

Partial Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006)

Magtab Planning Strategy Area Public Consultation Draft



February 2017

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Appendix 1: Phase 1 Objectives Public Submissions

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Government has directed the Planning Authority to undertake a Partial Local Plan Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006), for the preparation of a Strategy for the Maghtab Planning Area as indicated on Map 1 Maghtab Planning Strategy Boundary below.
- 1.2 This Partial Review is required in view of the need to establish and update the planning policy guidance for the identified Maghtab Planning Strategy Area. The current guidance is lacking and does not adequately address current and future development and environmental context improvement needs faced by the Planning Authority and that can satisfactorily lead to a general upgrading of the area.



Map 1: Maghtab Planning Strategy Boundary

2.0 Proposed Objectives and Proposals

2.1 The Government's Objectives for the Partial Review of the Central Malta Local Plan (2006) Maghtab Planning Strategy are as follows:

- a) To define the boundary for a Maghtab Planning Strategy;**
- b) To prepare a land use framework which designates distinctive character areas within Maghtab to address conflicting land uses;**
- c) To prepare a policy framework for each character area which seeks to:**
 - i. Contain urban sprawl;**
 - ii. Protect the environment;**
 - iii. Strengthen agricultural activities;**
 - iv. Enhance residential amenity; and**
 - v. Contain and regulate existing industrial and or commercial activities.**
- d) Identify additional measures to protect and enhance the character of the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area.**

2.2. These objectives were issued for an initial Phase 1 Objectives Public Consultation held between the 19th September to 7th October, 2016. 5 submissions have been received which are included within Appendix 1 Objectives Phase 1 Public Consultation Responses to this document. These can be summarised as follows: 1 submission from an SME garage industry showing an interest in the public consultation; 1 submission relating to a large agricultural farming brownfield site requesting a change of use for light industrial/warehousing use; 2 submissions from a resident and the Maghtab Residents Association requesting that they be involved in the review process and finally a submission that relates to a site outside the boundary of the area requesting consideration.

2.3 The main planning strategy proposals to be achieved to fulfil the initial Objectives are summarized as follows:

a) The designation of a boundary that encapsulates the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area is being identified. This boundary covers the predominant committed development areas of Maghtab centred around the:

- i. The area that relates to Maghtab as being a separate developed area from adjacent areas such as Bahar ic-Caghaq, Salina and Burmarrad;
- ii. The predominant road network currently servicing the area namely Triq il-Kappella ta' Santa Maria, Triq ir-Ramla, Sqaq Habel Zwejra, Sqaq il-Qbiela and Trejjet L'Arznu as the main access routes within the area;
- iii. The predominant clustered areas of activity based on the five main character areas as per (b) below; and
- iv. The main area that relates to the CMLP (2006) Policy CG04 requirement for the identification of a residential settlement area in Maghtab.

b) The formulation of a policy framework for the area that addresses existing issues experienced within the existing character area land uses includes:

- The wider Agricultural Areas that include characteristic rural landscape areas incorporating an Animal Husbandry Area, widespead Arable/Horticultural Areas and the need to sustain, promote and improve these areas as a priority goal of this Partial Review.
- The delineation of a focused Residential Settlement Area forming the Maghtab Settlement Area centred along the main road routes as required by Central Malta Local Plan (2006) Policy CG04.

- An amelioration of the situation faced with the existing industrial, warehousing and open storage land uses that are required to be addressed through a containment strategy. These are to be addressed through initiatives that encourage mitigation measures to reduce conflicts with adjacent residential land uses and thereby improve residential amenity in the area and also the change of use to a lesser impacting land use in the longer term.
 - The consideration of present and future national Waste Management Utility requirements and possible extensions to the current Civic Amenity Site operations adjacent to the ex-Maghtab landfill.
 - Generally improving the transport access and circulation in the area to minimise the impact of heavy traffic within the main settlement roads including the upgrading of Sqaq Habel Zwejra and its future possible connectivity to Triq ir-Ramla.
- c) The Plan also introduces planning direction and clarity in the area that guides towards an approach that reduces long term conflicts between land uses, whilst safeguarding the predominant agricultural activity and rural characteristic and nature of the wider Maghtab area, thereby ameliorating the current situation.

