

North Harbours Local Plan

Approved Document

July 2006

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is a Local Plan?

- 1.1.1 A Local Plan deals mainly with land-use and development issues. People need homes, places to work and services such as transport, shops, recreational and community facilities. This Local Plan shows where new development providing these needs can take place and the criteria against which new development will be judged. Equally important, this plan seeks to protect and improve the existing environment, character and heritage of the North Harbours. In short, this Plan's job is to balance the economic and social demands of the community against the need to protect and conserve the environment in its widest sense.
- 1.1.2 The Government requires the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (hereforth referred to as MEPA) to prepare Local Plans for the whole of the Maltese Islands. This Local Plan is one of 7 such plans that have, or are currently, being prepared. Local Plans are drawn up within context of national strategic land-use planning guidance known as the Structure Plan.
- 1.1.3 Article 27(2) of the Development Planning Act (2001) requires the Authority to seek final approval of a Local Plan from the Minister responsible for Development Planning and the Plan shall stay in force for a minimum period of two years following such approval, unless a revision is necessitated by a review of the Structure Plan, as required by Article 28(1) of the same Act. Changing circumstances may well require adjustments to the Plan after the minimum period of two years following final approval by the Minister, and such review of the Plan will be undertaken within the legal provisions of the Development Planning Act.

1.2 The Format of this Plan

- 1.2.1 The plan is divided into **general** and **area** policy chapters. These chapters contain policies that set criteria against which development proposals will be judged. Where these policies can be defined to a specific site or area it is shown on a detailed **map** within the chapter.
- 1.2.2 **General Policies Chapters** - set out major land use policies of importance and relevance to the whole of the North Harbours and provide a strategic policy framework for the policies and proposals in the Area Policies Chapters. These chapters are set out by topics (e.g. Transport) and policies are backed up with written justification in relation to the Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands (1992) and the Local Plan's own land use strategy.
- 1.2.3 **Area Policies Chapters** - These chapters are defined by local council areas (with the exception of Paceville). They contain detailed and local or 'site specific' policies. These are also backed with reasoned justification in relation to general policies or specific local circumstances.
- 1.2.4 Firstly, it is important to note that Area Policy Maps are subject to change through the PC application process, and therefore the public is directed to check directly with MEPA on the latest situation when interested on the details for a particular site or

area. These Area Policy Maps are therefore not to be used for direct interpretation. Secondly, it is important to note that where floor areas are stipulated in the Policies of this Local Plan, this should be taken to mean the Gross Lettable Floorspace. The Gross Lettable Floorspace refers to the whole floor area within the premises and on all its floors. It includes circulation areas (excluding stairs) and stores, and excludes staircases, toilets, internal shafts, yards and other unroofed areas unless they are used as an integral part of the development (e.g. open air restaurant).

- 1.2.5 All references to the DC2005 document in this Local Plan refer to the Development Control Policy & Design Guidance (2005) or any subsequent revisions approved by MEPA. Other reference to specific policies, sections or paragraphs in either dated supplementary guidance or the Use Classes Order referred to in this Local Plan are also taken to refer to the relevant reference in any subsequent approved revisions or amendments by MEPA should these come into force during the duration of this Local Plan.

1.3 Resources for Implementing this Plan

- 1.3.1 The Plan's strategy does not depend on public spending by MEPA nor any particular rate of economic growth. Because of the limited amount of land or buildings available for new development within the North Harbours the main function of planning is to ensure that the existing urban area is used to its full potential but without detriment to the area's character and function. Within the existing urban area, there remain a significant number of new development and redevelopment opportunities. The Plan emphasises the need to realise opportunities in connection with major development schemes. MEPA acknowledges the resources and positive role of the major landowners in achieving the Plan's objectives. The plan identifies a number of large or 'opportunity' sites where land is typically in single ownership (either private or government owned) and is likely to or may become available for development/redevelopment. Where appropriate, the plan sets site specific guidance for these sites through individual policies. These policies are aimed to ensure that new development in the North Harbours achieves social and environmental goals in addition to financial returns on limited land.
- 1.3.2 For example, a particular thrust of the Plan is to ensure that major developments are located in the right location on the transport network. Where major employment sites are developed, the Plan stipulates broad requirements in the form of off-site obligations or measures. This may involve the construction of a new road junction, bus drop-off or inclusion of legal commitments to discourage people to arrive by car in favour of more environmentally friendly modes of travel. Other obligations may include environmental enhancements (in particular in town centres) and the provision of necessary community facilities.
- 1.3.3 The success of the plan will rely on the quality of the proposals for development, for which planning permissions will have been granted, being implemented.

1.4 Overall Approach

- 1.4.1 The overall approach adopted by the plan is summarised in the Strategy Map (Map SE1). The approach is summarised as:

- **Contain urban areas** and protect the limited remaining rural fringe;
- Promote the **efficient use of land and buildings**;
- **Redirect inappropriate industrial and commercial uses** away from residential areas and towards locations where their amenity impact is minimised;
- **Reduce congestion** (particularly in the Inner Harbours) by directing new development towards locations that are well served by public transport/the arterial road network;
- **Promote environmental improvements** in urban areas;
- **Promote access** to rural and coastal areas;
- Ensure adequate **provision for community facilities** in accessible locations.

1.4.2 These represent the main strategic objectives of the plan. They are communicated primarily through general policies and to a site-specific level through area policies.

1.4.3 For example in attempting to ‘Redirect inappropriate industrial and commercial uses away from residential areas’ the plan first defines ‘non-local impact’ commercial uses. In this respect Policies NHHO01, NHCI01 and 2 are crucial. These policies define communal, commercial and industrial uses that will be deemed appropriate in different locations. MEPA encourages a comprehensive approach to development in some of these alternative areas. For example, by restricting the further ad hoc development of medium and large-scale workshop uses in residential areas, MEPA promotes the comprehensive consideration of areas identified for industry in the TPS (1988), whereby the living and environmental conditions (particularly of residents of the Inner Harbours and parts of San Gwann) will be improved over time. Similarly by restricting the ad hoc development of vacant sites in residential areas for large retail uses, the local plan is promoting rehabilitation and redevelopment in town centres (and hence the efficient use of land and buildings).

1.5 Description of Local Plan Area

1.5.1 The area includes a total of nine Local Councils: Msida, Ta’ Xbiex, Gzira, San Gwann, Pieta`, Sliema, St. Julian’s, Swieqi, and Pembroke. It extends from Msida Creek in the south to the White Rocks Holiday Complex in the North. Its coastline includes Pieta` Creek, Msida Creek, Manoel Island, Tigne` Point, Balluta Bay, Spinola Bay, Dragonara Point, St. George’s Bay and the Pembroke shoreline. The landward side extends to the New Lyceum and St. Philip’s Hospital to the south, north to San Gwann Industrial Estate up to the limits of Madliena and along Madliena Valley to the coast.

1.5.2 The topography of the NHLP area varies between sea-level along the coast in the east, to over 125m at Madliena Fort in the north of Swieqi and at Tal-Balal in the west of San Gwann. With one striking exception, drainage lines flow generally east/north-eastward along several valleys. These lines are however greatly modified by a dense network of buildings and roads which have altered the natural flow in many places.

1.5.3 The Local Plan area is predominantly urban in character with a total population of 62,393 within an area of 14.33sqkm and an average density of over 4,000 people per square kilometre. The land use is mainly residential, but it does include one of the country’s main tourism areas along the coastal belt from Sliema to Paceville. It also contains a primary town centre (Sliema) and numerous secondary town centres that attract shoppers and workers from outside the plan area. Other major areas of

employment include the main public hospital, the University of Malta and the San Gwann Industrial Estate.

- 1.5.4 Areas of open space are very limited due to the densely populated nature of the region, but it does contain four main valleys including Wied Ghomor, Wied id-Dis, Wied Ghollieqa and the smaller valley of Wied Harq il-Hamiem. The coastline also forms an important area of open space and, although there is only one small sandy beach (St George's Bay), the majority of the rocky coastline is accessible and used for recreational purposes.

2. Settlements

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Population growth, coupled with rising living standards and the growth of the tourism industry in the North Harbours area have put increasing pressures on land in built up areas and their fringes. Unchecked development on the fringes of existing urban areas has, in the past, led to their coalescence, with consequent irreparable harm to the countryside. Featureless townscapes with no identifiable centre or 'sense of place' make urban areas difficult for the visitor to orientate himself. Although this problem is common to many parts of Malta, it is particularly acute in this local plan area, two thirds of which is built up.
- 2.1.2 Within the plan area, growth in some localities has not been matched by the formation of identifiable centres for locally accessible community services, recreation and retail uses. Often access to public transport is inadequate which creates an over reliance on the car. There is an environmental necessity to promote and maintain compact settlements. This contributes to the goal of reducing encroachment into the countryside and reducing unnecessary trip generation.
- 2.1.3 This chapter contains a framework to consider the location of major new development, establish urban design and conservation criteria and identify priorities for the rehabilitation of under-utilised buildings.

2.2 Issues

- 2.2.1 The main issues that relate to Settlements are the following:
- i. Vast difference in living densities between areas. New low density areas not justifiable on sustainability grounds.
 - ii. Ambiguous interpretation of height limitations (e.g. Gzira and Msida).
 - iii. 94% of all land requested for scheme alteration is Outside Development Zone, totalling 36.3 hectares.
 - iv. Pressure for valley side development and low density growth on edges of settlements.
 - v. Inefficient use of vacant/under-utilised property.
 - vi. Opportunity to utilise property for general/special housing needs.
 - vii. Incremental loss in overall townscape, particularly in UCAs as older properties are redeveloped or allowed to deteriorate. Current rent laws stifle investment in property.
 - viii. Space at a premium within the Inner Harbours (between St. Julian's and Pieta').
 - ix. In localities such as Sliema and St. Julian's further development would increase further noise, traffic, overshadowing, sense of enclosure and degradation of the public realm.
 - x. Landmark buildings, Urban Conservation Areas and significant open spaces form important visual cues in the wider townscape/landscape. These 'view corridors' are under threat from over-development or insensitively located developments.
 - xi. Orientation in urban areas increasingly difficult. Major engineering works along arterial routes or development on settlement boundaries have led to bland entrances to settlements and less visual distinction between settlements.
 - xii. Many small urban squares or excessively wide roads offer no definition of space between vehicles and pedestrians.
 - xiii. Erosion of townscape character in UCAs.
 - xiv. Insensitive alterations to scheduled buildings.
 - xv. Inappropriate infill development in UCAs.

High urban densities and pressure to intensify development in existing built up areas

- 2.2.2 Including areas designated for new development such as Pembroke and Manoel Island, much of the Plan area is built up with few significant virgin sites.
- 2.2.3 In many parts of the plan area (particularly where existing densities are high such as Sliema and St. Julian's) the local road network and neighbouring uses cannot comfortably accommodate further development. In effect many of the residential quarters, particularly near the coast, are suffering from a lack of recreational space, infiltration of traffic, noise and other effects resulting from tourism development, commercial intensification and high housing densities.
- 2.2.4 The traditional advantages of the plan area such as good access to the sea front, shops, schools, services and a generally positive perception of the area are being eroded. In addition to pressure for more intensive development of committed sites there is pressure for development of remaining limited open space. Most requests within existing schemed areas are to change designated open or 'green' spaces for development.

Pressure on open countryside

- 2.2.5 Approximately 62% of the plan area is built up compared to a national average of 21% and 8% for Europe. This figure accounts for land mostly within the Development Zone, although other committed areas such as the San Gwann Industrial Estate are included in this calculation.
- 2.2.6 Open space is particularly limited in the 'inner coastal belt' including at Sliema and St. Julian's, Paceville, San Gwann, Msida and Gzira. Wied Ghomor and parts of Wied il-Kbir provide visual breaks between densely built-up localities. These remaining valleys form 'Green Wedges' into the plan area and are important for protection of water and natural assets and the control of pollution, although under increasing pressure for development.
- 2.2.7 The remaining countryside is also under strong development pressure. This is reflected in the numerous requests for scheme boundary amendments or changes to existing designations. Requests for scheme amendments effecting 38.6 hectares of land have been put forward for consideration in scheme or for redesignation. 94% of this land is Outside Development Zone (ODZ). Areas under most pressure include Madliena, Msida and Tal-Balal. On the limits of Madliena there are requests for changing a total of 15 hectares of land from ODZ to villa designation.
- 2.2.8 The plan area is mainly urbanised with extreme pressure to develop outside existing settlements. However, between different localities, there is a very broad range of living densities. These range from typically 9 dwellings per hectare in villa areas like Madliena to as much as 234 dwellings per hectare along the coastal belt in Sliema.
- 2.2.9 The Temporary Provisions Schemes (1988) identified certain areas for bungalow and villa development. Structure Plan Policy SET8 states that, "The present layouts and other provisions of all such schemes will, however, be reviewed as part of the Local Plans to be prepared for areas in which these schemes are located". If further intensification of development is to be considered in these areas, any resultant reduction in land values would have to be properly considered.

Poor perception of rehabilitation over redevelopment

- 2.2.10 There are numerous vacant buildings of townscape and architectural value within the Inner Harbours area. These buildings are under threat as demolition and redevelopment is often preferred over rehabilitation. Arguments cited by developers for this damaging trend are often financial (redevelopment being cheaper than rehabilitation). Other arguments include ease of site management and lower maintenance requirements. Further disincentives result from problems of fragmented ownership, rent laws discouraging maintenance of properties and an absence of fiscal incentives to rehabilitate.

- 2.2.11 There results a fast erosion of the traditional townscape in the plan area. Older buildings, with a little imagination, can be adopted for modern standards of habitation. Rehabilitation is therefore seen as a way to stem the incremental loss of areas of townscape value and utilise under used property in addition to making efficient use of land. It can offer alternative housing types that are needed within the plan area. There are particular areas or ‘pockets’ of housing that have suffered from under-investment and poor maintenance resulting in significantly degraded areas. These include properties in the areas of Gzira (surrounding the former National Stadium), Msida (Valley Road area) and parts of Sliema, for example, the ‘Lazy Corner’.

Fast erosion of townscape character in Urban Conservation Areas

- 2.2.12 Traditionally areas within the coastal belt of the plan area have functioned as seaside resorts and been regarded as desirable places to live. The St. Julian’s and Sliema UCAs are good examples of such areas. In the last 15 years pressure to build long-let holiday apartments, hotels and associated facilities (resulting from a growing international tourist market) have led to increasing demands on infrastructure, increased traffic generation and a proliferation of ‘bland’ tall buildings. In cases of redevelopment, replacement buildings often bear little relationship to their context. In townscape terms, such developments and pressures can incrementally erode the special character of the area. There have been recent examples of poor infill development within UCAs which have not fully respected their setting.
- 2.2.13 In the two designated UCAs of Sliema and St. Julian’s (especially on or near the coast) there is no clear economic rationale for refurbishment. Local land values are over inflated in the ‘hope’ that a more intensive redevelopment with more floor levels can be achieved. Consequently older vacant properties are left to deteriorate, in anticipation that eventually redevelopment will occur. This process of deterioration destroys the townscape character of the UCA.

Obstruction of strategic views, the settings of UCAs and the wider setting of the plan area by insensitive building design

- 2.2.14 The plan area accommodates 5 Urban Conservation Areas and affords prominent views into, and from, Marsamxett Harbour and Valletta (a World Heritage Site). Due to the undulating topography of the plan area, insensitively located tall buildings can adversely affect the setting and visual enjoyment of the surrounding townscape. Tall buildings that disrupt the skyline can affect landmarks and key buildings which often provide points for orientation and reference. The problem is particularly acute in the Swieqi and St. Julian’s areas where the settings of the valleys and the coastline have already been degraded. Proposals on the scale of proposed towers will also affect views of valleys and coast.

Homogeneous environments and lack of local landmarks or defined ‘edges’ to settlements

- 2.2.15 Often design, particularly in new residential localities such as Swieqi and San Gwann, is regular and homogeneous. There is scope to create a limited number of new landmarks placed at points on the network where they can aid orientation. Where small scale urban squares exist, they are often barren and inappropriately hard landscaped with little definition between vehicular and pedestrian areas. These are typically in residential areas and often result from inappropriately wide roads established by the Temporary Provisions Schemes (1988).
- 2.2.16 Many parts of the coastal belt are accessed through the Regional Road. Due to the tight clustering of signs and junctions, localities are often closely spaced leaving little time for the driver to differentiate between them. Many junctions are inadequately landscaped and give the impression of ‘left-over’ or abandoned parcels of land. Developments on the ‘edges’ of schemes, valley sides, public open spaces and major roads often dominate with high walls and blank rear elevations. These elevations can be improved by promotion of varied frontages onto appropriately landscaped areas in new development.

2.3 Strategy

The strategy for urban settlements is as follows:

Direct development away from inner coastal belt towards ‘Activity Nodes’ centred on the Regional Road

- 2.3.1 In line with a need to relieve unnecessary traffic and activity from the coastal belt and other congested parts of the plan area the strategy will promote Pembroke, Pender Place, Tal-Qroqq and San Gwann as areas for employment with access to and from the Regional Road. Combined with existing nodes where large concentrations of journeys occur new frequent public transport facilities can link activity nodes and utilise the Regional Road.

The emphasis shall be on consolidation by generally maintaining the extent of existing development boundaries outlined in the Temporary Provisions Scheme (1988)

- 2.3.2 The current limits to existing settlements are defined through the Temporary Provisions Scheme of 1988. These boundaries may be amended, if necessary, through the review of the Structure Plan. The Local Plan will recommend minor changes to the Limits to Development in order to rationalize this boundary, for example, by including existing legal developments that are currently outside development zone, and by excluding land that is of high ecological and/or scientific value. The only significant change to the limit to development is being recommended at the Tal-Qroqq/Swatar area given that this is an ideal location for the continued development of the existing employment node that has already been created with the University and the Mater Dei Hospital. The continued development of this employment node will however be subject to a number of conditions as stipulated in the relevant Area Policy NHMP13.

Promote compact settlements where services, accessibility and residential amenity can be maintained

- 2.3.3 There is a need to review residential zoning and building height regulations established through the Temporary Provisions Scheme (1988). The plan will seek to make efficient use of land whilst respecting the following criteria:
- i. The need for residents, visitors and workers to be within easy walking distance of main public transport routes.
 - ii. The desire to safeguard existing residential amenity.
 - iii. Need to safeguard prevailing townscape, particularly in UCAs or groups of buildings of unified townscape/significant quality.
 - iv. Maintaining the setting of landmark buildings, strategic views, and major public open spaces.
- 2.3.4 There is pressure in localities such as St. Julian’s and Sliema to increase building heights from existing levels. However, many of the coastal belt residential areas are over-developed and thus require a restrictive approach to further development. On the other hand, it is necessary to examine how planned activity nodes can contribute to sustainability goals such as reducing trip generation and providing new land/opportunities for employment and housing opportunities.

Extensive development of remaining under-utilised sites shall respect urban design criteria set out in this chapter and site specific briefs

- 2.3.5 With the exception of Manoel Island there are few significantly sized remaining sites still undeveloped or under-utilised sites. These include sites at Ta` Xbiex (44,020sqm) and the former Stadium Site at Gzira (23,480sqm). Urban design criteria are established for such sites within which extensive development during the plan period shall be expected to positively contribute to the surrounding area and achieve urban design and other objectives set out in this plan. Site briefs with

underpinning design criteria shall be formulated where the accent is on providing an appropriate mix of uses, creation of new public spaces, a sympathetic townscape context and promoting fronts of buildings onto streets and public spaces.

- 2.3.6 Development of the Maltacom Sites at Paceville is likely to occur during the plan period. MEPA has approved the Pender Place and Mercury House Development Brief (2005). The Development Brief specifies a mix of uses ranging from offices and various commercial/recreational facilities in addition to dwellings and community facilities.

Improve visual orientation throughout the plan area

- 2.3.7 Given the plan area's dense urban make-up, there are a number of settlements/areas that are not easy to distinguish between. The definitions of boundaries to settlements become blurred and views into and out of the plan area become confused with inappropriate tall buildings. The plan shall promote townscape identity and maintain key views which aid orientation between localities.

To encourage rehabilitation in favour to redevelopment

- 2.3.8 There are numerous buildings of townscape and architectural value that contribute to the special character of the plan area, particularly within the Urban Conservation Areas. In combination with a promotion of good new urban design, it is important to promote the retention of buildings of conservation importance and important streetscapes that provide a reference to the past and a context for new design. In order to promote rehabilitation as a viable option, policies relating to parking provision for residential developments may be relaxed. Conversely existing commercial pressure for small to medium scale offices or small scale high quality 'family' guest houses could be used to stimulate rehabilitation of older properties in certain localities. The possible toleration of lower parking standards for rehabilitation in UCAs is stated in the Policy and Design Guidance 'Development Control in Urban Conservation Areas (1995)', Part C published separately by MEPA. This will be extended to specific buildings outside UCAs where in the opinion of MEPA given townscape value and current state of the building, rehabilitation would be desirable. The rehabilitation potential for housing is immense and as such is considered separately in the strategy for housing.

General Strategy

- 2.3.9 In brief the strategy for settlements is as follows:

The Local Plan's integrated land use and transport strategy in general directs commercial development and other land uses resulting in high trip generation away from the intensely developed Inner Harbours (coastal belt between St. Julian's and Pieta'), towards new activity nodes centred on the Regional Road or existing main town centres. Quality of the public realm, rehabilitation of existing buildings of historic and townscape value and efficient use of existing sites will be crucial in order to ensure residential areas remain viable and liveable. Restricting further sprawl and promoting compact settlements with good access to a range of services and modes of transport will be supported. Strategic views onto landmark buildings will be protected and open spaces including valleys will be enhanced in order to improve orientation, identity and amenity.

2.4 Policies

NHSE01

Urban Development Boundaries

Urban Development Boundaries are indicated in the relevant Area Policy Maps. Changes to these Boundaries are being recommended in order to secure their rationalisation. These recommended

changes are indicated in the detailed Planning Control Maps (SB1 to SB15) and in the Area Policy Maps for the relevant settlements.

Confirmation of these recommended changes to the Urban Development Boundaries will, however, have to wait the finalisation of the Structure Plan Review that takes place after the approval of the related local plan, in accordance with Policy SET8 of the Structure Plan (1990). These recommended changes are also subject to Parliamentary approval.

Urban development will not be permitted outside the approved boundaries unless indicated through this Local Plan. In addition, it will only be considered if in the opinion of MEPA, and in accordance with Structure Plan Policies SET11 and SET12, the site is essential for the development proposed and no specific designation for the use to be accommodated within the development boundary has been made.

2.4.1 The Local Plan is characterised by dense urban development in many instances up to the limit of the Urban Development Boundaries established through the Temporary Provisions Scheme (1988). A significant number of the settlements have merged into each other with the exceptions being Pembroke and those areas separated by valleys such as between Msida, San Gwann and Swieqi.

2.4.2 It is imperative to retain the remaining undeveloped areas that are still uncommitted in order to provide:

- i. 'Green lungs' and protect remaining areas of ecological/scientific interest;
- ii. Recreational space for residents;
- iii. Buffers between settlements for them to retain their identity and improve orientation.

2.4.3 The Limits of Development indicated on the relevant Area Policy Maps are retained to those established through the TPS (1988). In a limited number of cases land is recommended for inclusion within the Limits of Development. Rationalizations to the Limits of Development comprise the inclusion within scheme of existing legal urban developments located outside but adjacent to the Limits to Development. It should, however, be clarified that these are recommendations and can only be formally considered for development following their confirmation by the Structure Plan Review. Boundary revisions to the TPS (1988) also require Parliamentary Approval before being adopted in terms of the Development Planning Act.

2.4.4 The recommended major employment node at Msida as identified in Policy NHMP13 is in line with the plan's overall strategy for land use and transport since over the plan period new employment uses are prioritised along the Regional Road or in locations with good access to it. More specifically this site is recommended for inclusion within the Limits of Development and prioritized for employment uses for the following reasons:

- i. Its geographical proximity to existing science and research institutes and capacity to provide a support employment role in terms of research/high tech orientated employment uses;
- ii. Its location in relation to the strategic road network and capacity to support and sustain future increased levels of public transport provision prioritised along the strategic road network; and
- iii. The area of land in question is not a valley and is not environmentally sensitive.

2.4.5 By applying an overall policy of restraint on further urban growth into valley areas and the Plan area's rural fringe, MEPA promotes future development, redevelopment and rehabilitation within existing settlements. Priority areas for growth within the existing urban areas are identified through Policy NHSE03.

2.4.6 Consideration has been given to the submissions made by the general public proposing amendments to the TPS (1988). In general, amendments that contribute to the proper planning of the area without unduly relaxing settlement boundaries have been accepted.

NHSE02

Development in the Absence of Specific Policies

MEPA 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. Furthermore, consideration shall be given to the existing building typologies on site and any other self-imposed building characteristics;**
- ii. The DC2005;**
- 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.**

In the determination of development planning applications, MEPA will also take into full account all relevant constraints affecting the site.

2.4.7 The Local Plan has attempted to indicate a complete range of acceptable land uses and development control criteria in the Plan area. However there may be exceptions where certain planning applications cannot be directly assessed in relation to Local Plan policies. To give guidance on how to assess such planning applications therefore, unless otherwise specified, it can be assumed that proposals which are compatible with the TPS (1988), with the DC2005, and all the relevant policy and design guidance and the Structure Plan will be acceptable. MEPA 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.

NHSE03

Achieving a Development Balance

The overall strategy for settlements in the congested Inner Harbours area is to balance growth by restricting further commercial/retail intensification outside town centres (see Policy NHRE01).

Major new employment generating development will be directed to the designated Town Centres and to other appropriate designated locations that contribute to a more efficient use of the Regional Road and Public Transport in accordance with Policy NHTR02, namely:

- i. Pembroke (Policy NHPE09), Paceville (Pender Place and Mercury House development), San Gwann Industrial Estate (Policy NHSG04), Gzira Employment Node (Policy NHGT14) and the Site for Employment Uses at Msida subject to confirmation by the Structure Plan Review (Policy NHMP13); and**
- ii. Sliema, San Gwann, St. Julian's and Tigné Town Centres (Policy NHRE01)**

New employment growth nodes and designated town centres are indicated on Overall Strategy Map SE1. This Map is schematic only and criteria on density, building heights, uses and other designations will be detailed through area policies for each of these localities and shown on the relevant Area Policy Maps.

2.4.8 Areas identified to accommodate major new employment uses over the plan period are schematically indicated on Overall Strategy Map SE1. Provision of retail shops and other services will be encouraged within defined commercial areas including town centres, local centres, employment nodes with good access onto the Regional Road and other sites in accordance with the Plan's strategy for commerce, industry and retailing. The growth of these identified areas is considered to be in line with the Plan's overall strategy for settlements and transport. This overall strategy is to relieve areas of high congestion (particularly in the Inner Harbours) by directing

development to appropriate growth areas in locations that will utilise existing Regional Road connections or are well served by the arterial road network.

NHSE04

Building Height Amendments

In line with Policy NHSE03 and the Plan's overall strategy, building height limitations have been reviewed for each local council area and are detailed through the relevant area policies and Building Heights and Urban Design Maps. The Local Plan designates only limited relaxation of Building Height Limitations established by the Temporary Provision Schemes (1988).

Development shall comply with the maximum building height limitation indicated in the relevant Building Heights and Urban Design Maps, shall comply with the relevant area policies that regulate building heights, shall be in accordance with the criteria for building heights established in the DC2005, and shall comply with all the relevant sanitary regulations.

For sites located within designated Urban Conservation Areas, where Receded Floors are permitted in accordance with the relevant Building Heights and Urban Design Maps, each Receded Floor is to be setback by 2m from the building alignment of the underlying floor notwithstanding that this may not be in accordance with the provisions of the DC2005. Penthouses above the Receded Floors will not be allowed. In addition, and except for townhouses on two floors located within the Sliema Urban Conservation Area, a setback floor on residential buildings of not more than 2 floors that are located within Urban Conservation Areas may be permitted provided the setback floor is receded by at least 2 metres from the front façade, notwithstanding that this would not comply with criterion (iii) of Paragraph 10.5 of the DC2005. However all the other criteria of Paragraph 10.5 of the DC2005 are to be adhered to. For townhouses on two floors located within the Sliema Urban Conservation Area, the provisions of Policy NHSJ06 shall apply.

Where maximum building heights are not specified in this local plan, the redevelopment of land or buildings will be considered in relation to the prevailing building height limitation for the area in which the development is situated. In addition these proposals shall enhance the townscape and the setting of the development within its context.

Where the need arises for an existing school to extend so as to incorporate required ancillary facilities, and this expansion cannot be achieved by means of horizontal extensions due to site constraints, then MEPA in consultation with the Department of Education will consider the development of an additional floor for the school above the maximum building height limitation indicated in the relevant Building Height Limitations and Urban Design Maps. This additional floor will be considered irrespective of the predominant height of existing buildings in the vicinity of the site in question. However, extension above the height limitation will not be permitted by MEPA in the following circumstances:

- i. for additional classrooms which would result in an increase in the student population of the school;**
- ii. for schools located within Residential Priority Areas; and**
- iii. where the additional floor would, in MEPA's opinion, create an unacceptable visual impact on important scheduled or landmark buildings as viewed in their setting and/or against the skyline.**

MEPA will also consider relaxing building height limitations in relation to the provision of Public Civic Facilities in accordance with the provisions of Policy NHSO02, in relation to hotel extensions in accordance with the provisions of Policies NHTO01 and 2, and in relation with the provision of Public Car Parks in accordance with the provisions of Policy NHSG03. However, should the school, public civic facility, public car park or hotel land uses indicated above cease to operate and a change of use be approved by MEPA involving the demolition and reconstruction of the existing buildings on site,

the development right for the additional floor shall be nullified and the building height of the new development is to conform to the maximum building height limitation as indicated for the site in the relevant Building Height and Urban Design Map. Furthermore, if the use of the structure for school, public civic facility, public car park or hotel land uses indicated above remains in operation for a period of ten years or longer, then the additional floor can be retained even where a change of use has been permitted by MEPA.

The maximum building height limitations indicated in this local plan override any approved supplementary guidelines with respect to building heights.

2.4.9 The Structure Plan requires Local Plans to consider in detail the appropriate height of buildings in conjunction with a full range of development issues. Overall, the Local Plan aims to concentrate new development in accessible areas to create a balanced transport network (see Policy NHSE03). Where activity nodes such as town centres or employment sites have been designated, a relatively flexible approach to building heights has been taken. The Local Plan also defines maximum heights in areas where ambiguity previously existed through the TPS (1988).

2.4.10 Within Urban Conservation Areas building height amendments have been effected to the TPS (1988) in line with the provisions of the 'Design Guidance: Development Control within Urban Conservation Areas' (1995). Therefore within UCAs the designated building height limitations as indicated in the Building Heights and Urban Design Maps actually reflect the predominant height of the existing buildings and building permits already issued. Where building heights have been reviewed, consideration has also been given to the size and scale of surrounding buildings. Urban areas that were already developed in the 1960's have generally been developed without semi-basements. Therefore in order to safeguard the streetscapes of these urban areas as identified in the relevant Building heights Maps, no new buildings with semi-basements will be permitted. Regarding sites located within the Sliema and St. Julian's UCAs, since most streets within these urban cores are quite narrow, recessed additional floors with a reduced setback of 2m would generally still not cause a negative impact on the skyline. In addition, given that many plots within the Sliema and St. Julian's UCAs are quite restricted, a 2m recess (excluding penthouses) would enable the provision of more required floorspace. This same reasoning applies to allowable setback floors on residential buildings of not more than 2 floors that are located within Urban Conservation Areas.

2.4.11 Building height relaxation not exceeding one floor is being permitted on school sites if this is the only option available to accommodate school extensions needed for the provision of new ancillary educational facilities (e.g.; media room, computer labs, art rooms etc.). This is being sought so as to avoid the costly relocation of existing schools. However, these vertical extensions will be allowed by MEPA provided that they are strictly in line with the Department of Education's school design policy and regulations. MEPA will not permit that the new space provided by the extension be used for new classrooms as this would increase the student population and thereby lead to increased impacts in traffic generation and reduced amenity. School extensions above height limitation for sites located within RPAs or affecting important Local Views in UCAs are not being allowed in order to protect the environment and amenity of these areas. Other floor increases are planned for Public Civic Facilities, Hotels subject to conditions and Public Car Parks in San Gwann subject to Policy NHSG03. It is noted that a hotel operation does not include time share or serviced apartments.

NHSE05

Upgrading of Public Open Spaces

Excessively wide road spaces, traffic junctions and designated urban public open spaces with potential for upgrading are identified for improvement as indicated in the Building Heights and Urban Design Maps and in Appendix 1. On these sites, MEPA encourages proposals for embellishment by private or public sector bodies in line with the environmental and design criteria stipulated in Appendix 1.

2.4.12 The spaces identified in Appendix 1 are typically under-utilised by pedestrians, dominated by the motor car, poorly embellished and capable of upgrading to make a positive contribution to local identity. Proposals for the upgrading of these urban spaces should seek design solutions to local problems of traffic management, lack of safe open spaces and any other issues affecting the locality. Therefore, in addition to promoting identity, proposals should aim to improve overall living conditions for local residents. Involvement between local councils, residents and the private sector shall be encouraged. Appendix 1 outlines the main planning objectives for each square relating to: Environmental Objective, Access and Traffic Implications and Development Control implications.

2.4.13 Where opportunity exists, MEPA will, with the co-operation of the relevant local council, encourage developer-led proposals for embellishment. Paragraph 12.4 of the DC2005 outlines those situations where MEPA would require developers of major housing developments to pay a financial contribution that would be used to upgrade a public open space located in the vicinity of the development site.

NHSE06

Soft Landscaping Schemes

MEPA in conjunction with the relevant agencies will encourage a programme of enhancement and landscaping through the planting of appropriate species of trees and shrubs particularly in the following locations:

- i. in squares, traffic junctions, public urban open spaces, and sports/recreational areas;**
- ii. along main transport corridors and main pedestrian routes;**
- iii. in town centres;**
- iv. to screen visually unattractive areas and particularly those in industrial areas; and**
- v. where an existing carriageway defines a Limit to Development boundary, a development-free green corridor (between 3m to 10m wide) shall be designated on the outer side of the carriageway. Proposals by local councils to create green verges for public enjoyment shall be favourably considered in this green corridor.**

Landscaping schemes are to be in accordance with MEPA's 'Guidelines on Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Planting & Landscaping in the Maltese Islands' (2002).

2.4.14 The urban environment will be substantially improved by the introduction of more trees particularly in densely built-up areas. The visual effect that this policy aims to achieve is that of enhancing all main public open spaces, main routes and degraded areas by means of the implementation of extensive soft landscaping schemes providing shade and shelter apart from visual improvement.

2.4.15 In cases where the edge of a development scheme is delineated by a carriageway, it is important to soften the transition from urban area to rural areas. Many such areas have been degraded as a consequence of the construction of the carriageway, buildings nearby or uncontrolled tipping. Thus an opportunity arises not only to improve the transition from urban to rural through the designation of green verges, but also to render the experience of walking along the edge of a settlement more enjoyable.

NHSE07

Strategic Views

In accordance with Structure Plan Policies UCO10 and RCO4, a number of Strategic View Corridors are established to protect long views into and out of the plan area. Strategic Landmark Buildings are identified to provide a focus for these views. These View Corridors, as illustrated on Map SE2, include the building planes and skylines that should not be significantly disrupted by new

development, especially high buildings. Views of important valleys will also be protected. Key identified view corridors are;

- i. Valletta/Marsamxett Harbour to Msida Church and towards Mdina.
- ii. University Site to Tigné Point, Marsamxett Harbour and Valletta.
- iii. Fort Madliena to Madliena Tower, White Rocks Tower and Sir Adrian Dingli School.
- iv. Wied Ghomor/St. George's Bay/Spinola Bay from Tal-Balal.

Where deemed necessary by MEPA, applicants shall be required to provide photo-montages in order to prove that the new development will not significantly disrupt the identified building planes and skylines.

2.4.16 Within the identified Strategic View Corridors MEPA shall safeguard the settings of key landscapes, landmark buildings, Urban Conservation Areas and the Valletta World Heritage Site. The purpose of identifying these corridors is to recognise that certain key buildings can be seen from many locations. Their setting should be protected to maintain visual orientation and prevent homogeneous townscapes and skylines. Further policy guidance on safeguarding views as they affect Urban Conservation Areas is given in MEPA's Policy and Design Guidance: Development Control in Urban Conservation Areas (1995), para. 29.

NHSE08

Strategic and Local Views

MEPA will refuse development permission for any proposed development that is likely to have a detrimental effect on strategic views (as indicated in Map SE2) and local views of valley sides (as indicated in Map CV5), scheduled buildings or landmark buildings as viewed in their setting and/or against the skyline.

Landmark buildings for Gzira/Ta` Xbiex, Msida/Pieta`, Pembroke, Paceville and Sliema/St. Julian's are indicated on the relevant Building Heights and Urban Design Maps.

2.4.17 MEPA will seek to ensure that any building proposal is compatible with the character of strategic and local views in terms of setting, scale and massing. Whether inside or outside UCAs, proposed development will not generally be acceptable if it impinges on locally important views or skylines, or if it would appear too close or too high in relation to a scheduled building or other landmark building/feature, or behind it so that its silhouette is marred.

2.4.18 A key urban design objective of the Local Plan is to improve visual orientation throughout the plan area. In this respect, landmark buildings are identified within the above-mentioned localities where it is required that the height and design of buildings in the vicinity respects the visual importance of these landmarks.

NHSE09

Urban Conservation Areas

MEPA designates new Urban Conservation Area boundaries for Ta` Xbiex, Msida, Pieta', Sliema and St. Julian's. Their boundaries are shown within the relevant Area Policy Maps. Within all designated Urban Conservation Areas, MEPA will promote the rehabilitation of traditional buildings and will seek to secure the conservation or enhancement of the character and appearance of the UCA.

MEPA is also categorizing the above-mentioned UCAs according to a street hierarchy system that takes into account the overall quality of the architecture, streetscapes and open spaces within the various sub-areas. The extent of the various categories is indicated on the relevant UCA Street Classification Maps. The hierarchy shall be as follows:

Category A: There shall be a strong presumption against any changes to the facades of (including changes in apertures) the built fabric and ancillary open spaces, street alignment and the addition of accretions in these areas. Structural interventions should be limited to the replacement of deteriorated components (which shall be carried out in materials and structures identical to the original) and the removal of incompatible accretions from the facades. No additional floors or significant structures will be allowed over the existing Category A properties.

Category B plus (B+): There shall be a presumption against any changes to the facades of the built fabric, street alignment and the addition of accretions in these areas. Structural interventions shall be limited to repair, upkeep and minor compatible interventions unless these are envisaged to restore the original façade. Additional floors over the existing Category B plus properties may be considered by MEPA provided that the design of the additional floors is of exceptionally high standard, that they do not detract from the architectural homogeneity of the existing vernacular building, and that such extension reflects the scale, floor heights, proportions, fenestration, architectural characteristics, materials, colours, textures and detailing of the existing building. In certain circumstances, sensitive signage, decorative and illumination fixtures may be considered, provided that these are deemed by MEPA to be compatible with the overall street context.

Category B: Minor alterations to the facades (e.g. changes to apertures), over and above those allowable in Grade B+ may be allowed, provided that traditional proportions, fenestration, architectural characteristics, materials, colours, detailing and textures are used. Complete replacement of facades is not allowed. Additional floors over the existing Category B properties may be considered by MEPA provided that the design of the additional floors does not detract from the architectural homogeneity of the existing vernacular building, and that such extension reflects the scale, floor heights, proportions, fenestration, architectural characteristics, materials, colours, textures and detailing of the existing building.

Category C: Significant alterations or even demolition of the façades, and/or the construction of additional floors may be allowed provided that the replacement building respects the surrounding context in terms of scale, floor heights, proportions, fenestration, materials, colours, and textures.

In all cases, if a building or feature is listed under the provisions of Structure Plan Policy UCO 7 and this listing has more onerous restrictions than those of the above-mentioned Street Categorization, then the more restrictive provisions shall prevail.

In all cases should a building or group of buildings which are incongruous* in character with the rest of the Categorization of a streetscape be proposed for total re-development, the replacement of such buildings which emulates the character indicated by the rest of the streetscapes shall be sought by MEPA. Massing, design, overall height, alignment of the façade as well as choice of materials, colours and detailing shall play a determinant role on whether the request for development permission for such replacement buildings is acceded to or otherwise.

