

Grand Harbour Local Plan

Approved Plan

April 2002

General Policies

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Grand Harbour Local Plan has been the subject of considerable discussion and research. It builds upon the groundwork laid by the Structure Plan, and other initiatives of national significance. It takes account of the social, economic and environmental concerns of the community, and interprets them in a manner which gives a basis for deciding upon the most appropriate use of land.
- 1.2 The underlying philosophy of the Plan is the need to reconcile development pressure with that of conservation and environmental considerations. The Plan tries to strike a balance between these two important elements. In some areas, identified in the Plan, it is appropriate to make allowance for large scale or far - reaching development proposals; in others, radical change is not acceptable, and maintenance and improvement of the existing environment are sought.
- 1.3 This draft Plan gives members of the public the opportunity to comment on the overall strategy and the detailed policies intended to support it.
- 1.4 Preparation of the Grand Harbour Local Plan has taken full account of the Structure Plan, and sectoral commitments by parastatal and other bodies, deemed to be in the national interest. It is intended that the Local Plan should be consistent with the provisions of the Structure Plan. Together they represent the planning guidance against which all development proposals will be assessed.
- 1.5 An effort has been made to keep the Local Plan a succinct document, so that the main thrust of its approach can be more easily understood and appreciated. It cannot, in any case, be exhaustive, but rather it attempts to deal with main issues. Explicit detail on a 'street by street' basis should not be expected and is not given. However, adequate guidance is available through the development plan system - the combination of the Structure Plan, the Local Plan and good development control practice - to enable assessment of individual development applications to be made. However, the Local Plan does not normally repeat the policies of the Structure Plan, and that document should still be consulted, particularly in respect of those matters which have a strategic bearing.
- 1.6 The Planning Authority has already issued formal planning guidance notes on a number of matters and may from time to time supplement these further. The Local Plan should be read in association with such guidance. Where development briefs are specified, it is intended to undertake these as resources permit, either in advance of development proposals being received, as proactive implementation projects, or when their consideration becomes necessary, prompted by development interests. Outline information will however be included in the Plan.

MAP 1

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Grand Harbour Local Plan deals with the Port area and those towns and industrial areas immediately surrounding and related to the Grand Harbour itself. For planning purposes, it therefore includes the water area and shoreline. The landward areas are Valletta, Floriana, Marsa (including Albert Town), Kordin, Senglea, Cospicua, Vittoriosa, and Kalkara (including Ricasoli). Although each has its own characteristics and problems, they are nevertheless all commonly associated with the Grand Harbour, historically the most significant part of Malta, and of course the principal port.
- 2.2 The area of the Local Plan covers some 930 ha, of which the land area is about 728 ha, and the water 202 ha. The total population is in excess of 38,000. As well as the historical and cultural heart of Malta, the Local Plan also includes densely populated residential areas, significant greenery and open spaces, and heavy industrial uses, notably the Power Station at Marsa, and Malta Drydocks and Shipbuilding. The latter two alone account for a workforce of over 3400. Of great importance too are the many maritime-related activities which occur around the Harbour.
- 2.3 Thus, because the Local Plan deals with an area which is so important in strategic as well as local terms, it has been necessary to adopt a twofold approach, preparing a strategy which relates to wider issues of importance in the whole of the Harbour area, and bringing forward more detailed policies and proposals for individual localities.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 The approach is reflected in the methodology adopted in preparing the Plan. An exhaustive consultation programme was undertaken to try and ensure that all organisations and groups likely to have an interest in the Plan area were given the opportunity to discuss issues and problems and get involved in plan preparation. In parallel with this task, a detailed consideration of the policy background was derived from the Structure Plan. Other strategic factors, involving questions of national interest, were also examined where these were likely to result in land use implications. The results were set out in a document, 'Grand Harbour Local Plan: Policy Background', produced separately.
- 3.2 The strategic issues were isolated and considered in relation to the local concerns which became apparent during the initial consultation process. Strategic issues and local concerns were then used to evolve a Planning Strategy Framework for the Local Plan. The Framework consists of a series of aims, based on an assessment of the Local Plan area, its positive and negative characteristics, and the scope and opportunity for planning related initiatives and action. Essentially, the process might be summarised as the preparation of planning policies based on the reconciliation of strategic and local factors. Throughout the whole process, the importance of a careful balance between development aspects, and those of the environment, was acknowledged. Where possible, therefore, reference has been made to the environmental capacity of the area.
- 3.3 Two sets of policies have been evolved. The first set covers the whole of the Local Plan area and puts forward policies dealing with issues relevant to that area generally, where they are not considered to be covered by the Structure Plan at all, or sufficient detail is lacking. Most of these policies are also indicated on the General Proposals Map. They also include policies that can be easily applied to other local plan areas. These are policies, therefore, of which the next revision of the Structure Plan should take account. They are termed Strategic Policies and follow similar lines to those in the already published Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan. The second set consists of area specific policies. The Grand Harbour has been sub-divided into individual localities, and policies have been prepared relevant to the particular locality. Each locality also has its own Inset Map. It is intended that the general policies will provide a basis for the more specific area policies.

4.0 Problems of the Grand Harbour Local Plan Area

4.1 Before examining the intended aims of the Plan, in the context of a long-term ‘vision’ for the area, it is worthwhile re-stating briefly the main problems which exist here. These reflect basic ‘structural’ changes linked to the evolution of Maltese economy and society as a whole over the last 20 years, as well as pressures peculiar to individual localities.

- A continuing decline in the local resident population, coupled with an ageing population structure;
- deterioration in the fabric of many urban areas, symptomatic of inadequate investment;
- traffic and access difficulties, particularly in Valletta and Floriana and between the Three Cities and Valletta;
- inadequate provision for the pedestrian/cyclist;
- the spread and coalescence of settlements and their gradual loss of identity;
- lack of adequate community facilities, especially open space and play provision;
- poor maintenance and presentation of historic buildings and artefacts;
- increasing office development in residential areas;
- inefficient use of industrial land;
- shopping areas in need of improvement;
- the presence of pollution and threats to natural assets;
- insensitive interventions, deterioration and incompatible uses in rural areas, the coastal zone and valleys;
- pockets of deprivation - poor quality housing, residents with social problems;
- pressure for development of open space and greenery in some peripheral areas;
- the general decline of Valletta and the Three Cities;
- the present “dormitory town” feeling in Cottonera;
- the future role and requirements of the Grand Harbour as a port;
- the overlooked potential for tourism development; and
- a general tendency towards poorly prepared development proposals, giving insufficient or no consideration at the outset to matters such as contextual design, access for people with special needs, parking, landscaping and planting, and energy efficiency.

4.2 The next section of the Plan sets out the broad framework for dealing with these problems.

5.0 Vision and Aims of the Plan

- 5.1 Given the extent and depth of the difficulties present in the plan area, what approach should the Planning Authority adopt, and what should be its role? It is considered that, in the context of the Plan, the Authority's principal task should be directed towards securing the economic and social revitalisation and regeneration of the Grand Harbour area in a fitting environmental context, with an emphasis on conservation.
- 5.2 Because the Local Plan is a land use based document, and the Authority has similarly limited powers and responsibilities, the Plan cannot represent a comprehensive treatment of all of the aspects involved. Nevertheless, it indicates, in planning terms, the approach which should be adopted, which might be summarised as:
- the proactive stimulation, encouragement and support of sound development ideas;
 - improvements through the modification of schemes;
 - a firm stand against negative proposals; and
 - a clear policy of environmental protection, through improvement and better management..
- 5.3 The Plan is thus intended to show to the public, parastatal agencies, private organisations and others who have an interest in the way land is to be used or developed, what the Authority wishes to achieve and how it intends to go about this process - based on a long term 'vision' or view of the Grand Harbour. In other words, the Plan seeks to remove uncertainty over issues of land use wherever possible, so that decisions can be taken within an established framework. Moreover, in this way, it is hoped that the Plan can provide a context for the more objective assessment of certain public investment decisions, which require an appreciation of the wider, as well as the local, setting.
- 5.4 At the heart of the Authority's approach to the Local Plan area is an acknowledgement of the historical and environmental importance of the Grand Harbour, and also a concern for its vitality as a residential and a working area. It would be easy, however, to over-emphasise one aspect at the expense of another. Hence, the Plan must adopt a view that gives recognition to all of these factors which are, at the moment, clearly out-of-balance - as evidenced, for example, by population changes and areas where the building fabric is clearly suffering from under-investment.
- 5.5 In development terms, a strategy of encouraging development, improvement and re-use of land has been adopted, but related firmly to the concept of environmental capacity. The latter can be described simply as an 'acceptable limit to growth,' but is much more difficult to define precisely. That is why it is considered important for the final version of the Plan to decide, through consensus, where there is scope for major change, to give an indication of the type of change which is acceptable, and thereby establish the parameters within which development can occur. It will be evident, for example, that certain requirements will remain. The area's supply of sports related open space is considered the minimal provision, which should ideally be increased. There may be scope, nevertheless, for change in terms of where that open space is located. Clear examples of circumstances in which this principle might arise are the case of the Xaghra in Floriana, and on the fringes of Bormla, with respect to a sports complex currently under consideration to serve as a 'regional' centre. Emotive arguments about the loss of a facility to development should be replaced by the principle of overall retention of pitch provision, and detailed consideration of the acceptability or otherwise of local alternatives.

- 5.6 Also important in the Local Plan's approach is the retention and strengthening of the positive characteristics of each area - the sense of place and identity that they each possess. This approach emphasises the inter-related importance of aspects like strengthening the local community by reversing out migration - which in turn will require a wider range of and improved housing; better shopping; attention to the quality of the public domain; and more job opportunities. It demands an integrated approach and is likely to involve certain measures outside the scope and competence of the Local Plan, for example, the possibility of appointing a town centre manager where necessary. Where such measures are nonetheless relevant, they are introduced for action at the appropriate higher level. Initiatives such as implementation work on commercial and housing improvement action areas are considered to be very important after the Local Plan is approved.
- 5.7 Unlike so many other parts of Europe, unemployment is not seen in a national context as a major problem. If anything, the job market in Malta is characterised by a shortage of labour, particularly in certain skills. But it would be a grave oversight to be complacent. A reduction in Government and public corporation employment is inevitable, and the private sector is likely to face increasing competition with closer links to Europe. Especially in the Three Cities, opportunities for diversification of employment, particularly where re-training is provided, should be targeted.
- 5.8 Two other particular development points should be underlined. One is the absolute need for Valletta to flourish in a 'rounded' way - not simply as a business centre, but as a residential community and the cultural and artistic focus of the Islands. As the capital city, Valletta has an international symbolism and importance, and for this reason, it demands special attention.
- 5.9 The second relates to Marsa Park (see area policies), identified in the Structure Plan COM 4 as a Primary Development Area, a controversial decision at that time because of its apparent implication of loss of character, open space and perhaps sporting facilities. However, the detail of this proposal was not fully expounded, and the Local Plan has an obligation to take this issue further. Marsa Park is dealt with at length in the Local Plan and it is considered that there is a clear opportunity for a development of a high standard which would satisfy both Structure Plan aspirations and local concerns.
- 5.10 The general task of regeneration has been broken down into a series of aims, based upon the Structure Plan's key goals of resource creation, management and protection. These provide a framework for more specific and detailed area-based policies.
- Containment and more efficient use of the urban areas in the context of a settlement hierarchy;
 - reversing population decline mainly by rehabilitation and redevelopment;
 - maintaining and enhancing the positive characteristics of the Local Plan area, especially in relation to heritage and urban design aspects;
 - enabling the port function of the Grand Harbour to flourish;
 - reducing the impact of industry generally and on residential areas in particular;
 - improving access and public transport facilities;
 - developing social and community facility provision;
 - reinforcing the vitality and viability of Valletta as the nation's capital;
 - encouraging tourism, especially in the Three Cities;
 - strengthening the retail hierarchy, in the interests of consumer service;
 - assisting industrial efficiency through the supply of land and sites; and
 - expanding upon Structure Plan policies in respect of Marsa Park.

Although these aims are explained in more detail in the ‘Grand Harbour Local Plan: Policy Background’, it is useful to reiterate the main points.

5.11 Containment and more efficient use of the urban areas in the context of a settlement hierarchy.

The need to use land and buildings more efficiently is a major goal of the Structure Plan. It is also important to deter wasteful duplication of services and facilities, and to halt the sprawling expansion of the urban area which would result in the loss of identity of the historic towns around the Grand Harbour. A clear view of the functions of the various towns is therefore important to enable a more ordered approach to be taken towards their future planning.

5.12 Reversing population decline mainly by rehabilitation and redevelopment.

Most of the plan area has consistently lost population over recent years, with the exception of Kalkara. The population loss reflects the many problems which the area faces, particularly poor quality accommodation in several places, and the increasing gap between people’s expectations regarding a better lifestyle, and what is actually available. This is leading to a long term ‘spiral of decline,’ especially in those locations where no incentive exists to improve property because of current rent laws. Strong and concerted efforts are therefore required to overcome this situation, to provide conditions which will encourage residents to remain.

5.13 Maintaining and enhancing the positive characteristics of the Grand Harbour Local Plan Area, especially heritage and urban design.

This aim highlights the need for a conservation-oriented approach. Not only does the plan area include many individual towns, townscapes, buildings and fortifications of great historical and architectural interest, but these occupy a ‘linked’ setting around the Grand Harbour, itself of great natural interest.

5.14 Enabling the port function of the Grand Harbour to flourish.

In terms of economic activity, the Grand Harbour is first and foremost Malta’s principal port serving the domestic market, and the location of associated maritime related undertakings. The Plan therefore needs to take into account this factor which is of national significance.

5.15 Reducing the impact of industry generally and on residential areas in particular.

Inevitably, in an area as complex as that of the Plan, the effects of industry, in particular as regards conflicts with established residential areas, are bound to occur. However, the task of the Local Plan is to minimise such conflict when there is a clear land use dimension to the problem over which planning policies can have some influence.

5.16 Improving access and public transport facilities.

The Plan area is a focal point for traffic. A number of arterial routes pass through here, with most of the ‘regional’ traffic between the north and south of the Island channelled through Marsa. Valletta and Floriana are, of course, major destinations themselves, and the maintenance of good accessibility to the Capital is an essential requirement. The Local Plan therefore needs to consider traffic problems at two levels - strategic and local - and with a strong bias towards improvement of public transport.

5.17 Developing social and community facilities provision.

Discussions and surveys have revealed an under supply of facilities which would normally be found in a complex urban area. Some parts of the Grand Harbour are also characterised by social problems. It is not possible for a land use based plan in isolation to solve these difficulties - that require concerted action over a wide front - but the plan can help to introduce relevant policies which may assist in meeting social goals, for example by positively encouraging particular types of development or restricting others.

5.18 Reinforcing the vitality and viability of Valletta as the nation’s capital and administrative and commercial centre.

Valletta is of key importance in the life of the nation. It is the seat of government, a focus of business, the arts, commerce and tourism. Despite a decline in population over the years, it remains an important residential area, although the increasing imbalance in its functions has led to a ‘deserted’ appearance in late evenings. In some places the building fabric is in poor condition, and the appearance and upkeep of streets and open spaces demands more attention.

The planning strategy adopted turns on three important points

- measures to strengthen Valletta as the nation’s capital;
- encouraging economic and socio-cultural regeneration; and
- seeking environmental improvement.