3.0 The Maghtab Area

- 3.1 The Maghtab Area forms part of the locality of Naxxar and is located to the east of Burmarrad, west of Bahar ic-Caghaq, south of Salina and north of the the Naxxar/Gharghur Great Fault. Maghtab is characteristically a rural and agricultural activity area of mostly flat land along an extensive plain. This plain incorporates agricultural, residential and other land uses that have developed over long periods of activity but increasingly becoming more urbanised since the late 1960s. The area traditionally contained scattered farmhouses and rural buildings, animal farms and horticultural areas that form the main primary land use in the area. Development originally focused around main roads and the formation of a substantially large animal farming area to the north west and with arable farming fields to the east and south. Within the northernmost extent outside the area of study is located the ex-Maghtab landfill area and also the geographical extent of the Wied ta' Kieli valley area that proceeds into the coastal area of Bahar ic-Caghaq and other environmentally protected areas along the coast.
- 3.2 The Central Malta Local Plan (2006) had identified the emergence of a residential component that had evolved into an outside development zone (ODZ) rural settlement cluster. This was zoned as a Category 2 ODZ Rural Settlement. This settlement had not however been defined within the Local Plan. The area also incorporates an old chapel Kappella ta' Santa Marija that includes also an open space and parvis and forms the only social and community facility in the area.
- 3.3 A number of industrial concerns also established themselves in later years. These sites were initially agricultural related concerns in the late 1960s but were followed with industrial operations that presently also include a mix of batching/construction plants, warehousing, open storage and garage SME type industries. This mix of uses has led to incompatibility of land uses that requires the establishment of a containment strategy and planning policy guidance for the area to reduce land use impacts in the longer term.

- 3.4 Furthermore, the onset of the Maghtab landfill (now undergoing rehabilitation) and the development of a number of these industrial concerns had affected the general rural landscape character of the area substantially. The landfill may have also affected and led to a temporary downturn of animal farming activity in the past. This is being addressed and improvements in the general character of the area have been achieved through landscaping and other programmes being followed, as well as, measures to reduce past impacts. This reversal has led to a revival of animal farming in Maghtab.
- 3.5 The industrial activity on the otherhand still lacks the required measures to reduce conflicts within the area, including appropriate mitigation, such as landscaping and other measures. The area is also characterised with enforcements over inappropriate land uses that need to be addressed mostly relating to industrial related and open storage activity. This unplanned industrial activity has had an adverse impact on the distinct characteristics of this rural area including a reduction of open countryside and fields that have been built over or disturbed through the activity. Other issues have arisen from abandoned farms that have not been reactivated and eventually resulted in brownfield sites that scar the traditional rural landscape of the area. Other significant threats in Maghtab include dumping (reduced substantially after the civic amenity site was introduced), fragmentation of sites, road formation and upkeep, obnoxious industry impacts and agricultural malpractices that may still be evident in the area.
- 3.6 The Partial Review aims to ameliorate on this general situation and guide towards an improved long term scenario for Maghtab through the Maghtab Planning Strategy.

4.0 Strategic Guidance

4.1. This Partial Review is guided strategically by the ‘Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED), 2015’. The SPED highlights in Para 1.2 the need to follow a ‘containment strategy’ to limit urban sprawl. This is apparent over the years in Maghtab which transformed from a sparsely developed typically rural area to a more developed and urbanised area. SPED Para 1.23 clearly describes the changes that have been experienced in the countryside such as the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area as follows:

‘The rural areas of the Maltese Islands reflect the continuum of activities from very rural to very urban which blurs the distinction between the two.’

SPED Para 1.4 defines the ‘need for the efficient use of available space’ and the ‘regulation of design and operations of development to reduce conflicts between uses’. The latter is evident in that the area has a wide range of land uses varying from agricultural to residential to heavy industry requiring planning guidance.

