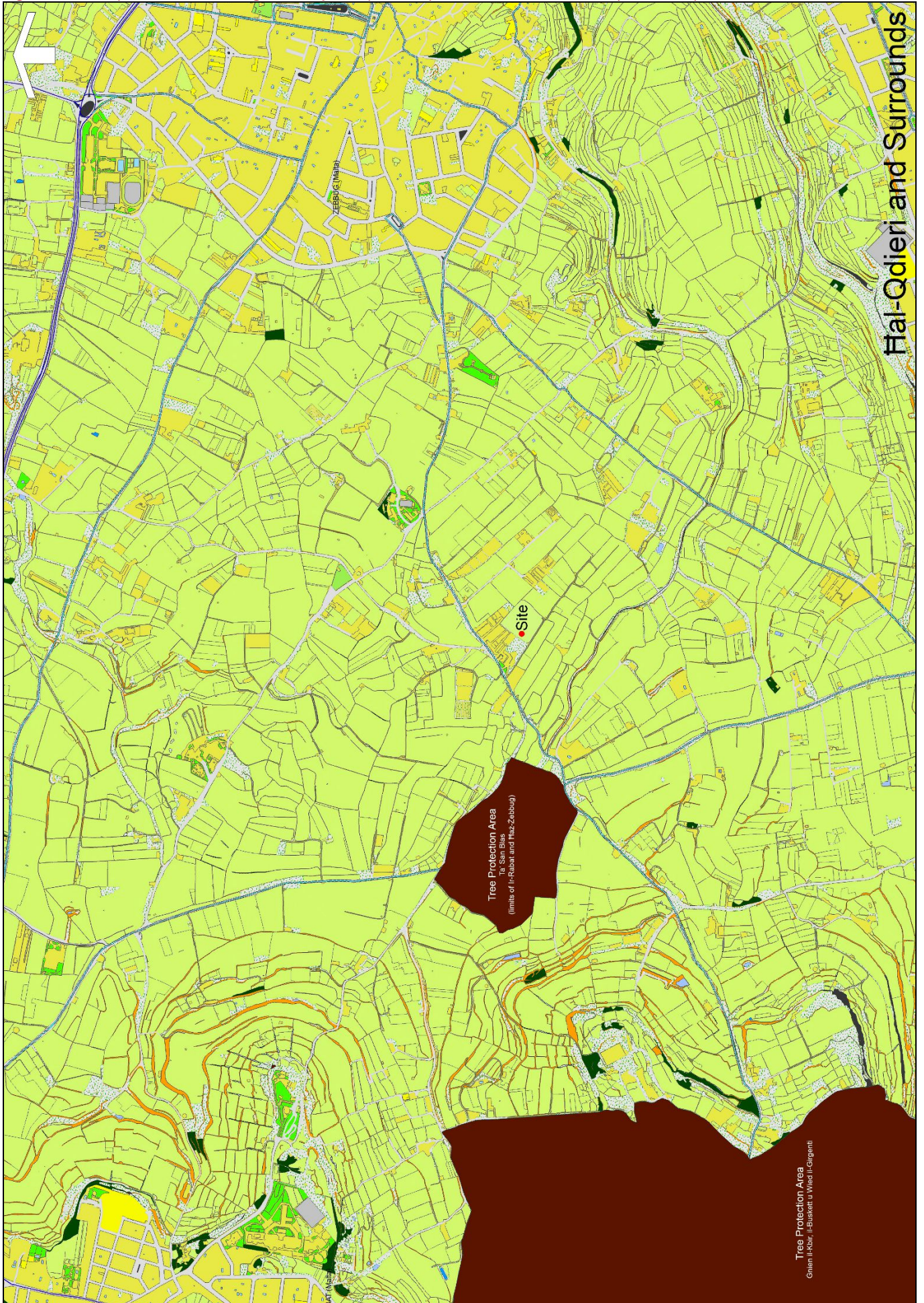