In the case of vacant sites within a designated UCA and which is as yet un-built and not otherwise protected, or designated for another use, a new building may be allowed. The design of the façade, scale, massing, floor to ceiling height, the number of floors and the finishes used in the new building should reflect the predominant streetscape character.

**incongruous refers to a building or group of buildings whose architecture and/or design elements clearly stand out as not belonging to the same era (e.g. new buildings built after the 1960's) and/or being clearly so ill-designed that a well designed compatible replacement building would constitute a rehabilitation of the streetscape. Vernacular and/or traditional buildings shall not be considered to constitute incongruous buildings.*

2.4.19 MEPA in accordance with the Development Planning Act (1992) and as amended will identify historic urban areas worthy of retention and seek their designation and protection as Urban Conservation Areas in line with Structure Plan Policies UCO6 - UCO15. Structure Plan Policy

UCO2 requires local plans to specify the precise boundaries of Urban Conservation Areas, and to this affect the local plan has revised the boundaries of UCAs at Ta' Xbiex, Msida, Pieta', Sliema and St. Julian's.

- 2.4.20 Justification for the designation of the three UCAs in Ta' Xbiex, Pieta' and Msida is summarised in Appendix 4. MEPA's Design Guidance: Development Control in Urban Conservation Areas (1995) together with the street hierarchy system specified in this policy and the Building Heights and Urban Design Maps drawn in accordance with the mentioned Design Guidance are indicated to those proposing to undertake work on buildings within Urban Conservation Areas. This guidance and classification gives further information and advice on the features considered by MEPA to be important, and which the Authority will take into account in considering development applications.
- 2.4.21 The street hierarchy system prioritises streets where it is important to retain the traditional characteristics in terms of style, scale, height, detailing or views. In streets where there has been some encroachment by unsympathetic building forms, there is scope to allow limited demolition and redevelopment where, in the case of redevelopment, the proposal would positively contribute to the character and appearance of the UCA. This policy therefore aims to ensure that redevelopment in the UCAs respects the basic character of the street and is directed away from streets of outstanding historic character.
- 2.4.22 The use of alternative materials, colours and textures may be considered by MEPA in streets that are classified as Category C. However detailed guidance on this particular issue shall be fully explained in a subsidiary document that is to be approved by the Authority. This subsidiary document shall also include recommended samples of apertures, louvers, acceptable materials etc.

NHSE10

New Uses for Historic Buildings

MEPA will adopt a flexible approach in considering appropriate new uses (like the provision of schools) for scheduled historic buildings with a strong emphasis on putting such buildings to good use rather than just preserving them. Normal planning requirements relating to floor areas, use, parking standards or contribution to CPPS funds may be relaxed at the discretion of MEPA in order to achieve this aim. Proposals must, however, retain the original structure and architectural characteristics of the building or group of buildings, incorporate uses that do not have an adverse impact on the building's fabric or character, and must incorporate uses that are neighbour compatible.

In negotiations for rehabilitation or extensions to scheduled historic buildings, the replacement of existing non-traditional features with traditional alternatives will be sought. Additions and alterations to scheduled buildings will be required to be in scale and sympathy with the original character of the building. No development will be allowed that would detract from the setting of the building, or that would be contrary to other relevant policy guidance. MEPA will require the developer to submit a satisfactory justification of the need for any proposed addition/alteration.

- 2.4.23 The best use for a scheduled building is that for which it was intended. In most cases this use can satisfactorily be continued, but some buildings were purpose designed for uses that are no longer required, and if left empty neglect becomes a considerable danger. In these circumstances, changes of use of a building may be suitable, if it will help to achieve the long-term preservation of the building and does not result in considerable alteration or loss to its character.
- 2.4.24 This Policy prioritises the effective but sensitive re-use of scheduled buildings. By adopting a flexible approach to applying planning constraints that would normally apply to new-build schemes, MEPA will seek to ensure that the re-use of scheduled buildings is viable to developers. Policy NHPE08 puts particular emphasis on the re-use of key scheduled buildings in Pembroke. These buildings collectively contribute to the special character of Pembroke and hence merit a separate policy.

2.4.25 The character or appearance of a historic building can easily be adversely affected by small changes such as alterations to balconies, windows, doors or the removal of original internal features, such as staircases. When considering applications for alterations to scheduled buildings, through this policy and other policies, MEPA will keep in mind the need to preserve the intrinsic character of the building. To do this, alterations should be kept to a minimum, repairs carried out in preference to replacement and the dangers of 'over restoration' guarded against. Extensions should never dominate the original building and, generally, the use of traditional or matching materials is considered the most appropriate. Great care should be taken to preserve all features of interest and original detailing.

3. Transport

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The North Harbours area has a high density of major roads that accommodate considerable traffic volumes. This is partly a consequence of the area's dense population and dispersed employment and commercial uses. Other factors include a generally inadequate provision for public transport and lack of traffic management (particularly parking control) within and around town centres and commercial areas. However enforcement on illegal parking has improved considerably.
- 3.1.2 Increasingly people are making less use of public transport, as levels of car ownership and use rise and commercial land uses become increasingly dispersed. Whilst acknowledging the convenience afforded by the car, its negative impacts of congestion, pollution, loss of open land and adverse effect on the built environment cannot be underestimated.
- 3.1.3 If no action is taken to manage these changes, the predicted levels of traffic will result in an ever deteriorating environment and increased congestion. This results in more pollution and time wasted through commuting. The co-ordination of land use and transport are two aspects whose integration is fundamental to the success of the Local Plan.
- 3.1.4 The Transport Chapter of the Local Plan highlights policy opportunities to promote development that encourages more environmentally friendly modes of transport and discourages unrestrained car use. In particular, opportunity exists to promote the Regional Road as a major public transport corridor to better link planned employment and housing growth areas. Similarly, within the town centres and commercial areas there is scope to promote development that positively contributes to the comprehensive management of traffic.
- 3.1.5 Within town centres the Local Plan identifies sites for major car parks and opportunities to restrain excessive use of the car. Through these measures environmental quality and commercial success of town centres will be improved. In this regard, a major role of the Local Plan is to identify where CPPS (Commuted Parking Payment Scheme) funds can positively contribute to these objectives.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 **The main issues that relate to Transport are the following:**
- i. Proportion of people using a car as their main mode of travel is rising.
 - ii. Proportion of households with access to a car is rising.
 - iii. Proportion of households with two or more cars is rising.
 - iv. Fewer people use public transport as main mode of travel.
 - v. Problems of congestion associated with these trends, particularly in the Inner Harbours area.
 - vi. New housing and employment areas have inadequately catered for access by public transport.
 - vii. Residents within and around town centres and commercial areas suffer from the consequences of unrestrained use of the car.
 - viii. The environmental quality and economic viability of town centres being reduced with increasing congestion and pollution.
 - ix. Commuting to work creates peak movements in the morning (towards Valletta) and in the evening (away from Valletta). Scope to better integrate land use and transport.
 - x. Important junctions on the Regional Road accommodate more traffic than they were designed for at peak hours (over-capacity). More junctions will exceed capacity unless more use of public transport is made or reliance on the car is reduced.

Congestion and over-use of the Car and under-use of Public Transport

- 3.2.2 In 1998 only 17.4% of households did not have a car. Reliance on the bus as a main mode of travel has decreased correspondingly. There is considerable scope to increase the use of alternative transport (to the car) such as walking, cycling and even promoting cross-harbour water ferries.

Employment uses dispersed, encouraging trips to work by Car

- 3.2.3 Medium and large scale shops, offices, social and community services have become dispersed throughout the Plan area. This can result in tension between residents who seek parking near their homes and people who visit, work or shop in the area. Often such areas will not be well served in relation to public transport and there is little or no provision for public parking. This scenario is typical in the Inner Harbours, especially Gzira, Ta' Xbiex, Pieta` and parts of Msida where commercial uses are very dispersed.

Lack of Traffic Management, particularly in Town Centres

- 3.2.4 The severe impact of an ever-increasing volume of vehicles upon the urban environment is apparent throughout the Plan area. The negative impact of the unfettered freedom of the motor car is, however, particularly acute in the larger town centres (Sliema and San Gwann) and commercial areas like Paceville. In these areas there is inadequate provision of public car parking. Without any significant measures to constrain arrival by car and improve priorities for buses, these areas will continue to suffer from congestion which is mainly caused by visitors driving through the area looking for a 'chance' of on street parking space.

Inefficient use of the Arterial Road Network

- 3.2.5 A considerable volume of traffic utilises the Regional Road. Peak directions of traffic are towards Valletta in the morning and towards Pembroke in the evening. In this regard, scope exists to plan future land uses in a way that will encourage movements in the contra-peak direction. As a public transport route, the Regional Road is poorly utilised (see Map TR2). Bus connections to Tal Qroqq, Ta' Giorni, Paceville, Swieqi and Pembroke and much of the Outer Harbours area are poor. Given that, over the plan period, most new development will occur in these locations, scope exists to improve priorities for public transport along the Regional Road.

Inadequate Road Infrastructure

- 3.2.6 Without further traffic restraint measures it is estimated that during the Plan Period, traffic levels will continue to grow by between 4 to 4.5%. The road infrastructure in the North Harbours is being improved in relation to the traffic volumes it accommodates. At peak times, most junctions on the Regional Road are operating at full capacity or over capacity. Elsewhere many residential areas (particularly within the Inner Harbours) accommodate considerable through traffic, relating to dispersed commercial activities.

3.3 Strategy

Restraining traffic growth (particularly in the Inner Harbours) and utilising more effectively the Regional Road as a public transport route

- 3.3.1 Giving greater priority to public transport on the arterial road network is essential in the North Harbours area. To achieve this MEPA will promote new trip generating development in locations that are well placed in relation to the arterial road network. The restraint of traffic in the Inner Harbours will be encouraged and better access to public transport will be promoted in town centres and along the arterial road network. Traffic management measures to give buses priority along existing routes will be supported by MEPA, particularly along the Regional Road (see Map TR2).

Encouraging alternative forms of transport other than the private car to improve accessibility of areas

- 3.3.2 As well as identifying the need for a long term study to consider options for alternative transport systems, traffic congestion levels in the area demand that a serious effort be made to promote alternative forms of transport which could be introduced during the Plan Period. These include buses, cycling, walking and the more intensive use of cross harbour ferries.

Maintaining accessibility to the main town centres, but encouraging arrival by alternative transport modes

- 3.3.3 Where sufficient funds exist, MEPA will promote the use of CPPS funds to introduce developer-led paying public car parks. Traffic restraint measures such as short-stay on street parking and Resident Parking Zones will be introduced to encourage visitors to park responsibly and consider the relative financial cost of arriving by car rather than other modes of transport. By introducing these measures the Local Plan recognises and promotes better public transport connections and pedestrian and cycling environments in town centres.

Enhancing living conditions around town centres and congested areas with the introduction of Resident Parking Zones (RPZs) and Public Car Parks

- 3.3.4 RPZs are proposed in streets that already suffer from acute problems relating to competition for on-street parking, or are likely to suffer from exacerbating problems over the plan period. Most of these areas are residential and surround town centres and commercial areas. The intention of RPZs is to minimise the impact of commercial traffic in residential streets. It is noted that there has been some off street parking provision in Paceville both by the private sector and the public sector. This provision helps relieve parking congestion considerably, and there is the need to cater for additional public car parks to absorb the demand for parking.

General Strategy

- 3.3.5 In brief the strategy for transport is as follows:

Overall the Local Plan encourages development that will reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car. Where there is a need to travel within, into or out of the Plan area alternative modes of transport to the car will be promoted. To achieve these measures developer-led improvements to public transport connections, and obligations for the development of major employment sites will be encouraged in town centres and commercial areas. In the Outer Harbour areas, the Regional Road is promoted as a major public transport corridor to better connect new housing and employment areas (Pembroke, Swieqi, Paceville and Tal-Qroqq (Hospital and University)). Employment sites will be promoted in locations that will be linked by this corridor and encourage movements in the contra peak (to Valletta). In the Inner Harbours traffic generating uses will be discouraged, except in town centres. Within and around town centres the overall approach will be to enforce parking restraint (for non-residents) and encourage visitors and workers to utilise paying public car parks or arrive by public transport.

3.4 Policies

NHTR01

Road Hierarchy

A hierarchy of roads is indicated in Map TR1. Within the Local Plan area the classifications of roads will follow the system specified through Structure Plan Policies RDS1 and RDS2. Changes to road classifications are recommended as part of the Structure Plan Review in the following localities:

- i. **San Gwann - Upgrading of Bella Vista Road to a distributor road and simultaneous downgrading of Naxxar Road and Vjal Rihan; and**
- ii. **Gzira/Sliema Strand to the 'Ferries' to be upgraded to a distributor road.**

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.

3.4.1 The Local Plan recognises that the transportation of people and goods safely and efficiently is essential to the prosperity of the area. Fundamental to this movement of traffic is the establishment of a hierarchy of roads which allows for the direction of traffic, by signage or design, onto roads most suited to their journey purpose. In the North Harbours the main arterial road (Regional Road) will form the main part of the strategic road network. The other main elements will be:

- i. District Distributor Roads;
- ii. Local Access Roads; and
- iii. Access only and Pedestrian streets.

3.4.2 The Structure Plan emphasises the need to introduce a hierarchical road system to channel traffic onto appropriate roads, thereby controlling the traffic impact elsewhere. The arterial network is intended to carry most longer distance and heavy traffic, providing links between various parts of the Island. Street parking and direct frontage access are not normally accepted on arterial roads and a high priority will be given to road improvement and traffic management and maintenance measures to assist traffic flows.

3.4.3 The district distributors are important routes connecting the major residential, employment and commercial areas to each other, and to the arterial network. Street parking and direct frontage access will be strictly regulated. It is the role of the local plan to recommend changes to this hierarchy which may be taken up through subsequent Structure Plan Reviews. Within the North Harbours Local Plan area the main Distributor Road that runs from Naxxar to the Regional Road is recommended for re-direction (along Bella Vista Road) and extension along the Gzira and Sliema Stand to the 'Ferries' area. The re-direction is recommended in view of specific traffic problems associated with the San Gwann's Secondary Town Centre (Policy NHSG01). The inclusion of the proposed Manoel Island Link Road and the Sliema/Gzira Strand is a recognition of the existing importance of the route for access to Gzira and the Sliema Town Centre area.

NHTR02

Strategic Bus Corridors

MEPA will seek the implementation of comprehensive measures to increase the convenience and attractiveness of bus services along four important corridors (see Map TR02), namely:

- i. **Gzira, Sliema, St Julian's Coastal Route;**
- ii. **Marina Street/Msida Valley Road;**
- iii. **Birkirkara Bypass/M. A. Vassallo Road; and**
- iv. **Regional Road.**

In conjunction with the ADT, Government, Local Councils and the developers of major projects located close to these corridors, MEPA will seek the following:

- a. **The introduction of bus priority measures;**
- b. **The improvement of facilities for passengers, for example bus shelters, timetables, and eventually real-time information;**
- c. **Improvements to make services more comfortable, frequent and reliable;**
- d. **Higher employment densities within the Primary Town Centre and other designated employment sites within the corridors as defined in Map TR2, with designs to facilitate good access for bus passengers;**

- e. **Restrained numbers of parking places, particularly for commuters; and**
- f. **Where possible, a greater concentration of bus routes along these corridors.**

- 3.4.4 The first two of the above mentioned strategic bus corridors already have a strong concentration of bus routes. The identified measures are intended to build on this and make them into corridors where increased use of public transport is a realistic goal. The number of services using the Birkirkara Bypass is expected to increase to serve the new Mater Dei hospital. The significance of the Regional Road in terms of public transport lies in the opportunity to provide speedily, limited stop services along this road, serving Pembroke and Paceville, and the employment nodes along this corridor.
- 3.4.5 There are a number of serious deficiencies in the provision of bus services across Malta, for example the poor state of the bus fleet and the absence of marketing (e.g. attractive season tickets and proper timetables). These are outside the scope of land use planning, nevertheless these are significant and valuable measures that can be promoted within the local plan and which can stimulate greater use of buses.
- 3.4.6 In addition to road-based schemes, such as bus priorities which improve journey times, reliability and facilities which increase passenger convenience (shelters and timetables), land use policies can promote greater bus usage. By allowing higher than normal employment densities, by providing good accessibility to bus users, and by restraining parking provision at sites close to these corridors particularly for commuters (commuters are understood to be persons who park for the whole day), greater levels of public transport patronage can be encouraged.

NHTR03

Public Transport Priority Measures

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, particularly in town centres and new employment areas. These measures will be strictly required when considering major new developments.

When considering proposals for road improvements MEPA will take full account of the scope for re-routing of buses to provide a better service especially onto the arterial road network.

- 3.4.7 The transport strategy of the Local Plan is committed to promoting the provision of better bus services. MEPA will liaise with the Works Division and the ADT on this aspect. Where significant scope for improvement exists in a defined area, separate guidance is given. Policy NHMP04, for example, sets guidance for the re-design of the Msida Marina area.
- 3.4.8 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. Traffic management measures, giving priority to buses and freeing them from the worst effects of traffic congestion can improve reliability and reduce operating times.

NHTR04

Sliema to Paceville Park and Ride

The development of a Park and Ride system to serve Paceville predominantly at weekends and Sliema during day time weekdays will be supported by MEPA. This requires the availability of significant parking space at both ends, namely close to the Sliema front and Pender Place in Paceville. The availability of a fast direct transport service between these two parking nodes is essential to guarantee patronage and success. Consequently, works or projects requiring development permission, which in the opinion of MEPA are likely to prejudice this aim will not be permitted.

3.4.9 MEPA is committed to promoting sustainable development. The provision of a Park and Ride Scheme in conjunction with a better public transport route between Sliema and Paceville would help to achieve this aim by reducing the need to travel by car between these two areas. Recently a car park at Pender Place went into service, and car parks at Sliema are planned at Qui-Si-Sana and the Chalet areas.

NHTR05

Promotion of Walkways/Cycleways

Working with relevant local councils and other government and non-government agencies, MEPA will seek the implementation of walkways/cycleways. Priority networks are detailed at Pembroke (Map PE1) and Paceville (Map PV2).

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would jeopardise the establishment of these routes or future approved schemes.

3.4.10 Cycling and walking are the most environmentally friendly forms of transport. For reasons of geography, and dense urban form the North Harbours Area is potentially adaptable to promoting a high level of cycling and walking. Through this policy MEPA will promote the introduction of networks established by this Plan and any future proposals by Local Councils or relevant bodies.

NHTR06

Ferry Landing Points

MEPA in conjunction with the Malta Maritime Authority (MMA) will encourage the development of water-borne public transport facilities. Pending the re-commencement of the ferry services the following localities will be safeguarded as Ferry Landing Points:

- i. **Manoel Island (Sliema side)**
- ii. **The Ferries (Sliema)**
- iii. **Sa Maison (Gozo Ferry)**

Development that may prejudice the future re-instatement of a Ferry Landing Point will not be permitted.

3.4.11 In accordance with the Plan's objectives to maintain and improve accessibility to the main commercial and tourist areas and to give greater emphasis to better public transport, it is considered important to encourage the introduction and use of ferry services. Once Manoel Island/Tigné Point are developed, this would involve the intensification and extension of routes in Marsamxett Harbour and connections to other forms of transport.

NHTR07

Green Transport Plans

In considering major projects MEPA will require the developer to prepare and implement a Green Transport Plan. The purpose of the plan will be to ensure that it provides a real and positive incentive for employees and visitors to travel by means other than as the sole occupant of the car.

3.4.12 This policy is intended to contribute to the overall transport objective for the North Harbours which is to reduce congestion and suppress unsustainable increases in the use of the car. By taking full account of future modes of travel to a site/area, environmentally friendly transport infrastructure and incentives can be established from the outset.

3.4.13 Green Transport Plans (GTPs) involve the formulation of a package of measures to discourage staff, and in some cases visitors, from driving alone by car, and encouraging them to use more

environmentally friendly forms of transport. Each GTP will be tailored to the needs of the development/organisation in question.

- 3.4.14 For existing companies the first step in the preparation of a GTP is conducting a staff travel survey, to determine the travel patterns and requirements of those within the organisation.
- 3.4.15 The key to a successful GTP is to determine and implement transport alternatives which employees/visitors are prepared to use and to ensure that these are more attractive than driving alone. This means removing perceived barriers and introducing a series of measures to change travel habits.
- 3.4.16 A typical GTP will include measures to encourage and prioritise car sharing, providing facilities for those that wish to cycle, and, where possible, increasing the use of scheduled bus services, or providing company services.

NHTR08

Long Term Public Transport

MEPA in consultation with relevant agencies, including the ADT, will examine the strategic implications and the feasibility of the long term development of a rapid transit system serving the Inner Harbours Region.

- 3.4.17 A Light Rapid Transit System (LRT) relates to low polluting, frequent and convenient public transport systems. This typically consists of guided electric trams or electric low emission buses. LRT has been successfully integrated into many European cities. Schemes are most successful where they provide level access (minimal steps), are frequent, cheap and connect main commercial and residential areas. However, the development of a rapid transit system is a long-term process. The Plan therefore awaits and requires further detailed studies on the potential of a (long-term) rapid transit route that is also identified in the Grand Harbours Local Plan, to be strategically examined in conjunction with relevant agencies such as ADT prior to actually defining the way forward.

NHTR09

Junction Improvements

MEPA will support ADT and appropriate government agencies to upgrade existing junctions which are not coping with the volume of traffic using them, particularly on the Regional Road.

Where major proposals will put unacceptable traffic loads on existing junctions, MEPA will highlight developer's responsibilities towards the redesign/upgrading of these junctions. Major junction improvements are indicated on Map TR1 and the relevant Area Policy Maps. No development permits will be issued which might adversely affect these sites in order to safeguard junction redesign requirements.

- 3.4.18 Policy NHTR01 emphasises the need to have a good road system in the Local Plan area, especially where routes have strategic significance. Junction Improvement Priorities are identified on Map TR1 in accordance with the TEN-T Project, and these are;
- i. Triq Sant Andrija to Pembroke Development Brief Area Junction, Pembroke;
 - ii. Triq Sant Andrija to Triq Suffolk Junction, Pembroke;
 - iii. Triq Sant Andrija to Triq Pedidalwett, Swieqi;
 - iv. Triq Sant Andrija to Triq il-Qasam, Swieqi;
 - v. Triq Sant Andrija to Triq Normandy, Pembroke;
 - vi. Triq Mikiel Anton Vassalli to Triq Sant Andrija, Paceville;
 - vii. Triq Mikiel Anton Vassalli to Triq il-Baltiku, San Giljan;
 - viii. Triq Mikiel Anton Vassalli to Triq Birkirkara, San Giljan;
 - ix. Triq Mikiel Anton Vassalli to Triq tas-Sliema, Gzira;
 - x. Triq Regionali to Triq il-Wied ta' l-Imsida, Msida.

3.4.19 It has to be emphasised 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 and following an integrated approach.

NHTR10

Urban Traffic Control Measures

MEPA in conjunction with the ADT will support the introduction of vehicle responsive Urban Traffic Control systems of linked traffic signals at various locations throughout the Local Plan area.

3.4.20 Urban Traffic Control is a cost effective way of bringing substantial benefits to traffic flows by making best use of the existing network. The objective of these installations is to improve flows by increasing capacity of existing signal controlled junctions and thus reduce delays, noise, fuel consumption and exhaust pollution. Urban Traffic Control can be used to give priority to the movement of buses and emergency vehicles.

NHTR11

Reduction of Traffic Impacts

In considering applications for development, MEPA will require analysis of their effect on vehicular and pedestrian traffic. If it is considered that the proposal will dangerously distract the motorist, negatively restrict the width of the carriageway or footway, interfere with visibility, or otherwise affect the free and safe flow of traffic, then permission will be refused.

3.4.21 Poor design of development layouts or placing of structures like advertisements, walls or monuments can distract motorists or pedestrians and reduce road safety. Obstructions can increase the possibility of serious injury, both to vehicle occupants and pedestrians. MEPA will therefore refuse permission for development proposals that do not adequately consider road safety.

NHTR12

Accident Reduction

MEPA will support initiatives to reduce accidents on the road network, and when a location is identified where a significant number of accidents occur, MEPA in conjunction with the ADT and Police will support the investigation of remedial measures to remove or limit the problem through road construction, traffic management and local road safety measures.

3.4.22 It is an implicit assumption in any transportation policy that the safety of all road users is of paramount importance. In 1991, there were 1836 personal injury accidents reported to Police within the Plan area, in 1993 this figure increased to 2639. An analysis of the figures of accidents by locality show that Msida, Pieta` and Gwardamangia feature as the highest area with a number of accidents. During the course of 1997 improvements along the stretch of arterial road in Msida were affected with the introduction of traffic lights, pedestrian crossings and crash barriers. There is still considerable scope, however, to improve traffic safety in this area and similar areas within the North Harbours.

3.4.23 In implementing road improvements priority will be given to those schemes that have potential to reduce the incidents of accidents. Main traffic routes will be given priority for accident remedial measures.

NHTR13

Traffic Calming

MEPA will seek measures to discourage through traffic, particularly in residential areas.

Working with the Local Councils and the ADT, MEPA will seek the implementation of traffic calming measures on selected local distributor roads, local roads and residential streets.

3.4.24 The acceptance of a road hierarchy enables the introduction of other traffic control and management techniques to help improve the safety of the roads. It also distinguishes roads that are more suitable to accommodate through traffic from roads that provide specific access in particular to residential streets.

3.4.25 Traffic calming can be useful to discourage through traffic in local roads and in areas where:

- i. there are unacceptable levels of through traffic, where such traffic should be encouraged to use other routes; and where,
- ii. significant road safety problems exist, especially involving pedestrians and cyclists.

NHTR14

Car Parks

MEPA will seek the construction of strategically located off-street car parks to serve primary and secondary town centres and main commercial areas. These car parks are identified in Map TR1.

MEPA will not permit the subsequent change of use of these strategic car parks, and safeguards existing public car parks where they are considered to positively contribute to traffic management in the locality.

3.4.26 In and around town centres and the centre of Paceville, environmental improvements and restraint of on-street parking will reduce the availability of spaces for workers, visitors and shoppers. These measures will, however, significantly improve the environmental quality of these centres for residents and shoppers and help to reduce congestion. In order to retain accessibility to these centres by car, car parks are essential elements in their overall traffic management. Commercial off-street car parks are prioritised for Paceville and the larger town centres in the Plan area including the planned local centre for Gzira. By promoting an overall regime of parking restraint with provision of paying car parks the Plan promotes arrival by more cost effective financial and environmentally modes of transport such as walking or bus.

NHTR15

Commuted Parking Payment Scheme

Promoting Public Car Parks

Development that is permitted within CPPS areas will be required to contribute towards the CPPS fund for any shortfall of on-site parking.

Where sufficient CPPS funds exist, these will be used to promote the development of Public and/or Publicly Accessible Car Parks identified in Policy NHTR14, in particular by providing financial support to set up Resident Parking Zones.

Application of the CPPS in Main Town Centres

Development of on-site customer parking facilities within town centres will not be permitted in order to discourage traffic entering town centres. Instead, contribution to the CPPS fund will be a strict requirement of the development. In considering residential components of development (where intended for permanent occupation) in these centres, contribution to CPPS payment and/or provision

of on-site parking will be waived in order to promote residential uses on upper floor levels in town centres.

3.4.27 The CPPS scheme was set up in 1995 with the intention of collecting funding to support the introduction of public and publicly accessible car parks in congested areas. Through General Policies NHTR14 and 16 the Local Plan prioritises sites for the provision of strategic car parks and parallel traffic restraint. CPPS funds will be used to directly subsidise the construction of public car parks or to subsidise/fund Resident Parking Zones around strategic public car parks, in turn improving their financial feasibility and likely implementation.

NHTR16

Resident Parking Zones

The Local Plan prioritises areas for the introduction of Resident Parking Zones within and on the boundaries of established town centres and commercial areas. Proposals for RPZs should achieve, in this order of priority:

- i. access to on-street parking for residents as close as practicable to their homes;**
- ii. short-term on-street parking opportunities for visitors and shoppers; and**
- iii. the simultaneous introduction of long-term off-street daytime parking for workers.**

3.4.28 Resident Parking Zones (RPZs) are encouraged through the local plan where lack of off-street parking and excessive use of private cars by visitors, shoppers and workers is undermining the quality of life for local residents. RPZs are prioritised through the local plan in order to direct non-residents to paying public car parks or make these visitors consider alternative means of arrival such as public transport, walking or cycling. It is intended therefore that future traffic levels and parking pressures in these areas will be reduced and the local environment enhanced.

3.4.29 The success of any RPZ depends on a tightly controlled permit system and effective enforcement. The traffic warden system operated by local councils could be the main enforcer in this scheme. Studies and management assistance in such schemes may be a planning condition on the future car park operators. Such planning conditions will be clearly outlined through the Local Plan and/or Development Briefs for major new public car parks.

3.4.30 New schemes will be assessed on criteria which examine the density of parking by motorists who are not local residents, and will only be introduced after consultation with affected residents has taken place and in-depth discussions with the relevant Local Councils and the ADT are successfully carried out. Whilst the priority will be to ensure a certain proportion of spaces remain available, the existing and future needs of small retailers/businesses within RPZs must be considered within the management of these schemes.

NHTR17

Short-Stay Parking

Within designated town centres, MEPA in consultation with the ADT will encourage proposals to introduce short stay parking. These measures are a parallel requirement for consideration of Resident Parking Zones but will also be encouraged in considering town centre environmental enhancement schemes.

3.4.31 In many retail and commercial areas it is evident that prime parking spaces both on-street and off-street are taken up by motorists who park for long periods i.e. commuters. This is inefficient and undermines the attraction and viability of these areas.

3.4.32 Structure Plan Policy COM7 requires Local Plans to encourage measures which will aid the efficient use of town centres to make them more pleasant for shoppers and visitors. The overall strategy of the Local Plan is also to encourage access to town centres. This policy promotes the

introduction of limited waiting restrictions for turnover spaces and safeguards the most convenient spaces for short stay visitors. The implications of such schemes is that access to town centres for short stay trips by car is maintained.

4. Housing

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The quality and supply of housing is a major land use issue that needs to be addressed in the North Harbours plan area. This chapter gives a profile of the current housing situation, identifies the main issues, strategic policy background and details the Local Plan Strategy and policies for housing.

4.2 Issues

4.2.1 **The main issues that relate to Housing are the following:**

- i. Number of approved housing units in the 'pipeline' largely satisfy housing need in terms of number of units forecast for the plan period.
- ii. Sufficient vacant land within scheme identified (60 hectares) (1998 data) for new build.
- iii. Despite adequate provision there are requests for 36 hectares of ODZ land for housing.
- iv. Vast difference in living densities between areas.
- v. High vacant dwelling rates, particularly around the congested coastal areas. Rehabilitation potential not being adequately utilized.
- vi. Current rent laws stifle investment and rehabilitation.
- vii. Poor quality residential environments eg. bad neighbour uses, lack of open/play spaces, overshadowing, dominance of the car and local traffic problems.

Oversupply of Residential Accommodation compared to Growth in Population/Number of New Households Forming

4.2.2 The resident population in the North Harbours increased by 8,476 (2,670 households) between 1985 and 1995, from 53,580 to 62,393. This growth is, however, an anomaly as the 1985 census figures for the Plan area excluded Pembroke and Swieqi which have a combined population today of 8,200. Population growth during the plan period is likely to be moderate. The increase in the number of households relates to a trend for smaller households due to socio-economic factors such as the delaying of marriage, increasing marriage separations and increasing numbers of elderly living alone.

4.2.3 Nationally there is an accelerating rate of residential development. Between 6,000 to 7,000 new units are, on average, being approved per year. This is in excess of the number of new households forming each year and is causing an overheating of the housing market, which results in increasing proportions of the housing stock being left vacant. Of approximately 155,000 dwellings in existence nationally, 23% (36,000) units are currently vacant or under-utilised (1995 data). A similar profile is reflected in the North Harbours where 6,300 of 27,467 dwellings are either totally or partially vacant, which is slightly above the national average.

4.2.4 Vacancy rates also vary significantly within the North Harbours area. For example, 23% and 25% of all dwellings in St. Julian's and Sliema respectively are completely vacant and this rises to 27% and 29% respectively when partly vacant properties are included. High vacancy rates may also be attributed to the practice of holding property as an 'asset' investment. In addition to vacant tourist stock, other properties are bought in shell form and retained in the hope that returns will be more lucrative than other forms of investment. This practice is unsustainable in the North Harbours where land is at a particular premium.

4.2.5 Similarly older properties are used inefficiently. Areas of immediate concern include Msida, Gzira and parts of Sliema. Greater attention should be given to these areas in the Local Plan to promote

housing improvement in accordance with Structure Plan Policies SET3 and 4 which encourage the rehabilitation of the housing stock. Unfortunately in the absence of fiscal incentives or reform of rent laws this objective is made more difficult to achieve through a land use plan alone.

Sufficient Land and Capacity for Housing within Limits of Development

- 4.2.6 Although mostly built-up, evidence from aerial photographs shows that there is sufficient vacant land for housing over the plan period within the Limits of Development established by the TPS (1988). Some 60 hectares of land is still available for development (1998 data), and this equates to 59% of the land designated in 1988. Assuming an average plot size of 150sqm, remaining land will provide approximately 3,000/4,000 plots. These figures are, however, based on land that could be developed for alternative uses, although this still remains significant.
- 4.2.7 Of the land designated through the TPS (1988), considerable vacant land remains available for housing, particularly within Swieqi and Pembroke. Notwithstanding this, 2 in 5 of all NHLP requests to extend existing settlement boundaries were received on Swieqi's rural fringe, mostly for further villa development.
- 4.2.8 In more dense coastal areas such as Sliema, Pieta` and Gzira the intensity of development is already identified as a major issue in the quality of settlements, where streets are congested and open space is limited. In these areas there are few remaining large sites for housing. These few remaining sites include Pender Place, the former National Stadium at Gzira and an open site of 4.4 hectares at Ta` Xbiex. Elsewhere in these congested areas, there is scope for the continuation of limited redevelopment and development of air spaces. With high levels of vacant housing stock there is considerable scope for a high proportion of dwelling element to be achieved through rehabilitation of the existing housing stock.

Requests to extend Schemes for Housing

- 4.2.9 There are continued requests to release land for housing outside the Limits of Development established through the TPS (1988). As identified in 'Settlement Issues' there are requests for some 36 hectares of land outside scheme mainly for housing. The greatest pressure is on the rural fringe of Swieqi/Madliena, Tal-Balal, other parts of San Gwann and the area west of the Tal-Qroqq roundabout.
- 4.2.10 Many of these requests are at ecologically/visually sensitive locations and on open countryside, such as valley sides and escarpments. Further to landscape concerns, the main issue is whether new land for housing is justifiable on sustainability grounds, given that there is an identified over-supply of housing units and capacity exists for new housing on vacant sites within the Limits of Development or through rehabilitation and the development of air spaces.

Range and Type of New Build not meeting Future Housing Needs

- 4.2.11 Some localities are experiencing a net population loss. In Gzira, Sliema and St. Julian's there have been significant population losses combined with an ageing or increasingly 'top heavy' population structure.
- 4.2.12 Substantial cultural and lifestyle shifts have also occurred in recent decades - marriage is tending to occur later, there is decreasing household size and more single persons are forming households. These demographic trends influence the number, location, type and size of housing needed. The main dwellings being approved in the North Harbours area are predominantly apartments, maisonettes and terraced housing.

Threats to Residential Amenity

- 4.2.13 Developments cumulatively and/or individually having an adverse impact on residential amenity include encroachment of entertainment uses in Paceville, language schools in residential areas,

workshops in San Gwann and the effect of large showrooms on residential streetscapes. Other threats to amenity include excessive height relaxation, narrow streets, loss of daylight and sense of enclosure.

4.3 Strategy

Improving the Residential Environment

- 4.3.1 Further commercial and industrial developments may have unacceptably adverse impacts in terms of noise, loss of light, smells nuisance and other negative impacts. It is important that the plan area remains an attractive place to live in. Poor perceptions of the area, for example regarding pollution and congestion, may discourage young families to move to or remain in some localities. In line with Structure Plan Policy BEN 1 and other local plan policies tackling identified ‘bad neighbour’ uses, the overriding consideration will be for the protection and enhancement of existing and future residential areas for all population groups and household types.

Direct new-build housing to sustainable locations in line with the overall strategy for Settlements and Transport

- 4.3.2 In appropriate locations, existing residential densities and height restrictions may be reviewed where it is considered new housing:
- i. will be served by existing and future public transport networks (in line with the overall Transport and Settlements Strategy).
 - ii. would not have an adverse impact on surrounding residential amenity.
 - iii. does not conflict with urban design policy in the Structure/Local Plan or other guidance.
 - iv. the needs of potential occupants will be serviced by shops and other services.
- 4.3.3 Given these criteria it is likely that new housing development will be located along the Regional Road Corridor in areas of lower densities, parts of Msida and at San Gwann. There is a range of residential densities throughout the plan area.

Improve and utilise existing vacant residential stock, particularly in congested parts of the coastal belt

- 4.3.4 In the congested areas of Pieta`, Msida, Gzira, Sliema and St. Julian’s the emphasis will be on new housing through rehabilitation and selective redevelopment rather than through extensive building, height relaxation or redesignation of open space.

General Strategy

- 4.3.5 In brief the strategy for Housing is as follows:

The release of areas of new land for housing is not sustainable, given the remaining potential for new housing development within existing settlements and an overall strategy to contain the existing settlements and urban areas. Instead, and in line with the overall strategy to better link transport and land use, new housing growth will be particularly encouraged in Pembroke, San Gwann and Swieqi. Elsewhere within the Plan area the emphasis will be towards satisfying demand for new units through rehabilitation, redevelopment and the use of vacant dwellings. This is particularly encouraged within the congested Inner Harbours Area. The upgrading of residential amenity for existing and future residents will also be sought in residential development.

4.4 Policies

NHHO01

Residential Areas

The Local Plan designates Residential Areas (RAs) within the Urban Development Boundaries of the following settlements as indicated in the relative Area Policy Maps:

Gzira, Ta'Xbiex, Msida, Pieta`, Pembroke, Paceville, San Gwann, Sliema and St. Julian's.

The following is a list of acceptable land-uses (new uses, extensions to existing uses, and change of uses) within all frontages located within the RAs.

- i. A mix of Class 1 (Use Classes Order, 1994) terraced residential development as detailed in the DC 2005, Part 3, and in accordance with the specific zoning conditions indicated in the same guidance, unless otherwise stated by a policy in this Local Plan;
- ii. Class 2 (Use Classes Order, 1994) residential institutions, provided that:
 - they are of a small scale and do not create adverse impacts on the residential amenity of the area;
 - Class 2 (a) institutions are located in close proximity to a town or local centre; and,
 - Class 2 (b) nursing homes and clinics are easily accessible from the arterial and distributor road network.
- iii. Class 3 (Use Classes Order, 1994) hostels provided that these uses are in accordance with all other relevant Local Plan policies.
- iv. Class 4 (Use Classes Order, 1994) small shops provided that:
 - the small shops (of any nature) are not to exceed a total floor area of 50 sqm each, and convenience shops are not to exceed a total floor area of 75 sqm each;
 - they comply with all the provisions of paras. 1.4.16 to 1.4.18 of the Interim Retail Planning Guidelines (2003); and
 - they comply with any relevant section of the DC2005 (design, access, amenity, etc.).
- v. Supermarkets provided that they comply with all the provisions of Policy NHRE04.
- vi. Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices provided that:
 - the floorspace does not exceed 75 sqm;
 - they do not unacceptably exacerbate parking problems in a residential street that already has an acute under provision of parking spaces for residents; and,
 - they comply with any relevant section of the DC 2005 (design, access, amenity, etc.).
- vii. Classes 7 and 9 (Use Classes Order, 1994) non-residential institutions, swimming bath or pool, skating rink, health club, sauna, sports hall, other indoor or outdoor land based sports or recreation uses not involving motorised vehicles or firearms, and interpretation centres, provided the facility:
 - is of a small scale and does not create adverse impacts on the residential amenity of the area;
 - is located on land already occupied by buildings and will replace these buildings provided they are not worthy of retention due to their historic/architectural merit and/or their contribution to the character of the area, unless land is specifically allocated for the facility by this Local Plan; and,
 - the immediate surroundings of the site are already of a mixed use character.
- viii. Class 8 (Use Classes Order, 1994) educational facilities, provided that access and the character of the area are taken into account and are deemed adequate by MEPA to allow the safe and neighbour compatible use of such facilities.
- ix. Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) business and light industry provided that:
 - The gross floor area of the premises does not exceed 50 sqm (including storage of materials and/or finished products);

- The activity conducted within the premises does not use heavy duty and/or noisy electrical/mechanical (including pneumatic) equipment, and equipment which requires a 3 phase electricity supply;
- The activity conducted within the premises does not entail extensive and/or prolonged use of percussion hand tools (eg. hammers, mallets etc);
- The activity employs less than 5 people; and
- The activity conducted within the premises does not inherently entail the generation of combustion, chemical or particulate by products.