This approach will involve better access to Valletta, based on improved public transport; enlivening the city in the evening; regeneration of lower Valletta (see area policies); and improving the shopping environment. Careful consideration will need to be given to the development of key sites, and more opportunities made available for housing improvement and the provision of particular types of housing, for example, single persons’ accommodation.

5.19 Encouraging tourism, especially in the Three Cities.

Whilst Valletta is well known as a tourist attraction, that is less true of other parts of the Grand Harbour, and in particular the Three Cities, whose tourism potential is considerable but for the most part remains relatively unexploited. Tourism development, carefully managed, should also assist in meeting other aims of the Plan. At least the relatively undeveloped nature of tourism and tourist facilities here does confer one advantage, in that growth can be carefully directed and controlled in a sensitive way which acknowledges the historical legacy of the Three Cities but also pays due regard to the fact that this is a vibrant, working community.

5.20 Strengthening the retail hierarchy, in the interests of consumer service.

A principal strategy of the Plan has been described as the containment of settlements and the retention of their individual identity and character. This is closely related to the shopping service which they provide, and the threat to such established centres posed by the growth of other forms of retailing, particularly in ‘out of town’ locations. Care has to be taken not to inhibit the consumer’s right of choice, but this should not be at the expense of accelerated urban decline caused by diversion of trade. In the Plan area, retail provision appears well balanced and is related to the needs of the local community, although Valletta, of course, has a ‘national’ role in the shopping hierarchy. Yet it is evident that many centres have scope for improvement. The position taken in the preparation of the Local Plan is that major retail expansion outside these centres should not be undertaken at the expense of the wider socio-economic benefits that are being sought.

5.21 Assisting industry through the supply of land and sites.

The Local Plan area has been very significant in industrial location terms, with proximity to the port, ease of access and the presence of the most heavily urbanised part of the Island nearby encouraging industrial growth. Nevertheless, information derived from survey indicates that the supply of sites appears to be in excess of demand, with about 21 ha out of an estimated 131 ha of industrial land undeveloped or used inefficiently. It is not considered therefore that additional land should be allocated for industrial use, but rather that efforts should be made to use existing land more efficiently, ensuring that it is ‘recycled’ rather than left derelict.

Because of the importance of the Grand Harbour as a port, provision should be made to ensure that those types of port-related industrial and commercial undertakings which by their nature need to locate in the vicinity of the waterfront are enabled to do so.

Finally, attention also needs to be given to the needs of ‘local’ industry, whose primary market is Malta and whose export component is small. Priority on estates is often given to export oriented industries, so it is important to ensure that sites are available for industries in the important domestic sector of the economy.

5.22 Expanding upon Structure Plan policies in respect of Marsa Park.

The Structure Plan makes specific reference to the development of Marsa Park as a ‘multi-use area in a woodland setting’. The detail is left for the Local Plan to resolve, although certain aspects are identified, linked to measures to improve the overall attractiveness of the landward end of the Grand Harbour. The scale of change envisaged here is likely to be significant and will require a holistic approach to development planning.

5.23 Policies have been prepared on the basis of both national requirements and local concerns. The first part of the Plan deals with overall policies relating to the whole of the Plan area. The second part puts forward policies for individual areas into which the Plan has been sub-divided. Hence the next section of the Plan deals with policies under appropriate topic headings. That is followed by maps and specific policies relating to individual areas.

6.0 General Policies

6.1 Strategic Policies

Strategy

There are instances where general policies applicable to the Grand Harbour Local Plan area could also be used on a more strategic, national level. These policies are not meant to replace those in the Structure Plan, but rather to expand further and stress their importance.

Approach

As with the already approved Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan, this part of the document contains policies regarding various topics. The spirit of these policies should be considered for adoption in the next revision of the Structure Plan.

GN01

Government Estate Management

In accordance with Structure Plan requirements (Section 19), the Planning Authority will encourage and help Government to set up a professionally managed estate agency for government land and property with the aim of making the most efficient use of it in line with the overall goals and objectives of this Plan and its general and area policies.

Relevant policies:

*GH03,
GE06,
GD03, GV26, 27, 28, 29,
GF14, 16, 20,
GM16, 17,
GI04, 08, 09, 10,
GB09, 11, 12, 13,
GL14, 15, 16,
GG15, 17, 18,
GK12, 17, 18, 20.*

Survey work carried out during the plan preparation period, and as a result of meetings carried out with specific organisations including the Local Councils, indicate that this Local Plan area incorporates substantial areas of government land and property which are inappropriately used. This increases the demand for more land and adds to the pressure for further release of greenfield sites to the detriment of both the urban and rural environments. The aim of this policy is therefore to improve the output of these valuable resources - land and property - and to eliminate the notion that government land resources are infinite.

GN02

Public Utilities

The Planning Authority will require early consultation on the siting, design and screening of operational equipment specified for public utility purposes by the responsible utility agencies where such equipment will involve the submission of a development application. Applicants will be expected to include adequate land within the site to allow for satisfactory screen planting, or to enable other screening methods to be used. Attention is drawn to Structure Plan policies on undergrounding of services.

Relevant policies:

GF20, GK03, 24.

Supply of sewerage, electricity, water, and fuel may require sub-stations, pumping stations, valve-houses and the like to be located in prominent positions for operational reasons. Early consultation with the Planning Authority will be necessary to avoid abortive work and achieve an acceptable solution well in advance of orders for equipment or detailed design.

GN03

Surface Water Run-off And Collection

The Planning Authority will cooperate with entities responsible for the provision of infrastructure services in order to enhance such services in the Local Plan area.

All new major building or development schemes and the construction of new road schemes will be required to make adequate provision for the collection, storage and use of surface water run-off.

Waterfront development, in particular, has to take account of its impact on infrastructure services.

Relevant policies:

*GT02,03,
GD04,
GV05,07,26,27,28,29,
GF05,09,16,20,
GM15,17,
GB11,13,
GK12,16,23.*

In view of the general shortage of fresh water on the Islands, and the cost of providing fresh water from sea water, it is prudent to utilise all possible sources of supply. This may be difficult or impractical in the case of small schemes, but in large developments, particularly those which include substantial areas of impervious surfacing such as car parks or carriageways, the marginal cost of providing a storage cistern or reservoir is low.

The Planning Authority will therefore want to be satisfied that this aspect has been taken into account in development schemes and that positive measures are also being introduced to utilise this ‘secondary’ quality water source e.g. to maintain landscaping schemes, for flushing or cleaning purposes.

Where initiatives are taken on a national level, these must consider other aspects related to the central issue. Examples include effects on and by the sewerage network, minimisation of negative environmental effects especially related to valleys, and also issues related to future management of the improvements and developments proposed.

Where waterfront development is considered, whether for leisure, residential, commercial or industrial purposes, the impact of such development on infrastructure services has to be assessed, especially related to water supply and disposal of sewage.

GN04

Access For All

All new or rehabilitated public buildings and public areas, or buildings which are expected to attract the public on a regular and frequent basis, will be expected to make provision for access by people with special needs, including wheelchair users.

Relevant policies:

*GH03,06,08,GT02,09,
GC01,03,04,05,06,
GV06,07,08,09,10,22,
GV23,26,27,28,29,
GD12, GF12,16,20,
GM05,15,16,
GB09,11,13,
GL07,14,16,
GG05,15,17,18,
GK08,12,13.*

It is important that people with special needs, such as the disabled, old, or mothers with young children are not ignored in considering planning proposals. This policy accepts the ‘Access For All’ Guidelines (November, 1995) already published, and underlines the Planning Authority’s determination to ensure that access needs are considered at the earliest possible stage. Such needs, including dedicated car parking, must be taken into account in the design of public transport facilities, road schemes, pedestrian areas, pavements and buildings.

MAP 2

GN05

Shopfront Design

The Planning Authority will require proposals for the development of new, or modified shopfronts, to be of a high standard of design, which should complement and enhance the character of the building frontage and streetscape. These should be in line with the document ‘Policy and Design Guidance - Shopfronts’ (May 1994). If vending machines are included in the proposals, then the contents of ‘Policy and Design Guidance - Vending Machines’ (May 1994) will also have to be considered.

In addition, within Urban Conservation Areas, the use of traditional, or sympathetic materials will be required, and visible wiring and air-conditioning units will not be allowed. The Authority’s design guide ‘Development Control within Urban Conservation Areas (July 1995) should be consulted prior to the preparation of any scheme of this nature seeking a development permit.

Relevant policies:

*GH01,06 ,GC05
GD06,07,08,11,
GV13,14,16,17,19,27,
GV28,29, GF10,12,19,
GM10, GB06,07,09,11,
GL10,12,14, GG12,14,
GG15,17,
GK09,10,12.*

This policy emphasises the Authority’s determination to improve the standard of shopfront design. This is particularly important in this Local Plan area where most shops are located in Urban Conservation Areas. This principle applies also to the location of air-conditioning units, which should be located and designed in such a way as not to detract from the visual quality of the street.

6.2 Settlements

Strategy

The strategy adopted seeks to reverse population decline, to retain the character and ‘sense of place’ of settlements, to avoid ‘coalescence,’ and to promote the containment and more efficient use of urban areas. The importance of other elements, such as the retention of open space, will of course remain.

Approach

The encouragement of rehabilitation and conversion of property to provide residential accommodation is required. An emphasis on the inclusion of housing units in redevelopment and infill schemes is also appropriate. Innovative design approaches, which seek to maximise the use of existing sites to provide a high standard of accommodation, will be supported. The fundamental importance attached to the maintenance of the historic townscape is reflected in the declaration of conservation areas. The overall functional hierarchy of the main settlements is acknowledged and retained.

GS01

Map Interpretation And Zoning

All maps shown in this document should not be used for direct interpretation. Inset Maps show the zoned layouts for the different areas concerned. These indicate the *PRIMARY USE* of these areas shown. When uses different from the primary use are considered, in the opinion of the Planning Authority these have to be complementary to the indicated primary use.

Applications for development involving the construction of buildings within the urban settlements should comply with the maximum building height limitations indicated in the relevant Building Height Limitations Maps for the particular settlements. Currently, the Planning Authority is undertaking an exercise to identify individual buildings, groups of buildings and areas having special architectural, urban and cultural or historical value. These heritage assets would be then proposed for protection either by listing or scheduling. Development affecting these buildings and areas would be regulated as provided by relevant policies in the Structure Plan or Local Plans. Building heights would not apply for buildings, which are listed or scheduled.

Relevant figures:
7,10,12,15,16,
17,19,21,23.

It is both undesirable and impossible to produce large scale maps of the localities being covered by this Plan at this stage of the local plan preparation process. Larger scale maps have to be drawn for this purpose following the approval of this Plan. These will contain more detail, be at a larger scale, and give the necessary interpretation of the maps in this document.

Regarding the Inset Maps included, the system adopted is to identify the primary use of the different areas. This does not mean that this is the only permitted use. Other uses are permissible and this zoning policy should not be interpreted in a rigid manner which excludes all other uses in the particular zone.

On the other hand, it should not be assumed that because of this flexible approach, all uses are acceptable everywhere. Other uses can be permitted only if the Planning Authority is

satisfied that the primary use is not jeopardised both by a specific project or incrementally by a number of small developments. Development permission will not normally be given if aspects of good neighbourliness are not addressed; or specific provision for the particular use is made elsewhere in the Plan; or the use is excluded from the area; or there is more detail given in the policy context.

Also in the Inset Maps, this Plan indicates important open spaces. However, given the scale of these maps, it is impossible to define and show all of these areas in the locality. The presumption should therefore be that all open spaces within the Urban Development Boundary are to retain their open character and only developments which guarantee this situation may be approved here.

The building height limitations for settlements have been reviewed and the Planning Authority has established new maximum building heights for Marsa and Kalkara. In such cases, the local plan has given consideration to the size, scale of surrounding buildings and the likely effect on strategic and local views. The Planning Authority has lately undertaken an exercise to identify various aspects of local cultural heritage. For the Planning Authority, apart from fine architecture of historical significance Maltese heritage also encompass rural, vernacular, military, industrial, maritime and engineering features, buildings and areas from all periods up till recent. These best representatives from this comprehensive list would be proposed for scheduling. Development of these assets would be mainly geared towards their restoration and re adaptive use following established policies and good practice in conservation.

GS02

Urban Development Boundaries

Urban Development Boundaries are defined on the Inset Maps as appropriate. Development will not be permitted outside these boundaries unless indicated otherwise in this Plan. It will only be considered if in the opinion of the Planning Authority and in accordance with Structure Plan policies SET 11 and SET 12, the site is essential for the development proposed.

<p>Relevant policies: <i>GD07,</i> <i>GV01,</i> <i>GF01,</i> <i>GM01,</i> <i>GB01,</i> <i>GL01,</i> <i>GG01,</i> <i>GK01.</i></p>	<p>The Local Plan area is characterised by established settlements in a dense urban part of Malta. It is also characterised by sites outside the main cities/towns/settlements which, although not part of the settlement in a morphological sense, are still seen as part of the urbanised zone. Examples include some fortifications and adjacent land. Urban Development Boundaries exclude new development from the latter zones unless the particular sites are earmarked for specific uses or for redevelopment purposes by this Plan.</p>
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The only exception where this problem does not occur is Kalkara, where the limit to development is already defined and gives way directly to the countryside which mostly has Rural Conservation Area status.

GS03

Residential Improvements In Areas Of Open Space

Minor improvements to existing, legal residential units forming part of a development covered by the necessary permits and located in areas of open space as shown on the relative Inset Maps will be permitted unless these are in conflict with the aims and objectives, and other policies in this Plan or any other guidance issued by the Planning Authority.

Relevant policies:
GS05,06

There exist instances where past decisions have permitted residential use and development to be located in areas which in this Plan are now shown as areas of open space and which therefore are to retain their landscaped and/or open character.

It is acknowledged that although further development is not desirable and therefore will not be permitted, minor improvements to existing dwellings will be allowed, provided that they will not compromise the status of the area concerned.

GS04

Plot Ratios

Proposals for terraced development within the designated Residential Zones of the Inset Maps will be built on a land coverage index of between 50% minimum and 80% maximum, provided that other building laws (including sanitary law) are observed. A certificate from the land registry where applicable will be required. Areas shown for semi-detached development will be built on a land coverage index of between 40% minimum and 50% maximum.

Relevant policies:
GS05,06

It is considered that the lack of guidance on the ratio of the amount of built space relative to the whole site is resulting in cases where large plots are used for low density development in areas where higher densities are expected. In line with the need for the efficient use of land as promoted in the Structure Plan, this policy tries to correlate the designation of the area with what is actually built on site. It therefore lays out the ratio of development footprint to total site area acceptable for the residential development.

GS05

Development For Residential Use

Approval will normally be granted for change of use and redevelopment of vacant, derelict and underused property and sites within built-up areas for housing, provided that, in the view of the Planning Authority:

- the location is suitable and can be sufficiently improved to give a satisfactory living environment;
- the development conforms to building and sanitary laws;
- lift provision is included in multi-storey buildings where possible;
- standards of amenity and services are appropriate to a residential area; and
- if the building is listed or forms part of an Urban Conservation Area, every effort is made to retain the original structure.