4.2 Furthermore, the following summarised SPED Policies are also relevant to this area namely:

- The SPED Vision for the Rural Area that ‘The Rural Area shall sustain the livelihood of the farming communities through modernisation of agricultural practices and diversification of compatible rural activities...with less buildings and dereliction,...’;
- Policy TO 1.10 Socio-economic development seeks to ensure that rural areas are not exploited by uses which are not legitimate or necessary.

- Policy TO 6.1 Controlling the location, design and operation of development.
- Policy TO 6.2 Identifying and designating pollution hotspotscontamination, and focusing resources for positive action and improvement.
- Policy TO 7.1 Controlling the location of development to prevent soil sealing and erosion, and

The Rural Area SPED Policies specifically that are also directly applicable:

- Policy RO 1.1 Protecting good quality agricultural land from development.
- Policy RO 1.2 Supporting the modernisation of existing animal and arable farms located away from sensitive areas.
- Objective RO 3 to guide development which is either justified to be located in the Rural Area...whilst ensuring the improvement of the quality of the rural environment by:
 - Policy RO 3.1 Setting out a policy framework to control the location and design of such development and guide appropriate environmental measures.
 - Policy RO 3.3 Controlling the cumulative effect of such development.
- Policy RO 4.6 Reviewing the hierarchy of rural settlements to guide the nature, scale and type of development within them.

5.0 Maghtab Planning Strategy Area Policy

5.1 Within the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area the following Area Policies are applicable:

CMMB 01 The Maghtab Planning Strategy Area

The boundary for the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area is shown on Map MTB 1 Maghtab Planning Strategy Area Policy Map.

The Maghtab Planning Strategy Area is identified primarily as an agricultural activity area. This agricultural area is to be maintained, conserved, consolidated and rehabilitated, whilst protecting its wider rural context, nature and character. This approach extends to important rural features that constitute the basic elements of the rural fabric, including the soil resource, rubble walling, mature trees and traditional rural constructions that are to be conserved.

This Strategy Area is subdivided into five main zones:

- a) **Animal Husbandry Area**
- b) (i) **Arable Farming Areas**
(ii) **Arable Farming Buffer Area**
- c) **Maghtab Residential Settlement Area**
- d) **Industrial Clusters, and**
- e) **Waste Management Utilities Area**

The Maghtab Planning Strategy guides future development within Maghtab on the basis of the following planning principles:

- **containing urban sprawl,**
- **protecting the environment,**
- **enhancing the residential amenity, and**
- **containing and regulating existing industrial and or commercial activities.**

The identification of additional measures to protect and enhance the character of the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area are encouraged. These may include mitigation measures such as landscaping buffers between incompatible land uses.

In cases of existing developments, the provisions of the Rural Policy and Design Guidance, 2014 (RPDG) shall be applicable. In considering proposals for alternative land-uses to existing development within the context of the RPDG, the Planning Authority shall support changes to land uses in line with the general designations of this Policy.

Additionally, the provisions of the following Subsidiary Policies are not applicable to the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area as indicated on Map MTB 1 namely:

- I. Fireworks Factory Complexes Policy, 2014**
- II. Fuel Service Stations Policy, 2015**

The Maghtab Planning Strategy Area is designated by the boundary as indicated on Map MTB 1. The Maghtab Planning Strategy Area is being identified following an extensive survey and analysis of the area and its development. The Strategy Area is subdivided into five predominant Character Areas that include an Animal Husbandry Area, Arable Farming Areas and an Arable Farming Buffer Area, the Maghtab Residential Settlement Area and other areas pertaining to Industry Clusters and an existing Waste Management Utilities Area.

The agricultural activity in Maghtab is identified as the priority land use to be encouraged and sustained as this is the most important positive contributor towards the long term conservation of the wider rural character and context.

The other Character Areas are guided by respective specific policy guidance for each Area. Maghtab also includes a wide variety of land uses many of which conflict with adjacent land uses but that have established over time in the area including batching plants, plant yards, garage industries as well as a substantial number of currently disused buildings awaiting redevelopment. This mix gives Maghtab a disorganised appearance and leads to a decreased rural quality and amenity.