Examples of acceptable uses considered by MEPA include tailor, cobbler, lace making and computer and electronic repair. Moreover, examples of unacceptable uses include carpentry, panel beating, mechanic, mechanical plant servicing, spray painting and bakery.

Proposals to convert from existing Class 12 (Use Classes Order, 1994) general industry to Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) business and light industry within designated Residential Areas shall only be considered acceptable by MEPA if all the conditions listed above are adhered to, and provided that it can be proven that the Class 12 Use (general industry) operation is a permitted one and the Class 11 Use (business and light industry) operation is actually more neighbourhood compatible than the Class 12 Use operation it intends to replace.

- x. Taxi Business or for the hire of motor vehicles as per para. 6.15 of DC2005.

Land-uses falling outside those mentioned above will not be considered favourably within the designated RAs, unless there are overriding reasons to locate such uses within these areas.

- 4.4.1 Residential Areas are the predominant land use in the urban areas especially on levels above ground floor. The range of non-residential activities, especially at ground floor level, tends to be a mix of uses and includes shops and offices, mostly of a local scale and serving local need, spread throughout the predominantly residential area. Garage businesses, schools, showrooms, bars and other uses can also be found in some residential areas, but the range and scale of the mix of uses is greatly influenced by the locality itself.
- 4.4.2 This policy seeks to guide the future growth of Residential Areas primarily by encouraging the location of more dwelling units within them. It is not the intention of MEPA to create “dormitory towns” through a rigid zoning policy, but it is important that these areas remain primarily an attractive place to live in and remain predominantly residential in use. This policy applies to all sites within the Residential Areas, unless a specific site is controlled by other policies in this Local Plan, in which case the site-specific policy should take precedence.
- 4.4.3 This policy also identifies those non-residential uses that can be located within the Residential Areas because they support and enhance community amenity (such as very small shops, old people’s homes or kindergartens) and/or do not create adverse environmental impacts (such as small offices and small health facilities or visitor attractions). The policy specifically excludes land-uses that are deemed to be incompatible with Residential Areas due to their nature and scale of activity, such as bad neighbour industrial uses. In this regard, acceptable light industrial uses in residential areas shall only include very low impact industrial activities such as electronic repair, servicing and maintenance as well as handcrafts that do not inherently require the use of electrical machinery, especially those related to textiles. Activities which require the extensive use of manual percussive tools (eg. hammers, mallets etc) are not deemed compatible with residential areas.

NHHO02

Residential Priority Areas

The Local Plan designates Residential Priority Areas (RPAs) within the Urban Development Boundaries of the following settlements as indicated in the relative Area Policy Maps:

Gzira, Ta’ Xbiex, Msida, Pembroke, Paceville, San Gwann, St. Julian’s, and Swieqi.

The acceptable land-uses (new uses, extensions to existing uses and change of uses) within all frontages located within the RPAs are:

- i. A mix of Class 1 (Use Classes Order, 1994) terrace houses, maisonettes and flats on sites zoned in the relative Area Policy Maps for these specific forms of residential development. This development is to be in accordance with the relevant conditions as detailed in the DC2005, Part 3, unless otherwise stated by a policy in this Local Plan.**
- ii. A mix of Class 1 (Use Classes Order, 1994) detached and semi-detached dwellings on sites zoned in the relative Area Policy Maps for these specific forms of residential development. This development is to be in accordance with the relevant conditions as detailed in the DC2005, Part 3, unless otherwise stated by a policy in this Local Plan.**
- iii. Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices for sites located within the Ta' Xbiex RPA only, and provided that all the provisions of Policy NHGT11 are adhered to.**

4.4.4 Residential Priority Areas are used exclusively for residential purposes, and are distinct from the rest of the urban area because of their particular building design and appreciable landscaped areas within individual sites (e.g. villa and bungalow areas). These areas can be extensive such as in Swieqi, Ta' Xbiex and San Gwann, or small enclaves such as in Gzira, Msida, Pembroke, St. Julian's and Paceville. The proliferation of businesses in the Residential Priority Areas can have a serious negative impact on their particular character and amenity, and therefore the location of new businesses is being prohibited to ensure that no bad neighbour developments are permitted. The only exception to this rule is for the RPA of Ta' Xbiex as explained in Policy NHGT11.

4.4.5 The Residential Priority Areas that have been designated for Swieqi, Madliena and L-Ibragg areas are dominated by detached and semi-detached villas. The remaining area is dominated by terraced houses and other terraced development. The design regulations and low densities for Madliena and L-Ibragg have created a unique character of relative space which needs to be protected. Business uses are not considered appropriate with the character of Swieqi and have been excluded from these areas.

NHHO03

Directing New Housing to Sustainable Locations

In line with the Structure Plan, the Local Plan designates land for new dwelling units during the plan period. The majority of these new units are to be accommodated within the Limits of Development for Pembroke and Swieqi where new community facilities are proposed and where, given their proximity to the Regional Road, further congestion in the Inner Harbours area will be minimised. Within the Inner Harbours area the emphasis will be towards the creation of new dwellings through rehabilitation rather than new-build.

Major housing development schemes are also encouraged in the following locations:

- i. Tigné and Manoel Island;**
- ii. Valley Road, Msida;**
- iii. Pender Place, Paceville;**
- iv. Gzira Stadium Site;**
- v. Central Madliena Opportunity Site; and**
- vi. Ta' Xbiex Opportunity Site.**

4.4.6 A key Structure Plan goal is "To use land and buildings efficiently, and consequently to channel urban development activity into existing and planned development areas". In line with this, new housing will be linked more efficiently with areas of new employment and access to the Regional Road and the wider transport network. This in turn helps in reducing the overall need to travel for employment and local services and will ease further increases in congestion in the Inner Harbours Area.

- 4.4.7 Strategic sites for housing are already committed through the Manoel Island Development Brief and the Pender Place & Mercury House Development Brief. Elsewhere, sites are identified for housing in line with the Local Plan's overall strategy for settlements which is to locate new housing development within existing urban areas, especially where potential access to areas for employment and recreation exists. Development of these sites other than primarily for housing would be contrary to the Plan's strategy to secure land for employment within town centres or other identified sites. On these housing sites, MEPA will seek the efficient use of space and the provision of social and community facilities in line with other policies identified within the Plan.

NHHO04 Residential Rehabilitation and Selective Redevelopment

MEPA will support measures to improve the residential stock in Msida, Pieta`, Gzira and Sliema through the rehabilitation of older dwellings that are vacant or in a state of disrepair. In particular proposals will be encouraged where they seek retention of any listed or scheduled buildings within Urban Conservation Areas in accordance with the criteria stipulated in Policy NHSE09.

- 4.4.8 Residential conversions and extensions can make a useful contribution by adapting the existing housing stock to meet the needs of the increasing number of smaller households which are well suited to historic urban quarters. In the more densely populated residential areas, particular care will be taken to ensure that new conversions do not result in unacceptable pressure for on-street parking or on other amenities.

5. Town Centre Strategy

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 MEPA attaches importance to the improvement of town centres. The town centre is the focus for a range of commercial and community activities, resulting in a mix of often interdependent land uses, which contribute to a sense of place and identity. It includes a combination of important features: historic buildings, cultural, civic and governmental buildings, as well as public open spaces. This physical form and mix of functions, which have evolved over a considerable period of time, makes a town centre more than just a shopping centre and provides much of its character which can be further enhanced by introducing appropriate new uses into historic buildings. It also has a high level of accessibility to employment, services, and facilities for all the community.
- 5.1.2 MEPA designates a network of primary, secondary and local centres, where the intention is to encourage the expansion and intensification of shopping facilities and associated services. MEPA aims to reinforce the retail function of these designated centres, particularly for non-food shopping.
- 5.1.3 The role of the Local Plan is to provide a positive framework to direct retail development to appropriate locations and encourage investment and the environmental management of existing town centres. Namely, to:
- i. Set a framework for projects to improve the public realm in town centres;
 - ii. Encourage investment in retail, employment, leisure and other key uses;
 - iii. Improve access by public transport and reduce congestion;
 - iv. Identify areas where local retail provision is poor.

5.2 Issues

- 5.2.1 The main issues that relate to Town Centres are the following:
- i. Pembroke and Swieqi have poor provision of shops selling essential everyday items
 - ii. Traffic congestion and pollution are threatening the appeal of town centres
 - iii. Limited investment focus in established centres for the public realm and transport infrastructure
 - iv. Retailing 'sprawling' from town centres into residential areas
 - v. Ad hoc location of large retailers causing congestion in residential areas.

Under provision of local shops selling essential items

- 5.2.2 Following discussions with Local Councils it appears that there is a deficiency in retail provision in Pembroke and Swieqi that, with the exception of Ta' L-Ibragg, have no established or defined local centres. A Housing Quality Survey undertaken by the Strategic Planning Unit of MEPA confirmed this. 600 households were sampled at random within the plan area. Only 10% and 50% of households in Pembroke and Swieqi respectively had shops selling essential/everyday items in their street. This is low when compared with 85% in Pieta` and 80% in Gzira.

Environmental decline of established Town Centres

- 5.2.3 During the last 10 years existing outdoor spaces and streets in commercial areas have suffered from neglect and increasing environmental decay, particularly relating to the effects of traffic. This problem is most acute along Lower Tower Road in Sliema, much of San Gwann and parts of St.

Julian's. Although there has been a declining quality in the public realm, a recent trend for indoor shopping malls has occurred. These provide a traffic free environment and an attempt is made to accommodate wheelchair users and pushchairs. Without planning control over commercial development, the quality of the public realm will continue to decline and indoor shopping malls will remain the only refuge from traffic and pollution. These centres continue to loose appeal over other centres with major embellishment initiatives such as at Valletta.

- 5.2.4 Although most town centres within the plan area are well located for public transport relative to other areas, public transport remains a second choice to gaining access to the centre by car. Public transport interchanges are mostly inappropriate, not conveniently placed for pedestrian access to main shopping areas and lack basic facilities such as seating and shading from the elements.

Sporadic growth of retailing outside established Town Centres

- 5.2.5 In Msida, Ta` Xbiex, Gzira, parts of Sliema and St. Julian's large retailers are locating ad hoc in residential areas and along main and arterial roads, and in these areas the size and location of some shops is a planning concern. However this issue is being addressed by the Retail Planning Guidelines. Outlets outside existing centres can cause problems to local residents in terms of noise, parking congestion and high traffic generation. A more acute problem is the proliferation of showrooms which introduce massive ground floor facades which are alien to residential areas and traditional shopping streets. The Local Plan must address the need to restrain showroom uses within designated areas in order to protect residential areas and traditional shopping areas.

- 5.2.6 If dispersed patterns of retail provision continue, coupled with poor public transport provision, residential areas will suffer from further congestion. Access to shops will become a privilege for those who have access to the car.

5.3 Strategy

Designate shopping areas where current retail provision is poor

- 5.3.1 The Local Plan designates local centres in Pembroke, Swieqi, Gzira and other locations where current provision of shops selling essential daily items is poor. In line with the overall transport and settlements strategy the objective is to reduce the number of shopping trips by car to centres outside these areas for daily goods.

Strengthen the retail hierarchy and encourage investment into the environment and transport infrastructure of existing Town Centres

- 5.3.2 In the North Harbours area there is a Primary Town Centre at Sliema. Smaller Secondary Town Centres are designated at St. Julian's, San Gwann and Tigné, and Local Centres that serve various local residential areas are also planned. With specific areas established for new commercial developments, investment to improve the local shopping environment and transport infrastructure can be secured with more certainty. Investment into traffic calming, pedestrianisation, customer parking provision and more accessible streets are seen as key investment priorities in existing main centres. Through the Local Plan, MEPA shall work in close co-operation with Local Councils, the private sector and government to secure these objectives.

Direct large retail outlets to Primary and Secondary Town Centre locations

- 5.3.3 In line with the overall transport and settlements strategy to integrate land use and transport, medium and large-scale retail uses will locate within the defined Town Centres. The objective is to limit traffic in residential areas, reduce the number of shopping trips by car and to focus activities in the main Town Centres. On the contrary smaller or Local Centres will continue to accommodate smaller scale facilities.

General Strategy

5.3.4 In brief the strategy for Town and Local centres is as follows:

The Local Plan will focus public and private sector investment in retailing on a regional network of existing and planned Primary, Secondary Town Centres and Local Centres. Investment opportunities to improve traffic management, accessibility by public transport and the quality of shopping streets in these centres, is outlined in the Local Plan. Shops (excluding showrooms) that serve more than just a local catchment area will be discouraged outside the designated Town Centre to safeguard residents from traffic congestion and pollution and disturbance associated with larger retail uses. Small local shops will continue to establish outside these centres subject to amenity and design. In cases of areas suffering from an under-provision of retailing, the plan designates Local Centres for local convenience shopping.

5.4 Policies

NHRE01

Town Centres

MEPA designates the following town centres within the local plan area:

Type of Centre	Locality	Area Policy Map
Primary Centres	Sliema	SJ1
Secondary Centres	St. Julian's/Paceville	SJ2, PV1
	San Gwann	SG1, SG2
	Tigné	SJ1

The boundaries of the town centres are indicated in the relevant Area Policy Maps. The acceptable land uses (new uses, extensions to existing uses, and change of uses) within all frontages located within the town centres are as follows;

- i. Class 1 (Use Classes Order, 1994) dwelling units on upper floors only. Proposals for residential development at ground level will only be considered by MEPA provided that the proposed development scheme includes one dwelling unit only. Conversions from existing commercial uses at ground floor level to new residential units will not be permitted by MEPA.
- ii. Class 2 (Use Classes Order, 1994) residential institutions on upper floors only.
- iii. Class 3 (Use Classes Order, 1994) hostels and hotels provided that these uses are in accordance with all other relevant Local Plan policies.
- iv. Class 4, (Use Classes Order, 1994) retail uses including shopping malls and speciality shopping, but excluding showrooms, provided they comply with the provisions of MEPA's Interim Retail Planning Guidelines (2003).
- v. Supermarkets provided that they comply with all the provisions of Policy NHRE04.
- vi. Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices.
- vii. Class 6 (Use Classes Order, 1994) food and drink, including hot food take-away. However take-aways are not to be allowed above ground level.
- viii. Class 7 (Use Classes Order, 1994) non-residential institutions including interpretation centres. However public halls are to have a floor area that does not exceed 150 sqm.
- ix. Class 8 (Use Classes Order, 1994) educational facilities.
- x. Class 9 (Use Classes Order, 1994) assembly and leisure.
- xi. Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) business and light industry provided that:
 - The gross floor area of the premises does not exceed 50 sqm (including storage of materials and/or finished products);

- The activity conducted within the premises does not use heavy duty and/or noisy electrical/mechanical (including pneumatic) equipment, and equipment which requires a 3 phase electricity supply;
- The activity conducted within the premises does not entail extensive and/or prolonged use of percussion hand tools (eg. hammers, mallets etc);
- The activity employs less than 5 people; and
- The activity conducted within the premises does not inherently entail the generation of combustion, chemical or particulate by products.

Examples of acceptable uses considered by MEPA include tailor, cobbler and computer repair. Moreover, examples of unacceptable uses include carpentry, panel beating, mechanic, mechanical plant servicing and spray painting.

Proposals to convert from existing Class 12 (Use Classes Order, 1994) general industry to Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) business and light industry within designated Town Centres shall only be considered acceptable by MEPA if all the conditions listed above are adhered to, and provided that it can be proven that the Class 12 Use (general industry) operation is a permitted one and the Class 11 Use (business and light industry) operation is actually more neighbourhood compatible than the Class 12 Use operation it intends to replace.

- xii. Class 17 (Use Classes Order, 1994) storage facilities only provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 75 sqm.
- xiii. Taxi Business or for the hire of motor vehicles.
- xiv. Band club and social club.
- xv. Cleaning of clothes in venues where articles are brought by the public, provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 75 sqm.
- xvi. Conference Centre.
- xvii. Indoor shooting range provided that all the conditions of the Guidance on Shooting Ranges are fully adhered to.
- xviii. Bakery and Confectionery with provision for outside catering.

MEPA will support initiatives from public agencies and the private sector that contribute to the enhancement of the external environment of town centres and add to their attraction as a community and retail hub. Proposals for appropriate pedestrianisation schemes, landscaping schemes and traffic management will also be considered favourably. MEPA will strongly encourage the establishment of town centre management initiatives in the primary town centre.

- 5.4.1 The town centre is the focus for a range of commercial and community activities, resulting in a mix of, often interdependent, land uses that provide a focus for identity, social interaction and business opportunities. It includes a combination of features; historic buildings, cultural, civic and governmental buildings, as well as public open spaces. This physical form and mix of functions, which have evolved over a considerable period of time, makes a town centre different from a shopping centre and provides much of its character which can be further enhanced by introducing appropriate new uses into historic buildings. It also has a high level of accessibility to employment, services, and facilities for all the community. Shopping provision is a key component of town centres, and makes a major contribution to their vitality and viability. It is important therefore that they retain retailing as a core function.
- 5.4.2 The term "town centre" is used generally to cover city and town centres which provide a broad range of facilities and services and act as a focus for both the community and for public transport. It excludes small clusters of shops of purely local significance. The size of the centre will influence the range of activities that it offers and its function. The scale of development possible and the opportunities available will differ from place to place.
- 5.4.3 The Retail Strategy defined a primary town centre as a town centre with a regional or sub-regional function for non-food shopping. A secondary centre is a town centre with a significant non-food shopping element but serving local residents or residents of closely neighbouring villages and used

at least by 2,500 people for non-food shopping. Non-food shopping is to be considered as comparison goods, which include clothing, footwear, furniture, household textiles, electrical goods, hardware, chemist goods, jewellery, recreational and other miscellaneous goods. Convenience goods retail outlets are to be directed towards local centres that are the appropriate commercial areas for this type of shopping.

5.4.4 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 acceptable range and mix of uses indicated in the policy. The vitality and viability of town centres depends on a varied mix of uses and activities that encourage people to visit the centre whilst ensuring that they remain an attractive place to live in.

5.4.5 Creating liveable communities requires integrated initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens. A quality physical external environment can act as the catalyst for investment, economic growth and social well-being.

NHRE02

Local Centres

MEPA designates the following Local Centres within the local plan area:

Location	Area Policy Map
Gzira (around Parish Church area)	GT1
Swieqi (Triq Ta' L-Ibragg)	SW2
Swieqi (Triq il-Qasam)	SW2
Swieqi (Triq l-Uqija)	SW2
Pieta` (St Luke's Road area)	MP1
Msida (around Parish Church area)	MP1
Sliema (around junction of Rudolph and Manoel Dimech Street)	SJ1
Pembroke (Triq Mons. Mifsud Tommasi)	PE1
Pembroke (Triq Giorgio Mitrovitch)	PE1
San Gwann (Triq Tal-Balal)	SG1

The boundaries of the local centres are indicated in the relevant Area Policy Maps. The acceptable land uses (new uses, extensions to existing uses, and change of uses) within all frontages located within the local centres are as follows;

- i. Class 1 (Use Classes Order, 1994) dwelling units on upper floors only. Proposals for residential development at ground level will only be considered by MEPA provided that the proposed development scheme includes one dwelling unit only. Conversions from existing commercial uses at ground floor level to new residential units will not be permitted by MEPA.
- ii. Class 2 (a) (Use Classes Order, 1994) residential accommodation and care to people in need of care on upper floors only.
- iii. Class 4, (Use Classes Order, 1994) retail uses including speciality shopping but excluding showrooms, provided:
 - that the gross floor area does not exceed 250 sqm; and
 - they comply with the provisions of MEPA's Interim Retail Planning Guidelines (2003).
- iv. Supermarkets provided that they comply with all the provisions of Policy NHRE04.
- v. Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 100 sqm.
- vi. Class 6 (Use Classes Order, 1994) food and drink including hot food take-away. However take-aways are not to be allowed above ground level.
- vii. Class 7 (Use Classes Order, 1994) non-residential institutions including interpretation centres. However public halls are to have a floor area that does not exceed 150 sqm.
- viii. Class 8 (Use Classes Order, 1994) educational facilities provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 75 sqm.

- ix. **Class 9 (Use Classes Order, 1994) assembly and leisure provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 75 sqm.**
- x. **Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) business and light industry provided that:**
 - **The gross floor area of the premises does not exceed 50 sqm (including storage of materials and/or finished products);**
 - **The activity conducted within the premises does not use heavy duty and/or noisy electrical/mechanical (including pneumatic) equipment, and equipment which requires a 3 phase electricity supply;**
 - **The activity conducted within the premises does not entail extensive and/or prolonged use of percussion hand tools (eg. hammers, mallets etc);**
 - **The activity employs less than 5 people; and**
 - **The activity conducted within the premises does not inherently entail the generation of combustion, chemical or particulate by products.**

Examples of acceptable uses considered by MEPA include tailor, cobbler and computer repair. Moreover, examples of unacceptable uses include carpentry, panel beating, mechanic, mechanical plant servicing and spray painting.

Proposals to convert from existing Class 12 (Use Classes Order, 1994) general industry to Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) business and light industry within designated Local Centres shall only be considered acceptable by MEPA if all the conditions listed above are adhered to, and provided that it can be proven that the Class 12 Use (general industry) operation is a permitted one and the Class 11 Use (business and light industry) operation is actually more neighbourhood compatible than the Class 12 Use operation it intends to replace.

- xi. **Class 17 (Use Classes Order, 1994) storage facilities only provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 75 sqm.**
- xii. **Taxi Business of for the hire of motor vehicles.**
- xiii. **Band club and social club.**
- xiv. **Cleaning of clothes in venues where articles are brought by the public, provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 50 sqm.**
- xv. **Bakery and Confectionery with provision for outside catering.**

5.4.6 Local Centres have a concentration of convenience shopping facilities serving the surrounding residential area. A local centre is identified as 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 locality. It is also easily accessible on foot from surrounding residential areas, and located close to the geographical centre of the locality that it serves. Access and servicing arrangements together with goods storage should not adversely impact neighbouring residents, businesses, or other users.

NHRE03

Commercial Areas

MEPA will permit the development of Commercial uses within the designated Commercial Areas at Msida & Gzira as indicated in the relevant Area Policy Maps. The following is a list of acceptable uses (new uses, extensions to existing uses, and change of uses) within all frontages located within the designated Commercial Areas.

- i. **Class 1 (Use Classes Order, 1994) dwelling units on upper floors.**
- ii. **Class 4, (Use Classes Order, 1994) small shops only provided that:**
 - **The small shops (of any nature) are not to exceed a total floor area of 50 sqm each, and convenience shops are not to exceed a total floor area of 75 sqm each;**
 - **They comply with all the provisions of paras. 1.4.16 to 1.4.18 of the Interim Retail Planning Guidelines (2003); and**
 - **They comply with any relevant section of the DC 2005 (design, access, amenity, etc.)**

- iii. **Class 4, (Use Classes Order, 1994) supermarkets, provided that they comply with all the relevant provisions of Policy NHRE04.**
- iv. **Class 4, (Use Classes Order, 1994) showrooms provided that they comply with the relevant provisions of MEPA's Interim Retail Planning Guidelines (2003).**
- v. **Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices on upper floors only.**
- vi. **Class 6 (a) (Use Classes Order, 1994) sale of hot and cold food and drink for consumption on or off the premises.**
- vii. **Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) business and light industry provided that:**
 - **The gross floor area of the premises does not exceed 50 sqm (including storage of materials and/or finished products);**
 - **The activity conducted within the premises does not use heavy duty and/or noisy electrical/mechanical (including pneumatic) equipment, and equipment which requires a 3 phase electricity supply;**
 - **The activity conducted within the premises does not entail extensive and/or prolonged use of percussion hand tools (eg. hammers, mallets etc);**
 - **The activity employs less than 5 people; and**
 - **The activity conducted within the premises does not inherently entail the generation of combustion, chemical or particulate by products.**

Examples of acceptable uses considered by MEPA include tailor, cobbler, lace making and computer and electronic repair. Moreover, examples of unacceptable uses include carpentry, panel beating, mechanic, mechanical plant servicing, spray painting and bakery.

Proposals to convert from existing Class 12 (Use Classes Order, 1994) general industry to Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) business and light industry within designated Commercial Areas shall only be considered acceptable by MEPA if all the conditions listed above are adhered to, and provided that it can be proven that the Class 12 Use (general industry) operation is a permitted one and the Class 11 Use (business and light industry) operation is actually more neighbourhood compatible than the Class 12 Use operation it intends to replace.

- viii. **Class 17 (Use Classes Order, 1994) storage facilities only provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 75 sqm.**
- ix. **Taxi Business or for the hire of motor vehicles.**
- x. **The sale or display of motor vehicles.**
- xi. **The sale of fuel for motor vehicles.**
- xii. **The cleaning of clothes in venues where articles are brought by the public.**

In granting permission for the above-listed uses, MEPA is to be satisfied that the design of the commercial developments shall be complimentary with, and shall enhance the existing streetscape. Particular regard will also be given to the provision of advertising space in order to ensure that this will not be too conspicuous.

5.4.7 Showrooms are defined as premises primarily used to display goods for sale where little direct (over the counter) retail sale is intended. Showrooms normally display a specialist range of bulky, non-food goods, such as: white goods; furniture; motor vehicles; household items, hardware and bathroom fittings. There are 50 showrooms selling white goods, motor vehicles, and electrical and household goods in Msida & Gzira alone and this type of retailing is expanding rapidly. In fact showrooms are rapidly developing along certain arterial routes in the plan area, and these can create an undesirable form of urbanisation if not strictly controlled. Consequently, so as to minimise the negative effects of showroom and other commercial uses whilst ensuring that the plan's objectives towards sustainable transport patterns is not compromised, the plan designates specific and limited commercial areas in Msida & Gzira only. Office development on the upper floors of showrooms is considered to be a compatible use and is therefore normally permitted by MEPA.

Large supermarkets (greater than 500 sqm) should preferably locate within or on the edge of town centres, provided that accommodating standards of parking provision are fully catered for on site to the satisfaction of MEPA. Where it is not possible to bring forward sites which are in or on the edge of a town centre because of the site size requirements of large supermarkets, residential amenity, environmental constraints in Urban Conservation Areas, or because the road network does not have the capacity to cater for the additional traffic and service vehicles, then sites within the designated locations listed in the following order of sequence will be considered for the development of large supermarkets:

- i. Local Centres;
- ii. Commercial Areas;
- iii. Mixed Use Areas;
- iv. Tourism Areas; and
- v. Entertainment Priority Areas.

There shall be a presumption against the development of supermarkets within designated Residential Areas unless there is a strong planning justification for departing from the sequential approach stipulated above. Supermarkets will not be permitted within Residential Priority Areas. The development of supermarkets is also to follow the relevant criteria stipulated in the Interim Retail Planning Guidelines (2003).

5.4.8 Supermarkets are an accepted component of the retail hierarchy. Their preferred location is within or on the edge of town centres where public transport provision can be made available for shoppers who do not have the use of the car. However, since supermarkets generally require large clear areas of floorspace together with adjacent car parking facilities, it may not always be possible for developers to find sites of an appropriate size and location within town centres. Consequently the policy sets out a sequential approach in establishing the preferred locations for supermarkets. The aim of this sequential approach is to accommodate modern facilities in all urban areas whilst safeguarding the amenity of Residential Areas and Residential Priority Areas.

6. Social and Community Facilities

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 In order to meet the needs of any community it is essential that social and community facilities are able to locate in accessible areas to the public they serve. The Local Plan broadly defines social and community facilities as uses including social centres, churches, educational facilities and health care clinics amongst others.
- 6.1.2 Appropriate levels of community provision are difficult to quantify or define. The type of facilities needed in an area will broadly relate to the age profile of the locality. In San Gwann there is a growing young population and the needs for sports and leisure facilities is high. In the Inner Harbours area the population is ageing and the need for better local access to health care and related care facilities. In Pembroke there are almost no social facilities apart from schools and opportunity exists to centralise local facilities in an accessible location. This chapter of the Local Plan provides design and locational criteria for such uses.

6.2 Issues

- 6.2.1 The main issues that relate to Social and Community Facilities are the following:
- i. Poor coverage of community facilities, particularly in San Gwann and the expanding residential area of Pembroke.
 - ii. Facilities often not located in the most accessible locations.
 - iii. Design of existing facilities sometimes inadequate in terms of disabled access.
 - iv. No major demographic changes expected to effect school enrolments. However there is a need to ensure land is available to extend some schools.
 - v. Limited dual use of facilities between schools.
 - vi. Language schools tend to be inadequately designed and located.
 - vii. There is a need for better access to local health facilities particularly in expanding residential areas.
 - viii. Poor provision of government policlinics.

Poor provision of Community Facilities

- 6.2.2 There is a perceived lack of general community facilities provision in the Local Plan area, such as clinics, police stations and community centres. In particular there is a need for more elderly day care facilities and local health facilities in the Inner Harbour areas of Msida, Gzira, Pieta`, St. Julian's and Sliema and more general facilities in growing residential areas like Pembroke and Swieqi.
- 6.2.3 The need for future elderly care facilities in the Inner Harbours will become pressing as the proportion of elderly people in these communities continues to grow. It has become practice with regard to care of the elderly and disabled to decentralise care to community homes. This is being accomplished through the building of community homes for the elderly and the establishment of community-based day care centres like the one at St. Mary's Street, Sliema. Other measures include the Government's encouragement of initiatives to construct and manage retirement homes such as those at Msida and Gzira. The purpose behind de-centralised facilities is to improve the quality of life of residents by ensuring they are not isolated from familiar surroundings and are able to partake in community life.

- 6.2.4 Within new housing areas there is a need to introduce a wider range of general social and community facilities. The TPS (1988) inadequately considered how housing growth would be matched with the provision of community facilities. Without a planned approach, new community facilities will continue to be provided on an ad-hoc basis in these areas. In this respect there is scope to tie the provision of facilities more closely to new residential and commercial development.

Need to safeguard land for new and expanding Schools and provide criteria for the location and design of Language Schools

- 6.2.5 The Local Plan area is characterised by a large number of educational establishments, including state and private schools, language schools, kindergartens and day care centres, institutes, the University of Malta and a tertiary college. Key issues to be addressed through the local plan include the need to anticipate future demographic and expansion requirements of existing schools and provide a policy framework for the location of future language schools.
- 6.2.6 The private schools and language schools are particularly concentrated in the Pembroke, St. Julian's and Sliema area and there is considerable pressure to increase their number. Apart from locational criteria, other specific problems relating to language schools need to be addressed which include inadequate or cramped facilities and associated nuisance to local residents especially during the summer months.
- 6.2.7 Most educational establishments need to expand in situ. This has proved problematic where land has not been available next to the site. Where there is scope the Local Plan needs to protect future land for educational expansion and ensure that sites for new school provision are well situated and large enough to accommodate any future expansion requirements. Also wherever possible the Local Plan should promote the sharing and dual use of existing facilities between educational establishments in order to discourage unnecessary duplication of facilities and inefficient use of land.
- 6.2.8 The single largest educational establishment, the University of Malta, expanded substantially between 1990 - 2005, increasing the number of students from 3,242 to over 8,000. Over the same period facilities were extended and improved including new constructions. There is unlikely to be any significant further physical expansion of the University during the plan period. Issues relating to the planned increase of foreign students, better provision of public transport to the site and protection of the setting of the University and Wied Ghollieqa will, however need to be addressed.

To promote access to Local Health Facilities

- 6.2.9 The Local Plan area includes Malta's main public hospital at St. Luke's. It also includes the private Capua Palace and Mater Dei Hospital. The Mater Dei Hospital is proposed to provide 825 bed spaces which will result in St. Luke's taking on a role for alternative uses. There is only one public health centre at Gzira and this serves the majority of the Local Plan area.
- 6.2.10 Nationally, 16% of all disabled people are resident in the North Harbours area. There are over 520 people (1% of the area population) in the North Harbours with a form of disability with the greatest incidences in Sliema, nearly 6%, and St. Julian's and San Gwann where over 2% of residents have a disability (Source: National Commission Persons With Disability Survey, 1994).

6.3 Strategy

Promote the provision of Facilities to cater for the needs of the Local Community

- 6.3.1 It is important that the Local Plan addresses the needs of the local community and that land/redevelopment opportunities are adequate for social facilities that are accessible to residents. Shops with 'every day' items, open spaces, local clinics, civic facilities and police stations should all be readily accessible. Particular emphasis will be given to the needs of the elderly and disabled

(in accordance with Structure Plan Policies SOC 18, 19, 20 and 24). The need for elderly day centre facilities and design measures to meet the needs of the less mobile will be given particular weight, particularly as many parts of the plan area are experiencing significant increases in their elderly population.

Provide adequate Education Facilities for all sections of the Community

- 6.3.2 The Local Plan assesses educational needs in the North Harbours area and addresses deficiencies when appropriate. The Local Plan looks at all areas of education provision from kindergartens to tertiary education. In accordance with Structure Plan Policy SOC 14 emphasis will be given to the joint use of school facilities with community services.

Promote dual use of Educational Facilities

- 6.3.3 Dual use of facilities allows better use of land and may reduce the need for additional facilities to cater for specific activities. In conjunction with the Plan's transport strategy and sustainability objectives local facilities reduce the need for car based journeys.

Control the provision and impact of Language Schools

- 6.3.4 Although classified as 'educational establishments' (falling within Class 8(b) of the Development Planning Use Classes Order, 1994) these schools operate primarily as commercial establishments with international catchments rather than local. In 1996 seventeen out of the nineteen officially registered language schools in Malta were situated in the North Harbours particularly in Sliema (8), Gzira (3), St. Julian's and Ta` Xbiex (4). In terms of employment generation and income generation for 'host families' and accommodation operators their economic impact is significant. Whilst seen as an important employment generator, potential conflicts may arise if schools are inappropriately designed and located.

General Strategy

- 6.3.5 In brief the strategy for social and community facilities is as follows:

Where there is an identifiable need for expansion of educational or other community facilities, the Local Plan safeguards land for such uses through relevant area policies. Where it is not possible to safeguard specific sites, the plan promotes the provision of new facilities in accessible locations such as town centres and local centres. In considering the development of new community facilities, the Local Plan ensures that appropriate standards of design are incorporated. Other policies promote the dual use of community facilities.

6.4 Policies

NHSO01

Provision of Social & Community Facilities

MEPA in conjunction with relevant agencies will ensure that the adequate and accessible provision of social and community facilities is sustained by:

- i. Allocating and reserving appropriate sites through this Local Plan;**
- ii. Seeking the adequate provision of civic facilities within development schemes particularly by means of the Policy NHSO02;**
- iii. Seeking the provision of facilities within the residential areas they serve, particularly those for the elderly people, persons with special needs and children;**

- iv. Seeking to ensure that where a development results in the loss of a social or community facility which, due to changing circumstances, is surplus to need, then the new development will be expected to provide some alternative community facility of benefit to the community in the locality; and
- v. Seeking to ensure that, where reasonable, provision is made for the needs of people with special needs.

Proposals for new or improved community facilities will be approved subject to the following criteria:

- a. the proposal is located in a central location in order to serve the needs of the local community;
- b. operating hours and operational requirements are compatible with the surrounding uses;
- c. suitable access is provided into and within the site in accordance with MEPA's Access for All requirements;
- d. any specific infrastructure or servicing requirements can be met;
- e. the scale of the facility is related to the needs of the locality and there is no adverse impact on the local environment in terms of the scale, use and design of the proposed development;
- f. the building is designed with a public frontage with doors and windows onto the street in order to provide a focal point for the local community;
- g. they are conveniently accessible by both public and private transport and on foot from nearby residential areas; and
- h. they conform to all relevant Local Plan policies.

6.4.1 Settlement patterns are changing and the distribution of social and community facilities needs to change accordingly. In the Plan area, the TPS (1988) have largely been implemented as housing estates, with minimal planned provision in their layouts for community facilities. Therefore, proactive planning for the effective provision of required community facilities is required.

6.4.2 Community services will be promoted in locations which are accessible to the whole community, especially in population growth areas like Pembroke. The scale of the facility should also be related to the needs of the community, discourage car journeys from beyond its catchment area and accord with the principles of sustainability. Where existing provision is poor or dispersed, new facilities will be encouraged within town and local centres especially through the implementation of Policy NHSO02. Visitor parking provision for the community facilities are to be calculated using the low standard.

NHSO02

Provision of Public Civic Facilities

MEPA shall encourage the provision of required public civic facilities to be preferably located at ground floor level within designated Town Centres and Local Centres or near the periphery of such centres as designated on the relevant Area Policy Maps. The Local Council of a locality may seek partnership with the private sector to provide the said public civic facilities. The location of the relevant site should be acceptable to MEPA.

Where the private sector embarks on such a partnership, MEPA will consider relaxation of some planning criteria, including the relaxation of the building height limitation for the site preferably by not more than one additional floor in accordance with Policy NHSE04, in order to promote such initiatives.

Relaxation of planning criteria (especially in terms of height limitation), will be subject to all the following conditions being adhered to;

- i. This planning initiative is to be used only once for every relevant Local Council area and there may be some local councils where this relaxation is not deemed to be applicable;
- ii. Part or all of the ground floor of the development is reserved for the required public civic facilities depending on the floor area required for such facilities. Provision of public civic facility space at other floor levels instead of ground floor level will only be considered provided that:

- a. this is acceptable to MEPA and the relevant public sector agency; and
 - b. that it is served by separate access from the rest of the building; and
 - c. that it fully complies with MEPA's Access for All requirements;
- iii. There should be a legally binding contractual agreement between the applicant/developer and the Local Council or Public Sector Agency whereby the former transfers the ownership of the entire floor area devoted to the civic facility use to the relevant Local Council or Public Sector Agency as the case may be. This transfer of ownership is to be affected before the relevant development permit is issued by MEPA and a preliminary written agreement between the local council and the private sector representative should be submitted with the development planning application;
 - iv. The parking that is required for the civic facility is to be operated independently from the private parking facilities on site, and has to be fully accessible to the public. These requirements are to be adhered to even in the event that the ownership of the civic facility is transferred to another entity. The ownership of this public parking provision must be included with the transfer of ownership of the civic facility.
 - v. The management and operation of the public civic facility shall be undertaken by either the Local Council or by the Public Sector Agency as required;
 - vi. The floor area of the permitted additional floor/s is to be equivalent to a maximum of 115% of the floor area that is transferred to the relevant Local Council or Public Sector Agency;
 - vii. The public civic facility adheres to all the criteria (a) to (g) of Policy NHSO01; and
 - viii. The public civic facility shall be designed to provide in-built flexibility to allow for wider community use.

However the relaxation provisions of this Policy shall not apply where the additional floor/s will have a detrimental effect on strategic views (see Map SE2) and local views of Urban Conservation Areas, long distance views, valley sides (see Map CV5), scheduled buildings or landmark buildings in their setting and/or against the skyline as per Policies NHSE07.

6.4.3 Public civic amenity uses (e.g. uses related to health, social services, elderly, youths and other community facilities) should ideally be located within or adjacent to town and local centres since they constitute community uses that reinforce the function of these centres. However, in view of the general lack of vacant sites and buildings within established town and local centres, the actual provision of such facilities on many occasions proves to be difficult to achieve in practice. Consequently, MEPA will encourage the provision of public civic amenity spaces by applicants/developers of suitable development schemes that are located within such centres. These civic facilities are to be administered and managed directly by the Local Council or Public Agency. As an incentive to promote the provision of these public civic facilities, the developer will be permitted to construct, above the designated height limitation, an equivalent of 115% of the floorarea of the civic facilities provided on site.

6.4.4 Preferably such community uses should be situated at ground floor level so as to facilitate access to the public. However, it may also be possible to reserve the first floor of the development instead of the ground floor for civic use provided that the facility can still function properly at this level and provided that public access to it is still acceptable to MEPA.