Relevant policies:

The Structure Plan contains general policies designed to safeguard ‘good-

GS03,04,06,
GV02,03,11,
GF02,03,07,
GM15,
GB02,
GL02,
GG02,
GK02,03.

neighbour' considerations and these must be met in all developments. However, policy GS05 is intended to underline the importance which the Authority attaches to redevelopment and rehabilitation, by actively inviting the submission of this type of scheme. The approach adopted here is that, notwithstanding that care will be needed in view of conservation requirements, the submission of rejuvenation schemes will be acceptable in principle.

Relating to minor alterations like lift provision for residential use, this policy sees such changes as fundamental, and the appropriate authorities are encouraged to initiate action in this regard. Relating to redevelopment schemes, the question of basic negotiation on this point should not therefore arise (except where individual buildings are of national importance, like in Grade I and II buildings). This should allow the applicant to proceed and ensure that energy is devoted to ensuring a good scheme, rather than having to justify redevelopment from 'first principles.' The policy does however include an important rider that the location should be suitable for housing. Where this is conspicuously not the case, then applications may be rejected. The point of this clause is to deter frivolous applications in areas which are clearly unsuitable for housing, and where future residents would then be subject to annoyance from legitimate existing uses. Redevelopment and rehabilitation for housing are sought, but not at any price.

GS06

Effect Of Site Factors On Housing Layouts

In considering all residential development proposals, the Planning Authority will take into account factors including the viability of more difficult sites, urban locations where tighter arrangement of buildings may be appropriate, and innovative or ingenious layouts which demonstrably ensure privacy by design rather than distance.

Innovative/novel housing layouts and design will be favoured as a means of creating more acceptable residential layouts, in particular the more economical use of space in infill schemes.

Relevant policies:
GS03,04,05,
GV02,03,
GF02,
GM15,
GB02,
GL02,
GG02,
GK02,03.

The pressures on land generally in Malta, mean that the Structure Plan and the Local Plan rightly lay great emphasis on the efficient use of land. This means that the expansive plot, dwelling and room sizes that have come to be accepted as a norm may not necessarily be appropriate in intensely urban locations such as those often found in the Plan area. The Authority therefore reserves the right to assess development applications having regard to the way space is utilised, and may reject applications where available space is 'squandered' or used profligately. It is for this reason that emphasis is placed on good design to achieve acceptable living conditions.

GS07

Industrial Development

Where permission is sought for any form of industrial development, even within established industrial complexes, the Authority will have special regard to the processes involved and the likely effects on any residential areas in the vicinity. Permission will be refused if, in the opinion of the Authority, the impact on residences is likely to be unacceptable. Such applications will only be reconsidered on the understanding that mitigation measures will be introduced to deal with any problems likely to be caused.

<p>Relevant policies: <i>GD01,02, GM15,17,18,19,20,21, GM22, GI01,02,03,04, GB14, GG22, GK19,20,21,22,23,24.</i></p>	<p>Although it is accepted that some of Malta's oldest established heavy industry is to be found in the Plan area, and that necessary industrial processes should not be unreasonably hindered, this does not absolve the Authority from ensuring that potentially negative effects are kept to a minimum. For that reason, any proposed industrial development will be carefully scrutinised and mitigation measures may be required - which could include physical works or operational changes - prior to the granting of a permit.</p>
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GS08

Development In The Absence Of Specific Policies

The Planning Authority will determine the acceptability of development permission applications on land, which is not covered by policies in the Local Plan, in accordance with

- i) the zoning conditions and building alignments as indicated in the Temporary Provisions Schemes (1988) or such revised schemes as provided in this Plan,
- ii) Development Control Policy and Design Guidance 2000
- iii) other relevant approved policies and design guidance;
- iv) Structure Plan policies and
- v) any other relevant material planning considerations relating to the site and to its context.

<p>Relevant figures: 7,10,12,15,16, 17,19,21,23.</p>	<p>It is impractical to attempt to indicate an appropriate range of land use for every potential development or redevelopment site in the Local Plan area. To give guidance therefore, unless otherwise specified, it can be assumed that proposals which are compatible with the Temporary Provisions Schemes (1988), with DC Policy and Design Guidance 2000, and all the relevant policy and design guidance and the Structure Plan will be acceptable. The PA may also have regard to pre 1988 schemes where these give guidance (particularly on building alignments) and to other material considerations relevant to the site and to the type and form of development proposed.</p>
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GS09

Action Areas

Where the Planning Authority considers it necessary, Action Areas are identified for improvement measures to be initiated and an indication is given on the types of improvement being sought.

- Such areas will be accorded a high priority in the provision of publicly-funded infrastructure works;
- Development permission will be granted for development, including changes of use, consistent with the aims of the Action Area;
- Development permission will not be granted to intensify or extend existing uses which are causing environmental or amenity problems, or which would prejudice positive redevelopment proposals. The Planning Authority is prepared to advise on the relocation of such uses; and

A special category of Action Area is a Housing Improvement Action Area. These may be declared to encourage the redevelopment of property to provide a better standard of accommodation.

<p>Relevant policies: <i>GC03,</i> <i>GD05,</i> <i>GV03,</i> <i>GF03,19,</i> <i>GB02,</i> <i>GG02.</i></p>	<p>Certain parts, mainly in the urban area, are clearly in need of improvement. In some cases, this may be of a relatively minor nature, such as road surfacing. In others, the improvements necessary are more fundamental and will require both public intervention and the co-operation of private individuals, for example the provision of new streets, improvements to buildings and open spaces, and the amelioration of problems caused by ‘bad-neighbour’ uses.</p>
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Where this wider approach is necessary, designation of action areas should help to indicate priorities for public sector investment and give guidance to the public on improvements, how it is intended these should be achieved, and what type of new development is being sought.

Parts of the Local Plan area, indicated more specifically in the area policies sections, include pockets of poor housing in need of urgent and fundamental improvement. The policy is designed to draw attention to these areas and, subject to acceptance by government, seek a range of fiscal as well as planning measures to ensure that their improvement is put in hand. Measures could include: tax rebates or exemption on specified repair works; direct grants for certain repairs; ‘soft loans’ for adaptation or improvement works; Housing Purchase Assistance Grants; fiscal relief on other specified taxation requirements. All fiscal measures would of course be subject to agreement with the Ministry of Finance. It would also be appropriate in such areas to give priority to general improvement works and infrastructure projects, and, with the co-operation of the Housing Authority, target these areas for government housing schemes.

This Housing Improvement Action Area policy is a positive policy and should not be used to exclude other uses from such areas. Indeed, other uses, such as commercial uses, which can be accommodated in such areas will be also encouraged, provided that they do not present problems of bad-neighbourliness

GS10

Opportunity Areas

Opportunity Areas are identified and indicated on the Inset Maps as appropriate. Guiding principles, or a more detailed development brief, will be prepared as required.

<p>Relevant policies: <i>GD05,</i> <i>GF20,</i> <i>GM15,17,</i> <i>GL17.</i></p>	<p>In the Local Plan, opportunity areas are defined as those where significant development or regeneration potential exists. Thus individual planning proposals need to be considered in a wider development context - taking into account the overall potential of the area.</p>
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This context will be set out either in the form of guiding principles covering land use, form of development and design, or a development brief which considers the development potential in more detail. Development briefs are more likely to be prepared where:

- the Planning Authority has a very clear view on the type of development it is seeking in order to meet wider planning objectives; and
- the opportunity area in question is physically capable at the outset of accommodating such development without serious difficulty.

Designation of opportunity areas is a way of focusing attention on, and providing guidance for, those localities where the Authority is especially anxious to promote positive and

significant change, through development or redevelopment, in a way which should have far-reaching benefits.

6.3 Heritage

Strategy

The strategy adopted seeks to establish an improved attitude towards our cultural heritage. This implies a better understanding of, and an improved respect for, issues of historical importance, whether relating to an individual object, a building or a line of fortifications.

Approach

The emphasis is on conservation as opposed to preservation only; and on reuse for compatible reasons rather than for no use at all or for illegal and/or uncomplimentary uses. Therefore the policies try to achieve a sense of balance between the need to safeguard our heritage through using it and the need to protect it from incompatible uses. A modern attitude and a proactive approach are needed at this stage.

GH01

Urban Conservation Areas

Urban Conservation Areas are designated, the boundaries of which are shown on the respective maps. Development proposals within Urban Conservation Areas will be required to preserve and enhance the character of the area, and will have to follow the approved guidance ‘Development Control within Urban Conservation Areas’ (July 1995).

Relevant policies:

*GM10, GN05,
GV13,14,15,16,17,26,
GG18, GV27,28,29,
GF10,11,12,18,19,20,
GB06,07,08,09,10,11,
GL10,11,12,13,14,
GG12,13,14,15,16,17,
GK09,10,11,12.*

Urban Conservation Areas consist of important historic and/or architectural elements which are fundamental in establishing the character of settlements, and which must be maintained. To ensure that the positive features are kept, to strive for the removal or upgrading of existing unsightly buildings and features, and not least, to require a high standard of new development, will necessitate the Planning Authority adopting a consistent approach to planning applications in these areas.

The design guidelines mentioned in the policy, published separately by the Planning Authority, have to be considered by those proposing to undertake work on buildings in the Urban Conservation Areas. It gives further policy detail, information and advice on the features considered by the Planning Authority to be important, and which the Authority will take into account in considering development applications.

Given that the scheduling process has not been finalised before the adoption of this Plan, the Planning Authority will review these areas as necessary once this is done, and may decide to change any such boundaries after performing the procedures established by law.

GH02

Listed Buildings

A full list of buildings graded as being of historic or architectural significance is currently in the course of preparation. Extensive Urban Conservation Areas have already been declared, which provide some measure of protection. In the meantime, until the definitive listing is complete, careful consideration will be given to proposals in development schemes to ensure that heritage assets with potential for listing or which have been listed are protected. For guidance on what work may be carried out in respect of listed

buildings generally, the guidance given in the Authority's publication **Development Control within Urban Conservation Areas (July 1995)** is applicable.

Relevant policies:

*GH03,04,05,06,08,
GV06,29,GF12,20,
GI09,GB11,
GL13,14,15,
GG09,17,20,GK17,18.*

Because of its historical associations, the Plan area boasts a wealth of buildings of historical and architectural importance. A task of the Authority is to secure their identification and safeguarding. This policy is designed to ensure that, in view of the ongoing nature of the listing task, no potential listed buildings are overlooked.

GH03

Bastions Improvement And Reuse

The Harbour fortifications have been lately scheduled as a complex of fortifications and as an Area of High Landscape Value. This was done in the light of the late submissions to UNESCO of this extensive asset proposed to be incorporated as a World Heritage Site. The Planning Authority will support initiatives to restore the fortifications, clear unauthorised and/or uncomplimentary uses, and maintain the fortifications in a suitable setting. Reuse of the bastions for activities which respect and are complementary to their historical setting will be encouraged.

Relevant policies:

*GK18, GN01,04,
GH02,05,06,08,
GV06,09, GF12,GI09,
GB09,10,GL13,
GG15,16,20.*

In many parts of the Plan area, extensive sections of the bastions, relating to the original fortification measures for the various settlements, remain basically unaltered. However, some lengths are in need of attention, illegal and inappropriate uses have taken over in places, alterations have been made, and various temporary structures have been added.

Valletta Rehabilitation Project, Cottonera Rehabilitation Project and Restoration Unit and the various local councils are all actively involved in attempting to restore, upgrade and reuse the fortifications. The Planning Authority can assist by taking enforcement action where appropriate, suggesting suitable alternative locations for certain uses, and scrutinising very carefully any proposals for, or in the vicinity of, the bastions. These fortifications are among the best in Europe and they are a vital part of the national heritage. Their restoration, reuse and appropriate presentation would also give a major boost to tourism, one of the key objectives for the Plan area.

GH04

Monument Protection

The Planning Authority acknowledges the important role of structures considered as national monuments (including the bastions), in the social and historical spheres of the Local Plan area. No development which adversely affects such monuments will therefore be allowed in their vicinity, or where it will reduce or compete with the importance of the monuments of the Plan area, except as specifically provided for in other policies of this Plan and of the Structure Plan, and as long as the proposals are acceptable from the urban design and heritage aspects.

Relevant policies:

*GH02,05,07,
GV18,29,
GB10, GF20,
GI09, GL13,
GG16,20,
GK17,18.*

It is recognised that the Local Plan area has a large abundance of national monuments an example of which are the bastions, and the aim of this policy is to offer them maximum protection. This protection may be needed where structures near the monuments are proposed and therefore their value may be compromised. An example of the latter is the use of the Bastions for farming and fireworks purposes.

Uncomplimentary uses, which can pose a serious physical threat, will therefore not be permitted on or near these monuments. The issue is also relevant from an aesthetic point of view, with the aim being to safeguard the prominence of such monuments.

GH05***Restoration Of Monuments***

The Planning Authority will encourage initiatives for the restoration of monuments, listed properties and other buildings of national importance in the Local Plan area. It will take a proactive role in liaising with national and voluntary organisations to encourage this restoration process.

Relevant policies:

*GH02,03,04,06,07,08,
GV18,29,
GF12,20,
GI09,
GB09,10,
GL13,15,
GG15,16,20,
GK18.*

The importance of national and other monuments is reiterated in this policy. The Planning Authority sees the restoration of the Bastions as an important tool in the upgrading of the area, especially on the Cottonera side. Special attention has to be given to gateways and main entrances, and the early implementation of their restoration will be sought. This will reflect their importance as focal points. The floodlighting of the bastion walls is also important, which should not simply be restricted to the seaward vista, but also to extend to the landward side of the fortifications.

It is realised that restoration work is very expensive to carry out and responsible organisations should embark on a funding plan rather than carry out works on an *ad hoc* basis. For this reason also, the Planning Authority must ensure that the techniques used for restoration are the best ones, and that the quality of restoration will not be affected by the lack of funding. If not done professionally and in the correct manner, restoration techniques can themselves be a threat to the monuments that they are trying to protect. It is imperative that this scenario does not occur. It is also important to emphasise that any preservation work carried out on listed buildings needs development approval according to Section 46(iv) of the Development Planning Act 1992. This will also apply to those structures with a potential for listing.

MAP 3A

MAP 3B

GH06

Bastion Trails

In conjunction with other organisations which have an interest in historic assets like the fortifications, the Planning Authority will encourage the designation of Heritage Trails wherever possible.

Provision of interpretation facilities will be supported subject to sensitive design considerations and other policies of this Plan.

Relevant policies:

*GN04,05,
GH02,03,05,
GF12, GV09
GB09,10,
GG15,16, GL13.*

Currently people cannot experience the real significance of the fortifications in some areas. Many parts of the fortifications are inaccessible, either because they are in a neglected state, or because they are leased to private interests, or illegally used by squatters. There may even be cases where part of the land is actually owned by private concerns.

Steps will need to be taken to liberate these sites for public use. The touristic significance cannot be stressed enough here, especially since this mostly applies to areas in need of economic regeneration. Two main trails can be identified, one for the Valletta/Floriana area and another for the Cottonera side of the Grand Harbour. These trails should link the various viewpoints, making them the main attraction. Adequate signposting, landscaping and lighting are important elements for the success of these trails.

The Planning Authority will collaborate with Lands Department and other agencies to better manage these fortifications, taking into consideration land use, property ownership, tenancy and future adaptive use of this public property.