The aim of this policy is to guide existing conflicting land uses by preventing the further development of incompatible uses in the area and by directing further growth to specific character areas as defined in the policies below. This strategy seeks to reach a balance by allowing the consolidation of these character areas through sustainable development and the protection of the overall rural character and wider rural context and by preventing new inappropriate developments that would adversely affect the Maghtab area. The acceptable land uses in these settlements are aimed at ensuring the genuine needs of these character areas are met.

An area is planned as an Arable Farming Buffer Area between the Animal Husbandry Area and the Residential Settlement Area to retain an adequate buffer between the two land uses. Within this buffer area, new animal farming is restricted to allow for an

appropriate buffer between residences and farms to limit impacts.

Furthermore in the interest of protecting the delineated Residential Settlement the consideration of firework factories and fuel service stations is not supported within the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area as designated on Map MTB 1.

Given that mature trees, the soil resource and rubble walling constitute important components of natural and semi-natural ecosystems and are also important aesthetic features of the rural landscape and within rural settlements, these are protected. Trees associated with rural settlements are to consist of indigenous or archaeophytic species.

CMMB 02 Animal Husbandry Area

In line with Policy CMMB 01, the consolidation, improvement, promotion and sustaining of the Animal Husbandry Area is encouraged and supported through the upgrading of and extensions to existing and new Animal Husbandry Farms.

Within the Animal Husbandry Area only the following policies of the RPDG, 2014 are applicable:

- Policy 2.2A New farm dwellings for dairy or swine livestock farmers**
- Policy 2.3A: Existing Livestock Farm Units (Including pre-1994 Farms)**
- Policy 2.3B: New or relocated Livestock Farms**
- Policy 2.4: Slaughterhouse development within operational**

livestock farms (rabbits and poultry only)

Policy 2.11 Small scale Photo voltaic Panels

Part 5: Animal Sanctuaries, Animal Enclosures, Stables and Horse Riding/Establishments

Measures to improve the efficiency of farm operations, upgrade and modernise facilities and farm related infrastructure and limit impacts on the surrounding areas, including attention to satisfactory site boundary treatment and landscaping are encouraged taking into account the requirements of Policy 2.9 of the RPDG, 2014.

The Maghtab Planning Strategy Area incorporates an extensive Animal Husbandry Area to the north west of Maghtab as indicated on Map MTB 1. This cluster of animal farms constitutes an intensive agricultural zone. The SPED Rural Policy Objective 1 supports the modernisation of existing animal farms and requires subsidiary plans to identify intensive agricultural zones.

The further consolidation, sustaining and upgrading of this animal farming zone is encouraged as an important agricultural economic operation. Redevelopment including consideration of extensions or new developments is to lead to an improved and efficient operation of the animal husbandry unit and limit surrounding impacts through the introduction of additional measures such as adequate landscaping boundary treatment.

It is noted that not all the policies of the RPDG, 2014 are applicable to this area except for those above mentioned policies that consolidate and enhance the intended strategy for this sub-area.

CMMB 03 Arable Farming Areas/Arable Farming Buffer Area

In line with Policy CMMB 01, the improvement of land for arable and horticultural purposes in the Arable Farming Areas is encouraged and supported.

Within the identified Arable Farming Areas, Part 2 and Part 3 of the RPDG, 2014 are applicable excluding the policies and parts listed under Policy CMMB 02.

Within the Arable Farming Buffer Area no new Animal Husbandry Farming development/extensions are permitted.

The Maghtab Arable Farming Areas are designated as shown on Map MTB 1. The Maghtab Planning Strategy Area involves widespread land use related to arable farming. This in effect constitutes the predominant land use in terms of land area. The continued upkeep of the agricultural fields within vibrant agricultural use and the related conservation of the important rural features within them including, the soil resource, rubble walling, mature trees and rural constructions is important for the retention and conservation of the wider Maghtab Rural Area character, context and nature. This is in line with the SPED Rural Policy Objective 1 for protecting good quality agricultural land from development.