NHSO03

Care of the Elderly

MEPA will encourage the development of elderly day care centres and residential homes within the North Harbours area in preference to the development of centralised care institutions. Proposals for these uses within the Inner Harbours area will particularly be encouraged, especially where they involve the rehabilitation of existing buildings.

6.4.5 Malta's population is ageing and this is already evident in areas such as Gzira, Pietà, Msida, St. Julian's and Sliema. Therefore, MEPA in conjunction with relevant agencies, needs to consider the

full implications of local provision of facilities, improvement of access for the people with special needs and the provision of suitable housing for the elderly. There is likely to be increased demand for elderly care facilities as the ageing population increases, with greater participation by the private sector through the provision of homes for the elderly. This policy encourages new facilities in the areas where there will be most need.

NHSO04 Provision of Sites for Educational Establishments

MEPA will support proposals for the retention of existing schools. In addition land will be reserved for educational purposes on the following sites as identified by the Department of Education and as designated in the relative Area Policy Maps;

- i. provision of a new primary school, Pembroke;**
- ii. extension of Sir Luigi Girls School, Pembroke; and**
- iii. extension of the University in accordance with Policy NHMP08.**

Proposals for the development of non-educational uses on land reserved for school or university use will only be considered where:

- a. It can be demonstrated that the land is surplus to educational requirements in the medium/long term;**
- b. The reserved site has no other beneficial social/community use;**
- c. The proposed development cannot reasonably be accommodated on an alternative site; and**
- d. The proposed development does not result in the loss of an existing community/recreational facility.**

6.4.6 There are a number of educational establishments in the Plan area including 16 state and church nursery, primary and secondary schools, and 9 post secondary schools. Where further school facilities are required to meet increasing demand, sites are identified and earmarked by the Department of Education for future development. These sites are specified through this policy and within the relevant area policy chapters.

6.4.7 The Department of Education is also rationalising a number of its establishments in order to meet the educational needs of the area. For example all primary schools also contain a kindergarten and this trend will continue.

NHSO05 Design and Location of Language Schools

The rehabilitation or redevelopment of purpose built language schools will be considered by MEPA in locations accessible by public transport and should:

- i. fall within an existing Town Centre as defined by Policy NHRE01, or involve the rehabilitation of a scheduled building or a vernacular building within an Urban Conservation Area. Locations outside Town Centres will only be considered provided that the language school will not be immediately adjoining an existing residence, and provided it can be shown to the satisfaction of MEPA that no inconvenience to nearby residents will result;**
- ii. demonstrate layouts that comply with Part A (Classroom Accommodation) of the Schedule of the National Minimum Conditions (Schools Teaching English as a Foreign Language) Regulations (L.N. 60/96);**
- iii. minimise noise and other disturbances to surrounding uses through the provision of an adequate internal lobby off the main entrance and common room/s/canteen. The size of common areas will depend on the maximum student capacity of the school, and shall be at the discretion of MEPA in consultation with the EFL Schools Monitoring Board/Education Division; and**

- iv. ensure the implementation of noise insulation measures to the third party walls of neighbouring uses that are sensitive to noise.

Requirements for parking spaces will be based on the number of administrative staff and the maximum number of teachers able to use the school at any one time (assuming one teacher per classroom). It will be assumed that students will not arrive by car. In cases of rehabilitation within UCAs, MEPA may use its discretion in the application of parking standards and the requirement for mini-bus drop-offs.

- 6.4.8 Language schools located in inappropriate areas can cause significant disturbance to surrounding areas. A number of existing schools are located in buildings which are not designed for such uses and result in instances of overcrowded classrooms, lack of health and safety measures and an under-provision of recreational indoor space. In conjunction with the EFL Schools Monitoring Board of the Education Division, MEPA will ensure that proposals for new or extended language schools will provide for adequate standards of accommodation for teachers and students in line with this policy and the provisions of L.N.60/96. From a sustainability point of view, ideal locations for language schools are where existing or planned access by public transport is adequate. This re-enforces the public-transport bias of the plan towards minimising car-trip generation.
- 6.4.9 Through this policy, MEPA will however also consider locations outside town centres provided the residential amenity of surrounding dwellings is protected. Therefore overall this policy seeks to improve design and amenity standards and locate new schools in accessible locations or within properties requiring rehabilitation.

7. Employment and Industry

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 Malta has experienced strong, consistent economic growth since the late 1980's despite widespread recession throughout Europe. Growth has been broad-based, with strong contributions particularly from tourism and other service industries. The structure of the economy is constantly evolving and in 1996 the labour supply comprised of over 147,000 people of which over 141,000 were gainfully employed. Of this total nearly 40,000 are employed in manufacturing related industries, nearly 50,000 in service related activities, 50,000 in the public sector with part time and unemployed making up the remainder. Nationally the working population has been increasing by 1% per annum since 1980 with male participation rates (88%) being higher than female rates. However, female participation rates have increased steadily to 32% in 1996. Over the same period part-time employment has also increased. The Local Plan area working population of 22,640 represents around 16% of the national figure.
- 7.1.2 Land needs to be identified and safeguarded for employment generating uses to ensure the economic prosperity of the North Harbours area and the national economy. The development of land for commerce and industry to diversify and strengthen the economy needs to be achieved in a way that does not harm the urban or natural environment, or the amenity of residents.
- 7.1.3 This chapter of the Local Plan sets an overall planning framework to guide the development of office and industrial uses to appropriate locations. Major aspects that are addressed in this chapter include the better integration of employment uses with the arterial road network thereby seeking to alleviate residential areas from existing and potential inappropriate office and industrial uses.

7.2 Issues

- 7.2.1 The main issues that relate to Employment and Industry are the following:
- i. Medium and large-scale office uses located in residential areas or locations that encourage arrival by car instead of public transport.
 - ii. Change of use to offices in residential areas that have 'bad-neighbour' impacts.
 - iii. Some industrial uses are inappropriate in residential areas.
 - iv. Need to safeguard appropriate areas/sites for future industrial development.

Sporadic Growth of New Office Accommodation

- 7.2.2 MEPA's Employment Topic Paper Final Draft (2002) identifies a substantial need for new office development up to 2015. The office sector as a whole still lacks adequate modern accommodation. Much of the demand for modern, new, office accommodation in the North Harbours is likely to be satisfied through the construction of a number of large-scale office projects like the Hilton redevelopment, the Manoel Island/Tigné Point project, the Pembroke Development Brief site and the Pender Place project amongst other planned sites.
- 7.2.3 Prior to the Local Plan, locational criteria for the location of medium/large scale office development were limited. Medium to large sized office accommodation has, in the past, established in areas that are inappropriate in relation to public transport connections and the strategic road network. In order to ensure that future medium/large scale office accommodation (not listed above) is located in 'sustainable' locations, the Local Plan needs to set firm locational criteria for medium/large scale new office accommodation.

- 7.2.4 Whilst small-scale office development in residential areas is generally acceptable, the cumulative effect of this type of development in some residential areas (such as Ta' Xbiex) can have adverse impacts on local residents. In this respect, the Local Plan needs to address the issue of the size, design, location and impact of future small-scale office development in certain localities.

Inappropriate Industrial Uses in Built Areas

- 7.2.5 Existing service industries in residential areas are a cause of nuisance for the nearby residents particularly in San Gwann, Gzira, Msida and Sliema. The nuisance is related to a proliferation of small garage workshops or warehouses operating from garages in residential areas. The role of the Local Plan in this respect will be to highlight these issues and identify suitable areas for the relocation of existing and new firms. This problem clearly cannot be solved through land use planning alone and will require a commitment from other Government Agencies.
- 7.2.6 San Gwann Industrial Estate is under the jurisdiction of Malta Industrial Parks (MIP). The Estate has 80,000sqm of floorspace and is nationally the fourth largest estate. MIP have proposals for the expansion of the Estate by utilising reserved vacant land to the west. Whilst recognising the need to safeguard land for future expansion of the estate, there is also a need to ensure that existing land and buildings are efficiently utilised. Another issue associated with the operations of the Industrial Estate is the disturbance to residents in San Gwann due to traffic generation and noise.

7.3 Strategy

Direct Medium and Large-Scale Office Uses to appropriate locations

- 7.3.1 A primary aim of this Local Plan is to promote economic development whilst minimising the need to travel, particularly by private car. This means ensuring employment opportunities are provided at appropriate locations in the Local Plan area which are easily accessible particularly by public transport.

Ensure Offices in Residential Areas do not have an adverse impact on Residents

- 7.3.2 Proposals for small scale offices in residential areas will not be considered appropriate where their operation unacceptably changes the residential status of the residential block or street in terms of parking or security concerns. In areas such as Ta' Xbiex where there has been an unacceptable cumulative impact of the change of use of residences to offices, a strict approach to new office uses is being followed.

Identify Suitable Sites for Medium and Large Sized Industrial Uses

- 7.3.3 It is essential for the economic prosperity of the country that industrial efficiency is maintained. However, this should not be to the detriment of residents who live in the area, or to the natural or built environment. Therefore, in accordance with Structure Plan Policies COM7 and 8 and IND1 to 13, the Local Plan will identify suitable sites for industry which make best use of existing land whilst causing minimal impact to the surrounding environment. The main area for industrial activity is currently the San Gwann Industrial Estate. The Local Plan will aim to contain this type of development in the Inner Harbours area, promote better management of land at the San Gwann Industrial Estate and identify suitable areas for expansion.

Identify Sites for Small-Scale Service Industry (Garage Industries)

- 7.3.4 The Structure Plan recognises the strong demand for appropriate premises for small service industrial uses and designates sites, in addition to those already allocated in the TPS (1988). Development of garage industries throughout the plan area (notably at San Gwann and Msida) has resulted in disturbance to residents.

General Strategy

7.3.5 In brief the strategy for Employment and Industry is as follows:

The overall approach for employment and industry is to promote development in locations where travel to work by public transport is possible and convenient. The Plan identifies town centres as suitable locations for new medium and large-scale office uses in addition to sites and areas that are accessible from the Regional Road. Industrial uses that are inappropriate to residential areas will not be permitted. Instead these uses will be directed to the San Gwann Industrial Estate and other designated sites where their impact on residents and the road network will be minimised. Low-impact and very small-scale office and industrial uses will generally be allowed in residential areas.

7.4 Policies

NHCI01

Provision of Medium/Large Scale Office Development

Proposals for new medium to large scale office development (over 75 sqm) will only be acceptable in the following areas:

- i. The designated Town Centres in accordance with Policy NHRE01;**
- ii. Small-scale office development up to 100sqm in Local Centres in accordance with Policy NHRE02;**
- iii. The designated Commercial Areas in accordance with Policy NHRE03;**
- iv. Manoel Island/Tigné Point Development Brief areas in accordance with the provisions of the Development Brief;**
- v. The Gzira Drainage Pumping Station in accordance with Policy NHGT06;**
- vi. The Ta' Xbiex Residential Priority Area in accordance with Policy NHGT11;**
- vii. The Gzira Employment Node in accordance with Policy NHGT14;**
- viii. The recommended Employment/Mixed Uses Site at Msida subject to confirmation by the Structure Plan Review and in accordance with the provisions of Policy NHMP13;**
- ix. Utilising Key Historic Buildings in Pembroke in accordance with Policy NHPE08;**
- x. Pembroke Development Brief Area in accordance with Policy NHPE09;**
- xi. Paceville - Mercury House Development Brief area in accordance with the provisions of the Development Brief;**
- xii. Small-scale office development up to 100sqm in the Entertainment Priority Areas of Paceville in accordance with Policy NHPV05;**
- xiii. Designated Residential Buffer Zones in Paceville and Swieqi in accordance with Policies NHPV12 and NHSW10 respectively;**
- xiv. The Swieqi ex-Hotel Site in accordance with Policy NHSW09; and,**
- xv. Other sites or localities identified through specific area policies;**

7.4.1 There are a number of new and pending office developments that will significantly increase the amount of purpose built office accommodation in the North Harbours Region. The Hilton Project and the Manoel Island and Tigné Point development are expected to contribute substantial office space during the plan period.

7.4.2 The amount of further new office accommodation supplied during the plan period will largely be determined by the market. Through this policy, however, MEPA will seek to ensure new medium and large-scale office development is directed to appropriate locations. The location of medium and large-scale offices within residential areas are not considered acceptable because of their impact in terms of traffic generation and general impact on residential amenity.

- 7.4.3 The Local Plan prioritises the main Town Centres because these locations act as existing (or planned) foci for employment and are generally accessible to workers by public transport and have planned improvements to public parking provision. Office development can improve the vitality and viability of these centres by encouraging rehabilitation or replacement of poor quality/run down buildings and utilising upper floors (above shops). In line with the overall transport strategy, office uses will be considered outside town centres at locations with good access to the Regional Road. The anticipated maximum scale of office provision at these locations is indicated where necessary.

NHCI02

Industrial Areas

MEPA designates an MIP Industrial Park within San Gwann as indicated in Map SG1. Subject to the provisions of Policy NHSG04, the following is a list of acceptable land-uses (new uses, extensions to existing uses, and change of uses) within all frontages located within the designated MIP Industrial Park:

- i. Class 6 (a) (Use Classes Order, 1994) sale of hot or cold food for consumption on or off the premises.**
- ii. Class 8 (a) (Use Classes Order, 1994) kindergartens, crèches, day nurseries or day centres provided that they comply with the relevant provisions of the approved Policy document entitled “Child Day Care Facilities”.**
- iii. Classes 11 to 16 (Use Classes Order, 1994) industrial uses. However the scale of the operation will determine whether the development may be located within an appropriate SME site or whether it is to be located within the designated MIP Industrial Park. In addition the proposed industrial development may be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).**
- iv. Classes 17 (Use Classes Order, 1994) storage and distribution.**
- v. Classes 19 (Use Classes Order, 1994) boatyards.**
- vi. Classes 20 (Use Classes Order, 1994) aquaculture.**
- vii. The manufacturing, processing, keeping or storing of a dangerous substance provided that it is considered to be acceptable and safe to locate the operation within the Industrial Area. In addition the proposed operation may be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).**
- viii. The cleaning of clothes.**
- ix. The manufacturing or processing of concrete products. However the scale of the operation will determine whether the development may be located within an appropriate SME site or whether it is to be located within the designated MIP Industrial Park. In addition the proposed industrial development may be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).**
- x. Bakery and Confectionery with provision for outside catering.**

- 7.4.4 Certain neighbour compatible small scale business uses can usually operate in residential areas without causing a nuisance. Expansion is however usually difficult as there may be problems arising for neighbours because of the scale of activities carried out. Where the industrial use has intensified and serious problems are being created for neighbouring uses the provision for relocation becomes necessary. This Policy prioritises San Gwann Industrial Estate as an area that is designated for such industrial development.

- 7.4.5 In accordance with Structure Plan policies, storage and distribution facilities can be accommodated within designated industrial areas. Other compatible and supporting facilities that are allowed within the MIP Industrial Park include child day care centres for those children whose parents work within the Industrial estate, boatyards, fish farms and other uses as specified in this policy.

8. Conservation

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 The North Harbours Plan area is predominantly urban, with a number of important exceptions that include valleys, the coast, countryside fringes and undeveloped pockets within the urban area.
- 8.1.2 This chapter deals with the conservation of this natural environment and includes issues relating to special areas of conservation, ecology, geology, archaeology, agriculture and minerals. In light of the emerging Subject Plans for the coast and minerals and waste, prepared by the MEPA, the local plan includes relatively few policies on these issues. Instead, where pressing minerals or coastal issues relate to a particular site or locality, the Local Plan includes area specific policies. Examples include a number of coastal access policies in the Paceville area, priority areas for beach replenishment and a policy relating to future minerals extraction in the Wied Ghomor Quarry.

8.2 Issues

- 8.2.1 The main issues that relate to Conservation are the following:
- i. Encroachment and pressure for development on valley sides.
 - ii. Pollution. Tipping of waste particularly in valleys and sea.
 - iii. Intense development in the coastal strip and restricted pedestrian access.
 - iv. Geological and ecological features under threat from encroaching development, building excavations, illegal dumping and quarrying activity.
 - v. Hunting and trapping practices which radically affect valley areas and garrigue.
 - vi. Lack of trees.
 - vii. Threats to archaeological sites due to urban and infrastructural development.
 - viii. Reduction in good quality agricultural land.
 - ix. Fishing berths under threat from development (mainly tourism).

Encroachment and pressure for development on valley sides

- 8.2.2 There are several valleys within the plan area that generally run from west to east. Significant valleys include Wied Ghomor (and its tributaries), Wied Mejxu, Wied Harq Hamiem, Wied Ghollieqa and Wied il-Balluta amongst others. These valleys are rich in flora, fauna and geology and provide open space in a predominantly urban area. Locations where development has not taken place are considered very important for ecological and landscape purposes, provide informal spaces for recreation and break the urban sprawl. Most of these valleys are, however, under pressure for development.

Pollution. Tipping of waste particularly in valleys and sea

- 8.2.3 Pollution (through the dumping of waste) is caused primarily by the demands of a densely populated area. Unregulated dumping of waste exacerbates the problem of environmental degradation to both land, for example in the valleys, and the sea. In addition, pollution incidences occur at certain locations within the harbours as a result of poor water circulation.

Intense development in the coastal strip and restricted pedestrian access

- 8.2.4 Access to the coast is restricted by the demands of private development, particularly hotels and beach concessions. The coastal strip is under more pressure for development than any other urban area in the North Harbours. The Sliema/St. Julian's/Paceville areas are where the majority of tourist accommodation and facilities locate. In these areas the development of hotels, jetties, private beaches, pathways, lidos, swimming pools, waterpolo pitches and private residences introduce further activity along the coast. The only significant stretch of natural coastline remaining in the Plan area is that to the north of Pembroke.

Geological and ecological features under threat from encroaching development, building excavations, illegal dumping and quarrying activity. Hunting and trapping practices which radically affect valley areas and garrigue

- 8.2.5 In geological terms, the NHLP area is made up mostly of Lower Globigerina Limestone (*Franka*) and various members of the Lower Coralline Limestone (*Qawwi*). A small outcrop of Middle Globigerina is found west of Madliena Tower in the north and Quaternary deposits are found exposed at Pembroke, St. George's Bay, Dragonara, St. Julian's and Sliema Terraces. The most common immediate threats to sites of geological importance are building development, excavations, roads and concreting in association with beach concessions. Notwithstanding this, activities such as quarrying, incorrect agricultural practices, dumping, hunting and trapping and other recreational activities severely threaten geologically and ecologically important areas such as areas of garrigue. The Environmental Resource Survey identifies a number of important geological and ecological features, worthy of protection in the Plan area. Many of these are already scheduled or are in the process of being scheduled as SSIs and AEIs (see General Policy NHCV01).

Lack of trees

- 8.2.6 Trees are a limited but very important feature of the Maltese landscape and a threatened resource. This is sharply evident in the North Harbours Area. There are specific problems in that some alien species have been planted indiscriminately with little consideration having been given to impacts on ecology. This disturbance of ecosystems has been such that, in some cases, it is now very difficult to state where the boundary between urban and rural area is.

Poor preservation/presentation of Archaeological Sites

- 8.2.7 There is a relative scarcity of sites of archaeological interest in the plan area compared to other areas in Malta. Most archaeological sites are within the urban area. San Gwann accommodates the majority of these with a few isolated sites in other urban locations and on the local plan's limited rural fringes. These sites are shown on Maps CV1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. The major threats to archaeological sites in the area are from potential major projects such as hotels and schools, urban development - especially renewal of housing stock, factories and office buildings, infrastructural development such as roads, pipe and cable trenching, visitors and natural erosion of the archaeological sites.

The Effects of Development on Agricultural Land and Fishing

- 8.2.8 The amount of land used for agriculture is very limited in the North Harbours. However, small areas of agriculture can be found particularly within and adjacent to valleys or on the rural fringes of the settlement boundaries. Agriculture includes all land that is actively managed for the purpose of growing crops or related products, land used for ancillary activities (e.g. land surrounding farm buildings, reservoirs, footpaths, etc.) and fallow land. Most agricultural land in the North Harbours area is dry or semi-irrigated land. There are few permanent freshwater sources in the Local Plan area, and the only land that is irrigated is in the vicinity of valleys. In spite of not being irrigated all the year round, the agricultural land in the area is quite productive. In the North Harbours, agricultural land is increasingly under threat from intensification of development within and outside

the existing settlement boundaries. There are important fishing berthing areas, particularly centred around Spinola Bay.

8.3 Strategy

Ensure the conservation and protection of ecological, geological and archaeological features and promote the enhancement and management of Rural Conservation Areas, giving particular attention to valley areas, the coast and areas of garrigue.

8.3.1 In order to protect these areas from inappropriate development, the Local Plan fully endorses Structure Plan Policies RCO28/29 for the protection of the valleys as water catchment areas, Policies RCO10/12 for protection of areas of ecological importance and ARC1 and 3 for designation and protection of archaeological features. The general strategy of the Structure and the Local Plan is to prohibit development that may otherwise be incompatible within the Rural Conservation Area from a use and location point of view. To help achieve this, MEPA will seek to designate, protect and enhance environmentally important areas including:

- i. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- ii. Areas of Ecological Importance (AEI)
- iii. Areas of Agricultural Value (AAV)
- iv. Areas of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
- v. Sites of Scientific Importance (SSI)
- vi. Areas of High Landscape Sensitivity (AHLS)

Promote the protection and management of archaeological features and improve access to these sites

8.3.2 In regard to archaeology the Local Plan establishes the following objectives including the:

- i. Identification of Archaeological Areas and Sites and their grading as to the level of protection required,
- ii. The support and encouragement of proposals to conserve, manage and improve sites,
- iii. The prevention of further decay of these features and promotion of accessibility where appropriate, and
- iv. The promotion of the understanding and awareness of their cultural value.

Promote the protection of the coastal strip from any further development which has a negative impact on the coastline

8.3.3 The Local Plan endorses the intentions of Structure Plan Policy CZM3 which seeks to protect access to the coast. In the interim period prior to the adoption of the Coastal Zone Management Plan, the provisions of the Structure Plan coastal policies will apply in the North Harbours area. Where opportunity exists to better manage the coastal zone, improve pedestrian access or undertake sympathetic embellishment, proactive area policies are included (for example those relating to the upgrading of St. George's Bay).

Marine Conservation Area

8.3.4 The Structure Plan identifies fourteen sites around the coast of Malta and Gozo as candidate Marine Conservation Areas (MCA), of which one occurs within the Local Plan area. These sites were established following a preliminary survey of the infralittoral communities around the Maltese Islands. MEPA will initiate work for the establishment of the Marine Conservation Area on the candidate site in the vicinity of St. George's Bay.

- 8.3.5 In the absence of designated Marine Conservation Areas, the Local Plan thus seeks to set a policy of restraint for candidate Marine Conservation Areas as identified in the Structure Plan key diagram, to protect these sites from unsuitable development, pending the environmental surveys and the setting up of a national policy on Marine Conservation Areas.
- 8.3.6 The lateral boundaries as identified on the key diagram are only preliminary boundaries. The Local Plan therefore reinforces the need to carry out marine surveys in order to define the permanent boundaries for all Marine Conservation Areas within it.

Protect established mature trees which are intrinsically valuable in an urbanised environment

- 8.3.7 The Local Plan will adopt the strategy that all established trees, shrubs and bushes are intrinsically valuable and should be protected. An exception to this policy is where the species concerned is threatening a valuable natural habitat to the detriment of natural species (as at Harq il-Hamiem, Manoel Island and Wied il-Balluta).

Regulate the existing mineral working activities

- 8.3.8 The Minerals Resource Survey has identified that part of the area has good quality building stone but that this is restricted by encroaching urban development, agricultural use and the number of worked quarries in the vicinity. Therefore, it is unlikely that there will be any further softstone quarrying in the area. Any extensions to hard stone quarrying at Wied Ghomor will be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment and the Local Plan will promote the effective use of hard stone in Pembroke related to excavation for major building development that is in line with the local plan.

General Strategy

- 8.3.9 In brief the strategy for conservation is as follows:

Within Rural Conservation Areas and along the coast, the primary objective of the Local Plan will be to conserve and protect natural habitats and protect important geomorphological features for the benefit of current and future generations. The Plan also seeks to protect existing important habitats and features and archaeological sites. Access to the coast or the Rural Conservation Area will be promoted where the human impact can be managed.

8.4 Policies

NHCV01

Protection of SACs, SSIs, AEIs and AHLSSs

MEPA designates Special Areas of Conservation as indicated on Maps CV1 and CV3 and in accordance with LN 257/03 and GN 877/03. Areas of Ecological Importance (AEIs), Sites of Scientific Importance (SSIs) and Areas of High Landscape Sensitivity (AHLSSs) are indicated on Maps CV1 to CV5, and these are designated by MEPA to be conserved in accordance with Section 46 of the Development Planning Act, 1992. In these protected areas and sites development will only be permitted provided it accords with all the relevant Structure Plan Policies, Legal and Government Notices relating to SACs, AEIs, SSIs and AHLSSs. Proposed developments located within AHLSSs are also to adhere to all the relevant provisions of MEPA's Supplementary Guidance document entitled 'Landscape Assessment Study of the Maltese Islands'.

- 8.4.1 In accordance with LN 257/03 and GN 877/03, Special Areas of Conservation including a NATURA 2000 Site of International Importance at Pembroke and two SACs of National Importance at Wied Harq Hamiem and Wied Ghollieqa are protected by MEPA. Furthermore, in accordance with Structure Plan Policy RCO12, MEPA will seek to safeguard and protect all AEIs, SSIs and AHLSSs located within the North Harbours through the Local Plan process. Sites and areas

to be protected also include *Garrigue* and *Maquis* containing indigenous and archaeophytic species that contribute to the typical Mediterranean setting and are of considerable ecological value.

- 8.4.2 A general presumption against development will apply on sites designated within the Local Plan as SACs, AEIs, SSIs and AHLs's, particularly on crests and sides of faults, of valleys and the edges of the coast. In this respect, unacceptable development also includes conflicting agricultural development and reclamation, roads and public utility services. A general presumption also exists against any activities likely to introduce pollution and damage risks to SACs, AEIs, SSIs and AHLs. In these areas and sites, MEPA would favourably promote the removal of intrusive elements and the eventual rehabilitation of damaged areas and habitats. These listed sites also include buffer zones to further regulate developments near and adjacent to SACs, AEIs, SSIs and AHLs. Development that affects AHLs will be considered by MEPA following the requirements set by the Draft Landscape Assessment Study of the Maltese Islands (2004) and relative Structure Plan Policies. AHLs are indicated on MAP CV5 and include all major North Harbour valleys.
- 8.4.3 10 sites of scientific importance were recognised within the Plan area which satisfy Policy RCO11 of the Structure Plan on the basis of geology or geomorphology. A further 8 sites are identified as AEIs. Some of these are already scheduled, whilst MEPA is seeking the designation of the other sites. The sites are:

SITES OF SCIENTIFIC IMPORTANCE (GEOLOGY/GEOMORPHOLOGY)	Level of Protection
1. Quaternary Deposits at Sliema Terraces	1
2. Wied id-Dis and Wied il-Faham, Madliena	1
3. Cave and valley at Harq il-Hamiam, St. George's Bay	1
4. Disused Public Wash-House at Msida	2
5. Gorge at Wied Mexju	2
6. Wied il-Balluta	2
7. Wied Ghollieqa	4
8. Victoria Lines Fault	2
9. Terminal Lower Coralline Limestone Hardground at Tigné	4
10. Exposures of LCL at Wied il-Kbir and Wied Ghomor	4

AREAS OF ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE/ SITES OF SCIENTIFIC IMPORTANCE (ECOLOGY)	Level of Protection
1. The coastal strip and abutting inland garrigue and rocky steppe between Ix-Xwieghi and It-Torri ta` San Gorg	1 – 3
2. The area around the Wied id-Dis Escarpment near It-Torri tal-Madliena	3 and TPO
3. Il-Qaliet pools and adjacent coastal strip to Spinola excluding the Hilton redevelopment site.	1 and 3
4. The Tigné coastal strip	4
5. The Wied Mejxu/Wied Harq il-Hamiam system (including Harq il-Hamiam cave).	1 and 4
6. The Wied il-Kbir/Wied Ghomor system	2, 3 and 4
7. Wied il-Balluta	2
8. Wied Ghollieqa	1 - 4

- 8.4.4 Appendix 2 describes the main geomorphology and other features that have justified designations as Sites of Special Scientific Importance within the plan area. Applicants, landowners and the public are advised to contact MEPA for detailed descriptions and the legal boundaries of these sites.

NHCV02

Protection of Archaeological Features

Areas and Sites of Archaeological Importance (AAIs, SAIs) are indicated on Maps CV1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, and listed in Appendix 3. Where Areas and Sites of Archaeological Importance as indicated in this Local Plan are not already scheduled, MEPA will seek to schedule these features to secure their conservation in accordance with Section 46 of the Development Planning Act (1992). Proposals for

development likely to adversely affect Areas and Sites of Archaeological Importance will be refused if there is an overriding case for preservation.

Where MEPA, in consultation with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, decides that there is no overriding case for preservation, permission to development the site will only be granted after a planning obligation has been entered into by the developer that secures a satisfactory monitoring programme of archaeological excavation, recording and conservation by a competent archaeologist. In these cases development may be considered subject to modifications as required and as directed by MEPA in consultation with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage based on the mentioned assessment of the archaeological significance of the findings.

In accordance with Structure Plan Policy ARC2, the Local Plan designates different levels of protection for the Areas and Sites of Archaeological Importance as listed in Appendix 3 and as indicated in Map CV6. Buffer zones around these features will be established as follows:

- i. A minimum of 100m for Class A archaeological features in which no development will be allowed; and**
- ii. 50m buffer zones for Class B-E archaeological features in which no development that would jeopardise the feature will be allowed.**

In the case of archaeological features identified through this Local Plan as Class E, no development will be permitted within the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a scheme of investigation as approved by MEPA. MEPA in conjunction with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage will reserve the right to re-classify Areas and Sites of Archaeological Importance listed as Class E following such investigations.

8.4.5 Any development proposal affecting an Area or Site of Archaeological Importance will be examined critically to determine whether remains/potential remains would be damaged by development. Once MEPA has sufficient information it will seek to ensure that potential conflicts arising from the proposed development are adequately resolved. Where development is likely to affect a site of archaeological interest, the developer will be required to finance the necessary programme of archaeological work prior to any development. It must be emphasised that the preservation on site of important archaeological remains is always to be preferred and this will be the primary objective of all negotiations. Where there is no over-riding case for preservation, development of such sites will only be permitted after alternative layouts have been fully examined which seek to avoid the site/monument. Before a permit is issued, agreement must be reached to cover provision for detailed excavation, ground and structural surveys in advance of development. All this can form part of an agreement prior to the development taking place.

8.4.6 In all cases of proposals affecting areas or sites of archaeological importance, MEPA will identify and advise on the level of protection appropriate to the specific site. The same criteria or priorities of preservation are being adopted as those suggested by the List of Archaeological Sites for Priority Protection (1990), which were eventually adapted in the Structure Plan, namely, A, B, C, D. This policy affords further protection (Class E) in cases where a site or monument is known to have existed as referred to in written documents, prints, maps, paintings or photographs, but at present is no longer visible.

8.4.7 The following summarises different levels of protection afforded through Structure Plan Policy ARC02 and this Policy:

- A - Top priority preservation. To be preserved at all costs with its present natural environment to a distance of at least 100m radius.
- B - Very Important. To be preserved at all costs
- C - Every effort must be made for it to be preserved, but may be covered over for force majeure after proper investigation, documentation and cataloguing.

In considering proposals for development in the vicinity of these sites, MEPA will require proposals to be compatible with the long-term replenishment and maintenance of these beaches in terms of the management of storm water run-off and other relevant off-site considerations that may affect the beaches.

- 8.4.11 Sandy beaches although constituting only a very small percentage of the Islands' coastline, are one of the Islands' most valuable resources, especially for recreational use by locals and tourists during the summer months. This policy positively identifies beaches where, subject to a satisfactory Environmental Impact Assessment, positive benefits can be achieved by improving the tourist product and ensuring a more attractive environment.
- 8.4.12 Inappropriate development of roads and dams across valleys behind sandy beaches has however led to erosion of the sand by reducing the input of sediment which enables beach growth. The building of quays and other coastal structures may also increase the rate of beach erosion by sea action. Replenished sandy beaches require substantial long-term maintenance. The costs incurred will include litter collection, clearing of blown sand from surrounding streets and seaweed from the beach. The environmental benefits and additional revenue generation (related to visitor activity) must therefore be well balanced against monetary costs involved. For the benefit of the responsible body for which the project would incur costs MEPA will require the applicant to submit estimations of costs incurred by third parties as part of the application. Conditions relating to proof of the applicant's commitment to these responsibilities are therefore required and essential to avoid the potential negative environmental affects of mismanagement. In this respect both environmental and monetary cost should be detailed further through the undertaking of an EIA.

NHCV05

Protection of Trees

Where site management or habitat engineering is proposed, MEPA will seek to ensure that the ecological and visual effect of such proposals is compatible with the landscape character and conservation value of the area.

When a development permit is required, applicants will be required to submit details of existing trees and landscape features, details of retention and protection during construction work where applicable, and proposals including siting and species proposed for additional planting and maintenance.

MEPA will seek to retain important existing trees and landscape features in urban areas when considering applications for development in accordance with MEPA's approved 'Guidelines on Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Planting and Landscaping in the Maltese Islands' (2002). Where trees are removed with Authority consent, conditions will be imposed to ensure their replacement with species in accordance with the above-mentioned Guidelines.

- 8.4.13 MEPA has a duty to protect important trees, and may even designate Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), in accordance with the Development Planning Act (1992) Section 48. TPOs can be applied to individual trees, groups of trees, maquis, copse or woodland, usually for amenity value or the protection of native species of trees having arboricultural, aesthetic or historical value. Uprooting, destruction, or damage to trees in gardens and other public open spaces, or on private land, will be prohibited unless authorised by the MEPA.
- 8.4.14 Trees are a very important part of the urban environment and soften and enhance the townscape. Buildings, trees and planting contribute to the character and appearance of historic areas. MEPA will require applicants to submit details, including a tree survey to show the location, ground levels, species, and canopy size of existing trees. Conditions may be attached when a development permit is granted. These can include measures to protect trees and other important features during construction. In accordance with the 'Guidelines on Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Planting and

Landscaping in the Maltese Islands' (2002), a scheme of new additional planting and landscaping may be required which will include the replacement of any trees or plants lost within a specified period of time. The Guidelines have been adopted by MEPA and this provides clear guidance as to which species are appropriate for planting.

9. Leisure and Recreation

9.1 Introduction

- 9.1.1 As much of the Plan area is urban, most existing recreational facilities tend to be formal such as gardens, playgrounds and the extensive coastal areas including the promenade. Competition for land in the North Harbours is acute. Recreational facilities with extensive land requirements are non-commercial or generate low returns on land. Consequently provision is generally poor. Alternatively other recreational facilities such as bars and restaurants have a strong commercial bias and proliferate in certain areas. These uses can, however, have negative impacts in residential areas.
- 9.1.2 The Local Plan recognises that provision of recreational facilities is an essential part of community development and accordingly safeguards land for such uses, particularly where the use would otherwise not materialise through the private sector alone.
- 9.1.3 The Plan promotes the development of recreation in the widest sense and in particular seeks to improve links to informal open spaces, such as valleys, upgrade facilities and protect existing recreational open spaces. The role of the Local Plan in this respect is to promote co-operation between Government agencies and voluntary organisations to ensure that opportunities are available for the provision of facilities and to assist in safeguarding these facilities.

9.2 Issues

- 9.2.1 The main issues that relate to Leisure and Recreation are the following:
- i. The need to recognise and provide facilities for the elderly and disabled.
 - ii. The need to protect public and private open space and availability of public access, particularly to the coast.
 - iii. The need to use intensive forms of provision such as multi purpose indoor/outdoor sports centres, particularly in this area where land supply is limited.
 - iv. The need to provide for mainstream and special sports facilities.
 - v. The need to provide afforestation initiatives in urban fringe areas, encourage recreational routes with dual use i.e. picnic areas, walkways and cycle routes.
 - vi. The lack of policy direction especially on informal recreational.
 - vii. The need for management and responsible agencies for implementation.
- 9.2.2 The amenity value of open space is largely visual and much of the existing use of green space is passive. This section deals with both public open space and urban green space to which the public may not have unlimited access.
- 9.2.3 The local plan area has a total area of 143.2 hectares, 76.8 of which are built up. This leaves 66.4 hectares as the total remaining undeveloped land. This includes both the area within and outside scheme ranging from formal sports fields, waterfront areas to incidental amenity areas in housing estates and alongside roads. The local plan's public open space amounts to approximately 20 hectares composed of gardens, public gardens and sports grounds giving an overall rate of provision of 0.33 hectares per 1000 population. Compared to British average standards of 3 hectares per 1000 population the provision in the North Harbours would appear to be extremely low. However, considering existing promenades including the one spanning from St. George's Bay to Pieta` that measures about 10.5 km, the perception of open space provision is significantly more.

- 9.2.4 The availability of local open space can never be overemphasised. Great importance is to be attached to the retention of recreational and amenity open space in urban areas. Demand is concentrated there and it is important that people particularly children and elderly people should have access to open space close to where they live. Open space contributes to the quality of urban life. Use of land for open space is no less important than other uses. Once built on, open space is likely to be lost to the community forever thus the decision is irreversible.
- 9.2.5 The distribution of open space is uneven across the local plan area with relatively low levels of provision in some local council areas. Accessibility to the coastal area is relatively easier than to the inland green wedges. Amenity value is not, however, necessarily reduced by lack of public access. Private gardens and countryside areas, whilst not accessible to the public, may often offer valuable visual amenity to the general character of an area.
- 9.2.6 Further development will take place in existing built up areas during the life of the Local Plan but the Plan will seek to resist loss of open space (public or private) where it clearly contributes to the character or quality of a neighbourhood.
- 9.2.7 The countryside, both within the Local Plan area and beyond is a valuable but relatively inaccessible space for most residents and visitors in the area. Indeed the most important single element is the presence of valleys close to most residential areas. It would however seem that the countryside in this area is not visited to a large extent for a number of reasons including the general appearance of dilapidation; restricted access due to private ownership; the lack of ancillary facilities; intrusions of physical development; unsympathetic agricultural practices; and dumping in valley sides.
- 9.2.8 Lying as it does, on the periphery of an expanding conurbation, the countryside in this Local Plan is under pressure and the need for careful management is particularly important given its sensitive context. Given that much of the countryside is made up of a number of valleys, there is little scope for introducing more formal recreational facilities without destroying the character or viability of what agricultural land remains.

9.3 Strategy

Promote the provision of appropriate Local Informal Recreational Facilities to cater for the needs of residents

- 9.3.1 The Local Plan will fully endorse the Structure Plan Policy to overcome recreational deficiencies by identifying suitable sites (REC1). Local informal recreational provision is very important for residents both to improve the quality of the local environment and for sustainability. The main objective is to prevent the need for people to travel long distances for informal recreation.

Promote the provision of areas for Formal Sports Facilities to meet National, Regional and Local Needs

- 9.3.2 Formal sport provision should be encouraged in the Local Plan where deficiencies occur, in accordance with Structure Plan Policy REC1. The areas of Tal-Qroqq and Pembroke are particularly important for formal sports provision and these areas will be promoted as regional and national sports facilities. Other localised sports facilities may also be required in other parts of the Local Plan area.

To maximise use of development opportunities and promote dual usage in established Centres for Leisure and Recreation Purposes

- 9.3.3 The priority in this sector is to introduce and reinforce the concept of efficient use of existing and planned facilities, together with better management techniques. It does not make economic sense to have the same facilities in every locality.

To improve access to the Waterfront for Recreational and Leisure Opportunities

- 9.3.4 Throughout this Local Plan (mainly detailed through specific environmental improvement policies within Area Policies), MEPA will seek proposals for upgrading of the waterfront. In particular proposals that improve access along the waterfront will be sought.

To improve the Cycleways/walkways Network as a Recreational Resource and link Major Open Spaces

- 9.3.5 Throughout the Local Plan specific policies detail priorities for cycleways/walkways, in particular where they link informal open spaces. In some cases MEPA will require the development of such routes (to be fully accessible to the public) as a planning obligation on development.

To link the Plan Area's Major Green Spaces

- 9.3.6 The valleys and the coastal area of the North Harbours are very close to the urban area and provide a very important natural environmental resource. The Local Plan will encourage the managed public use of the valleys and coastal area (Structure Plan Policy CZM3) only where such access does not compromise the environmental value of these areas. Walkway routes are generally poorly defined and promoted in Malta.