GH07

Areas Of Archaeological Importance

Areas of Archaeological Importance are shown in the appropriate map as applicable. The Planning Authority will take all the possible measures to protect existing and potential sites from harmful developments. Where large earth moving operations are required, archaeological assessment and monitoring will be carried out. No development will be allowed which will adversely affect these sites.

Relevant policies:

GH04,05.

This policy draws attention to the sites and their categorisation within the Local Plan area and invokes the protection under the Structure Plan and other statutes in the event of threat by development.

The archaeological stock of sites in the Grand Harbour area is not large, given the extent, strategic importance and antiquity of the Plan area. A possible explanation is that sites either remain undiscovered, or else have not been reported to the Authorities when private developments are taking place. Much has been lost with extensive maritime and industrial development. Since there is a rich heritage in the area, an effort should be made to protect all archaeological assets. Where present, therefore, these sites will be protected, upgraded, and made more accessible. The sites which are most at risk are those which as yet have not been discovered. It is therefore important to monitor large operations as these are the ones which could reveal more information on potential archaeological sites.

GH08

Developments In Historic Buildings

In respect to historic buildings, and depending on the grading of the particular building, the Planning Authority will adopt a sustainable conservation philosophy by allowing compatible and adaptive use. Such development may be permitted if by so doing the restoration and future existence of an historic building would be secured. All such proposals will be considered on their own merits, but bearing in mind the overall strategy of the Plan and other established policies where relevant.

<p>Relevant policies: <i>GN04,</i> <i>GH02,03,05,</i> <i>GV18,29,</i> <i>GL15,</i> <i>GG20,</i> <i>GK18.</i></p>	<p>To encourage modern conservation objectives relating to conservation areas, historic buildings or sites of archaeological importance, the Planning Authority may occasionally need to be flexible and allow uses which from a preservation point of view, traditionally could be considered inappropriate to a particular building or location. This situation places more emphasis on the socio-economic needs which prevail, but is likely to arise only rarely, and only if there would be no detrimental impact on the immediate vicinity or neighbouring communities.</p>
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6.4 Transportation

Strategy

One of the most important aspects of the Grand Harbour Local Plan is that of transportation. This importance emanates from the fact that this area is one with national significance, and therefore the Local Plan, although catering for a ten year horizon, has to take account of the longer term implications of strategic importance. The strategy will therefore be to maintain Valletta's accessibility while improving that of Cottonera and the Harbour area itself; to reduce the need for journeys where possible; to encourage the use of public transport and reduce the dependence on the Valletta terminus; to improve north-south links; to promote safety aspects in transportation; to seek the protection of the environment whilst safeguarding the transportation requirements of new schemes; to reduce extraneous traffic, particularly from residential areas; and most importantly, to improve conditions for the pedestrian and the cyclist.

Approach

Following directly from the above analysis, the approach adopted in the Local Plan has been to consider transport from two aspects, the improvement of the strategic provision, and more detailed consideration of local problems, which are mostly dealt with under the respective area headings of the Plan.

It is important to stress that the role of implementation agencies in this aspect, and details of schemes have to be agreed with such agencies, including the Traffic Control Board and the respective Local Councils.

In strategic terms, the basic concept is to channel traffic according to a 'hierarchy' of routes, and to concentrate upon improvements according to that hierarchy. Improvements here mean not just in relation to traffic flow, but also with regard to the relationship of the road and its surroundings - the corridor through which the road passes. A corollary of this approach is that through traffic should be deterred from penetrating residential areas - and causing environmental problems - by the introduction of local traffic management measures.

Giving greater priority to public transport is important and the relative map shows a possible route of a long term transport system. This is only an initial indicative attempt and deeper studies are needed in accordance with policy PTR4 of the Structure Plan into an appropriate future high speed public transport system. Giving priority to buses is also important by means of the introduction of traffic and parking schemes, and a closer examination of the traffic consequences of developments, with appropriate action where necessary, will be required. Aside from a long term study to consider options for other transport systems, a serious effort should be made to promote alternative forms of transport like the more extensive use of ferries (coupled with better connections to overcome changes in level) and taxis (if the service is provided at an affordable rate), and other forms which could be introduced relatively cheaply like cycling.

GT01

Road Hierarchy

A hierarchy of roads is indicated on the General Proposals Map and the Transport Diagrams for specific areas. The classification of roads follows the system given in the Structure Plan (Structure Plan Policies RDS1 and RDS2).

The hierarchy will be used to define roads in order of their importance for traffic circulation; as a guide for road investment (new construction, maintenance, upgrading); traffic management (including road marking), and the consideration of development applications. The arterial roads will form the strategic highway network. The main elements will be:

Arterial Roads

Triq Dicembru 13, Triq Aldo Moro, Triq Il-Labour, Vjal Sir Paul Boffa, Triq Kordin, Vjal It-28 Ta' April, South Harbour Link Road (Proposed), Vjal Kottoner.

District Distributor Roads

See area policies

Improvement Priorities

- **Addolorata Junction;**
- **December 13 Junction;**
- **Realignment of Triq Aldo Moro (near Match Factory);**
- **'Match Factory' Junction; and**
- **Various junctions in association with the South Harbour Link Road.**

Relevant policies:

***GT02,03,
GV04,05,GF04,05,
GM03,07,13,GI05,
GB04,05, GL05,
GG04, GK05,06.***

The Structure Plan emphasises the need to introduce a hierarchical road system to channel traffic onto appropriate roads, thereby controlling the impact of traffic elsewhere. Such a system is also important to assist in prioritising road construction, repairs and traffic management, and in the assessment of development applications.

The arterial road system is intended to carry most longer distance and heavy traffic, providing links between various parts of the Island. Street parking and direct frontage access will be kept to a minimum, and a high priority will be given to road improvement and traffic management measures to assist traffic flows.

The district distributors are important routes connecting the major residential and employment districts of the Plan area to each other, and to the arterial routes. Heavy commercial traffic will be allowed on most of these roads, but will not be encouraged where satisfactory alternative routes exist on the arterial routes. Street parking and direct frontage access will be strictly regulated.

The improvements specified above relate to assisting traffic flows, highlighting development opportunities, and in anticipation of the construction of the South Harbour Link Road.

MAP 4

GT02

Junction Improvements

The main traffic circulation system includes major junctions of national importance as part of the arterial network. The Planning Authority will encourage the respective implementation authorities to upgrade existing junctions which are not coping with the volume of traffic using them. These are indicated in the General Proposals Map and Inset Maps as appropriate. Development permission will not be granted for development which might adversely affect these sites in order to safeguard junction redesign requirements. This also applies to other sites earmarked for future transport infrastructural projects.

Relevant policies:

*GN03,04,
GT01,03,05,06,
GF05,09,
GM07 GB05.*

Policy GTO1 emphasises the need to have a good road system in the Local Plan area, especially where these have national significance. This policy complements the latter by indicating those areas which need to be safeguarded so that junction improvement can take place.

It has to be emphasised here that although the need to improve the traffic circulatory system is stressed, this has to be seen within the overall strategy as laid out in the Structure Plan to improve public transport. These policies do not replace the overall policies and it must be underlined that road improvements have to take place in parallel with improvements in the public transport service. Solving one aspect alone will not result in solving the overall transport problem. An integrated approach is vital.

GT03

South Harbour Link Road

As indicated on the General Proposals Map, a new arterial road will be constructed on the southern fringe of the Local Plan area, from Paola Hill (Vjal il-25 ta' April 1958) to Kalkara (Triq il-Missjoni Taljana). This road will be given a high priority for early implementation. No development approvals will be given for any projects which in the opinion of the Planning Authority could prejudice the construction of this road.

Relevant policies:

*GN03,
GT01,02,
GE02,
GB04,05,
GG03,GK05.*

Access to the southern part of the Plan area is generally poor. The routes pass through the centre of residential areas, and are subject to frequent congestion. This fact was recognised in the Structure Plan, which proposed a strategic link through the area, although it was left to the local plans to elaborate upon a more precise route.

The route chosen attempts to avoid property and reduce environmental damage. In this respect, care must be taken to minimise any environmental damage in the Wied Blandun area. The road will also provide a satisfactory spine serving the Three Cities, Kalkara, Ricasoli, Fgura, Zabbar and Xghajra. In the case of Fgura, it should act as a by-pass and assist in removing through traffic from the main street, Triq Haz-Zabbar. By providing improved access to the southern part of the Grand Harbour, in association with other junction improvements, it should also assist in meeting other Local Plan objectives, notably the encouragement of tourism in the Three Cities area.

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GT04

Traffic Calming

Working with the local councils and the Roads Department, the Planning Authority will seek the implementation of traffic calming measures on selected distributor roads, local access roads, and access only streets.

Relevant policies:
*GL06, GV04,05,10,27,
GG06,07,17, GF06,19
GM0406, GB11, GK12*

The acceptance of a road hierarchy enables the logical introduction of other traffic control and management techniques, to help improve the safety of roads.

Priority will therefore be given to:

- areas suffering from unacceptable levels of through traffic which should be encouraged to divert to other routes;
- areas suffering from significant road-safety problems, especially involving pedestrians and cyclists;
- areas proposed for improvement or redevelopment (Opportunity Areas, Action Areas, Conservation Areas) in which traffic control measures can play an important role; and
- incorporation of traffic calming measures as appropriate in the design of new road infrastructure, especially where related to housing development.

The types of measures used in any situation will depend on the local circumstances, including the status of the road in the road hierarchy. Generally, traffic calming measures will be more stringent at the lower levels of the hierarchy. Careful consideration will be given to the measures adopted to avoid interfering with the efficient operation of buses, or the requirements of emergency vehicles. The Planning Authority's published guidance 'Traffic Calming Guidelines' (April 1995) will be used in advising upon or considering traffic calming proposals.

GT05

Road Improvements And Public Transport

Road improvement and construction works will be examined taking into account the scope for re-routing of buses to provide a better service. The Public Transport Authority will be consulted on these schemes.

Relevant policies:
*GT02,06,07,08,12,
GV05,07,
GM09,15,
GL08,
GG08,
GK07.*

The Local Plan is intended to assist in the provision of better bus services. In some instances, these can only be achieved through related road improvements. The Planning Authority will liaise with the Roads Department of the Works Division and the Public Transport Authority on this aspect. Detailed schemes are indicated in the appropriate area headings later in the Plan.

GT06

Measures To Assist Public Transport

Measures will be taken to assist public transport operations by giving precedence to bus movements on congested routes, in town centres, and by promoting improvements to public transport facilities.

Relevant policies:

*GT02,05,08,12,
GV04,05,07,GF04,06,
GM03,04,09,
GK05,06,07, GB03,04,
GL04,05,08,
GG03,04,07,08..*

It is important to promote and increase the attractiveness of travel by public transport, thereby reducing the adverse effects of the motor car. This means positive discrimination in favour of buses wherever possible, and giving greater priority to passenger facilities. Details of measures proposed are indicated in the appropriate area sections.

GT07

Park And Ride System

In addition to selected direct bus services, the development of a ‘Park and Ride’ system to serve Valletta, Floriana and possibly Hamrun is planned within the Crown Works and Horn Works area, as defined in the relative approved Action Plan. This will provide significant parking spaces and will be served by a shuttle service to ensure an efficient transfer of patrons to and from the above mentioned areas. Consequently, works or projects requiring development permission will follow the guidance provided for in the Crown Works / Horn Works Action Plan.

Relevant policies:

*GT05,08, GV07,08,
GF20.*

The Park & Ride is planned in conformity with Structure Plan policy PTR10 as part of the Transport Study for Valletta/Floriana, and the approved Crown Works / Horn Works Action Plan.

The overall transport strategy envisages a switch to a more convenient and better standard public transport system, including the provision of a park and ride system. It is essential that the accessibility of the peninsula is maintained and improved. The availability of a park and ride system, based on a good, secure parking and a very fast and frequent shuttle service to Valletta, using new technology including the Euro 5 standard (zero emission) midi electric buses is promoted as a viable alternative. This policy seeks to secure land available for the park and ride system, providing for approximately 950 parking spaces.

GT08

Long Term Public Transport Measures

No permission for development will be given for proposals which in the opinion of the Planning Authority might prejudice the long term development of a rapid transit system serving the Inner Harbour Region as indicated in the Rapid Transit Route Map.

Relevant policies:

*GT05,06,07,12,
GV07,GB03,
GL04, GG03 GK05.*

Although the development of a rapid transit system is outside the scope of this document and beyond the timeframe (ten years) over which the Plan is intended to apply, it is important to bear in mind the long term validity of such a system and to avoid prejudicing its implementation.

Hence, major development proposals will need to be carefully assessed to ensure that they do not, because of location or constructional requirements, irrevocably prejudice future transport possibilities. This might be the case, for example, in respect of reconstruction of

parts of the existing bus station, or in connection with the former railway tunnel under part of Valletta.

The Planning Authority will collaborate with the Transport Ministry and the Public Transport Authority to study the transport problem in the Inner Harbour Region in the longer term. It is important to identify and check the technical, financial, environmental, social and aesthetic impacts of available options.

GT09

Providing For Pedestrians And Cyclists

The needs of pedestrians and cyclists will be given priority when considering all transport and development issues. This will also apply to schemes to be implemented at the detailed, local level. Where appropriate in the Inset Maps, Pedestrian Areas and Pedestrian Priority Areas have also been defined.

Relevant policies:

*GF20, GN04,
GV04,05,07,08,09,10,
GF04,05,06,09,16,18,
GM03,04,05,06,07,15,
GI05,06,09,11,
GB03,04,05,11,12,13,
GL04,05,06,07,14,
GG03,04,05,06,07,17,
GG18, GK05,06,08,12.*

Many development and road improvement schemes tend to overlook the importance of providing adequate pedestrian and cyclist facilities, and the standard of accesses, pavements, crossing points, refuges and bus shelters is not high, causing problems especially for those people with disabilities. This policy seeks to draw attention to the importance of providing proper facilities, and serves notice of the Planning Authority's intention to ensure that this aspect is considered fully in examining development applications.

At the local level, the Inset Maps indicate both Pedestrian Areas and Pedestrian Priority Areas. The difference lies in the fact that, during the hours of pedestrianisation, vehicular traffic is totally prohibited from entering Pedestrian Areas; whereas Pedestrian Priority Areas indicate zones where, although vehicular traffic is allowed, the pedestrian always has priority over the vehicle. These concepts should be supported by good design and use of appropriate paving materials.

GT10

Car Parking

The general approach to car parking - standards adopted, areas of 'restraint' - follows the Structure Plan requirements. As an additional requirement, however, and in view of the sensitive nature of much of the Plan area, the level of car parking provision will be related not only to the type of development proposed and the capacity of a particular location to accommodate stationary vehicles, but also to the need to maintain satisfactory environmental conditions. The ability of a proposal to satisfy required car parking standards may therefore not be enough to secure development permission if environmental considerations are not satisfied.

In the Three Cities, which are earmarked as areas where initial investment needs to be encouraged, the Planning Authority may relax its parking standards until it is satisfied that the regeneration process in the area has actually gathered momentum, after which time it will reapply the standards as applicable.