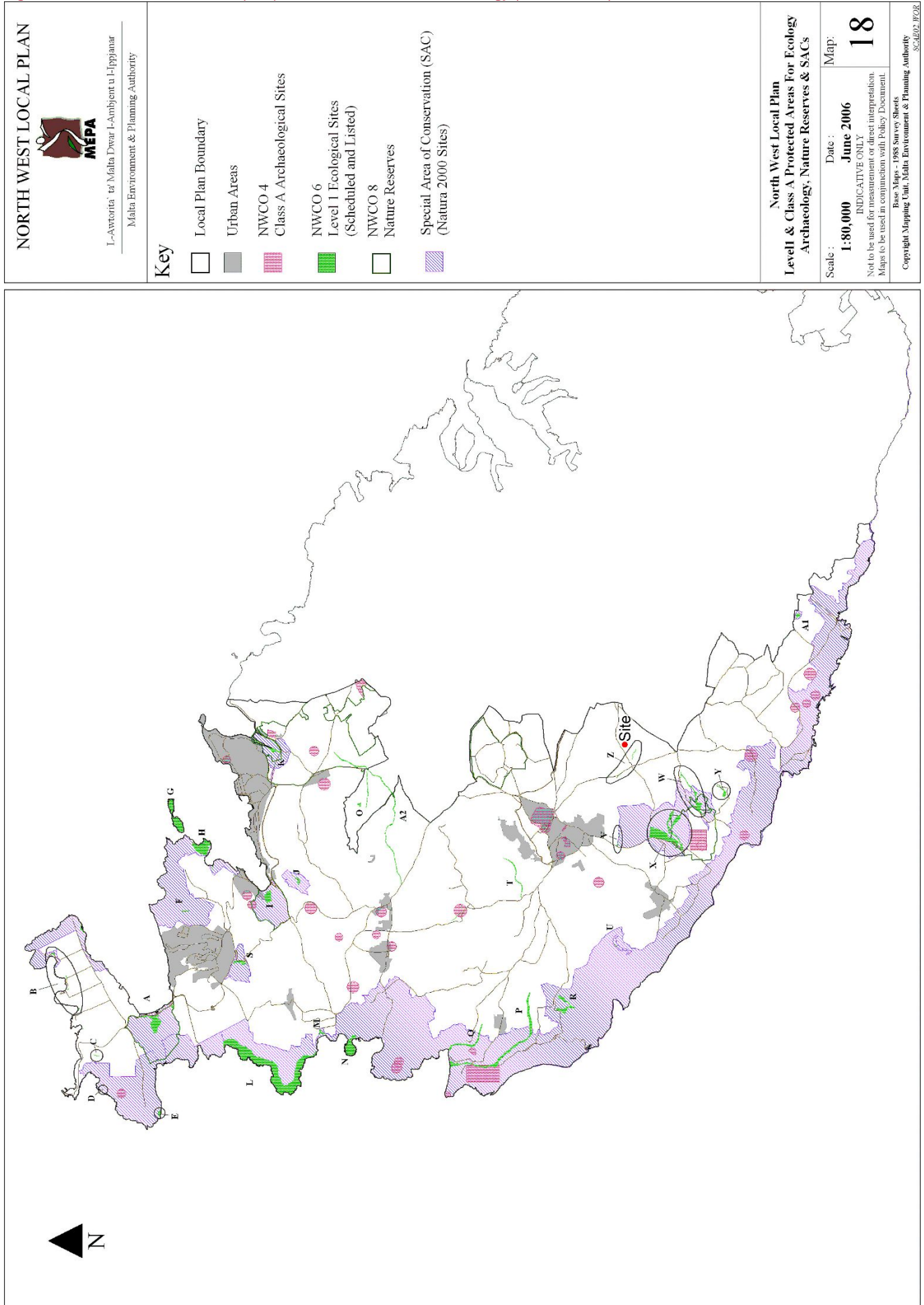