General Strategy

- 9.3.7 In brief the strategy for Leisure and Recreation is as follows:

The Local Plan safeguards existing recreational spaces and promotes the provision of new open spaces. In order to promote the efficient use of land and buildings, the Local Plan will promote the dual use of existing and future facilities between different sections of the community. Where recreational facilities such as bars and restaurants can by their nature have a negative impact on residential areas, the Local Plan directs such uses to more suitable locations. Improved pedestrian access to valleys, the waterfront and the Plan area's rural fringe is promoted where access would not compromise the area.

9.4 Policies

NHRL01 Loss of Urban Open Space and Playing/Sports Spaces

Planning permission will not be granted for development resulting in the loss of urban public open spaces, sports areas or areas previously designated as green areas in the TPS (1988) unless:

- i. Public open space or sports areas as applicable of equivalent or greater area are provided in the same locality within the development zone; or,**
- ii. Its use is complementary to the function of the public open space or sports area where the development occurs and occupies only a part of the open space; or,**
- iii. The space has been re-zoned for community or other uses through other policies within this Local Plan.**

- 9.4.1 The opportunities for the provision of new areas of public space within the built-up areas are limited. This policy protects remaining open public spaces and prevents their development to other uses. Where community or other uses are designated through area policies on public open space or green areas, MEPA will normally require that a significant proportion of the site is retained for open space.

- 9.4.2 All playing pitches, whether within schools owned by Government are of special significance both for their recreational and amenity value in settlement areas and for their contribution to the open space of an urban environment. MEPA and the Education Authorities will encourage and promote the joint use of school premises and playing pitches for community recreation purposes.
- 9.4.3 Playing field provision in the North Harbours consists of about 2 hectares. This equates to 0.03 hectares per 1000 population. The most widely quoted national open space standard is the British National Playing Fields Association standard of 3 hectares of outdoor play space per 1000 population. It is clear that provision is severely lacking in this respect. It is anticipated that in most age groups, the population trends in the North Harbours area will experience an increase. This will put extra pressure on existing facilities.
- 9.4.4 For most field sports, the local plan area is reliant on sports associations and school provision, very little of which is available for public use. Football pitches are particularly intensively used and much of the stock is in poor condition. This is worrying at a time when the perceived decline in school-based sport has encouraged local clubs in most sports to take on the role of encouraging young people in sport.
- 9.4.5 The pressure of numbers is further increased by greater mobility due to increased car ownership. As a result, leisure and recreation will be characterised by increasing variety and the greater interest of the commercial sector in meeting demands. Thus the limited public resources, together with the trends outlined, will require a policy response where action is required to:
- i. protect existing facilities, both public and private;
 - ii. protect school playing fields;
 - iii. make better and more flexible use of existing facilities;
 - iv. locate new and enhance existing facilities so that participation is encouraged ; and
 - v. promote the provision of new facilities, where required.

NHRL02

Visitor Attractions

MEPA will positively consider the development of visitor attractions within urban areas, particularly where proposals involve the re-use of scheduled or listed buildings or structures of architectural or historical interest. Proposals on sites located within UCAs will only be considered if there is an existing building on site that is vacant and/or derelict. In all cases, the development of visitor attractions will only be permitted provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:

- i. the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of MEPA that the proposed attraction will provide for an improved product for the enjoyment of locals and tourists alike;**
- ii. the whole project will not create significant negative impacts on the social and environmental character of the area;**
- iii. MEPA is assured, following consultation with the relevant agencies responsible for infrastructure, that impacts on infrastructure are acceptable;**
- iv. the proposed development should not give rise to problems of traffic and/or parking congestion, potential street/highway danger and vehicular and pedestrian conflict. In this respect, a Transport Impact Statement (TIS) might be required from the developer if MEPA deems this as necessary; and**
- v. any detrimental impacts to adjoining urban areas likely to result from the operation of the proposed development are appropriately resolved.**

- 9.4.6 The development of visitor attractions in the North Harbours area will enhance the current offer for the enjoyment of both locals and foreigners alike. However, it must be ensured that such developments do not compound the pressures currently experienced in the area. Such attractions will have to provide visitors with a quality experience and hence their operation should not lead to

significant adverse impacts. It is envisaged that such quality developments will therefore provide the basis for the re-direction of the tourist offer, and subsequently provide the basis for the long term upgrading of the tourist product.

- 9.4.7 The development of additional attractions may be permitted provided the criteria indicated above are respected. In UCAs, however, it should be emphasised that only those buildings that are vacant and/or derelict, and hence not residential, will be considered for use as visitor attractions.
- 9.4.8 Owing to the various impacts generated, the policy is more likely to be applicable for relatively small scale attractions as opposed to large scale projects. Hence, the development of interpretation/visitor centres and audio-visual shows, for example, are more likely to be favourably considered than large scale leisure/fun parks.

NHRL03

Coastal Area with Leisure Uses

In accordance with Structure Plan Policy CZM3, MEPA will seek to further secure and improve public access around the coastline adjacent to the sea (including bays, harbours, and creeks). MEPA will, in particular, seek to improve access to the Paceville Coastline when considering proposals for new development (refer to Policy NHPV11).

Within designated Coastal Areas with Leisure Uses, as indicated in the relevant Area Policy Maps, the following land-uses will be permitted; i.e;

- i. Class 9 (Use Classes Order, 1994) leisure and assembly including visitor attractions, provided they enhance the tourist product through their uniqueness and innovation;**
- ii. Class 6 (d) (Use Classes Order 1994) restaurants only; and**
- iii. Class 6 (c) (Use Classes Order 1994) bars only provided they are part of a mixed-use scheme.**

These uses will only be permitted provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:

- a. They are located within buildings/structures which are covered by development permission;**
- b. They will involve only very minor extensions and consolidation of existing buildings/structures covered by development permission;**
- c. The finished level of any new minor structure serving as an extension to an existing structure covered by development permission will not exceed the height of any existing legal structure within the site, and is not to increase the solid structures on the street frontage to ensure that views onto the sea across the site are not obstructed;**
- d. Public access to the coast is not compromised;**
- e. Any detrimental impacts to adjoining urban areas likely to result from the operation of the proposed development are appropriately resolved; and,**
- f. MEPA will seek planning gain from the developer, and particularly to secure public access to the coast.**

In the case where an existing structure on these stretches of coast is not covered by development permission, there will be a presumption against any further development on site.

- 9.4.9 The lack or restriction of public access to the coast has been identified as an important issue and the Local Plan, in accordance with Structure Plan policies, seeks to secure improved public access.
- 9.4.10 Beach concessions are leases issued by the Lands Department whereby private developers may operate under police license to hire equipment for bathers, such as deck chairs, umbrellas and paddle boats but are not permitted to construct structures. Beach encroachments are again leases issued by Lands Department which enable the lessee to carry out development in coastal areas, for private and commercial use. A number of beach concessions and encroachments have been granted within the Plan area particularly at St. George's Bay and Tigne`. Less than a third (28%) of

accessible beaches around St. George's Bay are available for public use. Whilst almost a fifth (17%) of the accessible beach between Tigne` and Balluta Bay, have restricted access to the general public.

- 9.4.11 Public access to the coast will not be achievable solely through planning legislation, but also by effective coastal zone management. Many beach concessions are abused and some areas that have not been the subject of a legal lease by government are being used commercially to the detriment of the public in general. Hence any existing developments not covered by development permission cannot be considered as a justification for further development through this Local Plan. This policy, however, seeks to introduce an element of order in the designated coastal development areas by firstly acknowledging their character, by indicating the activities that can occur and by giving guidance on future development.

NHRL04

Yachting and Berthing Facilities

In the absence of a Yachting Subject Plan, the Local Plan recognises that the Yachting Marina Study identifies two potential sites for new Yacht Marinas; ie:

- i. Pieta` Creek; and**
- ii. Sliema Creek.**

Proposals for yacht marinas will be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment and measures must be taken to minimise adverse impacts.

Proposals for development permits to construct Jetties, Pontoons or Slipways will only be permitted subject to all the following criteria being met:

- a. Prior approval is obtained from the Malta Maritime Authority;**
- b. The site location is compatible with other adjacent land and water users;**
- c. There is no adverse impact on the ecological, scientific and archaeological value of the site;**
- d. They do not adversely affect any element or setting of their context;**
- e. Adequate off-road access is provided for the launching of boats together with a parking area for cars and trailers; and**
- f. The location is not within a designated swimming area.**

- 9.4.12 There is an increasing demand for the provision of yachting facilities attributed to international and national trends as identified in the Yachting Development Subject Study Public Consultation Summary (1997). Yachting is an important component in diversifying Malta's tourist product whilst also bringing considerable economic benefits.

- 9.4.13 There are a significant number of marina berths in the North Harbours area, most notably in order of importance, at Msida, Pieta`, Sliema, Lazzaretto Quay and Ta` Xbiex providing nearly 900 berths (1994 MMA survey).

- 9.4.14 The marinas vary in their facilities but it is perceived that they should at least provide visitor berths, car parking, refuelling points, facilities for temporary repairs, shopping and restaurant facilities, a clubhouse, waste collection points and other amenities for both visiting and locally based yachtsman.

- 9.4.15 The Study has identified that there is substantial potential demand which could be tapped if facilities were provided with a doubling of summer sailing visitors, yacht charters - cruising holidays, unattended wintering yachts, live aboard - permanently living aboard vessels, super yachts, and the provision of permanent berths for increasing local need. Therefore the Study estimated that at least 600 marina berths and 500 hard standing spaces are necessary to cope with anticipated demand.

- 9.4.16 Any proposals for marinas will need to ensure that the social and environmental (both the land and marine) impacts are minimised given the limited coastline and high density in the area. Social and environmental impacts include loss of existing habitats, dredging implications, construction vehicles and their disturbance to surrounding uses, loss of amenity, water quality and competing uses such as swimming in the vicinity.
- 9.4.17 Boating in all its forms is an extremely important recreational activity, but proper facilities are limited. It would be desirable to improve access for seacraft where it is inadequate provided that there is no adverse impact on the environment.

NHRL05

Formal Recreation Facilities

Planning Permission will not be granted for major impact sports and other formal recreational facilities within designated valley protection zones as indicated in Map CV5.

- 9.4.18 The sensitivity of the valleys in the North Harbour Local Plan, the need to retain as much of the countryside character as possible and their proximity to areas of residential development does not allow for the identification of sites suitable for major impact sports such as clay pigeon shooting, motorcycle scrambling and off-road vehicle driving.

NHRL06

Walkways/Heritage Trails/Cycle Routes

MEPA will promote the development of recreational walkways/cycle routes and heritage trails based on the provision of circular routes and access from urban settlements to the countryside and the coast. Existing and proposed long distance footpaths will be protected from any development that would adversely affect their route or character. Where appropriate, these routes will incorporate tree planting schemes and picnic areas.

MEPA in conjunction with Local Councils and other agencies will implement the way marking of walkways/cycle routes/heritage trails and public access ways in order to protect rights of access. MEPA will also seek to improve pedestrian linkages between the Outer Harbours area and the more urbanised Inner Harbours Area. Wherever feasible and desirable, improvements to public access will normally be required when new development takes place in the countryside, especially where links can be created from settlements into the countryside.

MEPA may require that an Environment Management Plan (EMP) be formulated and approved prior to the implementation of walkways/cycle routes/heritage trails and public access ways. These proposed routes are to follow the guidance and recommendations set out in these EMPs so as to ensure that all environmentally important areas are protected and upgraded, and so that environmental impacts are minimized.

The promenade spanning from St. George's Bay to Pieta`, as indicated in Map TR1, will be protected and upgraded. In particular, MEPA will ensure that the following criteria will be strictly adhered to in any proposal that is likely to affect this promenade;

- i. The continuity of the promenade will not be interrupted in any way;**
- ii. The promenade will be maintained at a sufficient width that is necessary to allow uninterrupted heavy pedestrian flows throughout its length;**
- iii. Temporary and permanent structures, and the placing of tables and chairs, will not be allowed where these will compromise the use of the promenade by interrupting heavy pedestrian flows; and**
- iv. Temporary and permanent structures that obstruct views to the sea will not be allowed.**

- 9.4.19 A comprehensive network of heritage trails/footpaths and cycleways enhances access to urban open space, to the countryside and coast. It should be a general principle of development that

opportunities be taken to extend such public access, particularly where open spaces can be linked. Greater use of the coast and countryside gives considerable benefits from the point of view of health.

9.4.20 Suggested routes identified for consideration include:

- Pembroke Circuit - circular coastal route linking the main military sites in the area namely the Qalet Marku Tower, St. George's Tower and Madliena Tower.
- Forts Circuit - a linear route linking two important forts (Madliena Fort and Pembroke Fort).
- Wied Ta` Kalci Circuit - a route, that exploits the natural beauty of Wied il-Kbir and Wied Ghomor.
- Wied Ghollieqa Route - a route that provides access on foot to the University from the San Gwann side.
- Wied Ghomor Route - as detailed in Policy NHSW06.
- Wied id-Dis Route - a route that passes along a beautiful valley and links with the Victoria Lines.

9.4.21 Furthermore, cycling is a new activity in Malta, but expansion is severely inhibited by the limited road network, the physical condition of many roads, the number of motor vehicles, competing uses and driver behaviour.

9.4.22 Leisure cycling is usually unorganised and sporadic but may be combined with other activities such as picnicking. The choice of an area requires a location with limited traffic and easy parking, so that bikes can be transported by car and then used. Cycling routes could be combined with other recreational activities such as horse riding, walking and picnicking provision.

9.4.23 Of great importance is the existing Coastal Walkway Route that starts from St. George's Bay and goes all the way round the coast up to Pieta` measuring an impressive length of 10.5 km. This Route constitutes the one single most important leisure asset in the local plan area since it serves for the enjoyment of the coast and provides the pedestrian with magnificent views of St. George's Bay, Spinola Bay, Balluta Bay, Marsamxetto Harbour and Valletta. A large extent is intensively used for walking, however some parts need to be upgraded. This route links with other main routes in the NHLP area.

10. Tourism

10.1 Introduction

- 10.1.1 The North Harbours Plan area is recognised as being one of the major tourist areas of Malta providing a substantial number of entertainment facilities which cater for both tourists and locals alike.
- 10.1.2 Tourist and entertainment activities in the North Harbours make a significant contribution to the Maltese economy through the creation of jobs and the support they provide to local services and industries. In the North Harbours area it is estimated that about 1,900 full-time and 500 part time jobs are created directly through the tourist industry.
- 10.1.3 The major concentrations of tourist facilities are situated in Paceville and to a lesser extent in Sliema, St. Julian's, Msida and Gzira. There are over 68 hotels supplying over 9,600 beds and 14 village and tourist complexes with over 4,650 beds. In total there are 481 tourist establishments supplying over 16,000 beds in the Plan area. Nationally this constitutes a third of all tourist beds. Most of these accommodation facilities are aimed at the mass market and lower end of the market.
- 10.1.4 This chapter outlines the Local Plan's policy position regarding the development of tourist accommodation and facilities.

10.2 Issues

- 10.2.1 The main issues that relate to Tourism are the following:
- i. Nationally, Structure Plan figures for 4,000 additional tourist beds have been exceeded.
 - ii. The scale of tourist accommodation in Paceville has led to a poor quality environment where large scale hotel structures are the dominant building form.
 - iii. Substantial number of conversions from hotels to other uses,
 - iv. Pressure to develop tourist accommodation and associated entertainment facilities has led to a decline in the quality of the public realm, local services and increased noise in some localities thereby discouraging new residents from settling, particularly in Paceville.
 - v. Beach concessions and development of the coast reduces public access.
 - vi. Poor facilities for water sports.
 - vii. High visitor numbers in summer puts pressure on urban infrastructure, especially in Paceville, St. Julian's and Sliema.
 - viii. Poor provision of visitor attractions that encourage tourism all year round.

Over-supply of accommodation aimed at 'Mass-Market'

- 10.2.2 Nationally tourist arrivals reached a peak in 1994 with a record figure of over 1,176,000 but there has been an overall decline since with the consequent result of requests for conversions of existing hotels to other uses. This is also due to the fact that many establishments have been forced to considerably lower their room rates.
- 10.2.3 The development of 'mass market' tourism in the Maltese Islands has arguably reached saturation stage. This stage is characterised by a slow decline in arrivals and an ageing product that is failing to encourage potential tourists to visit the Islands. The uncontrolled continued growth of the tourism sector (in particular, new accommodation) in the Maltese Islands is unsustainable unless any permitted growth in this sector upgrades the market product and leads to its rejuvenation.

Deteriorating Urban/Coastal Environment in some tourist areas

- 10.2.4 The main concern for residents in the area, according to Local Councils is that, although tourism represents a major economic asset, it causes considerable congestion, generates noise and increases the amount of refuse deposited. Entertainment and tourist uses (particularly in Paceville) create considerable strain on the existing infrastructure and cause disturbance to local residents, who largely comprise of elderly people. The pressure on the road network has a knock-on effect on neighbouring residential areas of Swieqi and St. Julian's since these areas are used extensively for parking and access into Paceville.
- 10.2.5 A serious issue is the granting of beach concessions to private tourist operators, in direct conflict with Structure Plan Policy CZM3 which advocates public use of all areas of the coast. The North Harbours area is very popular for swimming and other water sports. Concern has been raised at the poor quality of some stretches of the coastline either due to sea pollution or poor facilities. It is to be noted however that water quality is continually monitored, that the monitoring results are made public, and that when EU standards are exceeded along a stretch of coast, swimming is prohibited.
- 10.2.6 It should be noted that although these problems are partly a consequence of tourism activity, there are various policies that aim to address them through this plan and not solely through general policies for Tourism. Policies such as NHHO01 (Residential Areas), NHHO02 (Residential Priority Areas), NHRL02 and NHRE01 (relating to the location of visitor attractions, bars and restaurants) and the various Area Policies for Paceville play an important collective role in controlling the type of development within and on the boundaries of main tourist areas.

High visitor peaks

- 10.2.7 Amongst the main reasons for tourists staying in the North Harbours are: centrality and accessibility, preference to resort areas compared to other areas in Malta and the presence of 4 and 5 star hotels. The North Harbours Areas are most popular for eating out (St. Julian's), sunbathing/swimming (Sliema and St. George's Bay), entertainment (St. Julian's), yachting (Msida/Ta'Xbiex), and diving (St. Julian's). These tend to be activities that are particular to the summer months. During the 'shoulder months' in late Autumn, Winter and early Spring there are few all weather visitor attractions in the North Harbours. Such facilities may help to spread tourist visits more evenly throughout the year.

Poor quality facilities

- 10.2.8 There are a number of facilities identified by tourists that need continued attention, namely, the further provision of required public facilities, the regular cleaning and maintenance of streets, further embellishment of public open spaces, improved public transport, the provision of more parking facilities, upgraded infrastructure and better street lighting and landscaping. Whilst noting that substantial improvement has been made to many of these facilities, and that many of these are outside the remit of this Local Plan, there are numerous policies that promote or require new development to be sensitive to these issues.

10.3 Strategy

Promote the upgrading of existing tourism accommodation and new hotels in Identified Zones

- 10.3.1 Nationally the number of tourist bed-spaces constructed has far exceeded the number envisaged through the Structure Plan, but there have also been substantial losses due to conversions of hotels to other uses. Inside specific designated areas of Paceville and Sliema, new hotels will be permitted so as to consolidate these strategic tourism locations. Elsewhere, the construction of hotel

accommodation will not be permitted and conversions of inappropriately located hotels will be favourably considered by MEPA.

Encourage innovative development and improve facilities

- 10.3.2 Tourist activities in the North Harbours area are largely based on informal recreation such as walking along the promenade, swimming/sunbathing, boat cruises and nightlife/eating. These activities are very popular and should be promoted. However, it is important that Malta remains competitive within the international tourism market. Therefore, activities which promote more diverse and innovative tourist activities should be encouraged, particularly around the main tourist belt from Paceville to Gzira front. The promotion of cultural heritage activities is particularly encouraged with the better interpretation and management of sites of historical importance, in line with Structure Plan Policies TOU 3, 9 and 11.

Ensure a better land use balance between residential and tourist uses

- 10.3.3 The Local Plan sets a policy framework to ensure that land use impact of tourist and related uses do not adversely effect the quality of life for residents. No specific policies are outlined in this chapter although reference should be made to:
- i. Area Policies for Paceville.
 - ii. General Policies NHHO01 and 2 that protect residential streets that surround tourist areas from encroachment of hotels, bars, restaurants and other tourist related facilities.
 - iii. General Policies for 'Leisure and Recreation', in particular NHRL02 which relates to the location of visitor attractions.

Ensure tourist activities do not have an adverse impact on residents and the environment

- 10.3.4 The Local Plan sets a policy framework to ensure that potential negative effects of tourist development are minimised in line with Structure Plan Policies TOU3, 9, 11 and other policies.

Regularise Paceville as a tourist/entertainment centre

- 10.3.5 Whilst the importance of the Paceville area for tourism is recognised the Local Plan strategy for Paceville is to seek firm improvements to existing, and the provision of new, basic public facilities and infrastructure. The Area Policy Chapter for Paceville sets a number of criteria aimed to better co-ordinate new development and balance tourist, entertainment and other uses.

General Strategy

- 10.3.6 In brief the strategy for Tourism is as follows:

A main element of the Local Plan's approach to tourist development is to encourage the upgrading of existing hotels and tourist accommodation. The development of new tourist accommodation will only be allowed within designated areas of Paceville and Sliema. In Paceville a more specific approach is detailed through Area Policies to achieve a better balance between tourist and residential uses. Through the Local Plan, MEPA will promote development that provides innovative tourist facilities. Proposals for 'cultural' facilities will particularly be encouraged.

10.4 Policies

NHTO01

Upgrading and Extension of Hotels and Hostels

MEPA will give favourable consideration to proposals to upgrade existing hotels and hostels. Extensions to existing hotels and hostels may be permitted by MEPA provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:

- i. **Prior approval by the Malta Tourism Authority is obtained;**
- ii. **The scale and quality of design of the whole project is consistent with the character of the area and the existing building;**
- iii. **The proposed extension may exceed the building height limitation for the area in which the building is situated by a maximum of one floor and in accordance with Policies NHSE04 and NHTO02;**
- iv. **The proposal will not compromise existing and future proposals for traffic management in the area as set out by the Policies of this Local Plan;**
- v. **Any existing detrimental impacts which adversely effect the amenity of the surrounding area are appropriately resolved;**
- vi. **Proposals are subject to conditions regulating the scale, location, access, design, landscaping, hours of operation and other requirements;**
- vii. **The proposal meets the required parking standards for the existing hotel/accommodation and for the proposed extension and/or intensification, or else, makes an appropriate level of contribution to the CPPS in the relevant areas; and**
- viii. **For hotels located in ODZ areas, limited extensions to existing permitted hotel development (including open air ancillary uses) may be considered by MEPA. However, the interventions will need to be low key, and the design should be of a very high quality and should respect the surrounding context. The proposals will also be subject to all environmental and visual impacts being acceptable to MEPA. In cases where such hotels are located in very sensitive environments, upgrading of facilities shall be limited to the barest minimum and where possible located underground or within the existing hotel curtilage and not exceeding the existing hotel height.**

10.4.1 Upgrading of the present accommodation stock without significant increases in the bed supply will improve the quality of the tourist offer without creating major pressures on the Islands' resources and host community, whilst at the same time meeting the needs of the more under-represented tourist market segments. Increases in the bed supply may be permitted provided that they are accompanied by an improvement in the tourist offer, to include accommodation and other facilities.

10.4.2 The policy does not limit itself to preventing detrimental impact. It also seeks to mitigate against any detrimental effects resulting from the existing establishment. If for example, coach parking is causing congestion in nearby streets the applicant will be required to provide adequate coach parking on site to cater for the existing and proposed development. Similarly, the applicant will be required to meet parking standards for all of the development and not just the extension. Wherever the provision of required parking spaces cannot be met or is not feasible, MEPA, where possible, will expect that the appropriate level of contribution towards the CPPS fund be made for all the development. Developers will also be encouraged to mitigate any impacts from their development through waste reduction and water conservation measures.

10.4.3 There are numerous hotels and hostels within residential areas particularly in Paceville and Sliema, the majority of which co-exist without any adverse problems. Indeed, tourist establishments can bring benefits to the local population in terms of employment and the use of facilities such as gyms. There are however other instances where conflicts may arise and this needs to be addressed. Therefore, in order to protect residents from unacceptable tourist development, any new proposal

- iii. **To be located in close proximity to adequate existing/planned public off-street parking; and**
- iv. **To be in accordance with all other relevant Local Plan policies.**

10.4.7 Tourist activities are important to the economy of the North Harbours area, providing jobs and opportunities for associated and supporting business activities as well as providing for leisure. This policy is in line with the Structure Plan's tourism objectives which are to promote market diversification, reduce 'seasonality' and upgrade the tourist product. The development of visitor attractions and events can help secure improvements to the area's environment and benefit residents and visitors alike.

10.4.8 Large-scale visitor attractions may be acceptable where substantial benefits including jobs are provided in an acceptable form and the proposal is suitably located, for example where improvements to public transport links and/or other safeguards to protect the local environment are provided.

NHTO04

Promotion of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism will be promoted in order to diversify the tourism base, aid the local economy and encourage the upkeep of important local features. These attractions shall be linked through the identification of cycle and walking routes wherever possible.

The provision of other cultural or educational attractions will be promoted in appropriate locations, particularly where this would result in the sensitive rehabilitation of deteriorating scheduled and listed buildings or structures.

10.4.9 Cultural tourism relates to the experience of the local way of life. Internationally, there is an increasing trend to promote this type of tourism. This trend needs to be encouraged in Malta and there are a number of features within the Plan area which qualify as cultural attractions. As a result the Plan will promote greater appreciation of features such as Urban Conservation Areas, historic military structures, churches and other features such as ecological and archaeological areas.

11. Public Utilities

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 The population of Malta and its economic, social, recreational and other activities generate a need for supporting services. Policies in the Plan seek to ensure that existing and designated development will be adequately served by utilities such as water, power, telecommunications, drainage and sewerage.

11.1.2 In addition, the Plan seeks to ensure that sufficient land is available in appropriate locations to enable an adequate level of service provision for the existing and future population of the North Harbours. The impact of providing such services requires plant, buildings, cabling and pipelines to be located in the most appropriate way and with the least adverse impact.

Telecommunications

11.1.3 The network within the North Harbours is comprehensive. Nevertheless, Maltacom proposes extensions and upgrades to the network in response to significant development proposals. For example, works are proposed to upgrade facilities in Msida/Ta` Xbiex/Gzira area, San Gwann, Msida and Pietà. In addition, Maltacom will provide improvements to Manoel Island, in Sliema for development at Tigné, in St. Julian's to upgrade and provide the necessary infrastructure for the Hilton development and at Pembroke for the new housing proposals.

11.1.4 Mobile networks cover the Plan area through collinear and microwave antennae on top of existing buildings or towers and the siting of small equipment cabins near or on top of the buildings or towers where the antennae are positioned.

Enemalta

11.1.5 The North Harbours Local Plan area is generally characterised by rapid development which necessitates complementary reinforcement of electrical systems. Projects which are particularly significant in this regard are the Hilton development, the development in Pembroke and Maltacom's Pender Place, the Manoel Island/Tigné project and the Mater Dei Hospital.

11.1.6 The Development Section of Enemalta Corporation makes short and long term plans associated with the 11kV and 33kV/132kV projects respectively. Short term plans cover periods from one to three years.

11.1.7 In connection with major projects Enemalta are indicating that:

- i. A 132kV Distribution Centre will have to be constructed somewhere in the Kappara area from where all surrounding localities in the plan will be supplied. This distribution centre would probably have to be supplied from cables running in a proposed tunnel from Marsa. The same tunnel may have to be extended to Swieqi in order to reinforce the 33 kV supplies to the existing Paceville Distribution Centre.
- ii. Depending on the size of the development a 33kV Distribution Centre may have to be constructed on Manoel Island in connection with the Manoel Island and Tigné projects. This would involve the installation of 33kV cables from Manoel Island to Tal-Qroqq or Kappara.
- iii. The Pembroke development involves the construction of a Distribution Centre and a number of substations as well as extensive trenching works in Pembroke southwards to Paceville Distribution Centre. A site as been designated in Pembroke for the Distribution Centre.

Water Services

- 11.1.8 The Plan area is supplied from Pembroke Reverse Osmosis Plant and San Gwann Reservoir. The network comprises of trunk mains which comprise of pipes up to two feet in thickness, feeder mains supplying streets and house connection mains.
- 11.1.9 Water Services are undertaking a rolling programme of investment over the next five years resulting in up to 85% of the network being replaced and upgraded in older residential areas such as Sliema, St. Julian's, Gzira and Msida where the network has not been replaced for 50 years. This has resulted in frequent leakage, supply and low pressure problems.
- 11.1.10 The upgrading of the network is expected to cater for all proposed development in the area including Manoel Island and Tigné. The upgrading proposals will ensure that the area can cope with the anticipated demand pressures.
- 11.1.11 Therefore, it is envisaged that Pembroke Reserve Osmosis Plant, San Gwann Reservoir and the proposed Ta' Xwieki Reservoir will be sufficient to meet demand over the Plan period.

11.2 Policies

NHTU01

Public Utilities

MEPA 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 the under-grounding of services.

- 11.2.1 The relevant Structure Plan Policies to this policy are PUT1, 2, 23 and 25. The satisfactory provision of public utilities should be assured before land is released for development. Supply of sewerage facilities, water and energy may require sub-stations, pumping stations, valve houses and other facilities to be located in accessible positions for operational reasons. Early consultation with MEPA will be necessary to avoid abortive work and to achieve an acceptable solution well in advance of orders for equipment or detailed design.

NHTU02

Surface Water Run-off and Collection

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.

- 11.2.2 In view of the general shortage of fresh water, 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 road surfacing such as car parks or carriage ways, the marginal cost of providing a storage cistern or reservoir is low. MEPA will therefore ensure that provision has been included in development schemes and that positive measures are also being introduced to utilise 'secondary' quality water sources for the maintenance of landscaping schemes.
- 11.2.3 The sewerage and drainage network covers all the urban centres. In the more isolated areas, farms and buildings not connected to the sewage network have cess pits which are emptied by the Health Department and disposed of into the main system.

11.2.4 The Drainage Department in the Works Division is committed to the implementation of the Sewerage Master Plan which proposes solutions to problems experienced in the Plan area. The Master Plan proposes to improve the sewerage system by constructing galleries to contain storm water, improve capacity at existing pumping stations to cope with peak demand, construction of sewerage works, improvement of sewage outfalls into the sea and phasing out of existing outfalls in order to meet international standards such as the Barcelona Convention.

NHTU03

Catchment Management Plan for Msida Valley

MEPA supports relevant government agencies in the early formulation of a Catchment Management Plan (CMP) including a detailed flood risk assessment for the Birkirkara/Msida Valley Basin (including Triq il-Wied ta' l-Imsida) as schematically indicated in Map CV05. As a matter of priority, this assessment shall accurately identify the flood prone area in line with the emergent EU requirements on Flood Risk.

The study is also to elaborate relevant development control criteria, development restrictions and flood mitigation and defence measures that are required so as to ensure the safety of the users of any development located within the identified Flood Risk Areas, and so as to ensure that flooding in the area will be effectively reduced.

11.2.5 Surface water runoff within residential areas and particularly along Triq il-Wied ta' l-Imsida has intensified through the development and surfacing of once permeable spaces. This situation has been magnified through changes in weather patterns that have resulted in heavy storms producing large amounts of storm water run-off in short periods of time. This makes management of storm water runoff a priority. The flooding issue needs to be managed in an integrative manner through the formulation of CMPs for the whole of the water catchment area, and MEPA supports immediate proposals for improvement especially for the critically effected Msida Flood Risk areas. The CMPs are to identify all flood risk areas located within this North Harbours urban area and shall elaborate all the development control criteria and flood mitigation measures that are necessary in order to secure the safety of these areas.

NHTU04

Energy Conservation

All new major developments will be expected to incorporate principles of energy conservation through design, massing, siting of buildings, landscaping and the use of materials, including taking account of:

- i. incorporating built forms, technologies, orientation and layout that will contribute to reduced energy consumption (e.g. ventilation, heating/cooling, lighting) and associated emissions;**
- ii. avoiding negative micro-climatic effects (e.g. wind turbulence, noise reflection);**
- iii. the potential for the re-use of existing buildings and materials, and the environmental effect of building materials used;**
- iv. making adequate, integrally-designed provision for the storage and recycling of waste; and**
- v. the potential for the management or recycling of water;**

Renewable sources of energy such as solar power systems should be provided within new buildings where this is feasible and appropriate. Wherever possible these principles should also be included during the conversion or re-use of existing sites and buildings.

Proposals for major developments are to submit an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) detailing proposals for energy saving and efficiency, and indicating how energy conservation principles within the project will be achieved.

11.2.6 The Plan's general strategy promotes energy conservation particularly by promoting the highest standards of thermal efficiency in new construction; by discouraging the excessive use of

illuminated signs; and by encouraging the provision and use of recycling facilities and the use of renewable resources.

- 11.2.7 Urban sustainability depends on the way towns and buildings are built, maintained and used. MEPA recognizes that buildings contribute directly and indirectly to the consumption of energy and resources and to environmental pollution. They also affect our activities, health and well-being. Energy efficient buildings and those designed and constructed sustainably are now recognised as likely to provide healthier and more comfortable conditions.
- 11.2.8 This policy is intended to encourage a more economic approach to the use of energy in new development taking place in the North Harbours Area. Buildings are estimated to be responsible for half of all energy consumption, with space heating/cooling accounting for the major part of this demand, contributing to Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Consequently, reducing energy consumption by cost-effective energy efficiency approaches to design and construction can make a major contribution towards reducing emissions. Integration of energy conservation measures into the design of new development and into the conversion or re-use of existing sites and buildings can achieve large savings in energy usage over the long term.
- 11.2.9 Energy conservation should be incorporated into the design process at an early stage, and generation of renewable energy can also be incorporated, for example through the use of solar panels, use of atriums to afford natural lighting, landscape sheltering, and the avoidance of overshadowing. Within buildings, high grade insulation and heat exchange/heat storage systems should be considered in order to retain/eliminate heat. Attention should also be given to opportunities to generate energy through solar power and photovoltaic cells. Major developments provide the opportunity to promote innovative approaches to heat and power supply which offer benefits in terms of energy efficiency. Greater energy efficiency is an objective common to all forms of development.

12. GZIRA & TA' XBIEX AREA POLICIES

12.1 Introduction

Combined Areas: 1.3km²
Combined Population: 9,604

- 12.1.1 Gzira has an established community with an extensive waterfront at the Strand and a dense residential area behind which accommodates approximately 7,872 residents. Ta` Xbiex is the smallest of the local councils in the plan area with a population of approximately 1,732. Like other Inner Harbour areas there is a growing proportion of elderly in both localities and population is falling. Between 1985 and 1995 the population in Gzira fell by 8% from 8,471 to 7,872 and in Ta` Xbiex by 13% from 1,955 to 1,732.
- 12.1.2 In the absence of area specific land-use policies for the area, commercial uses have located sporadically along the Strand, throughout Gzira and in parts of Ta` Xbiex. This mix of uses encourages economic activity and employment in the area, although it has environmental consequences relating to traffic and noise. In Gzira most street blocks have an element of retailing and/or other commercial uses such as warehousing or showrooms. In Ta` Xbiex there are concentrations of small and medium scale offices (mainly converted from flats) and showrooms around Testaferrata Street and Abate Rigord Street. Although the Ta` Xbiex peninsula is generally considered as a prestigious location for offices, there has been a visible under-investment in the vicinity of Testaferrata Street which is separated from the villa area to the east of the peninsula. In Gzira, Msida Road and the area around the former National Stadium site has also become physically and environmentally degraded. This lack of investment confidence can, in part, be associated with poor perceptions of the area, lack of parking and past uncertainty over the Manoel Island Project and its proposed link road.
- 12.1.3 At present, significant through traffic between Sliema and Valletta is accommodated along Abate Rigord and Testaferrata Streets. The implementation of the Manoel Island Link Road through Gzira and Msida will significantly reduce through traffic in the Ta` Xbiex Peninsula by directing traffic onto the Regional Road. Traffic entering Sliema from the Regional Road through the proposed new link road continuing via the Strand is primarily intended to facilitate the new development at Tignè/Manoel Island, but it will also bring positive benefits for the Gzira and Sliema residents as a consequence of the reduction of traffic entering Sliema through Rue D'Argens or Rudolph Street as currently happens. This scenario needs to be taken into account in considering the pressing need to undertake environmental improvements along the Gzira/Sliema Strand which is affected by flooding, dangerous parking, high traffic speeds and poor crossing points for pedestrians.
- 12.1.4 The seaward side of the Gzira Strand and the Ta` Xbiex promenade remain, however, popular for promenading especially in the summer months. As in Sliema there is very little open space in this area, with the exception of the public gardens opposite the existing Manoel Island Yacht Marina. Priorities for the Local Plan are therefore to safeguard the Strand as a recreational area. Measures to improve pedestrian safety, parking and traffic flows along the Gzira Strand are also a priority.
- 12.1.5 Given that traffic flows into the Ta` Xbiex peninsula will be restricted in the next ten years, it is unlikely that major trip generating uses will be encouraged within Ta` Xbiex. There is scope, however, to contribute to the regeneration of Testaferrata Street. Any new commercial uses would have to have good access onto the arterial road in order to limit congestion in this populated part of the Inner Harbours.

12.2 Issues

- i. Increasing levels of congestion.
- ii. Level and scale of office conversions and other commercial uses in residential streets excessive.
- iii. Regeneration of the Stadium site and the Testaferrata Street area.
- iv. Improving the enjoyment and setting of the waterfront.
- v. Forming a development scenario for Ta` Xbiex .

12.3 Key Planning Objectives

12.3.1 Traffic Management

- i. reduce through traffic in the Ta` Xbiex Peninsula.
- ii. reduce through traffic from Rue D` Argens.
- iii. promote measures to reduce through traffic in Gzira`s residential streets.
- iv. improve traffic flows and pedestrian safety along the Gzira Strand.
- v. establish appropriate access to Gzira`s local centre, especially via public transport.
- vi. ensure the local centre accommodates its own parking needs.

12.3.2 Urban Management

- i. directing medium and large offices and other commercial uses away from established residential areas and towards the designated local centres and other suitable locations.
- ii. improving the public realm within and around the Ta` Xbiex Government Housing Estate.

12.3.3 Promote Downgraded Areas

- i. direct employment uses to the former Stadium area.

12.3.4 The Waterfront and the Urban Setting

- i. designation of an Urban Conservation Area to protect the character and appearance of the established villa area at Ta` Xbiex.
- ii. safeguard the setting of the peninsula/coast and UCA.
- iii. allow embassy uses to continue to locate in the Ta` Xbiex UCA where the use ensures rehabilitation/occupancy of the building.
- iv. ensure improved access to the coast and an uninterrupted coastal walk.

General Strategy

- 12.3.5 The overall strategy for Gzira and Ta` Xbiex is to improve living conditions for residents, encourage the consolidation of large new employment and commercial uses and reduce the impact of traffic. Proposals to upgrade and protect the waterfront and redevelop or rehabilitate downgraded areas will be encouraged. Priority will also be given to proposals that improve access to the area via public transport. The policies contained within this chapter are based upon a transport strategy which includes the construction of the new Manoel Island Link Road. Developments are closely linked and dependant on this new link road, which in turn is needed to improve the traffic situation into and out of Gzira, Ta` Xbiex and immediate areas.

12.4 Area Policies

NHGT01

Traffic Management

Ta` Xbiex

On completion of the Manoel Island Link Road, MEPA shall encourage measures to reduce through traffic in Ta` Xbiex and, instead, prioritise public transport routes through the peninsula.

Gzira Local Centre

Proposals encouraging access to the designated Gzira Local Centre by public transport will be promoted. Vehicles entering the Local Centre will be managed and encouraged to utilise planned public car parking areas.

The Strand and Residential Streets

Complementary to the construction of the Manoel Island Link Road, the Strand shall be subject to traffic management and environmental improvement in line with Policies NHGT04 and NHGT05. MEPA will seek measures to discourage through traffic in Gzira's inner residential streets.