Relevant policies:
*GT11,12,GV05,06,11,
GV12,26,27,28,29,
GF07,08,16,20, GK12,
GM14,15,22, GB11,
GL14,GG10,11,17.*

This policy is intended to introduce an additional factor into the consideration of car parking provision, related directly to the concept of environmental capacity which underlies the Plan. It should not be assumed that mere availability of space for parking will be satisfactory and acceptable to the Planning Authority.

If the proposal generates unacceptable traffic levels, or else the presence of parked vehicles, or the operational use of the parking area, significantly detracts from the amenity of the vicinity (taking into consideration elements such as dust, fumes, noise etc.), then the proposal may have to be revised or may be refused, notwithstanding that parking requirements can be met by the development proposed.

In the Three Cities, where initial investment is needed to start the regeneration process, the Planning Authority may relax its parking standards if it considers that the overall benefit derived from any particular project will contribute to the initial regeneration process. Once the Planning Authority is satisfied that such a process has gathered momentum, the application of such relaxation in standards will be halted.

GT11

Commuted Parking Payment Schemes

The Planning Authority in accordance with provisions in the Structure Plan, and particularly policy TRA 4, and in consultation with the Local Councils concerned, will sustain, improve or establish Commuted Parking Payment Schemes in zones and localities suffering from traffic congestion. Particular emphasis will be given to the areas of Valletta and Floriana.

Relevant policies:
GT10.

Occasions may arise where it is impossible, or undesirable for a particular development proposal to meet the established full parking standards for the locality.

If the development is acceptable in principle after having been assessed against the provisions of the Structure Plan and this Local Plan, the developer will be asked to contribute a fee in relation to the shortfall in parking spaces provided, as part of the Commuted Parking Payment Scheme for the particular zone. These funds will eventually be used to alleviate parking problems within that locality.

The Planning Authority is in the process of issuing new guidance on such a system, and the fees and procedure adopted will therefore be in accordance with these methods when approved. Valletta and Floriana are the primary areas in the Local Plan which will be immediately affected, but this does not exclude that the scheme be extended to cover other areas in the future.

GT12

Ferry Landing Points

In order to facilitate access across the Harbour areas, and to promote these principles as highlighted in the Connections Project Development Brief, the increase in ferry services as one of the measures to improve the public transport system will be encouraged. Possible future ferry landing points are identified as follows and as indicated on the General Proposals Map:

- **Valletta - Marsamxett Ferry Landing; Customs House Quay;**

- Senglea - Triq ix Xatt /Triq it Tarzna;
- Vittoriosa - Maritime Museum; Post of Angleterre; and
- Kalkara - Triq Marina; Fort Ricasoli Breakwater Area.

These sites will be protected from development which will prevent the introduction of a service and related facilities.

<p>Relevant policies: <i>GT05,06,08,10,</i> <i>GP04,05,</i> <i>GV06,</i> <i>GB11,</i> <i>GL14,</i> <i>GG09,18,</i> <i>GK12,17.</i></p>	<p>In accordance with the Plan’s objectives to maintain and improve the accessibility of Valletta and the Three Cities, and to give greater emphasis to better public transport, it is considered important to encourage the introduction and use of ferry services. This would involve the re-establishment of the Grand Harbour services, and perhaps, once Manoel Island/Tigne Point are developed, the intensification and extension of routes in Marsamxett Harbour.</p>
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These recommendations have been taken up as part of the Connections Project, aimed at facilitating access between Valletta/Floriana, and the Three Cities and the Sliema area. Measures which encourage the use of ferries will be encouraged, including the consideration of a sea level tunnel through Valletta/Floriana, an idea emanating from the Connections project, given that environmental considerations are also taken into account.

It is accepted that for such schemes to succeed, measures will be necessary to overcome changes in level near disembarkation points on the Valletta side, in particular. However, ferry services are also closely linked to the expansion of tourism. It is therefore essential to ensure that no development occurs in or close to the waterfront zones which would prevent the introduction of a service.

GT13

Effects On Vehicular Traffic

In considering applications for development in locations near to or in public roads, the Planning Authority will examine their effect on the motorist. Permission will be granted if the Authority is satisfied that the proposal will not:

- **distract the motorist,**
- **restrict the width of the carriageway or footway,**
- **interfere with visibility along the carriageway (especially due to inappropriate landscaping schemes), or**
- **otherwise affect the free and safe flow of traffic, thus leading to the possibility of a traffic accident.**

<p>Relevant policies: <i>GE02, GV05,</i> <i>GF05,09, GM13,</i> <i>GB05, GL06,</i> <i>GG06.</i></p>	<p>There exist many instances where bad design of the development layout and details, or badly placed items like advertisements, monuments, or any other type of development reduces the safety for both motorists and pedestrians, by significantly distracting the motorist’s concentration from driving or through bad design as mentioned in the policy.</p>
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This often leads to car accidents with the possibility of serious injury, both to the driver, any passengers, or even pedestrians who happen to be on the pavements or crossing the road. The Planning Authority will therefore refuse permission to any application which does not keep these considerations in mind.

GT14

Road Rehabilitation Works And Improvements

In considering applications for development which relates to upgrading, resurfacing or paving works, usually associated with traffic calming measures and pedestrianisation schemes, the Planning Authority will ensure that the national public utility agencies are consulted to confirm that any necessary utility works which would be needed at a later date (not necessarily related to the project) would not be jeopardised in the process and that such works would be possible without damaging the project being approved.

Relevant policies:

***GV05,07,08,10,27,28,
GF05,06,08,09,16,20,
GM04,05,15,
GB05,11,13,
GL06,07,14,
GG05,06,17,18,
GK12,18, GV29.***

It is very common to notice public utility works in areas which have just been improved or repaved. The result usually is that such works damage materials in the original project, rendering such rehabilitation schemes ineffective, or drastically reducing their lifespan. This happens due to various factors, but maybe most importantly due to lack of consultation between such agencies, and the use of wrong detailing techniques and inflexible materials in the original project.

This policy ensures that the Planning Authority plays its share in solving this problem by at least being satisfied that two main causes of the problem are addressed. The first is lack of co-ordination between implementation agencies (like Local Councils and government departments) and public utility agencies (like Water, Electricity, Sewerage corporations); and the second is the standards used in the original project, which need to take such factors into account in choosing the type and characteristics of materials used.

6.5 Environment

Strategy

The Local Plan puts great emphasis on environmental considerations, in particular the concept of environmental capacity. Concern for environmental aspects is implicit in and fundamental to a proper planning approach. However, it is also useful to emphasise some points through the application of specific, more detailed policies.

The Local Plan tries to assist the area to become a more attractive place in which to live and work, and to visit. Therefore the strategy strives for an improved environment, which is healthier, will attract visitors and investment, and will help to create employment.

Although much of the south-eastern periphery of the Plan area contains land uses which are characteristic of the rural/urban fringe, the topographical and vegetation changes present can nevertheless create areas of high visual amenity and nature conservation interest close to other locations in need of reclamation and general improvement.

Parts of the outer shoreline also contain features of scientific and nature conservation interest. The Harbour waters themselves are subject to a variety of potential contaminants, which need where possible to be dealt with at source. Moreover, the value of parts of the Harbour as a recreational resource is largely unrecognised and for the most part untapped.

Approach

The objectives identified below seek to guide change by protecting the best features of the environment and encouraging improvement elsewhere. Two separate but interrelated strands are therefore pursued, relating to measures to protect and enhance areas and features of significance; and to seek the physical improvement of other areas by dealing with problematic land uses, supporting tree planting programmes, and extending the network of open space. The overall aim of environmental improvement is of course taken into account in all parts of the Plan and not just in this section, and this theme shapes and pervades many of the policies and proposals put forward.

Specific objectives are to:

- improve townscape and landscape, and protect and conserve environmental, agricultural, natural or historic features and areas;
- set high environmental standards and reduce pollution;
- minimise environmental impact of national infrastructural projects;
- maintain extensive areas of open land around the urban area;
- rehabilitate derelict/despoiled land for appropriate beneficial use;
- establish a network of open space within the urban area; and
- protect and enhance the amenity of the coastline and of the Harbour.

GE01 *Valleys, Areas Of Ecological / Geological Importance
And Sites Of Scientific Importance*

Valleys, Areas of Ecological / Geological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance are defined and indicated on the appropriate Inset Maps. The major areas are near Ricasoli/Kalkara. In these areas, development of any description which could prejudice the unique natural characteristics of the areas or adversely affect individual sites will not be permitted.

Relevant policies:

*GM11,
GG19,
GK03,15,16.*

Reference is made to the Structure Plan and its Explanatory memorandum. In policy RCO1, Areas of Ecological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance are Rural Conservation Areas. Hence, references in the Structure Plan to Rural Conservation Areas are also applicable to these areas. Structure Plan policies RCO 28 and RCO 29 also give special protection to valleys.

GE02 *Environmental Improvements To
Main Road Corridors*

The Planning Authority will seek improvements to the immediate visual corridors of main roads, especially arterial roads and the proposed South Harbour Link Road, which must be designed taking into account landscape concepts as well as traffic flow requirements.

Relevant policies:

*GT03,13,GP06,
GF05,09,
GM12,13,15,
GB05, GG07,GK05.*

The Local Plan area has a concentration of main routes, which must be considered in terms of the impression they give of the area (the view from the road) and their visual relationship with adjoining locations. This is an important issue of amenity for both local residents and road users.

The Structure Plan draws particular attention to the route from the Airport to Valletta via Marsa, but the same requirements apply elsewhere. Improving the visual corridor can be undertaken by:

- tree and shrub planting;
- maintaining open spaces alongside roads and conserving existing vegetation (except those with destructive roots);
- ensuring signs and advertisements are erected only where appropriate and are carefully designed; and
- assessing any development proposal against its visual impact on the corridor, and refusing to allow development where its effect would be detrimental; or alternatively, requiring modifications to the design.

The policy therefore envisages positive measures being taken over time to improve the visual corridor, and the control of development to ensure that no deterioration occurs. No arbitrary distance or width of corridor is being imposed - an inflexible limit is clearly unrealistic, since not all areas of land within the immediate visual field of the driver are of equal importance or value. The main point of the policy is to highlight this aspect of landscape improvement, emphasising that sites should be assessed in relation to this landscape concept as well as on their individual merits.

GE03 *Areas Of Open Space*

Areas of formal and informal open space (both public and private) located within or outside the built-up area, and which add significantly to the amenity of the locality, will be protected from development. There would therefore be a presumption against development in such areas, especially development which would remove or adversely affect these spaces.

Relevant figures:
7,10,12,15,16,17,19,21,
23, Policy GK04.

The Planning Authority is anxious to sustain and enhance the vitality of the settlements in the Plan area, encouraging a return of population.

Within built-up areas, regeneration and redevelopment are not however synonymous with 'town-cramming' - the use of much of the available open land for development purposes. The Authority will be guided by the need to maintain a reasonable balance between redevelopment needs and protection of open land.

The Planning Authority, in considering development applications on hitherto open areas, including afforestation zones, will have regard to the incidence, use and visual qualities of existing open space, and should refuse applications which would result in the reduction of such qualities.

GE04

Afforestation

For amenity, recreational and landscape improvement purposes, a programme of afforestation in the form of structural planting will be undertaken. This requirement will be particularly relevant:

- **on the edge of existing settlements;**
- **adjoining main transport corridors;**
- **in the vicinity of extensive sports/recreational areas;**
- **where large edge of settlement sites are proposed; and**
- **along long distance footpath routes and heritage trails where appropriate.**

Relevant policies:
GC07,
GP07,
GD04

The introduction of more tree and shrub planting on a large scale is important in a number of ways. On a global scale, the cumulative effect of such programmes is to counter pollution and the effects of greenhouse gas.

In local terms, additional planting has aesthetic appeal, helps to increase recreational and play opportunities, provides shade, and helps to sustain wildlife. For maximum effect, it is essential that schemes are put in hand as early as possible. It should be pointed out that the Planning Authority will routinely require the submission of landscaping and planting schemes from developers as a normal feature of development applications, whether or not structural planting measures are also required or are being pursued in the vicinity by public bodies. It is expected that indigenous species, selected to suite the particular growing conditions and for their ability to provide screening, shade, form and colour, will be used.

GE05

Scrapyards

Scrapyards will normally only be permitted within industrial areas where their environmental impact can be minimised and absorbed without detriment to other development and uses, and where they will be required to treat/recycle the scrap. They will therefore not serve as storage/dumping sites, and environmental impact requirements will be specified according to already published Policy and Design Guidance - Environmental Impact Assessment in Malta (May 1994). Landscaping schemes in accordance with Structure Plan policies RCO 31, 32 will form part of such projects.

Relevant policies:
GK16.

Scrapyards are required to be waste recycling facilities, not merely repositories for dumping material. Recycling is necessary, and such facilities perform a valuable function, but can have an adverse environmental impact if not carefully sited, with appropriate containment measures.

Prominent sites in open areas, such as the one located near Kalkara, are unsuitable for scrapyard use. The issue of existing scrapyards is a national issue and action is needed by the responsible authorities to change these yards into the commercial concerns which treat waste as described above. On existing scrapyard sites, including those outside the local plan area, any unauthorised use will be checked and enforcement action taken as required. New development of this type will only be permitted within a suitable industrial area where any impact can be minimised and monitored. Environmental Impact will be studied according to guidance already published by the Authority.

GE06

Derelict And Despoiled Land

The rehabilitation of derelict and despoiled land will be pursued. It is the Authority's intention to seek government assistance to ensure that a programme of derelict land rehabilitation work is carried out. The Planning Authority will also seek to prevent future dereliction or contamination by imposing restoration and aftercare conditions on appropriate development permissions including those for industrial structures which would not be adaptable to other uses.

Relevant policies:
GN01,GP02,03,05,07,
GD03,04,GM15,17,
GI01,04,08,10,
GB11,12,13,
GL16,GG18,
GK13,15,16,19,20.

Derelict land in this context generally refers to more extensive areas and might be defined as being land so damaged by industrial or other development as to be incapable of reasonably beneficial use without further treatment. This policy is essentially designed to encourage the recycling of land. Scope may exist for private sector involvement related to the 'after-use' of the site.

The Planning Authority will need to anticipate the potential for dereliction or contamination when considering planning applications, and when relevant, seek to minimise the possibility of this happening by imposing conditions relating to restoration and where appropriate aftercare.

GE07

Ricasoli Tank Cleaning Installation

The Planning Authority will support measures to reduce the impact of the Ricasoli Tank Cleaning Installation. In the long term, the removal of this installation will be pursued.

Relevant policies:

*GP01,05,07,
GD05,13,
GK13,16,18,19.*

The tank cleaning facility at Ricasoli is an essential operation to enable ships to enter the Harbour in a ‘gas-free’ condition, and thus for repair work to be undertaken. No feasible alternative to the current location seems likely at the present time.

If the restoration and re-use of Fort Ricasoli is to be carried out, then some measures to ameliorate the impact of the installation will be necessary, especially in relation to the oil storage tanks; together with safeguards to ensure that it presents no unacceptable risks to users of the Fort. However, in the longer term, a serious review of the future of the installation in relation to the current site, and to its operation generally, should be undertaken.

