

Environmental Impact Assessment

Screening according to Schedule III of S.L. 549.46

PA Reference no.: PA/03666/26

Project Title: To sanction replacement structure in lieu of greenhouse approved by PA/01625/18 and change of use to snail farm. To replace existing above ground reservoir structure covered by PA/01625/18 to small Class 4B retail outlet. Sanctioning of extension, porch and canopy to existing approved pre-1967 and covered by PA/07168/17 old rural structure and rehabilitation into residence. Extension of same structure at ground floor and at first floor. To sanction variations in landscape works as approved by PA/01625/18 and PA/07168/17.

Location: Ta' Netta, Triq Tal-Kalkara, Dingli

Screening date: 04 September 2026

I. BACKGROUND

1. Outline of Proposal

1.1 The proposal involves the development of a small-scale open-air snail farm at an existing agricultural site in Dingli. It includes the replacement of an approved greenhouse with a snail farming facility and the change of use along with extension of an existing rural structure into a residence with retail elements, and the sanctioning of previously approved landscaping variations.

1.2 The proposed interventions include the:

- Development of an open-air snail farm using the Short Cycle Method;
- Installation of demountable net cages and associated irrigation infrastructure;
- Replacement of the approved greenhouse to a structure used for storage, packaging and loading;
- Rehabilitation and extension of the existing rural structure into a residence with retail elements; and
- Sanctioning of landscape works and other previously approved variations.

1.3 Existing site access will be retained, with low-intensity traffic limited to operational, delivery and maintenance activities.



Figure 1: Plan of the proposed development (Source: PDS Dated July 2026).

2. Site context

2.1 The site (Figures 2-3) is situated within the northern part of Dingli in an area which is predominantly characterised by agricultural land and farms. The site is surrounded by fields and is adjacent to a stable, two conglomerates of farms to the east with the smaller one located closer the development, while the settlement of Dingli is 250m to the south.

2.2 The site is situated approximately:

- 200m east of Sistema ta' Widien tas-Salina, minn Wied Liemu sa Wied taċ-Ċawlsli which is an Area of Ecological Importance and Site of Scientific importance as per Government Notice (G.N.) 1235 of 2012; and
- 700m west of Ġnien il-Kbir, il-Buskett u Wied il-Girgenti which is a Tree Protection Area as per G.N. 473 of 2011.



Figure 2: Close-up aerial ortho-photo showing the location of the site (Source: PA Geoserver 2024).

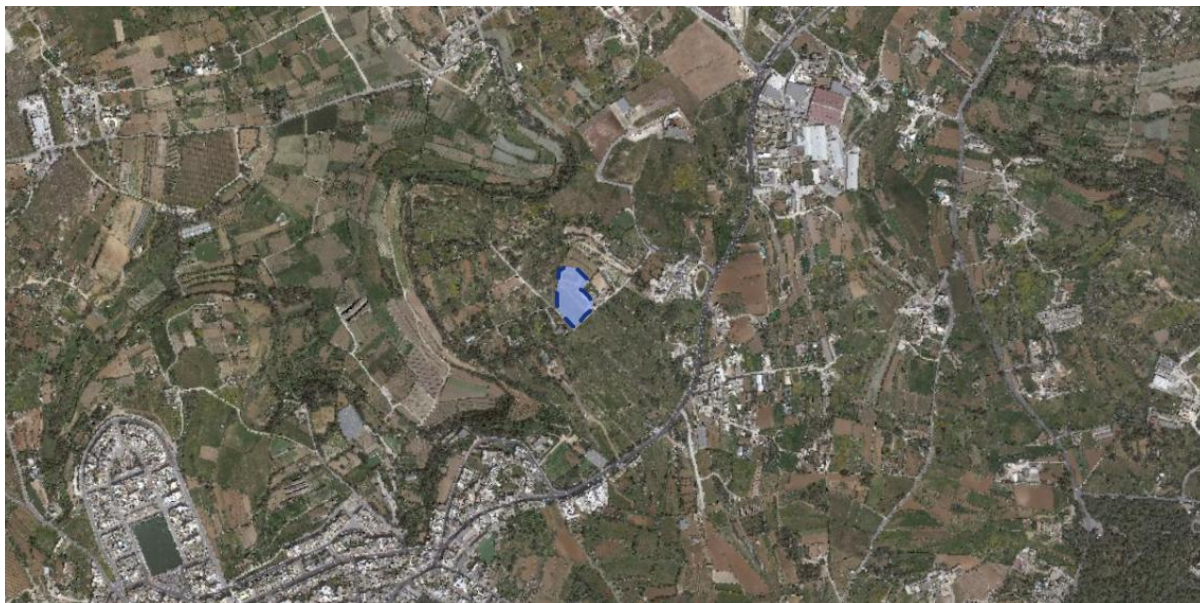


Figure 3: Aerial ortho-photo showing the location of the site (*Source: PA Geoserver, 2024*).