12.4.1 The Structure Plan requires local plans to 'put forward proposals for the improvement of conditions for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and vehicle parking'. In line with the Structure Plan, this policy seeks to encourage public transport in the area and reduce congestion. Key elements include:

- i. Maximising access to the local centre, particularly through the introduction of new public transport routes.
- ii. Encouraging measures to reduce through traffic in the congested residential areas.
- iii. Improving pedestrian safety and traffic flow along the Strand.

12.4.2 The Manoel Island Link Road will improve access to the local centre area, the Strand and Sliema. However if appropriate measures are not undertaken, increased accessibility will lead to increased congestion. A major thrust of the local plan is to reduce this congestion, particularly in the Inner Harbours, and MEPA will seek a strict traffic management approach in considering the redevelopment of the Stadium area. Accordingly through other policies such as NHGT02 and 14, MEPA shall require the fulfilment of obligations from the developers of the Gzira Employment Node. MEPA will also encourage cooperation and contribution towards these objectives from Government and other related bodies such as the Local Councils of Gzira and Ta' Xbiex.

NHGT02

Resident Parking Zones

Map GT1 shows priority streets for inclusion in the Gzira and Ta' Xbiex Resident Parking Zones. In conjunction with the ADT, the Traffic Control Board, Local Councils and local resident groups, the implementation of Resident Parking Zones shall be encouraged in the residential streets around Gzira Local Centre and the Testaferrata Street area.

12.4.3 Policy NHTR16 promotes the introduction of RPZs throughout the North Harbours Area. The safeguarding of on-street parking for residents is essential in Ta` Xbiex and the Stadium area where problems associated with the expansion of office development between Testaferrata Street and Abate Rigord Street cause particular problems for residents. Map GT1 shows priority streets for inclusion in an RPZ to surround the Gzira Local Centre. The RPZ is a vital component in an integrated approach towards solving the overall transport and access problems of this area. The introduction of short-stay car parking, traffic calming measures, pedestrian streets and priorities for public transport should be programmed in parallel to the RPZ.

NHGT03

Manoel Island Link Road

Development which, in the opinion of MEPA and the ADT, can inhibit the construction of the Manoel Island Link Road and associated junction improvements as indicatively shown on Map GT1 will not be permitted.

12.4.4 The need for improvements stem from more detailed considerations of the likely traffic impact associated with the development of Manoel Island/Tigné. In fact the ADT had commissioned a series of studies to assess the transport infrastructure in this area. In the meantime, it is important to ensure that no development is permitted which would prejudice or inhibit the necessary improvements, and particularly the construction of the new Manoel Island Link Road, from being undertaken. The Gzira and Ta' Xbiex Policy Map indicates a constraints corridor that follows the route of the Link Road so as to ensure that any developments in the area do not prejudice the implementation of this important road.

NHGT04

The Strand Upgrading

MEPA will encourage proposals to upgrade the Strand between Manoel Island and Tigné. Proposals are to introduce:

- i. A clearly defined carriageway and parking spaces;**
- ii. Safe pedestrian crossing points;**
- iii. Improved bus drop offs; and**
- iv. The upgrading of the promenade.**

12.4.5 The Strand is dominated by a four vehicle lane carriageway with a narrow central reservation. The carriageways are not clearly defined and they are often obstructed by parked vehicles. This has resulted (particularly at night) in high speeds, poor visibility and tragically, numerous traffic accidents. This policy aims to curtail the existing situation at the Strand and introduce measures for a better and safer traffic flow, whilst ensuring the enjoyment of the promenade by pedestrians. The alignment of the upgraded Strand with the Ferries area is also crucial in order to ensure that the re-design of the 'Ferries' area is not compromised and that a continuous walking route is retained.

NHGT05

Environmental Upgrading of Streets

MEPA will favourably consider proposals for the comprehensive upgrading of Manoel De Vilhena Street where such proposals will:

- i. Formalise and introduce short-stay car parking;**
- ii. Improve crossing points for pedestrians;**
- iii. Formalize loading/unloading bays to serve business concerns within the Local Centre; and**
- iv. Introduce traffic calming measures along Manoel De Vilhena Street, and at the junctions of Rue D'Argens and the Strand into this street.**

In addition, MEPA will encourage proposals to comprehensively upgrade Testaferrata Street, Abate Rigord Street and Princess Margaret Street. Chevron short-stay car parking, the introduction of quality street furniture and tree planting shall be sought to upgrade Testaferrata Street.

12.4.6 A key objective of the Local Plan is to encourage investment into existing town centres and enhance shopping streets. The Gzira Local Centre and residential streets currently suffer from the effects of heavy through traffic which runs through the heart of the local centre filtering into immediate residential streets. This traffic brings activity to the area (shopping and employment) but also has an

environmental impact on residents. The aim of this policy is to reduce the amount of through traffic in the residential areas.

12.4.7 With traffic levels along Testaferrata Street, Abate Rigord Street and Princess Margaret Street expected to decrease with the introduction of the Manoel Island Link Road there is potential to improve the environmental quality of these streets.

NHGT06

Drainage Pumping Station Site

MEPA will favourably consider the satisfactory rehabilitation and re-use of the Drainage Pumping Station Site as indicated on Map GT1, provided that the implementation of the Manoel Island Link Road as per Policy NHGT03 is not prejudiced, and provided that all the conditions of this Policy are satisfied.

The development of a modern drainage pumping facility and its relocation to Site X as shown on Map GT1 is permitted provided that:

- i. The new facility is located underground;**
- ii. The site is re-instated as a public open space at current street level; and**
- iii. The new facility does not negatively affect the amenity of local residents.**

The adaptive re-use of the existing pumping station heritage building is encouraged provided that:

- iv. Rehabilitation/refurbishment of the pumping station is according to the parameters of a Conservation Order;**
- v. The re-use of the pumping station building is not for residential purposes or other incompatible uses;**
- vi. Any proposal is to safeguard not only the listed status of the pumping station but also its setting and local views; and,**
- vii. Proposals also include appropriate pedestrian links to the public open space that is planned at the ex-Stadium Site in line with Policy NHGT14.**

Any additional buildings within the curtilage of the pumping station will be permitted subject to:

- viii. Such additions being in accordance with the parameters of the Conservation Order;**
- ix. The additional development is to safeguard not only the listed status of the existing pumping station but also its setting and local views; and**
- x. A satisfactory justification is given by the developer for such additional buildings.**

12.4.8 The relocation of the pumping station underground at Site X would allow for the positive reuse and rehabilitation of the existing important heritage building and as a buffer zone to protect residents from smells nuisance. In view of the current availability of modern processes, this facility can be suitably relocated with a reduced requirement for buffering. Any development shall not prejudice the future implementation of the Manoel Island Link Road.

12.4.9 Proposals for the refurbishment of the pump house should particularly include maintenance of the facade, gardens and external walls in accordance with the Conservation Order to be prepared by MEPA at the appropriate time.

NHGT07

Height Envelopes and Frontage Width

Maximum building heights for Gzira and Ta` Xbiex are designated as shown in Map GT2. Specific heights guidance applies for the following sites/areas:

Ta` Xbiex Central Opportunity Site

In accordance with Policy NHGT15 and as indicated in Map GT2, MEPA will adopt a restrictive approach on the Ta` Xbiex Opportunity site in order to safeguard the wider setting of the Peninsula.

Gzira Front

A strict block-by-block stepping down of building heights from 7 floors to 4 floors will be sought as shown in Map GT2.

Frontage Width

To avoid pencil development along the Gzira waterfront, proposals for new high buildings having a façade width that is less than 25m will not be permitted, except where the proposed facade will have a design that is identical to, and that is continuous with, that of its existing neighbouring building.

12.4.10 In the Central Ta` Xbiex Opportunity Site, no development will be permitted which detracts from the skyline of the peninsula and views of the UCA and waterfront. Along the Gzira Strand, MEPA recognises that a more relaxed approach to building heights has been taken. The Local Plan seeks to recognise this by promoting a stepping down of heights on a block-by-block basis in this area. Where existing frontages on the Strand have remained predominantly 4 floors in height, MEPA will seek to retain permissible heights to four floors in view of sensitive view lines identified through Policies NHSE07 and NHSE08.

12.4.11 Recent high-rise developments occurring along the Gzira waterfront have resulted in a series of pencil developments with blank third party walls and inappropriately designed facades. The Local Plan will address this issue by applying strict control on development along this waterfront whereby proposals will not be permitted with facades less than 25m wide unless specific design criteria are followed.

NHGT08

Gzira and Ta` Xbiex Design Priority Areas

In considering the detailed development of the Ta` Xbiex Design Priority Area as designated on Maps GT1 and GT2, MEPA will ensure that proposals respect the following criteria:

- i. The essential character of the adjoining Urban Conservation Area must be maintained. In particular proposals must respect the area's prevailing villa typology, scale, architectural characteristics and detailing of buildings;
- ii. Proposals are to include a minimum of 25% of the site area for landscaping with generous foliage provision, particularly along side curtilages; and
- iii. Building heights are not to exceed 2 floors without semi-basement, and the height of the new building shall not exceed the roofline of neighbouring properties.

Development within the Gzira Design Priority Area as designated on Map GT2 must respect the following criteria:

- a. The essential character of the Gzira Design Priority Area must be maintained. In particular proposed developments must fully respect the area's streetscape by following the floor heights, proportions, fenestration and architectural characteristics of the adjacent buildings; and
- b. The incorporation of projecting rooms in the facades of new development will not be allowed by MEPA.

12.4.12 Gzira lies between the Sliema UCA (approved in 1995) and the proposed Msida UCA. Gzira evolved on much the same lines and during the same periods as Sliema and Msida. In fact, the

coastal areas of Gzira were characterised by late 19th Century villas surrounded with small gardens along the seafront nearer to Sliema, and two storied traditional late 19th – early 20th Century resort and workers’ dwellings and taverns nearer to Manoel Island bridge. Gzira evolved as a suburb of Sliema during the turn of the 19th to 20th century, and spread northwards to and along Rue D’Argens. Gzira also has a number of buildings whose type and use first appeared at the turn of the 19th-20th century. These include the Drainage Pumping Station (1890s), designed by Sir. E.L. Galizia in the neo-gothic style; the Empire Stadium (1922), now derelict; the Orpheum Theatre/Cinema, (1934), scheduled as Grade 2, and the Marshall Court (1950s), built as a Naval Married quarters and in the 1970s was transformed as social housing. Much of the original urban fabric of Gzira still survives, apart from those along the seafront and some of the nearby streets, and parts of Rue D’Argens. Consequently some areas of the original urban fabric have been omitted from the Design Priority Area for Gzira. For these reasons the Local Plan designates the older parts of Gzira as a Design Priority Area. The design of development within this Design Priority Area shall fully respect the architectural characteristics of adjacent buildings. Similarly, new built development within the Ta’ Xbiex Design Priority Area must fully respect the design and environmental characteristics of the adjacent UCA villa area.

NHGT09

Ta` Xbiex Housing Estate

MEPA will favourably consider proposals for the environmental upgrading of the Housing Estate area as follows:

- i. An outline application is to be submitted and is to include proposals for improvements to all the areas within the Estate;**
- ii. Proposals are to include better utilisation of all spaces between blocks, formalised car parking spaces and re-designed landscaped public spaces and pedestrian links;**
- iii. The junction of Abate Rigord Street and Princess Margaret Street shall be improved according to criteria identified in Appendix 1 (see Square GTS03);**
- iv. The road carriageway along Princess Margaret Street shall be narrowed and short-stay, chevron (45 degree) parking and landscaping shall be introduced; and**
- v. Proposals are to include the establishment of an RPZ as shown on Map GT1 prior to the setting up of short-stay car parking in Princess Margaret Street.**

12.4.13 Ta` Xbiex Housing Estate exhibits a number of problems primarily associated with the state of the public realm. These include lack of formal play spaces and car parking spaces, unnecessarily wide roads and a lack of well-maintained landscaped areas. There are no safe play areas in proximity to the Estate. In order to provide an infrastructure and safe play spaces suitable for this Housing Estate, proposals must improve the public realm within the Estate as a whole.

NHGT10

Ta` Xbiex Marina

MEPA will positively consider measures to enhance the setting of the Marina area through the provision of suitable landscaping and better definition of pedestrian open space from parking areas.

12.4.14 The existing car park at Ta` Xbiex is an important facility for promenaders, residents and businesses in the locality. It includes existing foliage and extensive hard landscaping. MEPA will promote the environmental enhancement of this area where proposals secure better pedestrian provision.

NHGT11

Offices in Ta` Xbiex

Within the Ta’ Xbiex Residential Priority Area, development permission for all new office uses (including local office uses) will not be granted, except where the proposed office use satisfies all of the following criteria:

- i. It is for use as an embassy only;**
- ii. It involves the refurbishment/rehabilitation of an existing building within the Ta' Xbiex UCA boundary;**
- iii. It will enhance the character of the existing building and the UCA; and**
- iv. It complies with all the relevant provisions of the DC2005.**

12.4.15 The Structure Plan generally allows the conversion of residential property to small office use in built-up areas, with safeguards linked to improvements in transport, access, parking and pedestrian circulation (Policy COM5). In Ta' Xbiex, however, the process of residential conversions to offices has occurred to excessive levels. Fewer on-street car parking spaces are available to residents and there is increasing local traffic generation and pollution. In the long term, this has implications for the continued vitality of Ta' Xbiex as an established residential community, the population of which is diminishing and ageing.

12.4.16 Given the anticipated reduction of through-traffic along Testaferrata Street and Abate Rigord Street, new office uses (including local uses) will be directed away from this residential peninsula and towards the Gzira Employment Node and the designated local centre.

12.4.17 Exceptions will be made in considering proposals for diplomatic uses (embassies only) within the designated Ta' Xbiex Urban Conservation Area. This prestigious use is considered to preserve the special character of buildings within this villa area. Embassies, by their nature, seek high standards in the maintenance of historic and other buildings as a matter of prestige. Therefore, through the Local Plan, permission for other proposed office uses that would displace residential uses shall not be granted in this area.

NHGT12

Relocation of Community Facilities

MEPA shall promote the relocation of the existing Health Centre and Gzira Post Office presently located at Meme` Scicluna Square to a more suitable central location.

12.4.18 The existing Polyclinic for Gzira which services much of the Inner Harbours area, and the Gzira Post Office are located at Meme` Scicluna Square. Both uses create a significant number of car trips into the area that make parking in the locality more difficult for residents. In line with the local plan's objective to locate trip-generating uses to transport nodes, MEPA will encourage relocation of these uses to centrally located purpose-built or refurbished premises.

NHGT13

Garages and Boathouses

The construction of additional new boathouses or garages for private cars will not be permitted in the vicinity of It-Telgha ta` Ta` Xbiex as indicated on Map GT1. MEPA will not permit the change of use of existing garages and boathouses in this area to residential or any other uses.

12.4.19 Recent garage and boathouse development along the coast is considered to be inappropriate and unsympathetic with the context of the UCA designation and the setting of Ta' Xbiex as a whole which fronts the World Heritage Site of Valletta.

NHGT14

Gzira Employment Node

MEPA designates the land that comprises of Sites A to F indicated in Map GT1 as an Employment Node. MEPA shall only allow development on each of Sites A to F provided that it is satisfied that all the following conditions are fully adhered to:

- i. **The developable floorspace for each of the Sites A to F is to be divided as follows;**
 - a. **At least 9% of the total developable floorspace is to be used for Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices;**
 - b. **Not more than 4% of the total developable floorspace is to be used for Class 4, (Use Classes Order, 1994) showrooms only, provided that they comply with the relevant provisions of MEPA's Interim Retail Planning Guidelines (2003); and**
 - c. **The remainder of the total developable floorspace is to be used for Class 1 (Use Classes Order, 1994) dwellings;**
- ii. **Each of the Sites A to F is to be planned comprehensively. However MEPA may permit the development within each of these Sites to be carried out in phases;**
- iii. **MEPA will favourably consider the use of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) principle as regulated by the DC2005 for Sites A to F provided that suitable public landscaped areas are provided and maintained by the developer;**
- iv. **Amenity space that is suitably designed as landscaped communal space/s is to be provided on Sites A to F in accordance with the provisions of DC2005;**
- v. **In considering building alignments and massing, MEPA shall seek to protect the setting of the surrounding streetscapes and of the pumping station (See Policy NHGT06);**
- vi. **The development is not to compromise the formation of the Manoel Island Link Road in line with the provisions of Policy NHGT03. Special regard will be given to the traffic impacts of the Manoel Island Link Road on residential units planned for Sites E and F;**
- vii. **The development's car parking needs shall be accommodated in each of Sites A to F. However the provision of parking that is additional to what is required for the development on site shall be encouraged by MEPA; and**
- viii. **The basic infrastructure facilities, such as the upgrading of the road network, must be taken in hand in a phased manner in accordance with guidance from a TIS and a Construction Management Plan as approved by MEPA.**

12.4.20 The area designated as an Employment Node covers an area of about 6.1 hectares. The node encompasses the former national stadium site which consists of approximately 18,000sqm of disused land that has been vacant for a considerable time together with the immediate areas which consist of a mix of rundown dwellings, offices, workshops, a petrol station and showrooms. The site included in this node provides a major opportunity to contribute to the regeneration of the area. This employment node is conveniently located adjacent to the proposed Manoel Island Link Road that in part is to follow Triq San Gorg.

12.4.21 The Local Plan aims to direct new employment uses to this site and the Gzira Local Centre in tandem with an overall policy to restrain the ad hoc spread of traffic generating uses in the residential areas of Gzira and Ta' Xbiex (see Policies NHCI01 and NHRE02). This policy seeks to ensure that adequate provision of infrastructure such as car parking and open spaces are catered for as part of this development. The inclusion of these elements is essential in order to ensure the employment node is successful and impacts on surrounding residential areas are minimal. The development of this employment node will play a major role in attracting inward investment into this area.

Offices

12.4.22 The Structure Plan generally seeks to reduce travel demand through the provision of employment close to where people are already living. Through the implementation of this Policy it is envisaged that some 750 – 1,000 new office jobs would be created in the Gzira Employment Node area. Approximately a maximum of 20,000sqm of floorspace are allocated for office use.

Showrooms

12.4.23 The success of the stipulated level of showroom development may be jeopardized if additional or alternative retail uses are permitted to locate in these areas with disastrous consequences for the existing Gzira Local Centre and Sliema Town Centres. The policy therefore seeks to limit the number of showrooms that can be accommodated in the employment node, and prohibits the development of any other type of retail outlets.

Residential

12.4.24 A noticeable trend, which the Structure Plan and Local Plan are both seeking to reverse, is the decline of residential population from the North Harbours area. Consequently opportunities should also be considered for the construction of new residential accommodation within this node.

NHGT15

Central Ta` Xbiex Opportunity Site

The Central Ta' Xbiex Opportunity Site as designated on Map GT1 is safeguarded for mainly low-density housing. MEPA will not consider any proposals on this site unless the planning is undertaken on a comprehensive basis for the whole site. However, MEPA may allow development to be undertaken in phases. The developer is to demonstrate to the satisfaction of MEPA that the proposal adheres to all the guidelines on densities and other matters as listed below:

- i. The developer is to identify buildings or landscape features which are worth retaining and is to show how such buildings/features are to be integrated within the proposal through a detailed survey of the cultural, archaeological and natural assets in this area. The survey report is to evaluate the full assets' potential value;**
- ii. The existing WW2 Shelter is to be surveyed and assessed. Any eventual development is to avoid intervention on this feature;**
- iii. The existing rural building is to be retained and conserved as a landmark structure (as indicated in Map GT2). This building is to be suitably adapted and re-used;**
- iv. MEPA will only consider a comprehensive development proposal for the Opportunity Area if it is satisfied that it is of a very high design standard and that it is based on a unified and interesting architectural theme. MEPA is also to be satisfied that the development proposal will enhance the identity and local distinctiveness of the Ta' Xbiex Peninsula urban area;**
- v. Development within the central and eastern parts of this Opportunity Site as indicated on Map GT2 is to consist of residential units having a villa typology with generous landscaping provision, together with ancillary social and community facilities.**
- vi. A maximum of 5 centrally located local shops (not more than 50 sqm combined sales and storage area each) forming a cluster of shops will be considered at ground floor level in an appropriate location within the site;**
- vii. Higher dwelling densities than those typical of low density villa areas are to be sought on the westernmost part of the site only (next to the existing Housing Estate). To this affect building heights not exceeding four floors plus semi-basement and three floors plus semi-basement as indicated in Map GT2 may be considered by MEPA. Building heights on the rest of the site are not to exceed two floors plus semi-basement. The provisions of DC2005 relating to the use of the Floor Area Ratio principle cannot be applied to any part of the Opportunity Site;**
- viii. Significant new public open spaces are to be provided within the Opportunity Site boundaries in accordance with the amenity space requirements as stipulated in the DC2005;**
- ix. The level of car parking required by this development must be met within the site itself; and**
- x. The developer is to show how the proposed development satisfactorily links to the existing road network. The proposal is to positively consider the re-alignment of the road layout for this site as**

indicated in the Temporary Provisions Schemes (1988) so as to achieve more interesting streetscapes and urban spaces.

12.4.25 The area outlined in the Map GT1 is designated as an Opportunity Area. The site has an area of approximately 3.2 hectares and is one of few remaining major vacant sites in the Inner Harbours. The site is not, however, well located for major commercial intensification. Major traffic generating uses on this site cannot be well served by the arterial road network and would contradict the local plan's land use strategy to reduce congestion and improve residential environments in the Inner Harbour region.

12.4.26 In line with the Structure Plan and the Local Plan's overall land use strategy, MEPA seeks to safeguard this site for high quality residential development. If, during the plan period, the site is presented for housing development MEPA will seek to secure community facilities which are currently lacking for residents of Ta' Xbiex. Regarding development parameters not covered by the guidance set through this policy, MEPA will pursue the relevant provisions of general policies on housing specified in the DC2005.

NHGT16

Manoel Island

MEPA will support the development of an International Yachting Centre with related facilities and ancillary uses at Manoel Island as approved in the Outline Development Permit PA 2135/94. Full Development Applications that significantly change the mix and scale of uses within the Manoel Island development as approved in the Outline Development Permit will only be considered subject to the preparation, by MEPA, of supplementary planning guidance that takes account of the overall land use strategy of this Local Plan. The restoration and rehabilitation of heritage resources and public access to them will also be a priority in considering Full Development Applications for this site.

12.4.27 Manoel Island falls outside any of the designated areas for future employment and housing growth within the local plan. A cautious policy approach will be taken to future amendments to the Manoel Island Project beyond the existing committed levels of development as approved in the Outline Development Permit. Through this policy and any eventual revised guidance for this site, MEPA will seek to ensure that the development would not prejudice the overall strategy of the local plan. The overall land use and transport strategy is to discourage high trip-generating uses in the Inner Harbours and promote economic growth in town centres and at designated employment nodes on the Regional Road.

13. Msida and Pietà`

13.1 Introduction

Combined Areas: 2.15km²

Combined Population: 11,249

- 13.1.1 Msida and Pietà` are both dense urban areas falling mainly within the Inner Harbours area. They are bound by the urban areas of Hamrun, Birkirkara, San Gwann and to the northeast by Marsamxett Harbour. With the exception of the natural boundaries created by Marsamxett Harbour (1.7km of waterfront), Msida Valley and Wied Ghollieqa, both areas cannot be clearly distinguished from their urban neighbours. Only 25% of the area remains ODZ (all in Msida). With the exception of parts of the Msida waterfront, valleys represent the only major open spaces in the area. Much of Msida Valley and its water catchment area have been subject to development that contributes to storm water run-off and flooding along Valley Road and into Msida Creek.
- 13.1.2 In the post war period both areas experienced rapid population growth associated with new housing constructed inland of the older waterfront areas around Marina Street (Pietà`) and the Parish Church (Msida). In the last 15 years the combined population growth of both areas has been modest and today growth is slow compared to areas like Pembroke and San Gwann. Between 1985-1995 the population of Msida increased from 6,219 to 6,942 and Pietà`'s population decreased slightly from 4,380 to 4,307. Both areas have larger proportions of elderly people compared with other Inner Harbour areas like Gzira and St. Julian's.
- 13.1.3 Intensive road building and under-investment in the maintenance of older properties has led to parts of Msida and Pietà` becoming environmentally downgraded. The Regional Road and major distributor roads that pass through the area account for large volumes of through traffic. Typically 4,000 vehicles per hour (both directions) pass through the Regional Road at Msida. This compares to 3,200 along other stretches of the same road. These roads and their associated junctions have effectively segregated many parts of the area and pedestrian movement is difficult. In the vicinity of Msida Marina major open spaces are segregated by the convergence of four main roads (Regional Road, Rue D'Argens, Marina Street and Valley Road). This area is dangerous for pedestrians. This area is also subject to flooding requiring a Catchment Management Plan for the Birkirkara/Msida Valley Basin. In this area and parts of Msida's and Pietà's historic waterfronts, there is considerable opportunity for environmental and transport improvements and conservation through rehabilitation and selective redevelopment. The construction of the Regional Road in the late 1950s made inland areas of Msida more accessible and contributed to development away from the coast and the location of large public sector institutions on the outskirts of Msida.
- 13.1.4 The University of Malta currently occupies a site of approximately 12 hectares south of Wied Ghollieqa. It has an enrolment of approximately 7,000 students and employs over 1,200 staff. Other large institutions in the area include the Government Sixth Form College and Public Broadcasting Services. The Local Plan considers the land use implications of changes in the operations of these institutions. Major considerations include the planned relocation of the main government hospital from Pietà to Swatar and plans by the University to increase its intake of overseas students. Both will have implications in terms of traffic movements, economic activity and, possibly, the local demand for rented accommodation. In addition to these major employment centres, jobs in the area are dispersed between the numerous offices, shops, showrooms and distributive industries located throughout the area. This dispersal of land uses and facilities has resulted in an absence of identifiable commercial centres for local shops and facilities.
- 13.1.5 Given their broadly similar land use and locational characteristics, the Local Plan considers detailed area policies for both Msida and Pietà within this chapter.

13.2 Issues

13.2.1 Residential Amenities and Facilities

- i. Community facilities and local services dispersed with no defined local centres.
- ii. Lack of recreational open space.
- iii. Flooding problems in areas close to Valley Road and pressure to develop water catchment area.

13.2.2 Land Use and Traffic

- i. Level and scale of office, distributive and commercial uses in residential streets excessive.
- ii. Major roads have split residential areas and public open spaces in particular at Palm Square.
- iii. Traffic Management problems around St. Luke's Hospital area and lack of waterfront parking.
- iv. Congestion on arterial and distributor routes and use of residential streets as through-routes.

13.2.3 Housing

- i. Elements of the housing stock in poor quality or facing under investment.
- ii. Potential increase in demand for rented accommodation in Msida relating to increased student numbers at the University and moving of medical students and hospital functions to Tal-Qroqq.

13.2.4 Relocation of St. Luke's Hospital to Mater Dei Hospital in Swatar

- i. Need to ensure that subsequent uses for St. Luke's Hospital bring maximum community benefit.

13.2.5 Waterfront and Urban Setting

- i. Potential for conservation of waterfront areas and improving the setting of Palm Square.

13.3 Key Planning Objectives

13.3.1 Improve Residential Amenity and Promote an Optimal Land Use Mix

- i. Improve provision of and access to, local shops, open spaces and services for residents.

13.3.2 Traffic Management

- i. Reduce congestion and the negative effects of main roads on pedestrians and residents.
- ii. Discourage residential roads from being used as fast short-cuts between main routes.

13.3.3 Housing

- i. Anticipate and accommodate demand for rented and single person housing.

13.3.4 The Waterfront and the Urban Setting

- i. Designation of Urban Conservation Areas to protect the character and appearance of the waterfront areas and promote rehabilitation and selective redevelopment.

- ii. Promote the environmental upgrading of Palm Square.

13.3.5 Expansion of the University and relocation of St. Luke's Hospital

- i. Ensure any new uses for St. Luke's retain the architectural integrity of the scheduled hospital building and do not result in adverse amenity impacts on the surrounding area such as traffic generation.
- ii. Ensure expansion of the University's facilities does not adversely affect its surroundings.

General Strategy

- 13.3.6 The overall strategy is to maintain and enhance Msida and Pietà as residential areas. Access to local facilities will be improved and the ad hoc location of large new traffic generating uses will not be permitted in Msida and Pietà. Through its general policies on employment and retailing, the local plan will direct such uses to Local Centres or other specific sites. Existing major public sector institutions will continue to service the area provided their future expansion or development does not adversely affect the residents of Msida and Pietà and results in a responsible approach to traffic management. Within the urban areas existing public open spaces will be retained and where possible, upgraded. Outside the urban areas, the rural fringe that includes undeveloped parts of Msida Valley and Wied Ghollieqa will be protected from further development that will exacerbate storm water run-off problems or contribute to further flooding.

13.4 Area Policies

NHMP01

Height Envelopes

Maximum building heights for Msida and Pietà are designated as shown in Map MP2. Specific heights guidance applies to the following locations:

University Grounds

MEPA will adopt a flexible approach to building heights in accordance with Policy NHMP08.

St. Luke's Hospital Site

New buildings proposed within the hospital grounds shall not exceed the height of the scheduled main hospital building (excluding the towers) or significantly disrupt views onto it, particularly the waterfront view of its elevations and towers.

Site Reserved for Employment/Mixed Uses

If the Structure Plan Review confirms the inclusion of this site within the Urban Development Boundary, guidance on building heights will be elaborated in the Development Brief to be prepared for this area in accordance with Policy NHMP13.

- 13.4.1 The overall approach of the local plan is to retain building height limitations to those established through the TPS (1988). Relaxation beyond four floors would seriously jeopardise the local plan's strategy for the inner harbour areas that is to reduce congestion, promote housing rehabilitation and improve the quality of life for existing and future residents. The policy adopts a flexible approach to building heights for the University recognizing that this institution has become a significant landmark site in the North Harbours area. This policy also aims to ensure that no development will be permitted which detracts from views and the skyline of the Pietà Peninsula that is presently dominated by the existing hospital scheduled building.

NHMP02

Valley Road Regeneration

The Valley Road Regeneration area is designated in Map MP1. In considering new proposals for the redevelopment of street blocks or building groups in this area MEPA will require:

- i. The use of franka stone, wrought iron and similar detailing/fenestration as achieved in the existing Housing Authority Redevelopment at 157-186 in Triq il-Wied;
- ii. The resurfacing and landscaping of all external spaces excluding roads, but including pavements, prior to occupation of the building/s. Priority will be given to seeking the upgrading of the surfaces around the Grade II Scheduled Msida Wash Room;
- iii. The avoidance of the use of repetitive ground floor garage openings; and
- iv. The implementation of adequate measures to mitigate against flood risk.

MEPA will encourage the Housing Authority to continue its programme to redevelop substandard housing and other buildings within this designated area. Where appropriate, financial bonds will be stipulated to ensure compliance with points (i-iv) above.

13.4.2 Policy NHSE09 designates revisions to the boundary of the Msida Village Core area, designated through the TPS (1988). This Policy considers part of the former Msida Village Core as not being suitable for inclusion within UCA boundaries through the local plan thereby enabling its full redevelopment. Within this area, the special character of the Village Core has been significantly eroded through the effects of the piecemeal redevelopment of individual buildings without attention to contextual design. Many remaining older buildings in this area are substandard for residential accommodation, difficult to adapt to modern standards and have visibly suffered from acute under-investment/maintenance and persistent flooding which characterises the area. Within this area MEPA will promote redevelopment and upgraded public spaces, and will stipulate the use of traditional materials in new construction.

13.4.3 The redevelopment of 157-186 Valley Road was undertaken by the Housing Authority as part of their ongoing programme of redevelopment. This has successfully improved the local living environment and provides a good exemplar for new development. However, unfortunately within these schemes there has been little or no subsequent upgrading of open spaces. In particular, opportunity exists to upgrade the area (surfaces) around the scheduled Grade II Public Wash House and the adjacent reservoir area in Valley Road that has potential for dual use and adaptation as a water feature within a small garden. This policy aims to ensure that new proposals create visual continuity in the area and have particular regard to open spaces that also require upgrading.

NHMP03

Flood Reduction

In addition to Policy NHSE01 and Structure Plan Policies SET11 and 12, which make an overall presumption against development in areas outside the development zone, the development of the land shown on Map MP1 will not be permitted by MEPA since it consists of the remaining part of Msida Valley. This Policy however does not apply to any site that is included within scheme through the Local Plans Rationalisation of Development Boundaries Exercise (2006), in which case satisfactory flooding mitigation measures for the development of such site will be required by MEPA.

13.4.4 The wider catchment basin extends from Msida Valley to Birkirkara and falls mainly within the Central Malta Local Plan area. Within the North Harbours area though, a limited part of the Msida Valley remains undeveloped. This Policy stresses the importance of restraining further development in this area from a water resource management and landscape point of view.

Palm Square

In conjunction with the ADT and Msida Local Council, MEPA will seek the upgrading of the Palm Square Area. The proposals for the area should achieve the following objectives:

- i. Relieve traffic congestion, whilst seeking to discourage motorists from using this junction rather than the arterial road network;
- ii. Create a major and attractive public area immediately adjacent to Msida Creek;
- iii. Minimize the loss of existing important trees and have full regard to the setting of and views onto the 5th October Monument;
- iv. If required, relocate the existing bocci pitch to an appropriate site within the immediate vicinity;
- v. Significantly improve the pedestrian environment by widening footways and providing safe and convenient pedestrian crossings both to upgraded public areas and across main roads;
- vi. Provide bus priority measures on the approach to the Palm Square Junction, and improve public transport interchange facilities;
- vii. Provide suitable short-stay parking to serve the Local Centre; and
- viii. Incorporate adequate storm water run-off management measures.

St. Luke's Road

MEPA will promote proposals to upgrade the part of St. Luke's Road in Pietà as indicated on Map MP1. Proposals should achieve an overall increase in pavement widths and pedestrian facilities, increased landscaping, measures to promote short-stay parking and a clear definition of on-street parking.

Psaila Street/Regional Road Roundabout

MEPA will promote the future improvement of this junction and will not permit building development on adjacent areas of land that would prejudice measures to increase the junction's capacity.

- 13.4.5 The existing Palm Square area at Msida has a very poor environment due to the segregation of existing public spaces and the impact of the considerable volume of traffic that passes through it. The location is important because it is a focus for community activity, it is a local shopping centre, and it acts as a major public transport interchange point.
- 13.4.6 Three bus corridors intersect at this junction (hence the interchange activity) and 80 to 100 route buses pass through it at peak times. Currently these buses experience considerable delays. At peak periods some 5,000 vph use the junction, and it is evident that some of these are using Marina Street (a distributor road) as the route to and from Valletta/Floriana, rather than using the arterial road network.
- 13.4.7 The main urban design objective for the whole area is the creation of a single, large public space possibly adjacent to Msida Creek. The space needs to include and pay particular regard to the 5th October Monument. It will also be vitally important to ensure good pedestrian access into the area and across all main roads.
- 13.4.8 In terms of public transport, this junction is one of the most important nodes in Malta, because of the number of buses and services that pass through it. A considerable number of passengers change buses at this point, and it is also a busy destination in its own right, due to the presence of the Junior

College. In conformity with NHTR03, measures to reduce the existing level of delays to buses and provide safe, comfortable passenger facilities are therefore very important.

- 13.4.9 To serve the local centre, car parking will be required, and ideally this should be designated for short-term usage, in line with Policy NHTR17.
- 13.4.10 In Pieta's main shopping street the traffic problems are less severe, but there is considerable scope to improve parking arrangements and pedestrian spaces. The Local Plan also sets this area as a priority for environmental improvement. Policy NHTR17 supports the introduction of short-stay parking in local centres. In line with this and other policies MEPA will positively consider proposals for enhancement that achieve the objectives stated in this Policy.
- 13.4.11 The Psaila Street/Regional Road junction is of strategic importance and already suffers traffic congestion on some arms at peak periods. It is therefore appropriate to safeguard possible improvements which would increase junction capacity. There are a number of physical constraints, particularly the positioning of the over-bridges and the sub-standard design of the slip roads. However, the opportunity exists to increase the capacity of three arms, and to construct a dedicated left turn slip from the Regional Road North exit slip road to Triq Il-Kappillan Mifsud. To achieve improvements in the northeast quadrant of the junction will require some modification of the existing scheme alignment. It should also be noted that the anticipated improvements would improve conditions at the roundabout, but they would not overcome the congestion on the south facing entry slip road caused by the very poor merging layout.

NHMP05

Construction of new bridge across Msida Valley

In accordance with the TEN-T Project, MEPA will safeguard the alignment of a new bridge across Msida Valley intended to improve safety and upgrade operating conditions on the section of the Regional Road between the Psaila Street and Tal-Qroqq Junctions. In this regard MEPA will not approve any development within the area indicated in Map MP1 that would prejudice the implementation of this project.

This major road scheme should consider:

- i. The removal of the existing over bridge at Msida Valley Road;**
- ii. A rationalization of the slip/link roads to reduce the number of entry and exit points on the Regional Road;**
- iii. Where possible the safeguarding of protected trees and other important flora in the locality; and**
- iv. Significant environmental improvements on the valley sides to manage water run-off and improve the environmental quality of the area.**

The aesthetic design of the new bridge should be to modern and high standards, and its vertical alignment and design should minimize the impact of the bridge on the skyline.

- 13.4.12 The alignment of the Regional Road through Msida Valley is very substandard, and this, together with frequent merge and diverge points, creates a significant road safety hazard and poor operating conditions. The construction of a higher-level road, with a better horizontal alignment will greatly improve conditions on this very important arterial road.
- 13.4.13 The new bridge is likely to be visually more dominant and therefore it is paramount that its overall design is to attain the highest possible standards. The existing bridge will become redundant and consequently, so as to reduce visual intrusion and to upgrade the valley sides, it should be removed.

- 13.4.14 Part of the current problem is the multiplicity of entry/exit points over a relatively short distance, and the consequent weaving that takes place. Msida Valley Road is only a local access road, and therefore does not necessarily require direct access to the Regional Road.
- 13.4.15 The design of the road scheme needs to pay particular attention to the important flora in the area, for example the protected rare English Oaks situated just to the east of the existing bridge.
- 13.4.16 The removal of the existing bridge and some of the slip/link roads provides a great opportunity to reduce the amount of water run-off in an area very prone to flooding, and to return the valley sides to their natural state. This will be environmentally beneficial in itself, and also create separation between areas of development.

NHMP06

Garage Industries

Within the Clarence Street area as designated in Map MP1, the development of new industrial uses or the extension and/or intensification of existing industrial uses will not be permitted by MEPA. The change of use of existing bad neighbour industrial uses in the designated area to more neighbourhood compatible uses will be encouraged by MEPA.

- 13.4.17 The TPS (1988) scheme allowed for the development of two areas in Msida for industrial uses. One area remains in agricultural use whilst workshops and industrial uses have proliferated within the Clarence Street area. Although generally small scale, some uses are noisy and combined they have degraded the area. Uses such as panel beaters, sprayers and mechanics have disrupted the residential amenity and balance of uses in the street and surrounding residential streets. Clarence Street retains a significant residential component, including a home for the elderly and a hospital, and currently serves as the main emergency access between the arterial road network and St. Luke's Hospital. This policy seeks to reverse the trend of industrial intensification and encourage residential and other neighbour compatible uses.
- 13.4.18 The Clarence Street area is effectively rezoned in line with the overall strategy to improve residential amenity (particularly in the Inner Harbours) and minimise traffic generating uses in residential areas. New non-noxious small-scale industrial uses will be considered elsewhere in Msida and Pietà (in particular through Policy NHMP12). Policy NHCI02 directs medium/large scale industrial uses to the San Gwann Industrial Estate and encourages the relocation of small scale uses to designated SME sites.

NHMP07

Land safeguarded for University & Hospital expansion

The area of land at Tal-Qroqq that is designated on Maps MP1 and MP3 is reserved for the possible future expansion of the Mater Dei Hospital and/or the University of Malta. Development on this designated site that would prejudice the future expansion of these major national institutions will not be permitted.

- 13.4.19 The designated site constitutes the only remaining tract of land that is currently located outside development zone next to the Mater Dei Hospital and the University and that is not scheduled as part of Wied Ghollieqa. Under these circumstances, it is very important to safeguard this land for the possible future expansion of these major government institutions. This is in line with Structure Plan Policies SOC 2 and SOC 11.