6.6 Social And Community Facilities Provision

Strategy

Provision of social facilities across the Local Plan area is very variable. This has rendered certain areas, like in Cottonera, as dormitory towns, where locals travel out of their locality in order to make use of such facilities. It is acknowledged that such facilities play an essential part in community development. A land use plan such as the Grand Harbour Local Plan cannot of itself provide a solution to questions of social provision. This requires a concerted effort with the initial impetus coming directly from the relevant government ministries and voluntary organisations concerned. What the Local Plan can do is to co-operate with these other agencies to ensure that opportunities are available for facility provision, and to assist in safeguarding those facilities that already exist, making allowance for improvement and expansion requirements. The Plan will also try to introduce the concept of efficient use of these facilities, together with better management provisions. It does not make sense to have the same facilities in every locality, and this problem can only be solved through this approach.

Approach

The Plan will therefore tackle the question of facility provision in two ways. Firstly, by ensuring that community provision needs are not overlooked in the allocation of sites for development or redevelopment. This may involve the reservation of particular sites for community purposes, or, where a development brief is to be prepared, ensuring that community requirements are specified in the brief. Secondly, the encouragement of 'dual use' and improvement of existing facilities will be supported. It is also recognised that existing facilities are often prone to being displaced by other uses of greater economic or other importance. The policies therefore try to ensure the consolidation of what exists and the promotion of other facilities.

GC01

Provision Of Sports/Recreation Facilities

The Planning Authority will support the efficient use of existing and proposed sports and recreational facilities on government owned land. Development permission will normally only be granted if the Planning Authority is satisfied that maximum shared use is made of existing facilities identical to the proposed project in the neighbouring areas and localities.

Relevant policies:

*GN04,
GC02,03,04,05,06,07,
GP04,05,GD13,
GV09,21,22,
GF12,13,14,17,20,
GM11,14,15,
GI10,11,
GB09,11,12,13,
GL14,16,17,
GG15,17,18,
GK08,12,13,16.*

It has been noticed that various existing facilities on government land are either not used, or else are under-utilised through their control by one club/school/organisation only. This is a waste of a valuable resource - land - due to mismanagement. As an example, it is not acceptable to have two football pitches near each other solely because one pitch is run by one club or local council and the other is run by another. The catchment area has to be assessed, and if one facility is enough, the other site could be developed for some other type of sports or recreational activity. Mismanagement is not considered as a good justification for the construction of similar facilities.

GC02

Relocation Of Sports Facilities

The Planning Authority recognises the fundamental importance of sports facilities within the Local Plan area. Therefore, permission will not normally be granted for development which will result in a loss of such facilities.

However, it is recognised that in exceptional circumstances, the benefits derived by the local community from the proposed development may warrant a departure from this policy. Permission may be granted by the Planning Authority where it can be clearly demonstrated that:

- the applicant made genuine efforts to find a comparable, environmentally acceptable, alternative site both for his development as well as the sports facility being threatened; and
- the benefits of the proposed development outweigh substantially the disbenefits from loss of the facility.

Relevant policies:

*GC01,
GF17,GM11.*

The Local Plan area is intensively developed and the number of sports and recreational facilities is limited. The Plan expects an increase in facilities as well as the protection of existing ones.

The requirement to provide a suitable alternative site for facilities affected by development is therefore introduced. Evidently, however, under exceptional circumstances, there may be instances where no alternative site is found and where the benefits derived with respect to the local community are greater than the potential loss. In these circumstances, a permit may be issued, but any case for approval will carry more weight if an alternative site can be provided which is convenient to, and can be used by, the local community.

GC03

Recreational Use Of The Waterfront

The Planning Authority will encourage investments from both the private and public sectors for improvement and embellishment of the urban waterfront and the provision of appropriate facilities for recreation in accordance with the zoning and use guidelines contained in this Local Plan, together with Structure Plan policies on access and coastal areas, particularly CZM 3. Particularly for Valletta, it will prepare an Action Plan for the entire waterfront, from the entrance to the Great Ditch on Marsamxett side, to Lascaris on the Grand Harbour side.

Relevant policies:

*GN04,
GS09,GC01,04,05,
GP04,05,
GV06,
GB11,
GL14,
GG09,15,17,18,
GK12,13,15,16.*

The extensive waterfront is one of the most impressive features of the Local Plan area, contributing enormously to its amenity and atmosphere. Whilst accepting that along some commercial parts of the Grand Harbour, public access will be inappropriate for security and safety reasons, much of the rest of the waterfront would benefit from improvement and represents a potentially very important resource in terms of recreation. That potential is currently far from being realised, and together with other specific area policies, this policy attempts to underline the Authority's approach to the issue.

GC04

Marsamxett Waterfront

The Planning Authority will support the upgrading of the Marsamxett waterfront for public use on the Valletta stretch, and for the retention of existing uses on the Floriana stretch, namely as an inter-island ferry terminal, for military (Armed Forces of Malta) use and for leisure uses. Other policies in this Plan and in the Structure Plan will need to be respected.

Relevant policies:

*GN04,
GC01,03,
GV06,
GF08,09.*

The Marsamxett Waterfront is presently used for activities which in the Plan period indicate a need for upgrading. Starting from Sa Maison, the Gozo ferry terminal presently creates problems for motorists using the adjacent road network. It is expected that this situation could be resolved by some land reclamation to increase and improve both the site area and berthing facilities.

Its next door neighbour, the Naval base also indicates the need for intensification of use, and its location is consolidated in this Plan. The rest of the Floriana waterfront (Hay Wharf zone) can be used for leisure and education related activities, including water related users such as the existing Nautical School, yachting facilities, and similar activities.

Beyond the Excelsior Hotel on the Valletta waterfront, an active programme of improvements to the area should be pursued, and could include open air, sitting out areas served by water related sports activities like waterpolo, sailing, and diving. The rocky beaches in the area will be protected and structures should be minimised, preferably kept to what already exists. Ferry landing points also need to be safeguarded and upgraded. No constructions will be permitted below Fort St. Elmo.

GC05

Cottonera Waterfront

A promenade will link the whole of the Cottonera waterfront from Senglea point to Kalkara. Other private and public, leisure related facilities will be encouraged. These proposals will be subject to Structure Plan policies on the Coastal Zone, particularly CZM 3.

Relevant policies:

*GN04,05,GC01,03,
GP05,GD13,
GB11,GL14,
GG09,17,18,
GK12,16.*

The use of the waterfront as a recreational space is an important element leading to the regeneration of the area. Cottonera is characterised by the presence of a long, undulating, and natural waterfront which is currently under-utilised, misused, and/or inaccessible.

This situation needs to be rectified if Cottonera is to improve its image as a recreational, cultural zone. Due to the lack of recreational facilities in Cottonera, public access to the waterfront needs to be safeguarded in accordance with the Coastal Zone policies of the Structure Plan.

GC06

Recreational Footpath System

The Planning Authority will promote the development of a recreational footpath system based on routes on the north and south sides of the Harbour linking to Marsa and thence to the more rural areas further west. Where appropriate these routes will incorporate tree planting schemes and picnic areas.

Relevant policies:
*GN04,GC01,
GM11,15,GI11,GB09,
GG09,15, GK08,12,13.*

Both within and on the fringe of the Plan area, opportunities exist to develop a recreational footpath system, away from traffic, linking areas of greenery, extensive fortifications, open vistas and viewpoints.

The development of a managed footpath system for simple recreational use, including picnic spots, shaded areas, and where necessary interpretative facilities, would be a simple yet very significant contribution to the enjoyment of local people and tourists.

GC07

Existing Afforestation Zones

The Planning Authority will seek the improvement of afforested zones within the Local Plan area. It will encourage the responsible authorities in developing the potential of these zones into well managed, picnic and recreational areas with a woodland setting.

Relevant policies:
*GE04,
GC01,
GF14,
GB12.*

The Local Plan area contains tracts of land which include large areas of mature trees. These areas are usually neglected, leading to anti-social practices. With this in mind, and the need for more recreational spaces, this policy aims at encouraging a better use of these spaces. This could be done by the provision of hard landscaping, lighting or even fencing where appropriate. If developed in the right manner, these areas have the potential to serve as well landscaped, wooded urban parks.

6.7 The Grand Harbour Port Function

Strategy

The Plan recognises the fundamental and continuing importance of the Grand Harbour itself as Malta's principal port for the import of goods and raw materials and the export of finished products. This role is complementary to the development of the Freeport at Marsaxlokk as a container 'hub' for onward transshipment. The Plan must therefore assist the primary role of the Grand Harbour to be discharged in an efficient and effective way, and at the same time, allow other appropriate commercial enterprises requiring strong maritime links to flourish. However, where a fundamental conflict of interest is likely to occur, then in the national interest, priority should be given to the primary role of the Grand Harbour as Malta's principal port. Other important functions of the Harbour for which provision must be made are:

- the development of cruise ship berths and facilities;
- the continuation of the shipbuilding/ship repair industry;
- areas predominantly (but not exclusively) for leisure and tourism; and
- its role as a residential location.

This economic strategy has nevertheless to be set within an appropriate environmental context, an approach which underpins the whole policy framework of the Plan.

Approach

To integrate the economic and environmental aspects, the Harbour has been sub-divided into functional zones which define broad land use areas. It would be unrealistic to expect that such a zoning could be rigidly established, but nevertheless, it would be inappropriate to consider substantial deviation from this pattern. Where the opportunity arises, existing 'non-conforming' uses - particularly those causing problems - will be encouraged to relocate to the zone most suitable for their particular operation. An overall landscape framework will also be related to these functional zones.

Three broad functional zones have been identified. These are:

Zone A - The Inner Harbour - Commercial, Industrial and Dock Areas

The Inner Harbour has a water frontage of approximately 7km and industrial and residential areas are firmly separated, although areas exist where this is not the case. The current role of this area is well-established, appropriate and necessary, and the Local Plan must ensure that it can continue. Preference must however be given to port related uses which require, for operational reasons, to be located on or close to the waterfront.

Scope exists throughout the zone to utilise land more efficiently, particularly through the rationalisation of site boundaries and the provision of better access. Where necessary, action needs to be taken to assist in bringing land into productive use; to improve the efficiency, operating conditions and appearance of industrial areas, and to provide a better environment for workers.

This can be achieved through direct government intervention in the provision of essential infrastructure; the establishment of fiscal incentives; the co-ordination of public works; the acquisition/sale of land by Government, where necessary ; or any combination of the above. Fiscal incentives are necessary to encourage the preparation of sites for industrial development (including land assembly), and for the repair or

restoration of industrial buildings (including routine maintenance). Provision of improved access, loading or unloading arrangements also apply.

The Inner Harbour also represents the heart of ship repair activity, a use which may contract in land use terms with increases in efficiency, but which is unlikely to be replaced in view of its importance in social and economic terms. It is therefore expected that, during the Plan period, only limited changes in land use will occur here, with the major part of the water frontage continuing in ship repair use.

Whilst ship repair and related engineering operations are acceptable in this area, any intensification or extension of use which may adversely affect adjacent housing areas would require careful consideration and the introduction of steps to ameliorate any problems. Safeguarding of the marine environment will also be necessary.

Zone B - The Valletta/Floriana Waterfront - Passenger and Related Services, Leisure and Tourism

This section deals specifically with the immediate waterfront which extends for some 2km. The waterfront has a unique character deriving from its important location adjacent to both Valletta and Floriana, and thus its attraction and development as a 'prestige' berth for passenger ships, cruise liners and super yachts. Growth of this trade is encouraged, as it provides important economic benefits both nationally and locally. With increasing expectations by sea passengers that a wide range of facilities will be available at points of arrival and departure, scope exists for a mix of uses in this area, including specialised retailing.

The outer tip of Valletta (about 1km) below the Mediterranean Conference Centre is relatively inaccessible from the landward side. No particular development is envisaged here, except that related to Fort St. Elmo. The foreshore however, has to be safeguarded.

Zone C - The Cottonera Side - Residential, Leisure and Tourism

Some 6km of water frontage includes or has potential for residential, recreational and tourism uses. Development for industrial purposes is very restricted. Because of limited formal open space in the settlements, the waterfront represents an important public asset which must be retained and to which, as far as possible, the public should have access.

The zone also includes historic buildings; complex fortifications; and magnificent panoramas based on the interplay of water and urban form. It is also a zone of considerable, untapped tourist potential. Several of the historic sites include features in need of restoration, unused buildings, and parts to which public access is difficult or restricted. A carefully managed tourism development programme could not only assist in the restoration of these features, but also help to improve the local economy, encouraging diversification in a way which should directly benefit local people.

There are already indications that certain localities are beginning to attract foreign residents. This process of gentrification may nevertheless have certain disadvantages in restricting access to the housing market for local people by bidding up the prices.

MAP 5

Provision is made in the Local Plan to ensure that local housing needs can be addressed.

In summary, the Outer Harbour divides easily into distinct localities and planning policy will be directed towards enhancing the positive characteristics of these areas and promoting appropriate improvement schemes. Such schemes will relate to residential, recreational and tourism uses. Industrial activity, beyond limited, low-impact, maritime related undertakings will not be permitted, and the maintenance of public access to the waterfront will be a key consideration in dealing with any development applications.

GP01

Overall Use Guidelines

Proposals for development along the Grand Harbour waterfront will conform to the appropriate zoning as specified above in the Approach, as indicated on the Grand Harbour Waterfront Map and according to the specific policies that follow.

Relevant policies:

*GV06, GE07,
GP02,03,04,05,06,08,
GM17,18,20,22,
GI04,GB09,11,
GL03,14,15,16,
GG09,15,17,18,
GK12.*

The Harbour area has been sub-divided into three land use zones, in order to assist in the orderly development of the Harbour as a port and to ensure that its use for maritime activity is not compromised. These are:
Zone A (The Inner Harbour) - Commercial, Industrial and Dock Areas;
Zone B (Valletta/Floriana) - Passenger and Related Services, Leisure and Tourism;
Zone C (Cottonera) - Residential, Leisure and Tourism.

GP02

The Inner Harbour

In the area identified on Figure 5 as the Inner Harbour (Zone ‘A’), development permission will be restricted to uses or structures ancillary to the continued operational use of the waterfront for ship repair, cargo handling, cargo distribution, warehousing and supporting facilities to the main use such as maintenance workshops, garages for cargo handling equipment and fuelling stations or any other port or ship repairing related use, and as specified in the area policies.

Relevant policies:

*GE06,
GP01,07,08,
GM17,18,20,22,
GI04.*

The Inner Harbour is the heart of the port area and its continued use for cargo handling and other marine activities is essential. This policy is designed to support the long term prosperity of the port by safeguarding land which is essential for cargo handling and its related distribution or export, and land which is necessary for undertakings whose work is directly relevant to functioning of the Harbour.

GP03

The Dockyard

The shoreline along French Creek will be reserved for ship repairing and related marine engineering and manufacturing activities. Development permit applications will still be subject to normal development control and environmental assessment, in particular, in relation to any possible adverse effects on nearby housing, or on marine life and ecology, including water quality.

Relevant policies:

GE06,

French Creek has developed as the centre of the specialised ship repairing industry and substantial, comparatively recent investment has been made

*GP01,08,
GB09,11,
GL03.*

here. During the Plan period, it is unlikely that any major reduction in the area dedicated to ship repairing will occur, and it is logical to retain facilities here.

Should there be any contraction in the land required for ship repairing itself, then related ship repair/marine-related engineering activity will continue to be acceptable here, provided that nearby residential areas are not adversely affected, and no untoward effects on marine life will occur.