Figure 25: North West Local Plan | Map 4 – Protected Areas for Ecology (GoM, 2006a)



⌋B AEI and SSI scheduling under the Development Planning Act

3.3.4.6 The excerpt from the Planning Authority’s map server in Figure 21 (on page 42) shows part of Il-Buskett at Siggiewi/Dingli/Rabat which is designated, under article 57 of the Development Planning Act (Cap 552) (OSA, 2016, p. 36) as an *Area of Ecological Importance* (AEI) and a *Site of Scientific Importance* (SSI) (GoM, 1996, pp. 4149, 4150 (map)).

⌋C Regulations covering designations connected with ecology

- Figure 22 on page 43) identifies the *Bird Sanctuary* known as *Buskett Gardens & Verdala Palace* as designated under the *Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations* [SL 549.42] (OSA, 2006, p. 55 (map)).
- Figure 23 (on page 44) highlights the tract of land which is designated a *Special Area of Conservation* (SAC) and a *Special Protection Area* (SPA) under the *Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations* [SL 549.44]. The official name is *MT0000018 – L-Inħawi tal-Buskett u tal-Girgenti* (OSA, 2006; Epsilon-Adi, 2014; GoM, 2019, pp. 25,081, 25,082, 25,095 (map)).
- Figure 24 (on page 45) identifies two *Tree Protect Areas* (TPA), namely *Ġnien il-Kbir, Il-Buskett u Wied il-Girgenti* and *Ta’ San Blas (limits of Ir-Rabat and Haż-Żebbuġ)* (OSA, 2018; GoM, 2011, pp. 5861, 5863 (map), 5876 (map))

⌋D Spatial development planning and policy – ecology

Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development

3.3.4.7 *Rural objective 1* states:

To facilitate sustainable rural development and the diversification of activities within the Rural Area to sustain agriculture and safeguard its distinctiveness ...

Among other things this objective is to be attained through support for “... the modernisation of existing animal and arable farms located away from sensitive areas.” (GoM, 2015, p. 25).

North West Local Plan

3.3.4.8 As noted earlier, NWLP Policy NWAG 1 submits that agricultural development in areas of agricultural value should comply with “... other policies within this Local Plan” (GoM, 2006b, p. 57) and one of the Haż-Żebbuġ area policies states that:

The valleys of Wied Incita, Wied San Anton and Wied il-Baqqija are identified as a natural resource in terms of water resources, agriculture, wild life and soil conservation. The appropriate agencies will be encouraged to rehabilitate the valleys by the removal of rubbish and construction waste, and the creation of footpaths in appropriate locations. (GoM, 2026c, p. 257)

3.3.4.9 As is indicated in the *Protected Areas for Ecology* policy map in Figure 25 (on page 46), the Wied San Anton/Wied l-Isqof zone (Z) is considered a location of *Level 1 Ecological Site*, under Policy NWCO 6 (GoM, 2006b, pp. 127, 128)

3.3.5 Cultural heritage

⌋A Description

3.3.5.1 The map server extract from the Planning Authority, shown in Figure 26 (on page 48), identifies two properties that are formally scheduled under Article 57 of the Development Planning Act (Cap 552), namely *Il-Ġnien tal-Kmand and ancillary structures* (GoM, 2009) and a property identified under the *Traditional Buildings in Rare Architectonic Characteristics Muxrabiji Windows* designation (GoM, 2016).