This activity therefore plays a dual role as an important agricultural economic operation in itself and as a major contributor to the upkeep of the rural environment and context of the area. The vibrant agricultural land use in this area is considered as the main primary land use of the Maghtab area that is being sustained and promoted.

It is noted that not all the policies of the RPDG, 2014 are applicable to this area except for those above mentioned policies that consolidate and enhance the intended strategy for this area.

CMMB 04 Maghtab Residential Settlement Area

The Maghtab Residential Settlement Area is designated as a Category 2 Rural ODZ Settlement where the provisions of General Policy CG04 shall apply with the exception of Sections B and C.

Encroachments within the Arable Farming Areas shall only be considered provided the overall footprint of the proposed building located within the designated Residential Settlement Area and the Arable Farming Area does not exceed the 150 sqm in line with the provisions of Policy CG04.

The Maghtab Residential Settlement is designated as shown on Map MTB 1. The delineation of this residential settlement fulfils the requirements of General Policy CG04 Category 2 Rural Settlements and Map NAB 7 Naxxar Policy Inset Map Maghtab Rural Settlement.

The Maghtab Residential Settlement Area delineation focuses upon the predominant cluster of dwellings in the central area of Maghtab with frontages onto Triq il-Kappella ta' Santa Marija up to the Santa Marija Chapel and part of Triq ir-Ramla that form a consolidated settlement streetscape. This residential area is planned as a linear settlement with frontages onto these main access roads. The Maghtab Settlement includes residential units of varying types and design. The settlement itself lacks an identifiable public space area apart from the Santa Marija Chapel and parvis to the east of the crossroads between the above mentioned roads. In this respect, the openness of this area and space around the Chapel is being protected by the policy to

create an identifiable core area. This delineation does not include dispersed rural dwellings that are located all over the Maghtab Strategy Area and which do not form a physically connected part of the settlement cluster even though being located in Maghtab itself.

The policy guides existing and new residential development including infill development to consolidate the existing predominant settlement form and dwelling clusters. The policy also emphasises the need for attention to redevelopment and new development proposals to create and/or sustain a rural context to dwelling design within this settlement and resist proposals with a predominantly urban character so as to sustain the rural characteristics of the area.

Although in general road widening is not necessary, in cases of redevelopment a realignment of development frontage may be required by the Planning Authority to improve the general road alignment that has developed organically in certain areas.

Policy CG04 requires restrictions on site planning, footprints, building heights, and car-parking provision that are being followed in this policy to ensure that all new development will not create unacceptable impacts. Strict criteria for the identification of “existing buildings” and “uncommitted land” are also identified by the policy to ensure that the minimum amount of fresh land is taken up by development, in line with the overall strategy of consolidation. The elimination of blank party walls, leading to the visual enhancement of the settlement, was the main objective of this definition. These shall continue to be applicable within the Maghtab Residential Settlement Area.

CMMB 05 Industrial Clusters

Within the Industrial Clusters, light industry (Class 5A), general industry (Class 5B) and warehousing and open storage (Class 6A) will be

considered. The range of allowable industrial land uses within sites which already accommodate industrial activity shall be considered on a case by case basis within the context of this strategy.

Further development within the Industrial Clusters shall in general seek to improve industrial activities and to reduce deleterious impacts on surrounding land uses in Maghtab.

Redevelopment or intensification of industrial uses will only be considered by the Planning Authority if this leads to a general improvement in the site. The scale of development or intensification shall be considered within the context of existing development within the site and its immediate surroundings.

Within the industrial development site that directly abuts residential units the introduction of mitigation measures to reduce impacts on adjacent land uses is required, including landscaping of at least 3m green, landscaping buffer space.

Past development in Maghtab introduced an element of industrial land use into this area. This land use was and remains an extraneous and negatively impacting land use that is alien and not conducive to the conservation of the rural character and context of the area. In this respect, the policy guides towards a containment of these land uses to specific clusters.

CMMB 06 Site Specific Considerations

The provisions of this policy shall apply only to Sites A, B and C as shown on Map MTB 1.