GP04

The Valletta/Floriana Waterfront

The Valletta/Floriana waterfront as identified (Zone ‘B’) on Figure 5 is the area with greatest potential in relation to cruise passenger services. An outline development permit for such facilities has already been approved by the Planning Authority, reflecting the importance that is given to this sector in the economy of the Port. This includes ferry and cruise terminal facilities; and proposals for the restoration and rehabilitation of the prestigious eighteenth century Pinto Stores and other historic buildings along the waterfront. Uses include a wide range of commercial, recreational, and cultural activities. Other uses may also include specialised retail, office and other consumer facilities related to the use and expansion of the Port for passenger services, provided that required development control criteria are observed, and taking into consideration the policies in the Structure Plan and in this Local Plan.

Relevant policies:
*GT12, GC01,03,
GP01,08,GD09,
GF15, GV06,24,GM18*

This approach reflects the growing importance of the passenger sector to the economy of the Harbour as a general port. This policy supports this concept, especially if related to the appropriate reuse of Pinto stores.

In this context, rerouting of the existing road fronting Pinto Stores to pass through the space between the bastion walls and the back part of Pinto is supported. The road should be at grade, even though this might mean that some trimming of the rear end of the existing buildings may be required to ensure sufficient width and other road design considerations. This rerouting will liberate the waterfront and allow for the creation of a water esplanade here, lined with a promenade instead of the existing road that would be freely accessible to the general public.

The passenger cruise terminal concept also needs to be in context with other more specific objectives, including the need to revitalise Valletta and forge stronger links between the harbour side and Valletta/Floriana. It should be noted that retail uses located here should complement the main shopping activity available in Valletta, and is not aimed to encourage its unrestrained development in this location.

GP05

The Cottonera Waterfront

The development of ‘mixed uses’ will be acceptable in the Cottonera Waterfront area (Zone ‘C’) as identified on Figure 5, but all activities must be compatible with its generally restrained residential/town centre character.

The entire waterfront of Dockyard Creek between Il-Ponta ta’ L-Isla and Fort St. Angelo is designated as the ‘Cottonera Waterfront Revival Area’ where public access to the waterfront in the context of tourism development will be promoted.

The Planning Authority will seek the removal of the industrial use of Dock No.1 and will support the opening up of the site for tourism, residential and other community related uses. Development permission will not be given in this zone for activities which are likely to prejudice any residential or desirable leisure or tourism uses.

Relevant policies:
*GT12, GE06,07,
GC01,03,05, GP01,
GD13, GB09,11,
GL03,14,
GG09,15,17,18,
GK12.*

The phrase ‘mixed uses’ in this context refers to housing, leisure activities and tourism, with other commercial undertakings (including offices and retail) being secondary in nature and preferably limited to providing local services, or traditionally associated with the area. Again, all proposals will be subject to the normal development control procedures, and it should not be supposed that, because a proposal accords with the overall zoning, development permission will automatically follow.

The reuse and redevelopment of the No.1 dock site is essential to the regeneration of Cottonera as a whole. Subject to the detailed requirements of the development brief, some commercial element is likely to be necessary in the project, e.g. some offices and retailing, to help offset the relocation costs or to assist in long term maintenance.

GP06

Access

Improved access to the Grand Harbour area will be sought, including better connections to the arterial road system and measures for better peripheral movement along the shoreline. This will include pedestrian access. New developments on or near the waterfront will be expected to take these requirements into account in their design and layout.

Relevant policies:
GE02,GP01.

Maintaining and improving access to and within the Harbour area is vital if it is to function efficiently. This covers not just access to the arterial road system, but also movement throughout the Harbour area, and pedestrian access for the public to the water’s edge where this is possible. It will therefore be necessary to ensure that development which might affect access makes appropriate allowance to comply with this requirement.

GP07

Overall Landscape Requirements

The Grand Harbour is sub-divided into landscape character areas which relate to the functional zones. The Planning Authority will consider development in terms of its impact on the character areas as well as in relation to other planning factors.

Relevant policies:
*GE04,06,07,
GP02.*

In addition to assisting the efficient and harmonious functioning of the Grand Harbour as a port and residential area, it is important to retain its essential visual characteristics which make it a unique experience and help confer a sense of place to individual localities. The key landscape elements are considered below.

The Inner Harbour

These are essentially working areas, and industrial structures such as cranes, gantries, tanks, chimneys and pipe work are common features. In many ways, these features are indicators of the economic vibrancy of this part of the Harbour. Rather than attempt to camouflage their presence, it is preferable that their sculptural qualities should be emphasised and

contrasted with their background. The use of primary colours to pick out such features is therefore considered appropriate, and developers will be encouraged to examine the effect of proposals taking into account the distant prospect of the site.

Also critical in this context will be the views from the arterial roads. The visual corridor of Triq Aldo Moro and the proposed South Harbour Link Road will be very important in this respect.

The Valletta/Floriana Waterfront and the Cottonera Side

The form of the Three Cities and Valletta must be retained. This should be based on emphasising the vertical elements of the buildings and the contrast they provide with the massive bastions, which introduce a strong horizontal feature. Generally, buildings or structures must not obscure or overpower the bastions themselves. ‘Incongruous’ buildings, piercing the skyline in a dominant way, will not usually be acceptable. In specific instances, however, it may be desirable to do this so as to fulfil a necessary, national, prestigious cultural requirement. Such a situation is expected to occur very rarely, if at all. Where the opportunity arises, redevelopment of existing inappropriate or unsightly buildings will be encouraged. The introduction of planting and greenery, particularly in waterfront areas, will be supported.

At Ricasoli, development of the site of the Fort in a way which provides a contrast to the mass of Valletta will be considered. Provided the fortifications are rehabilitated and presented in a sensitive manner, limited new construction may be possible. However, the views of and detailed consultation with the Museums Department will always be sought. It is important to note that no development which might interfere with navigational requirements will be permitted. Generally, development which would penetrate the urban skyline of the critical ridges on the north and south sides of the Harbour will not be acceptable.

GP08

Shipping Movements

In the consideration of applications related to the waterfront and to moorings, the Planning Authority will ensure that shipping movements and ship manoeuvring practices are safeguarded. Development permission will not be granted for developments which might affect the navigational requirements of ships in the Harbour.

<p><i>Relevant policies:</i> <i>GP01,02,03,04.</i></p>
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The natural shape of the Grand Harbour makes it sometimes difficult for large ships to manoeuvre in the water area. In certain parts, this also applies to smaller ships. Quayside developments, especially those which include reclamation works, must ensure that this situation does not regress, thus making the movement of ships inside the port more difficult.

6.8 Local Economic Development

Strategy

The Grand Harbour has developed as a ‘traditional’ centre of industry and warehousing in Malta, for reasons of centrality, distribution links, proximity to the main port, and economies associated with industrial agglomeration. Although these locational factors have lost some of their importance, the Local Plan area as a whole still retains a strong attraction as a convenient location for business development, particularly since the growth of the domestic market has continued. A planning strategy must be adopted which will enable this tradition to continue, although with appropriate safeguards. Areas presently considered as lacking investment, and which as a consequence have become dormitory towns (as in Cottonera) will be earmarked for new initiatives and projects.

The Local Plan area also contains some 130 ha of industrial land, about 20 ha of which remain in an abandoned or semi-derelict condition. The strategy adopted by the Plan is to promote recycling of land where this will not exacerbate environmental problems.

Also important is the need to lift the standards of existing industrial development making it more attractive, efficient and environmentally friendly. This is common practice abroad and has been the strategy of some European port-cities which were at the forefront in successful attempts to integrate industry, high environmental standards, and public access and recreation. There is no reason why this philosophy should not be followed here, and thus a strategy of industrial improvement is being proposed. Where small industries have developed in residential or sensitive historical areas, and are creating ‘bad-neighbour’ problems, then this issue will also need to be tackled.

In relation to shopping, the vitality of existing centres depends upon a strong retailing component. The Local Plan accepts that there may be the need however to enable new forms of shopping to develop in the interests of the consumer. Such shopping may not be capable of being accommodated within the traditional centres, or if it can, may cause problems such as traffic, as well as pressure for changes in building form which may not be desirable. Thus, development on the fringe of centres may be acceptable, whereas sporadic development in isolated ‘out of town’ locations almost certainly is not.

In tourism terms, the potential of the Grand Harbour is very significant. Valletta is a major attraction, but even here, the tourism experience - the complete environment in which visitors are immersed - requires upgrading. This demands action on the widest front and is one reason why the Local Plan policies have the carefully regulated expansion and improvement of this sector as a major objective. In the Cottonera area, the impact of tourism, beneficial or otherwise, has been small, and the area remains largely undiscovered. This does present the opportunity to encourage tourism development in a gradual, orderly fashion, and to integrate policies, initiatives and programmes on a wide range of other relevant matters with those of tourism expansion.

Approach

Mention has already been made of the need to promote land reclamation as an aid to recycling of land. This could also be linked to an active programme of industrial improvement areas, where it is envisaged that the public and private sectors would co-operate in the carrying out of improvement works.

To fulfil the strategy of removing industrial ‘nuisances’ - mainly small, bad neighbour garage uses - it will be necessary to have an alternative site and premises available where such uses can be undertaken in properly constructed and managed premises without creating problems for adjoining occupiers. Again, small industries face many difficulties in achieving growth and development, including lack of a proper financial assistance programme. M.D.C. should be given special responsibility and funding for this task.

Policies will also be introduced to protect the shopping function of existing centres, and a cautious approach to new forms of retailing will be adopted, with ‘edge of centre’ locations generally preferred in the absence of a town centre position being available. The approach adopted towards shopping provision - introducing measures to strengthen the role of town centres - is aimed at enhancing the level and quality of the shopping service and ensuring the centres continue to be the main focus of retail provision.

The Local Plan recognises the importance of tourism as a potential catalyst for economic and social development within the area - if properly managed and co-ordinated with other activities. Clear linkages are evident between tourism growth and the fundamental concern of the Plan to seek urban regeneration, involving aspects like the conservation and maintenance of the historical heritage, better employment opportunities, improved social facilities, improvements to the public domain, and more efficient public transport. Thus, the overall approach is to welcome the expansion of tourism here, but to temper this with a carefully modulated response to the type of facilities proposed, and to seek an integrated, gradual increase in provision.

In Valletta/Floriana and Cottonera, the emphasis is on the development of limited, small scale, quality accommodation; seeking the re-use of redundant/underused buildings. Facilities which encourage tourism activities in the evenings will be encouraged, subject to other Local Plan policies which seek to protect amenity. In Cottonera, an integrated approach to tourism is vitally necessary, concentrating on a series of linked and complementary attractions, rather than each settlement attempting to compete. The waterfront lends itself to this type of approach and a development brief for this area, including proposals for No.1 Dock, is a central feature of the adopted approach.

Given the need for initial injection of economic activity in the area, the Planning Authority will support such initiatives and be flexible in the application of development control requirements in Valletta, Floriana, and Cottonera. This may include the relaxation of normal requirements related to, for example, parking provision, tourist accommodation rating requirements, size of tourism establishments, and any such standard requirement which may hinder the initial investment. Once economic activity in these localities increases, such relaxation will be reviewed.

GD01

SME Workshops In Residential Areas

No further permissions will be given for the development of workshops or any other industrial uses in the residential areas identified on the Inset Maps except for the provisions of Use Class 11 of the Use Classes Order (1994, as amended).

Relevant policies:
GS07,
GD02,
GI03,
GB14,
GK22,23.

An increasing problem throughout the residential areas is the growth in activities of an industrial nature which have an appreciable detrimental effect on nearby residents. In some cases, these activities have expanded into adjacent, former residential accommodation. Not only is the housing stock diminished, but great inconvenience is often caused to residents.

Although Structure Plan policies are available which require ‘bad neighbour’ effects to be taken into consideration, these are to some extent subjective and susceptible to debate and argument. To make the position quite clear therefore, it is not intended to allow any further uses of this type in the residential areas. Where applications are received, applicants will be advised to seek a site or building in a properly constituted industrial area. This includes applications for the expansion and intensification of existing uses. Advice will be available on the appropriateness of other sites.

GD02

Sites For Small And Medium-sized Enterprise Workshops

The Planning Authority will encourage the development of commercially operated workshops for small scale industries in contained surroundings. Locations are identified where appropriate on the relevant area Inset Maps.

Relevant policies:
GS07,
GD01,
GI03,
GB14,
GK22,23

A current feature of the local economy is the lack of specific provision for small and medium-sized enterprises. Sometimes this is not a problem, where ‘garage’ industries can operate in domestic surroundings without causing a nuisance. Expansion is however usually out of the question, and there may in any case be problems arising for neighbours because of the activities carried out.

Often, the option of moving to an established industrial area is not available or would be inappropriate. Scope also exists for such provision by the private sector. If the initiation and growth of small businesses is recognised as a priority, then the question of acceptable sites and facilities needs to be addressed.

Since the underlying theme of environmental improvement must be met, the Planning Authority would require specific provision of a high standard and would be prepared to issue design guidance on what is being sought. It may be that, in the absence of private sector interest, the Authority should seek the involvement of M.D.C., the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry for Economic Development, Lands Department and other relevant bodies with a view to setting up a pilot project to exemplify what can be achieved.

As important as securing a properly contained site, and buildings of an approved standard, is the question of long term management. The Planning Authority, in granting development permission, would require evidence of a legal agreement binding the owners and/or leaseholders, and their successors in title, to maintain individual buildings and common areas, including landscaping and planting, in good condition. Any legal agreement should also specify obligations and duties in respect of the everyday use (and misuse) of the units and surroundings. The same applies for the garage premises being vacated in the residential

areas due to relocation. If originally they were legally established, it will have to be made clear that this use is terminated and the premises would have to be reused for an alternative non-industrial activity.

GD03

Recycling Of Redundant/Abandoned Sites

In order to encourage the recycling and redevelopment of redundant or abandoned sites, the Planning Authority will normally approve the use for industrial or commercial purposes of a site not previously allocated or used for that purpose.

This does not apply to all such sites, but only to those developments which satisfy all of the following criteria:

- **the proposal does not involve the loss of residential use or open space;**
- **the site is no longer required or suitable for its current use or allocation;**
- **the development is of a form and scale appropriate to its location, and would not have an adverse impact on the local environment and residential amenity;**
- **the proposal is acceptable in terms of traffic, noise and other effects;**
- **the proposal is not in conflict with other policies of this Local Plan.**

Relevant policies:

*GN01,
GE06,
GM17,
GI01,04,08,
GK20,23.*

Recycling and efficient use of land is one of the most important considerations of this Plan. The effect of strictly circumscribing the occasions when change of use to industry or commerce is acceptable is to encourage the recycling and redevelopment of redundant or abandoned sites and premises, and to discourage the take-over of residential areas by commercial and industrial development. It may also help to maximise the range of premises and locations brought forward, by removing the ‘easy option’ of attempting to develop greenfield sites or open land in the built-up area or outside development boundaries.

GD04

Upgrading Of Existing Industrial Estates

The Planning Authority will encourage and support the improvement of the existing industrial estates at Kordin and Ricasoli.

Relevant policies:

*GN03, GE04,06,
GI01,08, GK20.*

M.D.C. have a programme of improvement which includes securing boundaries, rationalising and controlling access, and carrying out of other partial redevelopment works, including the introduction of planting.