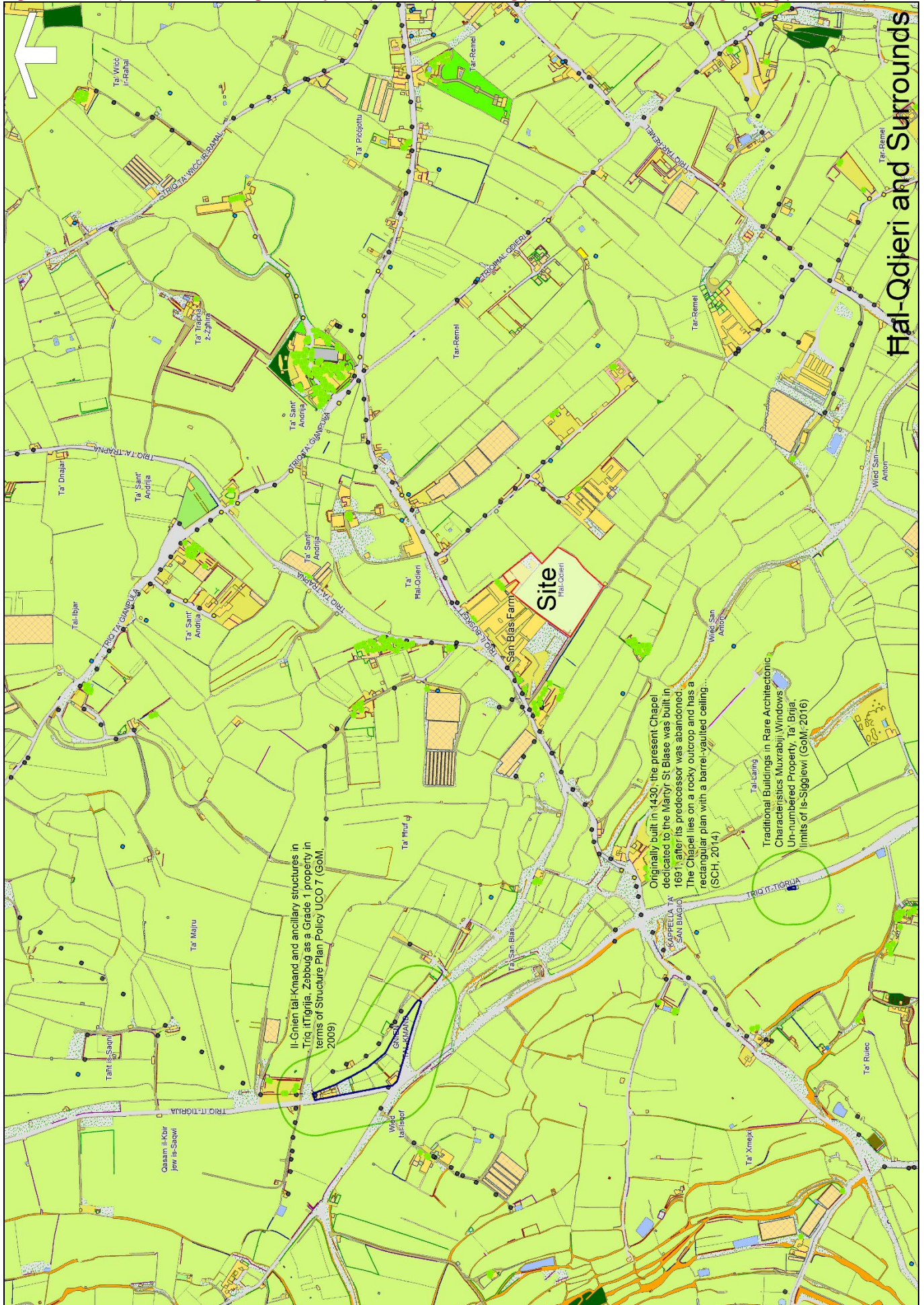
3.3.5.2 It also indicates the location of the St. Blase Chapel (Il-Kappella ta’ San Biagio), which, despite its significant merit, is absent from the server's *Scheduling* layer. This chapel was constructed in 1691 and is considered of *Very High* value in the *National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands* (NICPMI) (SCH, 2014; Wikipedia, 2023).

⌋B Landscape value scheduling under the Development Planning Act

3.3.5.3 The scheduling mentioned above was formalised through the following announcements:

- Government Notice No 590 of 2009: *Il-Ġnien tal-Kmand and ancillary structures in Triq it-Tigrija, Żebbuġ as a Grade 1 property in terms of Structure Plan Policy UCO 7* (GoM, 2009, pp. 10,307, 10,314 (map))
- Government Notice No 1262 of 2016: *Traditional Buildings in Rare Architectonic Characteristics Muxrabiji Windows* (GoM, 2016, pp. 9208, 9213 (map 13))

Figure 26: Excerpt from the Planning Authority's map server | Scheduling (HS) and Scheduled Building Setting (PA, 2025a)



!C Safeguards under the Cultural Heritage Act

3.3.5.4 The *Very High* property assessment for the Chapel of St Blase in the NICPMI Inv No: 2175 was made under Article 53 of the *Cultural Heritage Act* (Cap 445) (OSA, 2002, p. 38; Part IX Special Powers of the State), as is the level of protection required to adequately safeguard this property.

!D Spatial development planning and policy – protected properties

Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development

3.3.5.5 *Thematic Objective 8* states:

To safeguard and enhance biodiversity, cultural heritage ...

Among other things this objective can be attained through the identification, designation, and management of areas, buildings, structures for protection and appreciation (GoM, 2015, p. 22).