For each of the Sites A, B and C, the following conditions shall apply:

- a) The site shall be covered by a single development application providing a comprehensive plan;**
- b) Only residential land-use will be considered, provided that each dwelling unit complies with Policy CMMB 04 in terms of footprint and floorspace;**
- c) Built site coverage is not to exceed 40% of the site area. The remaining 60% of the site is to accommodate access requirements, open space provision and green boundary landscaping treatment with tree planting;**
- d) Overall height of buildings should not exceed two floors without semi basement. Structures at roof level shall only provide access to the roof;**
- e) Development is to introduce rural design features within the new dwelling design; and**
- f) Underground development shall be restricted to the footprint of the building.**

In the interim period to the approval of a comprehensive plan for each site, the provisions of RPDG 14 shall continue to apply within the context of policy CMMB 1.

A number of industrial sites that are located outside the designated industrial clusters but constitute committed development will continue to operate under said permit. These specific sites are earmarked specifically as priority sites for a change of use in the longer term should this be followed through comprehensive upgrading and development. This is being favourably considered by the Planning Authority to provide for an ameliorated environment of the Residential Settlement Area.

These sites are thus being earmarked for consideration by the Planning Authority as areas for comprehensive planning whereby their change of use to residential land use will be favourably considered subject to a master plan guided by the above mentioned conditions (a) to (f).

Should this redevelopment not be followed in the shorter term the use of site as per existing legal permit and conditions will continue with the introduction of mitigation measures including the introduction of boundary treatment around these sites.

CMMB 07 Waste Management Utilities Area

Within the Waste Management Utilities Area the extension, improvement and upgrading of existing and new waste management facilities, including the existing Maghtab Civic Amenity Site, will be supported by the Planning Authority for an efficient waste management operation adjacent to the ex-Maghtab Landfill.

Within the area adjacent to the ex-Maghtab Landfill there are located a number of existing waste management operations including the Maghtab Civic Amenity Site. The continued efficient operation of these sites may require future interventions including

the consideration of extensions and upgrading projects. In this respect, the Planning Authority will consider such development in the area indicated on Map MBT 1.

No such development will be considered in the Arable Farming Buffer Area designated in line with Policy CMMB 03. New or redevelopment projects are also to introduce the necessary boundary treatment in the form of landscaping as may be required by the Planning Authority.

CMMB 08 Transport Access Improvements

The Planning Authority supports transport measures to improve road access within the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area. These include the improvement of the Sqaq Habel Zwejra and its connection to Triq ir-Ramla to introduce a more efficient circulation and access between the Animal Farming Area and the Waste Management Facilities and arterial road network as indicated on the Map MTB 1.

The roads in Maghtab have developed organically with little or no planning following existing rural tracks and development over time. One particular such instance is the present state of Sqaq Habel Zwejra which constitutes the main and only access servicing the Animal Husbandry Area and involves the movement of vehicles related to farm operations. Traffic management and farm vehicle movement directly within the Maghtab Residential Settlement Area roads can be greatly reduced if the upgrading of this road is followed including the early connectivity to Triq ir-Ramla of Sqaq Habel Zwejra. This is intended to also have the additional benefit of providing the consolidated farm area with a direct shorter access to the waste management site facilities and arterial road network. The introduction of a direct connection between Sqaq Habel Zwejra and Triq ir-Ramla would thus increase connectivity and circulation between the Animal Husbandry Farming Area and the Waste Management Facilities

Area, reduce through traffic from the residential settlement roads and incentivise increased use of waste recycling facilities.

6.0 Public Consultation

6.1 The Planning Authority invites individuals and organizations to send their representations pertaining to the Maghtab Planning Strategy Area Public Consultation Draft.

Representations are to be made in writing to the:

The Director of Planning,
Planning Authority,
Partial Review of the Central Malta Local Plan
(Maghtab Planning Strategy Area),
P.O. Box 200, Marsa GPO 01

or on the email address: maghtab.cmlp@pa.org.mt

Submissions are to be sent to the Authority by Thursday 30th
March 2017.