This is strongly supported in principle by the Planning Authority, which encourages early implementation. Appropriate planting schemes along the boundary of the estates are considered to be a major contribution to improving the environment, both as seen from outside the estate and also for the workers themselves. This aspect will therefore be expected to be a major consideration in upgrading proposals.

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GD05

Change Of Use From Industry Or Commerce

Where the use of a site has been for industrial or commercial purposes, and has resulted in an excessively adverse impact on the local neighbourhood or environment, a change of use to other more appropriate purposes will generally be acceptable unless specified otherwise in this Local Plan.

Relevant policies:
*GS09,10,
GE07.*

This policy complements measures seeking the removal of industrial uses having a negative impact on the local population, acknowledging that a ‘vacated’ site can have considerable value for other uses. Development permission for alternative uses more appropriate to the site will therefore not be unreasonably withheld. This approach is intended to be a positive incentive to the relocation of uses prone to cause ‘bad-neighbour’ or environmental problems.

GD06

Town Centres

The Planning Authority designates the following town centres within the local plan area: -

Primary Town Centre – Valletta

Secondary Town Centre – Cospicua

Tertiary Town Centre – Floriana, Marsa, Vittoriosa, Senglea

The acceptable land-uses at ground floor within Primary Retail Frontage of the Primary Town Centre and within all frontages located within the Secondary and Tertiary Town Centres are:

- (i) Retailing use (Use Class 4, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended). (Showrooms within the Primary Retail Frontage will not be allowed and should not exceed 500m² sales and storage area when located within Secondary and Tertiary Town Centres);
- (ii) Financial, professional and other offices (Use Class 5, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended) provided the criteria set out in area policies GV24 and GV02 for Valletta and policy GF15 for Floriana are complied with;
- (iii) Food and drink (Use Class 6, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended);
- (iv) Non-residential institutions (Use Class 7, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended);
- (v) Assembly and leisure (Use Class 9, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended);
- (vi) Access to upper floor uses;
- (vii) Band clubs, social clubs, amusement arcades, tourism accommodation, conference centres;

provided that for uses falling under (ii) to (vii) above, the proposal will not result in the percentage of non-retail uses in each block façade exceeding 25% of its total length.

All uses falling under (i) to (vii) above can be located within the Secondary Retail Frontage of the Primary Town Centre without restrictions on the length of street frontage they occupy.

For upper floors within all Town Centres, the following additional uses together with those identified under (i) to (vii) above will be accepted:

- (i) dwelling units (Use Class 1, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended);

- (ii) residential institutions (Use Class 2, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended);
- (iii) hostels (Use Class 3, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended);
- (iv) education facilities (Use Class 8, Use Classes Order 1994, as amended).

The Planning Authority will support initiatives from public agencies and the private sector which contribute to the enhancement of the external environment of town centres, such as, pedestrianisation/pedestrian priority and traffic management schemes, landscaping of public areas and public transport services which add to their attraction as a retail hub.

The boundaries of each Town Centre are indicated on the relative inset maps.

Relevant policies: <i>GN05, GD07,08, GV19, GF19, GB11.</i>	The Retail Strategy of the Planning Authority defined a primary town centre as a town centre with a regional or sub-regional function for non food shopping.
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A Secondary Centre is a town centre with a significant non food shopping centre serving local residents, or residents of closely neighbouring villages, and used by at least 2,500 people for non food shopping.

A Tertiary Town Centre has a significant non food shopping centre but serving a smaller number of people than a secondary centre.

Non food shopping is to be considered as comparison goods which include clothing, footwear, furniture, household textiles, electrical goods, hardware, chemists goods, jewellery, recreational and other miscellaneous goods.

Convenience goods retail outlets are to be directed towards Neighbourhood Centres which are the appropriate commercial areas for this type of shopping.

Although retailing is a dominant activity in a town centre, the attraction of each centre for the location of other businesses and social and community facilities were taken into account in identifying the range and mix of uses indicated in (i) to (vi) above, acceptable within town centres. The vitality and viability of town centres depends on a varied mix of uses and activities which encourage people to visit the centre whilst ensuring that they remain an attractive place to live in.

The success of town centres as a commercial and social hub depends on a pleasant external environment, adequate public transport facilities and proper management of traffic. The designation of the town centres gives an indication of the urban areas where enhancement and embellishment schemes would be appropriate and encouraged.

GD07

Neighbourhood Centres

An appropriate location for a neighbourhood centre has been identified in Kalkara.

Within the Neighbourhood Centre the Planning Authority will ensure that the retailing use (primarily convenience), excluding showrooms (Use Class 4, Use Classes Order, 1994 as amended) remains the predominant use at ground floor level. Small supermarkets and other shops with a combined sales and storage area of up to 250m² would be allowed in these centres, together with other defined local and community services.

Other ground floor level uses appropriate for the Neighbourhood Centres are:

- (i) **Local Class 5 Offices (UCO 1994, as amended);**
- (ii) **Class 6 – Food and drink (UCO 1994, as amended) provided floor space does not exceed 75m²;**
- (iii) **Access to upper floor Class 1 – Dwellings;**
- (iv) **Band Clubs, Social Clubs.**

Relevant policies: <i>GN05,</i> <i>GS02,</i> <i>GD06,08.</i>	The threshold for small supermarkets and other shops in neighbourhood centres is designed to restrict these locations to provision for the immediately neighbouring catchment area.
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A neighbourhood centre is identified as:

- (i) a cluster of shops, primarily selling convenience goods or providing retail services (e.g. hairdresser, dry cleaners, video hire), together with other social and community services for the immediate neighbourhood;
- (ii) easily accessible on foot from surrounding residential areas; and located close to the geographical centre of the neighbourhood that it serves.
- (iii) Small supermarkets and other shops will be allowed provided they do not cause nuisance through noise, smell or other factors.

Access and servicing arrangements together with goods storage will not adversely impact neighbouring residents, businesses, or other users.

GD08

Small Scale Shopping

Small shops which comply with the Local Shops Policy, 1997 or subsequent amendments will be allowed in residential areas, without an automatic requirement for additional off-street parking provision, provided that the proposal will not threaten the residential character or function of the area by:

- (i) **attracting a large number of customers from outside the immediate locality; or**
- (ii) **introducing a building which is not sympathetic with neighbouring residential buildings in terms of building line, height, scale and the design of the façade; or**
- (iii) **visual intrusion of signboards and advertisements (illuminated or otherwise)**
- (iv) **creating nuisance for neighbouring residents through noise, smell, lighting, hours of servicing and operation or other factors**
- (v) **causing local traffic congestion, or jeopardise the safety of road users or pedestrians, through customer parking or access by service vehicles**
- (vi) **encouraging on-street parking on arterial or distributor roads**

Relevant policies:
GN05,
GD06,07.

Small shops in residential areas offer a vital service to the neighbourhood. In many locations, there is a continued demand for new and expanded convenience shopping facilities at this level. As a general principle, local provision of such facilities will reduce the need to travel by encouraging shorter shopping trips, often on foot. Many small shops can be accommodated within residential areas without causing nuisance to neighbours. However, careful control of these uses is required in order to protect the residential character of local neighbourhoods, prevent nuisance to neighbouring properties and avoid traffic congestion within residential areas.

GD09

Office Development

The Planning Authority will allow the development of offices within the local plan area in a controlled manner. The need to restrict office growth in these areas must be balanced with the need to upgrade the transport infrastructure (currently underway) of housing provision, rehabilitation of historic buildings and essential public administrative requirements.

A site is being reserved to upgrade and increase public office space at the Public Office Enclave in Floriana.

A major land allocation for private sector offices is a site forming part of the Marsa Park, at the heart of the arterial road network.

Favourable consideration for the location of new offices will also be given within designated Town Centres and Neighbourhood Centres provided criteria set out in Policies GD06 and GD07 are complied with.

Relevant policies:
GP04, GD09
GV02, GV24,
GF2, 15,16,18,
GM15.

The Planning Authority acknowledges the important role that the Local Plan area plays in terms of office location and hence the Local Plan strategy is directed at trying to reach a balance between residential and commercial uses, whilst improving these areas.

For the public sector, the Local Plan acknowledges the need to improve, upgrade and make more efficient use of the land in the designated Public Office Enclave on the Marsamxett side of Floriana as established in policy COM 1 of the Structure Plan.

On the other hand, Marsa Park, as mentioned in policy COM 4 of the Structure Plan, can act as a prestigious private office location right on the arterial road network.

The location of office uses in Town Centres act to maintain their vitality and viability and enforce their role as a commercial hub together with other supporting amenities.

For office development along the Valletta/Floriana waterfront, the following are considered to be port-related office uses:

Boat building and repairs, cargo carriers, cargo superintendents, cargo surveyors, clearing and forwarding agents, coastal environmental and geotechnical engineering, cold stores operators, commercial diving contractors, docking and slipping services, ferry services, marine consultants and services,

marine electrical/electronic services, marine repair services, marine surveyors, marine towage services, pleasure cruise operators, port cargo handling, ship building/repairs, ship management services, ship owners, ship surveyors, shipping agents, TIR operators, tug services, underwater services and equipment repair, any other office use which, in the opinion of the Planning Authority falls in the above category.

The restrictive stance of the Structure Plan towards the location of further office space in Valletta and Floriana with the solution of the transport situation is based on the fact that these areas are unlikely to be able to cater for additional parking demands and the importance to restrict the outflow of population from these areas.

In line with the strategy of improving the transport situation in the Valletta/Floriana peninsula, the Planning Authority in collaboration with other entities has prepared a comprehensive scheme for traffic management. This incorporates various measures, including a Park and Ride scheme, as described in Policy GF20 which has now been formally approved by Government.

GD10

Development Of New Attractions And Facilities

Development permission for new attractions and facilities, or extensions to existing ones, especially related to tourism (including local tourism) will be permitted provided that there is no conflict with Structure Plan Policies BEN 1, 2 and 3, and with other provisions in this Plan.

Relevant policies:
*GD11,13,
GV22,26,28,29,
GF20,GM15,
GI10,GB11,
GL14,15,
GG17,18,20,
GK13.*

This policy is intended to establish the generally favourable attitude of the Authority towards tourism expansion, but to draw attention to the importance of observing ‘good neighbour’ requirements. In particular, the following points will be considered: over provision, servicing, proximity to public transport, impact on traffic and pedestrian movement, impact on the reasonable use and enjoyment of neighbouring buildings and land.

GD11

Tourism Development Zones

The principal tourism development zones in the Local Plan area are Valletta/Floriana and the Three Cities. The introduction of facilities in these areas is encouraged, and where necessary normal development control standards will be relaxed. Within the Urban Development Boundaries, development of small scale tourism accommodation, rather than large hotel complexes, will be preferred.

Relevant policies:
*GN05,GD10,12,13,
GV18,22,29, GF12,20,
GB09,11, GL14,15,16,
GG15,17,20, GK13.*

The areas mentioned above are recognised as having the most potential, and being the most appropriate, for tourism development. This does not mean that other parts of the Plan area will be ignored, but rather that activity should be focused where the potential to meet other Plan objectives is at its greatest.

If the Authority considers any tourism related proposal (subject to policy GD12) to be in line with the aims, objectives and provisions of this Plan, and in order to encourage such activity to occur, especially at the initial stages of the regeneration process, the Authority

may even consider to relax established standards (like parking standards) in order to secure the development for reasons of planning gain.

Regarding tourism accommodation proposals, “small scale accommodation” means that development will be of a nature and character which respects the area’s social and physical capacity to accommodate the development, together with its environmental resources and its socio-cultural fabric. It would not require major infrastructural improvements and can be supported by the existing provision. The incremental effects of such development will also be taken into consideration, together with any other material planning consideration.

GD12 Tourism Accommodation In Tourism Development Zones

Valletta and The Three Cities will be promoted for tourism. Proposals which result in the restoration and re-use of buildings of historical or architectural importance will be given preference in the relaxation of standards in line with policy GD11 above.

Other proposals for the development of hotels or guest house accommodation which do not apply to buildings of historical and architectural importance, will also be permitted provided that the following requirements are satisfied together with other provisions in this Plan:

- **the proposal is essential to start the economic regeneration of the area;**
- **the proposal will not result in oversupply of accommodation;**
- **the proposal will not detract from the visual or environmental amenity of the neighbourhood;**
- **the proposal will introduce activity at street level;**
- **road capacity and access arrangements are acceptable.**

<p><i>Relevant policies:</i> <i>GN04,</i> <i>GD11, 13.</i></p>

Whilst there is evidently scope in The Three Cities to initiate and develop tourism to a much larger extent than hitherto, this process needs to be carefully considered. The objective is to encourage tourism which is sustainable, not physically or socially disruptive, and which can assist physically the rejuvenation of the town.

It is therefore important, especially in residential areas, that tourism activity should be subsidiary to everyday life and not tend to become dominant. Day tourism can be linked to the level and number of attractions in the area, is more easily controlled and avoids problems of ‘imbalance’ of facilities and tourist numbers. It is therefore appropriate to concentrate on this segment of the market. The provision of accommodation on a small scale is feasible and suited to the character of the area provided it is kept within reasonable limits. Although, as indicated, the Authority is sympathetic to improved visitor accommodation, this does not mean that any scheme will be acceptable. For projects outside the Urban Development Boundaries, or which do not make use of buildings of historical and architectural importance, certain requirements will need to be met and these are set out above.

In addition, proposals which contribute to the rejuvenation of listed buildings, or those buildings which are important individual townscape elements, are more likely to gain permission than schemes which ignore the discipline of townscape and fail to display architectural ‘good manners.’

GD13

Cottonera Tourism Approach

The Planning Authority will co-operate with the Ministry of Tourism in the preparation of a detailed tourism development plan for Cottonera, based on the strategy and proposals indicated in the Structure Plan and Local Plan, which will be used to guide and direct tourism growth in the area. The plan will also include arrangements for monitoring and will set out implementation responsibilities.

Relevant policies:
GE07,
GC01,05
GD10,11,12.

Both the Structure Plan and the Local Plan provide guidance on the development of tourism in Cottonera, and establish broad principles. However, the comparative lack of tourism development in the past, the opportunities available now, and the historic and physical background of the area make it extremely important to ensure that any development which is promoted is of the right type, in the right place, and to the maximum benefit of the local community.

Tourism cannot be allowed to grow in a haphazard and uncoordinated manner, with possible serious consequences for the area. For these reasons, it is considered important to ensure that full guidance is available to the various organisations and firms who have an interest or responsibility in this field, and that they act with a common, agreed purpose in view. The Planning Authority, Ministry of Tourism and Local Councils share several objectives and it is considered that the best way forward is the joint preparation of a Tourism Development Plan. The plan would indicate the markets to be addressed, identify the most appropriate types of scheme, opportunities for public/private partnership, physical requirements, and arrangements for implementation and monitoring.

MAP 6

NOTE

It is restated for the sake of emphasis that all the above policies are seen as complementary to Structure Plan policies, and that the latter are not repeated here. It is thus the totality of policy which will be used to assess applications. The next section, Part 2 of the Plan, deals with policies and proposals for individual areas, which may also have to be considered in assessing applications, examining development issues, or promoting development projects.