Expansion Areas

MEPA will not permit the northerly expansion of the University into Wied Ghollieqa. Development on existing afforested areas will not be permitted. The preferred areas for expansion of campus services and facilities are to the south west of the site as designated on Map MP3. Development within the designated area for University expansion is to conform to all the following criteria:

- i. The maximum site coverage is 40%.
- ii. A minimum 6m wide heavily landscaped buffer zone is to be provided between the proposed development and Triq Dun Karm;
- iii. A 6m wide inaccessible and heavily landscaped buffer zone is to be provided between the proposed campus development and any residential accommodation located to the east of the designated area;
- iv. The structural stability of the tunnel and vents serving the Enemalta distribution cables is not to be compromised; and,
- v. For safety reasons, no vehicular and pedestrian access will be allowed from the area designated for the campus expansion to Triq Dun Karm.

Building Heights

In order to allow for the required expansion of the University within its designated area, MEPA will adopt a flexible approach to building heights. MEPA is to be satisfied that the design of any high buildings is to be of exceptionally high quality and will enhance long distance views to the University Grounds.

Transport

MEPA will seek to improve pedestrian and public transport links to the University. New car parking facilities will not be permitted in or around the University Campus other than the car parking spaces identified in Map MP3.

In considering proposals for expansion, MEPA will require the University to demonstrate a commitment to:

- a. Providing incentives for students and staff to arrive by public transport and other sustainable modes of travel by the preparation of a Green Transport Plan to the satisfaction of MEPA;
- b. Improving public transport links to the west and east of the University Campus. Subject to approval by the ADT, the provision of a bus interchange as indicatively shown on Map MP3 will be sought as a planning obligation;
- c. Improving internal pedestrian links;
- d. Promoting a car free environment, including the ring road; and
- e. The removal of the existing car parking area currently encroaching into Wied Ghollieqa as soon as possible. Directly following the removal of this car parking area, the land in question is to be re-instated to its original natural state to the satisfaction of MEPA. Exceptions to this re-instatement will only be made where specific operational provision is needed.

13.4.20 The University has expanded rapidly since its establishment in the 1960s. In 2000, it employed over 1200 staff and had a student population of approximately 7,000 which is likely to rise over the plan period. In 1995 the University of Malta submitted a Master Plan. This was intended to cover the University's development up to the year 2000 but, to date has not been approved. This Master Plan failed to take a long-term approach to controlling traffic and promoting access by different transport means. It is now largely out dated as many of the buildings identified have been built. In the lack

of a clear strategic growth strategy for the University, the local plan's stance for development is to provide flexibility in the expansion of the University provided:

- i. New development is not located in ecological/archaeological/landscape sensitive areas (in particular Wied Gollieqa).
- ii. Traffic impacts are properly considered and access via a range of transport modes is promoted.
- iii. Existing buildings and land within the campus are used efficiently.

13.4.21 The local plan's land use and transport strategy is to direct employment and other uses resulting in high trip generation away from the intensely developed Inner Harbours area and towards major town centres and areas/activity nodes that have good access to the Regional Road (see Policy NHSE03). The Tal-Qroqq area is identified as one of these nodes. Given the significant existing and future travel demands that will be generated by the University and Mater Dei Hospital, it is important to ensure that the traffic impacts on the surrounding area are minimal and the area is accessible via a range of transport modes, including public transport (see Policy NHTR07).

13.4.22 MEPA's stance is to restrict new car parking within the University and encourage the University to consider green transport options. By restricting car parking provision to an acceptable threshold the increased use of alternative transport modes will be encouraged. There is considerable scope for improved public transport connections to the University. The site is currently poorly served from the south at Tal Qroqq Junction. This bus drop-off results in pedestrians crossing major traffic flows. There is however a planned bus interchange on the designated site as per Map MP3.

NHMP09

Improved Sports Facilities

MEPA will favourably consider proposals for the upgrading and redevelopment of the University Sports Grounds as indicated on Map MP3. Proposals shall ensure that:

- i. The primary use of the site is retained for sports provision and related ancillary facilities;**
- ii. The development will not result in a loss of amenity for residents (particularly of Edgar Bernard Street and University Road which face the site) by way of excessive noise, floodlighting or loss of daylight;**
- iii. The main vehicle entrance to the site is not via University Road;**
- iv. A bus pull-in to serve the development and University from the Regional Road is constructed before any development on this site is carried out;**
- v. Car parking provision is minimized and real incentives for alternative modes of transport such as walking, cycling, public transport or coach are encouraged;**
- vi. The existing swimming pool complex (including the sports halls and ancillary facilities) is fully utilized;**
- vii. Outdoor sports activities with landscaping are to be provided to the south of the site, and these are to be used as a buffer between this site and the existing residential area;**
- viii. Residential accommodation on the southern part of the site is to serve as an ancillary facility for use by students or visiting athletes only. These halls of residence will not exceed three floors in height and the existing building on site is to be incorporated in the design of the new development. A pedestrian passage is to be safeguarded through the buildings;**
- ix. The existing vehicular link between the University and the sports grounds is made pedestrian and cycle only; and**
- x. Adequate coach parking is made available to the north and traffic management measures installed to allow safe coach access through residential streets.**

13.4.23 The MEPA Report 'Criteria for the selection of Sports Complexes' (March 1999) identifies potential sites for new or improved national or regional sports facilities. The Ministry for Sports, Youth and Culture has subsequently identified this as one of three national sites for upgrading as a national facility to provide a range of international standard sports facilities. Within the North

Harbours, the University Grounds were identified as a potential site to improve facilities. Locational advantages identified for this site included its proximity to the arterial road network and its location within the Limits of Development. Furthermore, the multi-purpose sports complex could also be used by University students ensuring a regular flow of users throughout the day. The site is also close to an existing government school, and this presents another potential factor for dual use of facilities.

13.4.24 This Policy has been based on discussions with the Ministry for Sports, Youth and Culture, however MEPA will flexibly consider the type and range of facilities provided in the development of the site. The Authority will, however, expect the site to be retained for sports uses and the development to be undertaken in a way that will have minimal impact on surrounding residential streets. Furthermore in line with the local plan's transportation and land use strategy the development should provide or improve facilities for arrival by public transport and other transport modes.

NHMP10

Student Housing Areas

MEPA will support the University of Malta in expanding the provision of student accommodation for overseas and local students in the vicinity of the University. Sites for private sector or University operated student housing will be positively considered within:

- i. The Student Housing Priority Area identified on Map MP1;**
- ii. The Halls of Residence in the University Campus in accordance with Policy NHMP09 and as indicated on Map MP3; and**
- iii. The recommended Employment/Mixed Uses Site at Msida subject to all the provisions of Policy NHMP13 being satisfied, and subject that the Development Brief that is to be prepared for the area identifies student housing as an acceptable use.**

MEPA will exercise discretion in applying requirements for on-site parking when considering purpose built student accommodation that is designed to accommodate less than 20 residents.

In addition, MEPA will permit the development of student related shops within the area designated on Maps MP1 and MP3, including stationeries and bookshops.

13.4.25 The existing University Residence is at Lija. It has a capacity for 200 students and is mainly occupied by overseas students. Should this residence cease to operate, the site at Lija is earmarked for redevelopment to other uses as indicated in the Central Malta Local Plan. In the period 2000-2005 the University planned to increase its intake of overseas students from 500 to 900 students. During the Local Plan period residential facilities may be relocated from Lija to purpose built accommodation on or near to the University Campus (for up to 400 students).

13.4.26 In addition to the anticipated increase in overseas students, the relocation of the University Medical School to Tal-Qroqq (approximately 1,000 students), the demand for accommodation by Gozitan students and the presence of an existing language school at University Road are likely to increase pressure for smaller flats and purpose built communal accommodation in the area for students and transient residents. Through this policy MEPA will seek to reverse the current under-supply of suitable student accommodation types within walking distance from the University. In considering parking standards, this policy assumes that car ownership among transient overseas students is relatively low and the need for motorised transport will be reduced through the provision of suitable accommodation close to the place of study. Student housing development accommodating more than 20 residents would be required to provide adequate car parking provision in line with current MEPA parking requirements.

MEPA will positively seek the redevelopment of the St. Luke's Hospital Site once the existing function ceases to operate. Consequently, MEPA will formulate a Development Brief for the hospital site as designated on Map MP1. The Brief is to provide detailed guidance on land uses, density, layouts, building heights, conservation of important buildings, open space provision, new improved pedestrian links and other urban design measures.

Subject to further studies the Brief will pursue the following principles:

- i. The scheduled main hospital building and its towers are to be conserved, adapted and refurbished for a new use in a way that does not jeopardize the building's setting and architectural integrity. Any new buildings proposed within the site shall not disrupt views onto the scheduled main hospital building in accordance with the provisions of Policy NHSE08;
- ii. The open spaces within the hospital grounds will be embellished and made as publicly accessible as possible;
- iii. The traffic impact by the proposed uses on surrounding streets shall be substantially less than the former hospital use, and the development shall promote arrival by alternative modes of travel other than by car in accordance with Policy NHTR07;
- iv. The developer is to contribute by means of a planning obligation towards the upgrading of the Public Open Space at St. Luke's Entrance as detailed in MPS5 in Appendix 1;
- v. The development's car parking needs are to be accommodated on site; and
- vi. Access through the site to the existing government school is to be retained.

The Brief will be used to guide and promote development in accordance with policies contained in the Local Plan and the Structure Plan. In the meantime, any proposals requiring development permission that would, in the opinion of MEPA, prejudice the above principles of this Development Brief will be refused.

13.4.27 St. Luke's Hospital currently generates significant levels of activity and traffic in Pietà. Despite occupying a site of 6.5 hectares and being located next to an existing bus interchange it generates considerable congestion and competition for on street parking in Pietà. Not enough parking is provided for visitors on site and problems are most acute during visiting hours.

13.4.28 Following the relocation of the main government hospital to Tal-Qroqq, MEPA will require that this site be developed in a comprehensive manner. The Development Brief will determine which land uses will be appropriate for this site. The planned relocation of its outpatients and casualty departments and medical school to the Mater Dei Hospital at Tal-Qroqq is programmed to take at least three years. In addition, the government has indicated that services such as the Medical Stores on St. Luke's Road are likely to also be relocated to within the vicinity of the new hospital. Over the local plan period, therefore, opportunity exists to significantly reduce the impact of the use of this site on surrounding residential streets.

13.4.29 A key objective of the local plan is to reduce congestion (particularly in the Inner Harbours area) and improve the overall quality of life for residents in the area. Opportunity exists for limited redevelopment and new buildings on the site provided the overall impact of the scheme will not have negative environmental implications. In addition the amenity of the neighbourhood can be substantially improved through the embellishment of the open spaces within the hospital grounds and by rendering these spaces more publicly accessible. The Brief will also consider the feasibility of including the beautiful gardens of Villa Hookham Frere within the overall redevelopment project and the creation of new pedestrian links between the Hospital Site and Triq ix-Xatt so as to increase permeability to the Pietà front.

NHMP12

Small-Scale Industrial Area

Proposals for Class 11 (Use Classes Order, 1994) Business and Light Industry, and Class 17 (Use Classes Order, 1994) Storage and Distribution will be considered by MEPA in the SME site as designated in Map MP1 provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:

- i. The SME site is serviced by a separate vehicular access;
- ii. Appropriate vehicle turning areas and loading/unloading bays are provided within the site;
- iii. Adequate parking provision for the entire development is catered for on site;
- iv. The overall design and layout includes effective landscaped buffering that is intended to protect any surrounding residential uses;
- v. A centralized waste collection point is to be provided; and
- vi. All Local Plan policies and DC2005 provisions in relation to design and amenity will apply to the development on this site.

Prior to any development occurring, MEPA will require the developer to submit an outline development application showing comprehensive proposals for the entire SME site which reflect the provisions of this policy and other relevant policies within this Local Plan.

13.4.30 This 2.2 hectare site is currently used as a farm; Use Class 18, Use Classes Order (1994) and is designated through the TPS (1988) as an industrial area. If the site becomes available for development during the local plan period, opportunity exists to provide local small-scale and neighbour compatible industrial uses. Through this policy, MEPA will seek the comprehensive development of the site providing the residential amenity of adjacent residents is protected. MEPA is not pre-empting the development of the site, however the existing established use is considered to have a negative impact (in terms of smells) on surrounding residences.

NHMP13

Site Reserved for Employment Uses

The area indicated on Map MP1 is recommended for inclusion within the Limits of Development and will only be released for development subject to all the following conditions being fully satisfied:

- i. The Structure Plan Review confirms the inclusion of this site within the Urban Development Boundary in accordance with Structure Plan Policy SET 8. Release of this site for development is also subject to Parliamentary approval; and
- ii. An adequate solution is found to the traffic situation that is likely to be created in the surrounding road network by the projected development. This solution is to be to the satisfaction of MEPA and the ADT. Therefore, the traffic situation is to be thoroughly addressed prior to MEPA approving any development in the area. A TIS may be required in this regard.

Should all the above conditions be satisfied, a Development Brief is to be prepared in order to regulate development in the area. This Development Brief shall be prepared in order to define and resolve issues relating to land ownership, access, design and other relevant issues. The Brief shall consider low traffic generating employment uses in the area with preference given to uses ancillary and related to the existing Mater Dei Hospital and the University in line with Structure Plan Policies SOC2 and SOC11 respectively. The provision of a limited amount of student housing is also to be considered. The Brief shall also examine the scope for the expansion of the existing private school in this area.

The Brief will be used to guide and promote development in accordance with policies contained in the Local Plan and the Structure Plan. In the meantime, any proposals requiring development permission that would, in the opinion of MEPA, prejudice the above principles of this Development Brief will be refused.

13.4.31 The importance of this site to serve as a major employment node is in line with the plan's overall strategy for land use and transport. The area identified in Map MP1 is well placed in relation to the

strategic road network, the University and the Mater Dei Hospital and the planned public transport interchange. Over the plan period, new employment uses are directed along the Regional Road or in locations with good access to it. This area is comparable in area to the University of Malta (around 10 hectares). In order to ensure the development promotes alternative transport modes (see Policy NHTR07) and other key elements of the Local Plans strategy, the formulation of a Development Brief for the site is required prior to any further development considerations within this area. This site is outside the Limits of Development established through the TPS (1988) but is recommended for inclusion within the Limits of Development subject to all the conditions of this Policy for the following reasons:

- i. Its geographical proximity to existing science and research institutes and capacity to provide a support employment role in terms of research/high tech orientated employment uses.
- ii. Its location in relation to the strategic road network and capacity to support and sustain future increased levels of public transport provision along the strategic road network. However it is of paramount importance that effective solutions are found to traffic generated in the surrounding road network by the new development and the traffic generated by the existing hospital and University uses, to the satisfaction of MEPA and the ADT. This is to be clearly addressed in the TIS required for the development of the area.

13.4.32 The Transport Coordinating Committee (TraCC) that has been established between MEPA, the Malta Transport Authority (ADT) and the Malta Police, is concerned about the resulting traffic situation at Tal-Qroqq, and especially the Tal-Qroqq roundabout, keeping in mind the projected opening of the Mater Dei Hospital in July 2007, and other activities responsible for the current high traffic levels in the area. Amongst them is the University, which has a population of about 8,000 students and a staff of over 1,200, and that is heavily car-dependant lacking a green transport plan (GTP) altogether. Furthermore, the number of offices and retail outlets in the area is on the increase, and is therefore exacerbating the situation, especially in morning peak hours. Consequently the development of this recommended employment node will inevitably further compound the existing transport situation if an alternative transport solution is not found. In this regard, it is of utmost importance that effective solutions are found to traffic generated by the new and projected development in the surrounding road network to the satisfaction of MEPA and the ADT. This is to be clearly addressed in the TIS required for the development of the area.

14. Pembroke Area Policies

14.1 Introduction

Area: 2.3km²

Population: 2,202

- 14.1.1 Pembroke is one of the largest local council areas within the Plan area. Although the North Harbours area is predominantly urban in character, Pembroke is the only council with a considerable amount of land outside development zone. Land uses within Pembroke's settlement boundary are largely residential, with a varied mix of sports uses (including football, judo, and tennis area) and a number of primary and secondary schools and historic buildings including a fort.
- 14.1.2 Although largely un-populated before 1985, Pembroke's resident population in 1995 increased to 2,202 as a result of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) plots for housing since the late 1980s. This new population consists mainly of young families who moved to Pembroke from throughout Malta. 35% of the population is in the 25-39 age group compared to 23% in Msida and 16% in Sliema. This pace of population growth has not, however, been matched by the development of supporting community facilities. Pembroke's population is expected to rise to between 6,000 and 7,000 and the need for basic services such as banks, post office, pharmacies, other shops and local employment will become much greater over the next ten years. This is a key issue for the Local Plan to address.
- 14.1.3 Former military barracks and other colonial structures which form a distinct group of freestanding buildings dominate the physical layout of Pembroke. Compared to other new housing areas and village cores the area enjoys considerable open space and tree coverage. In terms of form, layout and appearance, much of the area is characterised by its military origin that enhances local identity. Unfortunately, today, many of these historic stand alone buildings and open spaces are derelict or under-utilised. Considerable opportunity exists to rehabilitate these structures and imaginatively integrate new uses within this expanding residential area. With the redevelopment of the major new parish church for Pembroke that includes a community centre, there is considerable scope to create an identifiable centre to link homes to essential shops, jobs and services.
- 14.1.4 Being well connected to the arterial road network, the growth of Pembroke for housing and employment will assist in meeting the Structure Plan objective of reducing transport movements to/from Valletta and the Inner Harbours area. Allocation of land for employment and other uses will ensure that Pembroke does not become a 'commuter village' with poor provision of services for residents. Given the area's substantial vacant land and proximity to the Regional Road, considerable opportunity to promote community facilities and new employment uses exists. A key issue is how to achieve and promote a balanced settlement in terms of land uses. Combined with housing growth, provision of local services and employment uses will reduce commuting, generate fewer car trips and contribute to a balanced traffic flow along the arterial road system and junctions.
- 14.1.5 Most of the area is in public ownership and has been subject to an Action Plan (Pembroke Action Plan) which was approved in 1996. The policies of the Action Plan will be superseded by the Local Plan. However, the overall strategy (and many of the policies) of the Action plan are retained and adopted through this local plan including the need to identify new housing sites, promote employment generation and the urgent need to manage open spaces and re-use scheduled buildings.

14.2 Issues

14.2.1 Lack of Community/Civic Facilities

- i. lack of local community/civic facilities and local shops;
- ii. lack of adequate land for school expansion.

14.2.2 Housing

- i. existing housing zoned with no attention to future community uses or surrounding open spaces.

14.2.3 Employment

- i. need to ensure employment uses do not have a negative impact on Pembroke's residential areas.

14.2.4 Key Scheduled Buildings Neglected

- i. buildings that are important to the historic character of the area are vacant or in a poor state of repair.

14.2.5 Leisure, Sports and Recreation

- i. opportunity to improve sports provision and upgrade facilities for a local and regional catchment;
- ii. scope to protect existing informal spaces for recreation such as cycling/footpaths and picnicking.

14.2.6 Poor Public Transport Links and Dangerous Access onto the Regional Road

- i. need to promote public transport to the area;
- ii. scope to improve the arterial road system and safety of key junctions.

14.3 Key Planning Objectives

14.3.1 Improve Local Facilities

- i. improve provision of, and access to, local shops, open spaces and services for residents;
- ii. identify land for future expansion of schools.

14.3.2 Identify Areas for New Housing

- i. ensure sites for new housing are clearly defined and housing development achieves an efficient use of land without degrading the special open nature of the Pembroke area.

14.3.3 Promote Compatible Employment Uses

- i. promote non industrial uses only and ensure uses do not affect existing and future housing areas;
- ii. ensure access to new employment sites are distinctly separate from access to residential areas.

14.3.4 Encourage New Uses for key Scheduled Buildings

- i. take a flexible approach when considering new commercial, leisure or educational uses for important local buildings.

14.3.5 Promote Leisure, Sports and Recreation

- i. identify opportunities to improve the range and quality of sports provision;
- ii. integrate existing formal and informal spaces with new housing and employment areas.

14.3.6 Promote Better Access to the Area

- i. ensure improvements to the arterial road system and safety of key junctions;
- ii. need to prioritise access to the area by public transport.

General Strategy

14.3.7 Overall MEPA will promote development that ensures the conservation and protection of open areas, trees, coastline and historic buildings and that ensures the retention of Pembroke's residential character and importance as a destination for sports and informal recreation. Local Plan policies for Pembroke are intended to highlight the development potential of sites in government ownership for housing and employment. In highlighting development opportunities, MEPA will require that new development ensures the provision of essential local shops/facilities and employment opportunities for the area's growing population. Key planning priorities include the provision of local centres to provide essential local shops and facilities, better access by public transport and safer junctions onto the Regional Road. These are all planning objectives to be tied to the development of the Pembroke Opportunity area (see Policy NHPE09 - Pembroke Development Brief Site).

14.4 Area Policies

NHPE01

Pembroke Local Centres

MEPA designates Local Centres in Pembroke to establish local retail, office and community facilities in this locality as indicated in Map PE1.

For the Local Centre situated within the Development Brief area, further guidance on the permitted type, layout and scale of uses will be given through the formulation of a Development Brief as outlined in Policy NHPE09.

In the interim period, another Local Centre is designated close to Fort Pembroke as shown on Map PE1. The uses considered acceptable in this Local Centre are as stipulated in Policy NHRE02. MEPA will consider the development of a Local Centre in this part of Pembroke as a planning priority.

14.4.1 In a household survey undertaken by MEPA, 89% of Pembroke residents said the street where they lived had no shops selling everyday items such as groceries and stationery whilst only 20% and 25% responded the same way in Gzira and Sliema. Given Pembroke's anticipated increase in households (from 600 to about 2000), the need for provision of local shops will become more pressing. The term local centre in this context refers to a centre providing a small grouping of facilities to serve the local population. As defined in the Local Plan's retail chapter, neighbourhood centres typically comprise of a newsagent, a general grocery store, a sub-post office, a pharmacy, a hairdresser/s and other small shops and services of a local nature. The scale of development and uses in the local centre identified at the Pembroke Development Brief Site should be appropriate to serve an optimum population for Pembroke of approximately 2000 households.

14.4.2 Opportunity exists in Pembroke to plan and provide a safe and secure shopping area with appropriate facilities for pedestrians arriving by public transport and the car. This policy requires that a plan for servicing, parking and open space is secured from the outset in a holistic rather than piecemeal way. The establishment of retail and community facilities in this area will help to provide

a sense of identity and focus for this expanding community. This is further supported by Policy NHSE05 that gives guidance on the enhancement and embellishment of the designated small square between the local centre and the church. Outline proposals for the development of the local centre shall include a financial commitment to upgrade this square in line with this policy.

NHPE02

Height Envelopes

Maximum building heights for Pembroke are designated as shown in Map PE2. Specific building heights guidance applies to individual sites/areas namely:

Pembroke Development Brief Area

Building height limitations are to be established through the Pembroke Development Brief as per Policy NHPE09.

Wesghet George Portanier Development Brief Area

Building height limitations will be established in the Development Brief for this site as per Policy NHPE10.

14.4.3 Building heights vary across Pembroke. MEPA will ensure that individual buildings such as the Clock Tower, other historic structures and the new Parish Church will keep their visual dominance within Pembroke as more land gets taken up for housing and commercial uses. It is particularly important that development around the periphery of Pembroke respects the scale and setting of these buildings especially in the context of the views onto the Pembroke Coastline from Madliena as identified in Policy NHSE07 (Strategic View Lines). In the case of development of the major sites identified in this policy, apart from abiding by these principles, heights may vary to provide opportunities to open up new vistas and public spaces to help integrate the development into the surrounding area.

NHPE03

Protection and Upgrading of Open Spaces

In accordance with Policy NHRL01, MEPA will not permit development that would have an adverse effect on the open spaces that contribute to Pembroke's distinct townscape character. These spaces are identified on Map PE1, and these include:

- i. Garden and Recreational Areas (Existing/Proposed Green Areas and Informal Recreational Spaces);**
- ii. The proposed St. Patrick's Park; and**
- iii. Priority Areas for Tree Planting/Protection of Existing Trees.**

To promote the public use of these open areas, proposals for landscaping and management schemes and related suitable ancillary development such as appropriately located public conveniences, picnic areas, footpaths and seating will be favourably considered by MEPA.

14.4.4 It is essential that high priority is given to the protection of informal and formal open spaces which contribute significantly to the unique character of Pembroke. Through this policy the local plan prioritises key sites for upgrading as public gardens. Other areas are protected from further development for the valuable and essential role they will play as an amenity to future generations of residents in this area. Provision of children's play areas, picnic sites, together with the provision of toilet facilities and other appropriate amenities by competent authorities will be supported by MEPA. Picnicking opportunities with support facilities are relatively scarce in Malta and a need exists to introduce suitably equipped picnic areas in key open spaces. Preference will be given to areas that are currently in a dilapidated state.

NHPE04

Sports Facilities and Walking/Cycling Routes

In accordance with Structure Plan Policy REC 5, MEPA will encourage more intensive use of existing and planned sports facilities in Pembroke as designated in Map PE1. The development of a range of sport and recreational facilities to serve people living in, working in or visiting Pembroke will be supported by MEPA.

New sports/recreational facility uses will be considered outside these designated sites only where the proposal:

- i. Contributes to the rehabilitation of a scheduled building in terms of Policy NHPE08 and provides an appropriate use for the building itself; and**
- ii. has an adequate catchment area that may also include adjacent localities; and**
- iii. improves the standard/range of a school's sports facilities.**

In accordance with Policy NHTR05, Map PE1 also shows appropriate pedestrian and cycle routes for Pembroke. Development proposals that would compromise these routes will not be permitted. Any major (governmental or private) development proposal located within Pembroke will be required to include generous provision for cycle paths and footways, to the satisfaction of MEPA.

14.4.5 There is a dynamic relationship between changing population characteristics and demand for sports pitches and facilities. Demand in Pembroke from junior age groups will rise sharply over the plan period. The Local Plan adopts a strategy to promote sport and recreation facilities for residents and visitors. Improvements to facilities may include the introduction of synthetic surfaces, floodlighting and changing facilities. Associated retail facilities shall be ancillary and allowed only in order to safeguard the viability of retail uses within the planned local centres/rehabilitation of key historic buildings.

14.4.6 While recognising that there will be a limit to the amount of national sports facilities that the area can accommodate, the local plan will not prejudice new facilities such as gyms and school facilities for Pembroke's growing local community and adjacent localities.

14.4.7 MEPA will encourage government, the local council and private developers to assist in implementing walking/cycle routes. Particular attention will be paid to providing safe routes for children to get to school, to workplaces, the local centres and bus stages. Developers of major developments will similarly be expected to provide towards high standard pedestrian and cycle facilities as indicated on Map PE1. Pedestrian/cyclist safety and convenience can also be enhanced by measures to calm, reduce or exclude traffic in residential areas and the local centres. Use of pedestrian and cycle routes bordering the AFM ranges will be controlled especially during the operation of these ranges. The needs of people with disabilities will be considered in all aspects of design.

NHPE05

Future School Provision

In line with Policy NHSO04, MEPA will favourably consider the provision of new schools, or extension to existing schools on sites as designated on Map PE1.

14.4.8 During the local plan period new housing units will be built thereby further increasing the resident population. Sites for school provision have been safeguarded for the educational demand resulting from increases in the population of the region.

14.4.9 The site currently committed for stores/bus depot owned by the Ministry for Education is also earmarked for the redevelopment of a school. Due to demographic changes and the increase in pressure for expansion of existing schools, the local plan envisages the need for further schooling premises within Pembroke to cater for future demands.

NHPE06

Infrastructure Improvements

MEPA will require proposals to upgrade and improve as necessary existing sewage, electricity and water networks prior to the approval of any further major housing or employment developments, including the Pembroke Development Brief Site.

The likely road and utility infrastructure requirements for the development of the Pembroke Development Brief Site will be identified through the formulation of a Development Brief as stipulated in Policy NHPE09.

14.4.10 The existing sewage, electricity and water networks will have to be upgraded and improved to cater for the planned development. The demand to be generated by these land uses will need to be calculated, however, it has been established that the existing networks will not be able to cope with such development demands and further investment is needed. A site has been designated for a new electricity distribution centre in Pembroke.

14.4.11 The strategy of the local plan, in line with Structure Plan Policy, is to upgrade the main arterial road without prejudice to Pembroke's community. The new network of roads is intended to discourage additional traffic within residential areas, but at the same time provide much needed links to retail and business areas.

NHPE07

Housing Sites

MEPA, in line with Policy NHHO03, will favourably consider proposals for the construction of housing units on the sites as designated on Map PE1 subject to the following criteria:

- i. The type of housing on Sites E and G as indicated on Map PE1 shall be maisonettes and flats;**
- ii. The building height limitation shall be in line with Map PE2;**
- iii. at least 10% of the area of each site shall be dedicated to landscaping that shall secure the protection of existing mature trees;**
- iv. The architectural design of these residential units shall enhance the identity and local distinctiveness of Pembroke; and**
- v. The total number of individual dwellings developed on the designated Sites E and G shall not exceed 304 units.**

14.4.12 In Pembroke there are only two as yet undeveloped housing sites from the previously planned 7 Sites (Sites A to G) that could accommodate a total of 665 dwelling units. These areas will consolidate Pembroke as an urban settlement and link housing to the planned local centres, community facilities and sites for employment. Throughout these sites MEPA will encourage suitable designs that complement the urban environmental characteristics of the settlements. Although housing is anticipated to be primarily family sized accommodation, MEPA expects to secure a proportion of smaller dwellings in consultation with the Housing Authority, in anticipation of an increase in demand for single person and smaller dwellings over the plan period.

14.4.13 The development of these sites must protect, respect and enhance all the existing important mature trees and other important landscape features and open spaces. Proposals shall also respect existing buildings, including the ex-barracks buildings of architectural and historic importance.

In line with Policy NHSE10 (New Uses For Historic Buildings), MEPA will adopt a flexible approach in considering appropriate new uses for Fort Pembroke, Australia Hall, the Ex-Raffles Discotheque, Chapels, the Clock Tower Building and Martin Luther King Hall as indicated in Map PE2 and as detailed below:

- i. Fort Pembroke (Grade I) - presently used as a school. Commercial and Community uses on this site will be considered including those in Use Class 5 (Offices), Use Class 7 (Non-Residential Institutions), and/or Use Class 8 (Education). The utilisation of the underground space of this Fort will also be considered for employment or other commercial purposes.
- ii. Australia Hall (Grade II) - built as a meeting hall for soldiers and currently vacant and internally gutted. This building could be used as a public meeting hall, for commercial use, exhibition space or other suitable cultural/recreational use, including those in Use Class 4 (Shops), Use Class 5 (Offices), Use Class 6 (Food and Drink), Use Class 7 (Non-Residential Institutions), Use Class 8 (Education) or Use Class 9 (Assembly and Leisure).
- iii. Ex-Raffles Discotheque (Grade II) - this building was used as a discotheque and is currently vacant. Appropriate reuses for this building may include a mix of club, local council premises or office uses in addition to Use Class 5 (Offices), Use Class 6 (Food and Drink), Use Class 7 (Non-Residential Institutions), Use Class 8 (Education), or Use Class 9 (Assembly and Leisure). The reuse of the building as a disco will not be permitted given the likely impact on residents.
- iv. Church and Churchyard (Grade I)- currently used as a sports club. The existing church is well suited for a sports club, but alternative uses could include those in Use Class 5 (Offices), Use Class 7 (Non-Residential Institutions), or Use Class 9 (Assembly and Leisure).
- v. Martin Luther King Hall (Grade III)- currently used as a school. Should the existing use cease, the re-use of this building as a hostel, sports association, gym or research centre will be considered, as will uses in Use Class 3 (Hostels), Use Class 7 (Non-Residential Institutions), Use Class 8 (Education) or Use Class 9 (Assembly and Leisure). Existing access to this building will be retained and no new accesses will be permitted.

Any proposals submitted on these scheduled buildings shall respect the buildings' structure, architectural integrity, setting and any views from and onto the scheduled buildings. In view of their scheduled nature, interventions may require a Restoration Method Statement.

14.4.14 There are some 100 buildings, structures or groups of buildings in Pembroke listed as being of special architectural or historic interest. A number of buildings are at risk particularly where their original uses are no longer viable and/or they have been vacated. In these cases, sympathetic conversions to new uses may be the best way of securing their long-term future. Where conversion is permitted, original structural features should be retained wherever possible and alterations should maintain the integrity of the building and should not put the structure or that of adjoining buildings at risk. Alterations should reflect the plan form of the building, and decorative features that are of architectural or historic interest should be retained or reinstated. Repair of the fabric of historic buildings is preferable to replacement and should be undertaken using authentic, matching materials. Furthermore, internal alterations will have to be considered following expert advice.

MEPA will formulate a Development Brief for the area designated on Map PE1. The Brief shall provide guidance on the mix and type of uses appropriate on this site. The recommended uses for this site in order of priority are:

- i. Non-industrial employment generating uses of a national/regional catchment area;
- ii. Leisure uses;
- iii. A Local Centre as indicated in Map PE1; and
- iv. Private sector housing.

The Brief will present potential developers with detailed guidance on:

- a. **The size and location of office, leisure and other employment uses;**
- b. **The type, size and layout of uses in the Local Centre; and**
- c. **Urban design principles, open space provision, landscaping, building heights, parking provision, access and phasing.**

Key planning obligations of the development will include:

1. **A comprehensive infrastructural improvement in line with Policy NHPE06;**
2. **Provision of better access to the area by public transport;**
3. **The upgrading of the existing Regional Road Junction that serves Suffolk Road and the schools area, and the construction of the link road from this junction to the Pembroke Development Brief Site;**
4. **Other improvements to the arterial and local road network deemed appropriate through the recommendations of a Transport Impact Statement (TIS);**
5. **Upgrading of St. Patrick's Park as per Policy NHPE03; and**
6. **Upgrading of open spaces.**

The Brief will be used to guide and promote development in accordance with policies contained in this Local Plan and the Structure Plan. In the meantime, any proposals requiring development permission that would, in the opinion of MEPA, prejudice the objectives of this Development Brief will be refused.

In line with the need to relocate the Police Compound and the Armed Forces of Malta Site, MEPA in conjunction with the Armed Forces of Malta and the Police Authorities will assist in identifying suitable alternative sites for these uses. Proposals for the layout and design of developments within the Pembroke Development Brief Site will be considered prior to, and in anticipation of, the relocation of these facilities.

14.4.15 Without prejudice to the content of the Brief, the following elements are suggested for consideration in respect of the mixed use area:

- i. the relation and location of the commercial area with the residential areas;
- ii. to have a dedicated road link for the commercial area so as to avoid negative impacts on residential areas;
- iii. to split the area into phases, to account for current and future availability for development and so permit the timely relocation of the Police and AFM uses from this site;
- iv. to prioritise access to the site by public transport, but retain acceptable levels of car parking;
- v. to tackle the issue of surface run-off problems in the area's immediate vicinity; and
- vi. to provide pedestrian routes through the area to link to the local centre of Pembroke.

14.4.16 The development of this area also provides opportunities to fulfil elements of the Local Plan strategy for Pembroke;

- i. Better integrate existing informal and formal spaces with new housing and employment areas;
- ii. Ensure new uses do not affect existing and future housing areas; and
- iii. Ensure access to new employment sites is distinctly separate to access to residential areas.

14.4.17 Currently the Police and the Armed Forces of Malta occupy an area of land earmarked for mixed use development and on land partly allocated for Pembroke's Local Centre (Policy NHPE01). Recently the area used by the Police has been cleared, but the existing huts are still in use. The Armed Forces of Malta use their premises to operate, repair and park heavy vehicles.

MEPA will formulate a Development Brief for this site. The Brief is to provide detailed guidance on land uses and their layout, open space provision, landscaping, building heights, density, urban design measures, required road and junction reorganisation and parking provision.

Subject to further studies, the recommended uses for this site are:

- i. A strategic car parking facility incorporating around 800 to 1000 spaces is to be constructed below ground level (the exact number of spaces is to be determined by means of a TIS);**
- ii. A conference facility possibly to be incorporated below ground level;**
- iii. Part of the site is to be developed as high quality residential development; and**
- iv. A formal garden on the remaining part of the site to be landscaped and maintained at the expense of the developer.**

The Development Brief is also to elaborate requirements relating to the following transport principles:

- a. A new Resident Parking Zone for Pembroke, in accordance with Policy NHTR16 and as shown in Map PE1, must be introduced in parallel to the operation of the strategic public car park on site; and**
- b. The strategic car park is to have good pedestrian links to the St. Julian's/Paceville Town Centre and the St. George's Bay area.**

The Brief will be used to guide and promote development in accordance with policies contained in the Local Plan and the Structure Plan. In the meantime, any proposals requiring development permission that would, in the opinion of MEPA, prejudice the above principles of this Development Brief will be refused.

14.4.18 The surface car park at Wesghet George Portanier in front of the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) is already serving partly to accommodate the parking requirements of Paceville, especially the St. George's Bay area. Although it is rather small as a surface car park, if excavated and an underground car park is constructed, this area would serve as a strategic car park. Land adjacent to this car park, also designated as a formal garden, can be joined to the car park at lower levels. CPPS funds will be utilised to promote the construction of this car park. The public car park is estimated to accommodate between 800 to 1000 spaces. These spaces will be used during the day for conference purposes and in the evening in relation with Paceville's night-time activities. The Site is also well located for the development of high quality residential units, a conference centre and a formal garden.

15. Paceville

15.1 Introduction

Area: 0.6km²

Population: 783

- 15.1.1 Since the 1960s Paceville has experienced rapid building growth relating to expansion of the tourism and the domestic entertainment sectors. Many of the original two storey terraced houses have now been redeveloped to ground floor bars, restaurants or other entertainment uses, typically with overlying tourist accommodation. There are now 6,226 tourist bed spaces in the area (NTOM 1999) and a falling resident population which now stands at approximately 783 (figures adapted from 1998 electoral register). The pace of this entertainment and tourism related growth is in part due to Paceville's proximity to the coast and Regional Road. As an entertainment destination, the area has a national catchment with most people arriving by car. The existing transport infrastructure is seriously inadequate and cannot cope with the resulting demands for parking and pedestrian space.
- 15.1.2 In 1992 the Planning Services Division in the Works Department recognised the potential effect of further unplanned building growth in the area and published the Paceville Study. The scope of this report was to outline measures to improve conditions for residents and make recommendations for embellishment and traffic management. 24 proposals were outlined to be implemented through a 'Paceville Co-ordinating Committee', most of them in the period up to 1998. Despite few of these being implemented, the report succeeded in highlighting investment priorities such as improvement of the Regional Road Junction and the siting of peripheral public car parks. Similarly priority areas for improving street elevations, pedestrian spaces, street furniture, lighting and landscaping were highlighted.
- 15.1.3 Since this study, development activity has continued to shift towards the coastal belt and the St George's Bay area. The replenishment of this bay as a larger sandy beach and the location of new family orientated leisure uses in Bay Street have extended day-time and early evening activity. Concern about this shift in terms of noise and congestion for residents in the Swieqi and Pembroke areas has been expressed by both local councils and the residents who see this as an unwelcome expansion of Paceville's commercial centre. Access to open space and the coast is poor for residents and visitors in Paceville. With the exception of Wied Harq Hamiem at St. George's Bay, the area is largely built up. In 2005, a Development Brief was approved by MEPA that clarifies the appropriate use of the former Maltacom sites at Pender Place and Mercury House, where an opportunity exists to provide for employment uses and a strategic car park to serve central Paceville.
- 15.1.4 Whilst recognising the need to accommodate the operational requirements of the tourism and entertainment sectors within Paceville, the Local Plan seeks to establish clear planning frameworks to protect residential areas, manage traffic, improve the tourist product and enhance the poor quality street environment. The area strategy for Paceville will be made in the context of the Local Plan's overall land use and transportation strategy, the Pender Place and Mercury House Development Brief (2005), and where still relevant, the Paceville Study (1992).

15.2 Issues

15.2.1 Inadequate Road/Pedestrian Infrastructure

- i. Congestion;
- ii. Pedestrian overcrowding;

- iii. Abuse of on-street parking; and
- iv. Poorly located bus terminus in terms of pedestrian/vehicle conflict.

15.2.2 Extent and Quality of Tourist Product

- i. Certain tourism accommodation and facilities needs upgrading.

15.2.3 Residential Amenities and Facilities

- i. Conflict arising from encroachment of entertainment uses into residential areas;
- ii. Residents compete with visitors for limited on-street parking; and
- iii. Few local shops.