3. Case history

The site was previously subject to the below planning applications and enforcement notice:

- PA/02317/09: Outline application to construct stables. (Two proposed options are being submitted for MEPA consideration to choose one) – approved;
- PA/07168/17: To consolidate rural structures by merging pre-1994 rooms to pre-1968 Rural structure and cladding of gate in timber – approved;
- PA/01625/18: To construct an underground and above ground reservoir and a pump-room, install traditional wind driven pump and green house – approved;
- PA/09046/19: To alter barumbara structure used as a former residence and change of use from agricultural stores to residential room, extension to the dwelling and proposed swimming pool – refusal; and
- EC/00830/96: Construction of room without permit – Illegality removed.

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 the following Category II criteria in Schedule I:

- 8.1.2.9 (ii) – Any establishment rearing: (i) exotic animals (e.g. emus, ostriches, kangaroos, or crocodiles), whether for consumption or otherwise; or (ii) other animals (e.g. snails, insects or frogs) that can create an ecological imbalance or other impacts if they escape into the wild. Therefore, the proposal was screened in terms of the EIA Regulations.

4.2 Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Screening (citations refer to S.L. 549.44, except where otherwise specified)

The proposal lies in the vicinity of the following Natura 2000 sites:

- 300m south of L-Għar tal-Iburdan u l-Inħawi tal-Madwar (MT0000025) which is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC); and
- 700m west of L-Inħawi tal-Buskett u tal-Girgenti (MT0000018) which is a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Special Area of Conservation of International Importance as per G.N. 1522 of 2019.

5 Documents used for screening

- a. Project Description Statement (PDS) which was referred to ERA on 17/07/2026.

II. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

6 Assessment of Impacts and Ancillary Considerations

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

Land use

6.1 The proposed development consists of two components. The first involves the installation of an open-air snail farm in place of the previously approved above-ground reservoir, together with the change of use of an approved greenhouse into a galvanised steel structure to be used for loading, storage and packing.

6.2 The second component relates to the existing structure located at the entrance to the site. This involves the sanctioning of several already constructed elements, the change of use of the structure from an agricultural store to a dwelling, together with the proposed extensions and the incorporation of retail (Class 4B) elements.

6.3 The installation of an open-air snail farm along with the change in use of the approved green house into storage, which will be replacing the above ground reservoir is not envisaged to have a significant impact in terms of land use in view that it is considered in line with the surrounding environment.

6.4 With regard to the sanctioning of the change of use of the agricultural stores into a dwelling incorporating retail elements, together with the proposed extensions, it is noted that residential use is already established on site. However, ERA has concerns regarding the introduction of retail use within this location, particularly in view of the site's ODZ context.

Construction-phase impacts

6.5 The proposal is expected to generate dust, noise and vibrations during the construction phases, especially during excavation works. Such potential impacts are temporary and can be minimised at source as long as the requirements outlined in the Environmental Management Construction Site Regulations (S.L. 552.09) are properly adhered to.

Operation-phase impacts

6.6 Impacts on air quality or noise are primarily related to vehicular trips to and from the site. Considering the nature of the proposed development there are no significant effects are envisaged from an air quality or noise perspective.

6.7 Any operational waste generation will consist of common municipal waste, which is not significant subject that waste is managed in accordance with the afore-mentioned Waste Regulations (S.L. 549.63), and efforts are done to recycle and reduce waste generation at source.

6.8 The proposed snail farm is a small-scale operation, and the species to be bred, *Cornu aspersum*, are native to the Maltese Islands. Consequently, the risk of significant impacts on surrounding agricultural land is not considered significant. Nevertheless, it is essential that the mitigation measures identified in the PDS, including the installation of effective perimeter barriers and the implementation of ecological monitoring, are fully implemented.

Screening Outcome

The above EIA screening concludes that the proposed development does not require an EIA in accordance with Regulation 15 of S.L. 549.46.

7 Screening in terms of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44):

As mentioned in section 4.2 above, the proposal lies in the vicinity to two protected areas (SAC and SPA). Due to the nature of the proposed development and that the proposal will be limited to the existing already built area, no significant negative impacts are envisaged on the protected area. In this regard, no further assessment in terms of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44) is required.

8 Permitting requirements

Should any operations falling under the Environmental Permitting (Procedure for Applications and their Determinations) S.L.549.172 be eventually carried out within the facility, an environmental permit for the related operation would be required.

Application forms can be found on <https://eris.eraportal.org.mt/>

It is also being recommended that the Plant Protection Directorate be contacted regarding the requirement of any permits pertaining to Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS).

III. ERA CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

The above screening concludes that the environmental impacts of the proposed development are unlikely to be significant to the point of warranting further detailed studies. No further assessment in terms of the EIA Regulations (S.L. 549.46) and the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44) is required. ERA does not object to the proposal from an environmental point of view, subject to the conditions in Annex II.

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.