Rural Policy and Design Guidance 2014

3.3.5.6 The RPDG Policy 1.2G states that “[p]roposed developments which would have an unacceptable adverse environment, landscape, cultural or archaeological impact will not be permitted.” (GoM, 2014, p. 7; Section 1.2).

3.3.6 Power generation

!A Description

3.3.6.1 As is noted in sections 2.2.1!D and 2.2.2 (on page 22), the annual power consumption of the proposed development would amount to 18,980kWh at the production unit and 28,674.4 kWh at the administrative building. The total would be 47,654kWh.

3.3.6.2 In addition to constituting an extension of an existing livestock farming operation, the proposed development is intended to function as a private sector electricity contributor to the national grid. The anticipated electrical output from the photovoltaic installations affixed to the roofs of both the existing San Blas Farm and the proposed extension is approximately one megawatt, comprising circa 350 kilowatts from the existing San Blas Farm and 650 kilowatts from the extension. The electricity needs of the farm (existing + proposed) and the power generation of photovoltaic panels will be independent of each other.

3.3.6.3 The methodology employed by the Applicant, both historically and as proposed under development application PA/06080/24, aligns with a prevalent practice among livestock farm proprietors and operators across Malta and Gozo in recent years. Photovoltaic panel installations on the roofs of such agricultural establishments have become a characteristic and widespread feature within areas where these farms are concentrated.

!B Regulations covering private sector power generation

3.3.6.4 The export of power from renewable energy to the national grid is and would be carried out under the *Electricity Regulations* [SL 545.34] (OSA, 2021).

!C Spatial development planning and policy – renewables

- The SPED, NWLP, RPDG promote the use of renewable energy through the following provisions:
Thematic Objective 9: To control Greenhouse gas emissions and enhance Malta's capacity to adapt to Climate Change. (GoM, 2015, p. 22)
- In the NWLP, the corresponding policy is NWPU 1. This policy stresses the need for installations to be of a scale “...sympathetic to the character and landform of the North West” (GoM, 2006b, p. 147).
- RPDG Policy 2.11 states that only small-scale photovoltaic panels would be acceptable on rural buildings which do not qualify as protected structures (GoM, 2014, p. 21; Part 2).

3.3.6.5 The provisions in the above-mentioned documents were subsequently updated in the *Solar Farm Policy* (GoM, 2021). The following table summarises the provisions of this policy document:

Table 2: Schedule of proposed tree species

Location Type	Acceptable?	Notes
Large-scale rooftops	Yes	Priority given
Car parks	Yes	Encouraged, especially with EV charging integration
Industrial areas	Yes	Includes areas of containment, garage industry, SME sites
Disused landfills	Yes	Officially closed and remediated
Quarries (not in SACs/SPAs)	Yes	Subject to additional assessment if near protected areas

Table 2: Schedule of proposed tree species

Location Type	Acceptable?	Notes
Agricultural land	No	Not permissible
Open countryside/greenfield	No	Not permissible
Protected/scenic areas	No	Includes SACs, SPAs, archaeological/cultural sites
High landscape sensitivity	No	Excluded due to visual/ecological impact

4.1 Land use

4.1.1 The anticipated significance of the impact of the proposed development upon the land use patterns within the Ta' Sant' Andrija, Hal-Qdieri, and Tar-Remel areas is assessed as **moderate**. The area is distinguished by its intricate complex cultivation patterns comprising both horticulture and livestock farming, as designated in Figure 11 (on page 27).

4.1.2 This moderate level of impact is attributed primarily to two factors. The first is the area's classification under the Corine Land Cover system, which signifies land use patterns that warrant careful consideration. The second is the existence of several livestock farms which have already installed photovoltaic systems across most, if not all, of their rooftops. This suggests a degree of precedent for both infrastructure and renewable energy integration in the locality.

4.1.3 In summary, although the area possesses notable agricultural qualities, the prevailing land use, especially the common application of photovoltaic technology on agricultural structures, results in the impact of the proposed development being classified as indicated above, i.e., moderate.

4.2 Landscape

4.2.1 The principal visual receptors likely to be affected by the proposed development comprise groups of high, medium, and low sensitivity. High-sensitivity receptors include recreational/weekend walkers in the vicinity of the Site. Medium-sensitivity receptors include local farmers and drivers of or passengers in vehicles on the local road network, including Triq it-Tigrija. Receptors of low sensitivity are considered to be those engaged in outdoor sports (e.g., joggers and or cyclists) and others, such as expatriate workers, for whom the quality of views are not a primary focus of their activity.

4.2.2 To establish the visual baseline and assess the potential effects of the proposal, reference was made to images from two viewpoints (VP).

- VP1, located west of Hal-Qdieri near the Chapel of St Blase, provides views illustrated in the baseline photograph (in Figure 27 on page 52) and corresponding photomontage (in the subsequent Figure 28).
- VP2, located on Triq it-Tigrija approximately 550 m south of the chapel, corresponds to the baseline photograph (in Figure 29 on page 53) and photomontage (in the subsequent Figure 30). These viewpoints were chosen to be representative of views experienced by the receptors identified in paragraph 4.2.1.

4.2.3 The magnitude of the proposed extension is judged to be **high**. This is primarily due to the introduction of a new built form that would be of a larger scale and massing than the prevailing features that dominate and define the existing landscape character, such as the larger greenhouses and livestock farms (including their rooftop photovoltaic panels).

4.2.4 Based on the above-mentioned magnitude of change and the sensitivity of the identified receptors, the proposed development is predicted to result in a significant on the visual amenity of the area. This assessment is made with reference to the baseline photography and photomontages presented in Figure 27 to Figure 30. These visualisations were submitted to the Planning Authority via the e-Applications portal as part of the outline development permission application (Ref: PA/03395/20; Doc 83b).

4.2.5 The mitigation strategy for the proposed development incorporates both embedded and additional measures. Embedded mitigation includes the use of external walls constructed from Lower Globigerina Limestone blocks; the natural weathering of this material over the medium to long term is expected to ameliorate the initial visual impact.

4.2.6 Additional mitigation comprises a comprehensive tree planting scheme, the information about which is provided in Figure 6 (on page 18), Table 1 (on page 22), and paragraph 2.2.2 (on page 23). To ensure this planting achieves its maximum potential for screening and landscape integration, it would be important for the trees to be provided with adequate plant nutrition, and if required protection.

Figure 27: Baseline view from the west of Hal-Qdieri in the near vicinity of Il-Kappella ta' San Biagio



Figure 28: View of the proposed from the west of Hal-Qdieri in the near vicinity of Il-Kappella ta' San Biagio



Figure 29: Baseline view from the southwest of Hal-Qdieri along Triq it-Tigrija



Figure 30: View of the proposed from the southwest of Hal-Qdieri along Triq it-Tigrija



4.3 Geo-environment and hydrology

4.3.1 Geology and geomorphology

4.3.1.1 Typically, the impact on geology will be of high significance, mainly as no mitigation measures can be taken. On the other hand, the existing geomorphologic profile will not be changing, so the significance of the impact will be neutral.

4.3.2 Hydrology and water bodies

4.3.2.1 The discussion in section 3.3.3 (on pages 33 to 41) is indicative that the impact on hydrology and ground water bodies can be of very high significance and adverse, if the provisions of the following Regulations:

- Waste Management (Activity Registration) Regulations [SL 549.45] (OSA, 2007).
- Nitrates Action Programme Regulations [SL 549.66] (OSA, 2011).

are not adhered to rigorously.

4.3.3 Ecology

4.3.3.1 The farm operations will not have an impact on the protected areas identified in Figure 21 to Figure 24 (on pages 42 to 45).

4.3.3.2 The discussion on ecology on pages 41 to 47 indicates in the *Protected Areas for Ecology* policy map in Figure 25 (on page 46), that the Wied San Anton/Wied l-Isqof zone (Z) is considered a location of *Level 1 Ecological Site*, under NWLP Policy NWCO 6 (GoM, 2006b, pp. 127, 128).

4.3.3.3 On the part of the project in question, the Regulations referred to in respect to hydrology would need to be adhered to scrupulously.

4.3.4 Cultural heritage

4.3.4.1 None of the assets discussed in section 3.3.5 (on page 47 et seq), should be expected to be affected in one way or another by the proposed development.

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