15.2.4 Poor Quality Public Realm

- i. Building heights do not relate to street widths and infrastructure needs upgrading;
- ii. Poor pedestrian access to the coast;
- iii. Lack of civic/public open spaces; and
- iv. Poor quality surfacing materials and street furniture.

15.3 Key Planning Objectives

15.3.1 Traffic Management

- i. Restrict traffic entering the centre of Paceville at night to improve the pedestrian environment
- ii. Identify suitable sites for a public transport interchange and public car parks;
- iii. Promote Resident Parking Zones within and on the boundary of Paceville; and
- iv. Introduce safety and upgrade the capacity of the Regional Road Junction prior to further improvements to public transport and car park infrastructure.

15.3.2 Improve Tourist Product

- i. Encourage the upgrading of existing tourist accommodation; and
- ii. Encourage greater diversity of tourist attractions.

15.3.3 Improve Residential Amenity

- i. Contain the entertainment sector to the centre of Paceville and St. George's Bay area;
- ii. Restrict entertainment uses in residential areas; and
- iii. Improve opportunities for provision of retailing and local services.

15.3.4 The Waterfront and Urban Setting

- i. Improve and enhance public access/enjoyment of the coast; and
- ii. Prioritise areas for investment into pedestrian friendly streets.

General Strategy

- 15.3.5 Within Paceville the spread of the entertainment industry into adjoining residential streets will be contained through control on the type of uses deemed appropriate in residential areas. The use of Resident Parking Zones to restrict on-street parking by non-residents is part of this overall strategy to improve the quality of life for local residents and stem further decline in the permanent resident population.

- 15.3.6 The strategy for traffic is to limit congestion within the centre of Paceville by encouraging visitors/workers to arrive by public transport or utilise one of three planned public car parks (see Policy NHPV03 and Map PV3). The Local Plan prioritises the re-design of the Paceville Junction which is an essential infrastructural requirement for the indicated new bus terminus and car park at the Mercury House site (see Policy NHTR09).
- 15.3.7 Within the Town Centre and the Leisure and Entertainment areas, restaurants, bars, clubs and other uses relating to the entertainment industry will continue to establish. Diversification of entertainment uses including uses to complement the new sandy beach at St. George's Bay will also be promoted around the bay area, particularly where uses extend peak visitor activity periods into day-time hours. New tourist accommodation establishments will be limited within Paceville. This will help to achieve other planning objectives for Paceville that are to reduce the burden on the road infrastructure and encourage a range of services, open spaces and other facilities for the permanent resident population and visitors.

15.4 Area Policies

NHPV01

Traffic Management and Restraint

Measures to significantly reduce traffic entering the centre of Paceville will be promoted. Map PV3 indicates changes in road priorities, car parks and pedestrian priority areas as part of an overall approach to traffic management in Paceville. In addition, a public transport interchange is planned within the Mercury House and Pender Place Development Brief area. Within designated pedestrian priority streets and nighttime pedestrian streets as indicated in Map PV3, on-site parking facilities or new garage openings will not be permitted except where on-site parking is intended for use with new dwellings for permanent residential occupation.

Development deemed to prejudice this strategy or elements of it as detailed in Policies NHPV01, 2, 3, and NHTR09 will be refused by MEPA. In addition, developments that may compromise future proposals for managed pedestrianisation in other parts of the town centre and within the designated Entertainment Priority Area as indicated on Map PV1 will be refused.

- 15.4.1 The Local Plan establishes a planning framework within Paceville from which MEPA will make informed decisions on proposals that might otherwise hinder future schemes for traffic management. MEPA recognizes, however, that pro-active proposals for the day-to-day management of traffic are likely to come from the Local Council or other competent public bodies. In the meantime MEPA shall favourably consider any proposals that contribute to this overall approach to traffic management. Proposals that would prejudice future restrictions on traffic in the centre of Paceville or other elements of the transport strategy will not be considered acceptable.
- 15.4.2 The approach to traffic management in Paceville is to discourage night-time traffic seeking parking in the congested Town Centre and Entertainment Priority Area (see Map PV1 for outlines of these areas). Within the area identified on Map PV3, MEPA will encourage future proposals to close these streets at night during periods of peak demand for entertainment facilities. The Local Plan, through this policy, seeks to ensure that development of new entertainment facilities and other commercial uses within the above areas will not compromise any future proposals for traffic management.
- 15.4.3 The Local Plan sets these streets as priorities for night-time closure to traffic as, given the intensity of traffic generating development in Paceville, this is necessary in land use planning terms. Day-to-day implementation of traffic management within Paceville is outside the remit of the Local Plan. Definition of peak hours and the physical works required for this scheme will be subject to a full Traffic Impact Statement and a related submission for development permission. Proposals for traffic

management within Paceville from St. Julian's Local Council or other competent bodies will be encouraged with the full cooperation of MEPA. Access should, however, be retained for resident traffic, existing on-site parking and emergency/essential service traffic.

- 15.4.4 It is evident that the regulation and design of the pedestrian only access area should take account of the requirements of residents of St. George's Park to enjoy vehicular access at all times.

NHPV02

Resident Parking Zone

Map PV1 shows priority streets for inclusion in the Paceville Resident Parking Zone (RPZ). In co-operation with the ADT and the Swieqi/St. Julian's Local Councils, an implementation plan and management system for RPZs shall be encouraged within and around Paceville.

- 15.4.5 Policy NHTR16 promotes the introduction of Resident Parking Zones throughout the Local Plan area. Streets that are primarily residential and are subject to a severe competition for spaces between residents and non-residents are proposed for inclusion under a RPZ scheme for Paceville. These streets are identified on the Area Policy Map. It is anticipated that the scheme will be self-financing in the long-term and management of the RPZ will be through the St. Julian's Local Council.
- 15.4.6 Where no RPZ for Paceville or Swieqi exists, a planning obligation will include the need for the developer to undertake studies on demand for on-street parking within Paceville. This study will form the basis for the implementation of RPZs in the area. The planning obligation and details of the use of CPPS funds will be drawn up by MEPA with regard to the principles established within Section 6 of the Qui-Si-Sana Development Brief.

NHPV03

Public Car Parks

CPPS funds will be utilized to promote the construction of the three Car Parks as identified in Map PV3 with good pedestrian links to the Town Centre and the St. George's Bay area. These priority sites are identified at:

- i. Pender Place in accordance with the Pender Place and Mercury House Development Brief (2005);**
- ii. The Wesghet George Portanier Strategic Public Car Park (see Policy NHPE10); and**
- iii. Zone A of the Villa Rosa Site re-development (see Policy NHPV13).**

Public car parks will not be permitted where they would result in traffic passing through the Town Centre, residential areas or the Resort Zones identified in Map PV1.

- 15.4.7 Thoughtless and illegal parking is evident throughout Paceville. In 1992 the Paceville Study estimated that over 6,000 cars seek parking on a busy evening in Paceville, many of which park illegally, on corners of junctions and generally contribute to congestion. With the introduction of Resident Parking Zones and an overall reduction of traffic from the centre of Paceville programmed through Policies NHPV01 and 02, the demand for public transport (as a mode of arrival) and off-street public car parks is expected to rise further in coming years.
- 15.4.8 The sites identified are situated close to good existing and proposed future access points from the Regional Road. The three identified sites are capable of providing good pedestrian links to the town centre and St. George's Bay area. Alternative sites will, however, be considered providing each one retains reasonable access to the Regional Road. All applications will require a satisfactory TIS and should clearly indicate the number of spaces, how the spaces will be available to the public over any 24hr period, access and relevant off-site planning considerations (including the RPZ proposed through the Pender Place Public Car Park).

Pender Place Car Park

15.4.9 As part of the overall redevelopment of Pender Place and Mercury House MEPA will seek the incorporation of a major underground parking facility. People seeking to enter Paceville (in particular, the town centre) by car, will be encouraged to use this strategic car park. Vehicle access will be from St. Andrews Street and the car park will lead traffic onto the indicated Regional Road Junction to exit. A temporary surface car park accommodating 450 cars has been constructed at Pender Place as an interim measure to relieve some of the pressures being generated by new developments in Paceville. Policy NHTR04 anticipates that this car park could be used for the Paceville to Sliema Park and Ride service.

Wesghet George Portanier Car Park

15.4.10 The St. George's Bay area is expected to attract significant numbers of people seeking the existing and proposed facilities programmed at the bay and lower Augustine Street entertainment area. As an integral part of the redevelopment of the existing surface car park close to the ITS (see Policy NHPE10) MEPA shall seek the construction of an underground multi-storey car park at Wesghet George Portanier with access/exit from the new hotel link road and convenient pedestrian links to the bay.

Villa Rosa Car Park

15.4.11 Villa Rosa is earmarked for re-development in accordance with the provisions of Policy NHPV13 and Map PV4. Given the very close proximity of this major site to the Town Centre and Entertainment Priority Area in Paceville, the opportunity exists to incorporate a modestly sized public car park with good vehicular access from the Pembroke side.

NHPV04

Development of New Hotels in Paceville

Applications for the development of new hotel projects within the areas identified for Hotel development in Map PV1 will be considered favourably provided the following criteria are met:

- i. The prior approval of the Malta Tourism Authority is obtained;**
- ii. The proposed development is not likely to create significant adverse impacts on the local amenity;**
- iii. The scale of the proposed development is consistent with the building height limitation and the character of the area;**
- iv. High quality design in terms of height, volume, layout, elevations, materials, finishes and landscaping is achieved;**
- v. The proposal will not compromise existing and future proposals for traffic management in the area as set out by the relevant Area Policy Map;**
- vi. Development proposals are to comply with established standards for access, on-site parking provision, coach parking facilities and alighting points. In those cases where on-site parking provision is not desirable, the developer will be required to pay the appropriate level of contribution to the CPPS applicable to the relevant area; and**
- vii. The proposal is in conformity with all relevant Policies in this Local Plan.**

Apart from conforming to all the conditions listed in this Policy, development within the designated Resort Zones is also to conform to the provisions of Policy NHPV06.

15.4.12 This policy encourages additional hotel development within the designated areas identified for Hotel development. The areas identified for Hotel development consist of those areas in Paceville that are designated as Resort Zones, Entertainment Priority Areas, Town Centre and specific residential areas as identified in Map PV1. This policy therefore ensures that hotel development does not

spread into the surrounding areas outside the areas identified for Hotel development. The specified criteria will ensure that the permitted development is in line with the Malta Tourism Authority's policies, is in harmony with the surrounding area and will not result in significant adverse impacts.

NHPV05

Entertainment Priority Areas

The Local Plan designates Entertainment Priority Areas within Paceville as indicated in the Area Policy Map PV1.

The following is a list of acceptable land-uses (new uses, extensions to existing uses, and change of uses) within all frontages located within the Entertainment Priority Areas:

- i. Class 1 (Use Classes Order, 1994) dwelling units.**
- ii. Class 3 (Use Classes Order, 1994) hostels and hotels provided that these uses are in accordance with all other relevant Local Plan policies.**
- iii. Class 4 (Use Classes Order, 1994) small shops provided that:**
 - a. the small shops (of any nature) are not to exceed a total floor area of 50 sqm each, and convenience shops are not to exceed a total floor area of 75 sqm each;**
 - b. they comply with all the provisions of paragraphs. 1.4.16 to 1.4.18 of the Interim Retail Planning Guidelines (2003); and**
 - c. they comply with all the relevant sections of the DC2005 (design, access, amenity, etc.),**
- iv. Supermarkets provided that they comply with all the provisions of Policy NHRE04.**
- v. Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 100 sqm.**
- vi. Class 6 (Use Classes Order, 1994) food and drink, including hot food take-aways. However the sale of food and drink for consumption on or off the premises is to be at ground floor level only.**
- vii. Class 7 (Use Classes Order, 1994) non-residential institutions including interpretation centres.**
- viii. Class 8 (a) (Use Classes Order, 1994) small-scale educational facilities only.**
- ix. Class 9 (Use Classes Order, 1994) assembly and leisure.**
- x. Class 10 (b) (Use Classes Order, 1994) marine leisure – diving, sailing or windsurfing school or other marine based sports or recreation.**
- xi. Taxi Business or for the hire of motor vehicles.**
- xii. Amusement Arcade or centre, or a funfair.**
- xiii. Band club, social club, dance hall, wedding hall and discotheque.**
- xiv. Cleaning of clothes in venues where articles are brought by the public, provided that the gross floor area does not exceed 50 sqm.**
- xv. Cinema.**
- xvi. Bakery and Confectionery with provision for outside catering.**

15.4.13 The main role of Paceville as a focus for entertainment uses is recognized by the Local Plan. Proposals for hotels, bars, restaurants and a wider range of entertainment uses will therefore be encouraged within this area. The provision of retail and office facilities in the areas delineated as Entertainment Priority Areas is to be limited to small scale developments only in line with the stance of directing the development of larger scale commercial facilities to Town and Local Centres.

15.4.14 Facilities within Paceville cater for a predominantly visiting population with few remaining urban open spaces or other services/facilities for residents. The area will continue to accommodate development which supports Paceville's main function as a destination for leisure and entertainment whilst still providing opportunities to improve the range of services and facilities for tourists and local residents.

NHPV06

Resort Zones

Within the areas designated in the Area Policy Map as Resort Zones, proposals to develop or upgrade hotel facilities will be favourably considered by MEPA provided that:

- i. The use of the development will be strictly limited to hotel use and ancillary facilities, and has the approval of the Malta Tourism Authority;**
- ii. Proposals are of a high quality and with an up-market orientation;**
- iii. Existing open/landscaped areas are integrated with the development and where this is not possible, an equivalent area within the site is found;**
- iv. Proposals do not further restrict public access to and along the coast; and**
- v. Proposals are in accordance with other relevant planning policies.**

Apart from conforming to all the conditions listed in this Policy, development within the designated Resort Zones is also to conform to the provisions of Policy NHPV04 and to the relevant provisions of Policy NHPV08.

15.4.15 Within the last 20 years a number of 4/5 star hotels/resorts have been established on Paceville's coastal peninsulas. These hotels contribute significantly to the range and quality of tourist accommodation and facilities at a national level. Therefore in order to safeguard these strategically important hotel facilities located within Resort Zones, MEPA will only favourably consider proposals that improve the existing range and quality of facilities within existing hotels. In addition, the change of use of existing hotels located within Resort Zones to other uses will not be permitted in line with Policy NHTO02. Upgrading proposals of existing hotels will only be accepted by MEPA provided that development does not adversely impinge on the setting/appearance of existing landscaped open spaces that are a positive characteristic of these resorts, and provided that access to and along the coast is safeguarded.

NHPV07

Leisure Uses at St. George's Bay

Within the area designated in Map PV1 for Leisure Uses at St. George's Bay, development proposals for small-scale Food and Drink facilities (Use Class 6 of the Use Classes Order, 1994) will be favorably considered by MEPA provided that all the following conditions are adhered to:

- i. The height of the development shall not exceed one floor without semi-basement above street level;**
- ii. There is to be a continuous front garden that is to be at least 3 m wide for the purpose of placing tables and chairs in front of the Food and Drink facilities. This front garden area is to be physically separated from the pavement by means of a low boundary wall in order to prevent tables and chairs being placed on the pavement;**
- iii. The roof level of the Food and Drink facilities is not to be accessible to the public;**
- iv. MEPA will ensure that the development will fully safeguard the amenity of adjacent residential units by imposing strict conditions as necessary;**
- v. The design of the facades of the Food and Drink facilities is to be as uniform as possible and of a high standard to the satisfaction of MEPA; and,**
- vi. All services located at roof level are to be screened in such a manner that the screen is read as part of the design of the building.**

15.4.16 The Local Plan strategy for the St. George's Bay waterfront is to create continuous active frontages that would add to the character and vitality of the area both during the day and in the evening. In line with this strategy, low-key catering establishments are also being promoted in Zone C of the Villa Rosa redevelopment site as detailed in policy NHPV13. Pedestrian activity along the bay is further promoted by means of the semi-pedestrianization of the street running along the side of the sandy beach.

15.4.17 There currently exists a narrow and elongated stretch of vacant land situated between the St. George's Park residential complex and Triq id-Dragnara. The development of this derelict stretch of land for catering establishments with highly active frontages is in line with this strategy for St.

George's bay. Restrictions on building height and uses are being imposed in order to safeguard the amenity of adjacent residential uses.

NHPV08

Height Envelopes

Maximum building heights for Paceville are designated as shown in Map PV2. Specific building heights guidance applies on individual sites/areas namely:

Villa Rosa

Development shall not compromise the setting of the villa, valley and the bay in line with Policies NHPV13, NHSE07 and 8.

St. George's Park

In consideration of large scale redevelopment of this site MEPA will consider a flexible approach to height envelopes provided that:

- i. The ratio of built to un-built space is according to the previous permit granted in 1987; and
- ii. A maximum height of 3 floors is retained in that part of the designated area that is located adjacent to St. George's Bay.

Residential Buffer Zones

The specific maximum building heights for these zones are as detailed in Policy NHPV12.

Resort Zone

MEPA will adopt a restrictive approach to building heights within this zone. Heights will conform to existing permitted heights on site with the exception of the Hilton Tower, which will not be used to determine future heights.

Pender Place and Mercury House

Building heights are as specified in the Pender Place and Mercury House Development Brief (2005)

15.4.18 Overall there is no relaxation of building heights from those specified in the TPS (1988) due to the area's over-stretched infrastructure in relation to traffic, open space, tourist facilities and other services. Further relaxation of heights would jeopardize the plan's objectives which are to reduce congestion, improve the tourist product and enjoyment of the public realm.

NHPV09

Environmental Improvements

MEPA shall support measures by the ADT, the Works Division and any other relevant agencies to improve the flow of pedestrians within Paceville. Priority areas for improvements are highlighted in Map PV3, namely:

Within the Town Centre

Designs should lower kerbs, introduce new surfaces and allow for night-time pedestrianisation as envisaged by Policy NHPV01 and as indicated in Maps PV2 and 3.

St. George's Bay

Designs should promote pedestrian priority at the promenade as indicated in Policy NHPV01 and Map PV3.

Spinola Palace Gardens

The existing gardens and sports pitch will be redesigned as a new public open space to act as a gateway from St. Julian's into Paceville via Paceville Avenue. In considering proposals for the embellishment of the Spinola Palace Gardens, the provision of an alternative community sports pitch shall be sought through the development of the Spinola Bay Car Park site (see Policy NHSJ03) or on an alternative locally accessible site.

Triq id-Dragunara

The area of land that was previously illegally used as a car park is to be developed into a publicly accessible and landscaped garden. Convenient pedestrian walkways are to be integrated within this garden in order to connect Triq id-Dragunara to the rocky coastline of St. George's Bay.

15.4.19 The public realm within Paceville has become downgraded as development has intensified. With the exception of the Spinola Palace Gardens, road space is the only notable open space in the town centre. Therefore the objective is to introduce properly landscaped and publicly accessible open spaces including the planned open space next to Mercury House as further detailed in the approved Pender Place and Mercury House Development Brief, the Spinola Palace Gardens, Zone H of the Villa Rosa site, and a planned new public garden at Triq id-Dragunara. Overcrowding of central streets at night (relating to demand for entertainment facilities) is worsened by traffic and parked cars which displace space for pedestrians. This policy indicates how road space could be used in Paceville. Designs should include comprehensive signage and encourage good pedestrian links with Spinola Palace Gardens, car parks and a public transport interchange.

15.4.20 Through Policy NHPV01, the Local Plan seeks the future managed pedestrianisation of Paceville's central streets. Within these streets, designs should be particularly robust in terms of materials and the adaptability of the roads to accommodate traffic by day, and pedestrians by night. Design proposals within the town centre and other designated areas should be sensitive to the area's need for basic facilities such as seating and public conveniences. The Local Plan recognises that Paceville Avenue forms a sensitive buffer between the remaining residential streets in this part of Paceville, and thus only encourages low-impact uses along this street. In co-operation with the Works Division, MEPA will encourage Paceville Avenue (see Map PV2) as a pedestrian entrance into Paceville.

15.4.21 Policy NHPV09 identifies sites at either Lapsi Street (St. Julian's Primary School grounds) or other suitable locations as possible sites for the relocation of sports facilities that will be removed in the enhancement of the gardens at Spinola Palace. The existing sports pitch within the Spinola Palace Gardens degrades the setting of the Palace. It is intended that before environmental improvements are undertaken that would remove this use, provision on an alternative site will be sought.

NHPV10

Development in Front Gardens

Within the Paceville Secondary Town Centre, the Entertainment Priority Area and sites fronting Triq Paceville as indicated in the Map PV1 applications for the use of, and structures within, front gardens will be favorably considered provided they conform with all the criteria set out in Policies 15.8 and 15.9 respectively of the DC2005.

15.4.22 In areas largely committed for commercial and entertainment uses there are positive aspects to the use of front gardens for additional customer space. In Paceville, the potential to add further life into

these central streets is considered positively in view of the Local Plan's strategy to prioritize streets for managed evening pedestrianisation within the centre of Paceville (see Policy NHPV01). In this context these outdoor spaces can add interest to the pedestrian environment and provide an informal way of policing streets by encouraging people to watch passers by. In addition, this policy is applicable to these parts of Paceville as it is recognized that most ground floor uses are already committed as restaurants, bars or shops.

15.4.23 In regard to development in front garden areas which has already been undertaken without planning permission, those encroachments which comply with this policy and which have no negative impacts can be sanctioned, subject to a fine, following the submission of a formal application.

NHPV11

Promoting Pedestrian Access to the Coast

MEPA will seek to achieve full and unrestricted public access to the coast in all new proposals for development located next to the Paceville coast. The pedestrian network shown on Map PV2 will be safeguarded and enhanced through the following approach to development adjacent to the coast:

- i. Hilton Resort Area: The natural coastal area with public access is to be retained as designated in Map PV1; and**
- ii. In all new development adjacent to the coast: Unobstructed public access to and along the coast will be safeguarded.**

15.4.24 Unlike within Sliema and St. Julian's, pedestrian access to the coast in Paceville is sporadic and patchy. Formal access is pursued at the new Hilton Resort and will be improved at St. George's Bay through Policy NHPV13. Wherever possible, MEPA will seek to improve access where it is currently hindered or ensure full access in proposals for new uses by the coast.

NHPV12

Residential Buffer Zones

In order to limit the impact of night-time uses on nearby residential streets bordering the St. Julian's/Paceville Secondary Town Centre, MEPA will apply the following provisions to development proposals affecting the four sites (A, B, C and D) as delineated on Map PV1:

- i. Terraced development will be permitted on all these Sites instead of the previous zoning for detached and semi-detached dwellings. Development on Sites B, C (except for the side facing Triq Santu Wistin) and D shall be with front gardens, whilst development on Site A and the side of Site C facing Triq Santu Wistin shall be without front gardens;**
- ii. Only if Site A is comprehensively developed, building heights between 3 to 6 floors will be allowed, provided development at the upper road level (opposite main junction) is retained at 3 floors. Otherwise the building height limitation on this site is retained at 3 floors;**
- iii. Only if Site B is comprehensively developed, building heights between 2 to 4 floors will be allowed, provided development in upper Triq Santu Wistin (existing private road) is retained at 2 floors. Otherwise the height limitation on this site is retained at 2 floors.**
- iv. The building height limitation for Site C is of 3 floors;**
- v. The building height limitation for Site D is of 2 floors;**
- vi. Servicing arrangements for each site must be undertaken within the site curtilage and the developer is to provide for adequate parking provision for the development. Alternatively contribution to CPPS funding will be considered; and**
- vii. The following uses will be considered by MEPA on Sites A to D provided that these uses will not cause any deleterious impacts on the neighbouring residents;**

- 1. Uses permitted in General Policy NHHO01;**

2. **Class 4 (Use Classes Order, 1994) shops that are larger than what is permitted in Policy NHHO01, provided that they comply with all the relevant sections of the DC2005 (design, access, amenity, etc.);**
3. **Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices that are larger than what is permitted in Policy NHHO01, provided that they comply with all the relevant sections of the DC2005 (design, access, amenity, etc.);**
4. **For development on Sites B, C (except for the side facing Triq Santu Wistin) and D, in addition to the uses listed in 1 to 3 above, MEPA may also consider proposals for additional uses which are of a small-scale and that have a low impact. These uses should complement the nearby tourism activities, and should be located only at ground floor level. MEPA will ensure that these uses will fully safeguard the amenity of adjacent residential units by imposing strict conditions. Uses which inherently entail unacceptable impacts will not be favorably considered; and**
5. **For development on Site A and on the side of Site C facing Triq Santu Wistin as indicated in Map PV1, in addition to the uses listed in 1 to 3 above, MEPA may also consider proposals for the following uses;**
 - **Class 6 (Use Classes Order, 1994) food and drink, including hot food take-away. However take-aways are not to be allowed above ground level;**
 - **Class 9 (Use Classes Order, 1994) assembly and leisure; and**
 - **Language Schools notwithstanding that these:**
 - a. **do not fall within an existing Town Centre as defined by Policy NHRE01;**
 - b. **do not involve the rehabilitation of a scheduled building or a vernacular building within an Urban Conservation Area; and**
 - c. **may be immediately adjoining an existing residence.**

15.4.25 These areas form a key protective buffer between the town and entertainment centre of Paceville, which is largely committed for leisure and entertainment uses, and the adjoining residential priority areas. In these Buffer Zones, the Local Plan will promote development that has a minimal impact on the adjoining villa areas, particularly with regard to noise and operating times. At the same time the development being allowed in the buffer zones will enable existing villa residents located adjacent to the existing entertainment area to relocate to a more suitable and quiet residential location.

NHPV13

Villa Rosa

In considering the comprehensive redevelopment of the Villa Rosa area, MEPA will seek the following objectives and guidelines. The grounds of Villa Rosa are divided into Zones as indicated on Map PV4.

Zone A: Tourism and Leisure Uses (High Density Development Area)

- i. **Use: tourism uses, leisure uses and a car park to be developed within the limits as indicated in Map PV4 subject to a satisfactory TIS;**
- ii. **Building Height: 4 floors from the lower road level;**
- iii. **Urban Design: Attention is to be given to back elevational treatment of buildings; and**
- iv. **Environmental Considerations: The sensitive location and access of the Scheduled Level 1 Cave and its buffer area must not be encroached upon by development in Zone A. Excavation works should be limited to within the boundary of Zone A in order that the cave and valley designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are not affected in any way. No activities from Zone A shall be allowed to encroach into the non-developable protected valley area to the north of Zone A.**

Zone B: Tourism and Leisure Uses (High Density Development Area)

- i. **Use: tourist accommodation with leisure facilities;**

- ii. **Building Height:** not to exceed the height of 6 floors plus overlying penthouse level but without semi-basement above higher street level at the southern side of Zone B adjacent to the existing development. The development is to be terraced and stepped down from this maximum building height limitation down to 2 floors without semi-basement adjacent to St. George's bay and the Villa Rosa gardens; and
- iii. **Urban Design:** The overall building envelope shall be sensitive to the setting of the Villa Rosa and its gardens and of the bay.

Zone C: Catering Establishments, Retail and Leisure Uses (Low Key/Low Density Development Area)

- i. **Use:** small scale retail, catering establishments and leisure facilities;
- ii. **Building Height:** not exceeding 2 floors; and
- iii. **Urban Design:** In order to safeguard views onto the Villa Rosa and its gardens from the bay, buildings located within Zone C shall be designed in such a way as to provide a wide strategic view line onto the Villa Rosa as shown on Map PV4. To this end, these buildings are to have a total frontage length that amounts to not more than 50% of the total frontage length of Zone C. Buildings are to be low key and low density with an overall site coverage in Zone C not exceeding 50%. No structures will be allowed at roof level of these buildings. Attention is to be given to back elevational treatment of buildings proposed in this zone. The 50% un-built site coverage is to be appropriately landscaped retaining wherever possible existing mature trees. Proposals are to include the total removal of the existing front boundary wall. Managed public access through Zone C is also to be secured.

Zone D: Retention of Upper Gardens

- i. The rehabilitation and conservation of the existing upper gardens is required; and
- ii. No structures will be permitted in this zone. Major physical interventions will not be considered appropriate in this no development zone.

Zone E: Viable Re-use of Villa Rosa

- i. Development proposals in all the other zones shall respect the intended reuse and setting of the Villa Rosa and the surrounding upper gardens in Zone D;
- ii. A full rehabilitation programme, including appropriate minor internal/external alterations that are necessary to accommodate the new use for Villa Rosa, will be sought provided that the architectural integrity of the Villa is fully respected; and
- iii. All proposals should respect the historic and architectural detailing and the setting of the Villa in accordance with the scheduled status of the building and its prominent location. Any development, even if located outside the Villa Rosa site, is to safeguard the strategic view line onto Villa Rosa as indicated in Maps PV1 and PV4.

Zone F: Tourism/Residential Accommodation Area (Low key/Low density Development Area)

- i. **Use:** Up market/niche market tourist/residential accommodation that shall consist of a maximum of 15 bungalows shall be considered in Zone F. These bungalows are to be planned so as to create a gated community;
- ii. **Building Height:** not exceeding 1 floor from upper site level of each bungalow;
- iii. **Urban Design:** Development in this zone is to fully respect the context of the existing gardens. These bungalows are to be designed in order to be unobtrusive on views onto the gardens and onto Villa Rosa, and to constitute low key/low density development. The site coverage of bungalow development in Zone F is not to exceed 25%, and the building footprint of each bungalow is not to exceed an area of 170 sqm. The layout and location of these bungalows is to ensure that all existing mature trees in this Zone are retained, and that the canopy of these trees is to screen as far as possible these bungalows from view. Attention is to be given to back elevational treatment of buildings proposed in this zone. Proposals are to include managed access through Zone F; and

- iv. **Environmental Considerations:** Given the existing problems of storm water run-off through the lower parts of the site and into St. George's Bay, appropriate water management measures will be sought in Zone F. To achieve this, a properly designed, landscaped and managed watercourse will be reinstated in this Zone to the satisfaction of MEPA. A minimum of 2 m on either side of the managed watercourse is to be left free from any development.

Zone G: Pedestrianisation of Bay Shoreline

- i. **Retention of full vehicle access along Ix-Xatt Ta' San Gorg is no longer essential as the St. George's Bay area is now well connected to the Arterial Road via the new hotel link road.**
- ii. **As part of a comprehensive development proposal for the Villa Rosa site proposals are to include the semi-pedestrianisation of the road space marked under Zone G. The possibility of full pedestrianisation of Zone G will also be investigated to the satisfaction of MEPA.**
- iii. **Given the uses being promoted at Zone C fronting the bay, opportunity exists to capitalize on the use of this space for public outdoor use.**
- iv. **The physical re-design of the pedestrian area should include suitable materials, and proposals should include details of street furniture, paving and other materials. The road space should be designed in a way that will allow the placing of tables and chairs and other outdoor activities.**
- v. **Proposals seeking to pedestrianise Ix-Xatt Ta' San Gorg are to be in tune with the pedestrianisation scheme being indicated for Triq Santu Wistin.**

Zone H: Open Area fronting the Bay

- i. **This area is to be developed into a suitably landscaped and fully publicly accessible open space. No construction works will be allowed in Zone H. MEPA will ensure that the completion of this publicly accessible open space shall be secured before any other development works as detailed in this Policy are taken in hand.**

Zone I: Ancillary Facilities

- i. **Ancillary Facilities will be permitted within this area provided that these are planned totally underground, and provided that the roof level of these facilities is properly modeled and landscaped in order to complement and reinstate fully the symmetrical layout, design and landscaping of the formal upper garden in Zone D. The reinstated upper surface will be treated as part of and in accordance with the policy requirements for Zone D.**

15.4.26 During the local plan period the Villa Rosa area is likely to be subject to intensification of tourist uses and the redevelopment of the existing hotel. Given the size and sensitive nature of the site, this Policy and Map PV4 are intended to guide the developer towards achieving a development that is sensitive to the site itself and to its surroundings. MEPA will seek to ensure that any redevelopment positively contributes to the improvement of the public realm and transport infrastructure. Given that night-time and day-time activity is likely to significantly increase in the St. George's Bay area, MEPA will expect the development to make a tangible contribution to the traffic management strategy outlined by Area Policies NHPV01 and 3. Furthermore, studies carried out on the use of St. George's Bay especially after the recent upgrading and regeneration indicate that beach users demand that the area around the beach should be fully pedestrianised to introduce a feeling of safety from cars. Investigations on introducing full pedestrianisation of Triq ix-Xatt ta' San Gorg will therefore be followed by the Plan for this area in conjunction with all relevant authorities and stakeholders to this effect.

NHPV14

Residential Areas with Low Impact Uses

MEPA designates Residential Areas with Low Impact Uses within Paceville as indicated in Map PV1. Apart from uses allowed in General Policy NHHO01, MEPA may consider proposals for additional uses which are of a small-scale and that have a low impact. These uses should complement the nearby

tourism activities, and should be located only at ground floor level. MEPA will ensure that these uses will fully safeguard the amenity of adjacent residential units by imposing strict conditions. Uses which inherently entail unacceptable impacts will not be favourably considered.

15.4.27 Paceville is an established tourism and entertainment area. Therefore, the provisions of Policy NHH001 may not always fully satisfy the particular situation of this locality. There is therefore scope for MEPA to consider additional small scale, low impact uses that complement the nearby activities. However, special attention should be given to ensure that the amenity of the relevant residential area is not adversely affected by the operation of such small-scale uses.

16. San Gwann

16.1 Introduction

Area: 2.62km²

Population: 12,011

- 16.1.1 San Gwann, along with Swieqi, constitutes the major inland area of the Local Plan. It is predominantly residential with a busy commercial high street. 60% of San Gwann is urban including land committed for industrial uses. Up to the time of the 1995 Census the population was the fastest growing in the Maltese Islands. Between 1985-95 the population increased from 8,179 to 12,011 largely as a result of the relocation of families from outside the Plan area to government housing estates such as at Taz-Zwejt. The expansion of the government stock has now ceased and the population is anticipated to stabilise. However the influx of young couples over the last two decades has resulted in high proportions of children and young adults in the area. In this regard the Local Council has identified issues relating to a lack of community and local sports facilities for residents.
- 16.1.2 The urban area is surrounded by Wied Ghomor and Wied Ghollieqa which form natural buffers between Swieqi to the north and Tal Qroqq (Msida) to the south. Within these areas, the Local Plan must address the delicate balance between local needs for access to recreational space and the need to conserve these important valleys. The urban area is also characterised by a concentration of archaeological remains (including cart ruts) which are under threat from intensification of urban development (see Policy NHCV02 which seeks to ensure their protection).
- 16.1.3 The urban area of San Gwann is, to a certain extent, a victim of accessibility. Commercial land uses such as shops, offices, banks and take-aways have located throughout the length of San Gwann's main distributor road from Taz-Zwejt to the junction of Naxxar Road and Birkirkara Road. A part of this area is defined in the Local Plan as a Secondary Town Centre due to the range of shops, services and employment. Pressures for on-street parking and the impact of heavy traffic results in a poor quality environment for residents, shoppers and workers in this town centre area. The Local Plan prioritises investment and employment opportunities in town centres through Policy NHRE01. In San Gwann, the Local Plan must address the need for development that will promote jobs, retain accessibility to employment and shops but lessen the environmental impact.
- 16.1.4 Traffic problems exist elsewhere in San Gwann. However the dedicated link road to the Birkirkara Bypass at the southwestern corner of San Gwann has reduced heavy traffic currently gaining access to the Industrial Estate via Bella Vista Road and Naxxar Road. Outside the urban area, the road through Wied Ghomor leading to Swieqi is frequently used as a short cut route between Naxxar/San Gwann and Swieqi/Paceville. This is creating a traffic hazard for pedestrians, and encouraging ad-hoc roadside car parking, which contributes towards the degradation of the area's fragile ecological status. The valley is promoted for walking and informal recreation through Policy NHSW06.

16.2 Issues

16.2.1 Traffic Congestion

- i. High volumes of traffic in the town centre
- ii. Heavy traffic along Bella Vista Road
- iii. Effect of traffic on Wied Ghomor

16.2.2 Loss of Residential Amenity

- i. Excessive ad-hoc commercial activity and workshop uses in residential streets; and
- ii. Need for consolidation of commercial uses.

16.2.3 Development Pressure

- i. Pressure to increase height limitations;
- ii. Development pressure to build outside development zone, particularly in Wied Ghomor; and
- iii. Demand for medium/large scale office and retail accommodation conflicts with other uses.

16.2.4 Community Facilities

- i. Lack of community facilities such as civic centre, clinic etc;
- ii. There is a general lack of sport facilities in the area; and
- iii. Historical and archaeological features not presented well to the public.

16.2.5 Rural Fringe

- i. Restricted recreational access to surrounding countryside; and
- ii. Coalescence of surrounding urban areas.

16.3 Key Planning Objectives

16.3.1 Traffic Management

- i. Reduce traffic within the Town Centre and improve the pedestrian environment;
- ii. Stipulate a parking strategy and Resident Parking Zone around the town centre;
- iii. Promote the area for access by public transport; and
- iv. Regulate traffic to and from San Gwann Industrial Estate and enhance arterial road access.

16.3.2 Balancing Residential and Commercial Uses

- i. Contain medium/large retail and office uses within the town centre to protect residential areas;
- ii. Regulate the distribution of garage industries; and
- iii. Improve existing community facilities.

16.3.3 Safeguard Land for Community Facilities

- i. Safeguard land for future sports provision and other community facilities.

General Strategy

16.3.4 In brief the strategy for San Gwann is as follows:

The Local Plan seeks to prohibit further intensification of inappropriate commercial development in the residential areas of San Gwann. Larger commercial/employment uses including retailing will be directed to a defined town centre area, whilst industrial uses including garage industries will be directed to designated industrial areas. Within the town centre, specific measures to promote new employment and relieve congestion are stipulated. Elsewhere land is safeguarded for future community uses and informal recreation. Further extension of the urban area into the environmentally sensitive valleys will not be permitted. Instead, opportunities to promote public access to informal recreational space particularly at Wied Ghomor will be sought.

16.4 Area Policies

NHSG01

Traffic Management

Within San Gwann, MEPA shall encourage proposals to improve traffic management that:

- i. Downgrades Vjal Rihan and Naxxar Road to Local Access Roads and simultaneously upgrades Bella Vista and Sliema Roads to Distributor Roads in accordance with Policy NHTR01;
- ii. Discourages through traffic in San Gwann's residential streets;
- iii. Promotes access to the town centre by public transport;
- iv. Encourages car users to utilise planned off-street car parks;
- v. Calms traffic along Vjal Rihan and Naxxar Road, providing safe opportunities for pedestrians to cross and promoting short-stay public car parking whilst not reducing the total number of car parking spaces available in the town centre;
- vi. Reduces the impact of heavy goods traffic; and
- vii. Reduces vehicular traffic through the environmentally sensitive area of Wied Ghomor.

16.4.1 San Gwann's Town Centre and residential streets currently suffer from the effects of heavy traffic as the main distributor road between Naxxar and the Regional Road (Sliema and beyond) runs through the area. Typically 14,000 vehicles pass through the Town Centre in any 24-hour week day period. This is comparable with a figure of around 12,000 through Sliema's congested town centre at Tower Road. This policy aims to reduce the amount of through traffic in the Town Centre, and reduce the impact of traffic entering San Gwann.

16.4.2 This traffic brings activity to the area (shopping and employment) but also has an environmental impact on residents. Further threats to the area include the impact of heavy traffic, associated with the Industrial Estate and traffic passing through the environmentally sensitive Wied Ghomor. MEPA will not allow road widening proposals and will seek to introduce width restrictions along this route of Wied Ghomor to ensure that vehicular traffic, including large vehicles, are restricted from making use of this road. The Structure Plan requires the local plan to put forward proposals for the improvement of conditions for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and vehicle parking. This Policy establishes criteria that will be used to determine all applications relating to traffic management in the area. Further specific measures are outlined through Policies NHSG02 and 03. Policy NHTR01 recommends the re-alignment of the Distributor Road in order to encourage light through traffic to by-pass the congested Town Centre. This change in designation is recommended through this Policy, but can only be adopted through a review of the Structure Plan.

NHSG02

Resident Parking Zones

MEPA in conjunction with the ADT, San Gwann Local Council and the developers of the Public Car Parks promoted by Policy NHSG03, will seek the implementation and management of Resident Parking Zones (RPZs) as indicated in Map SG1 to relieve the effects of parking generated by visitors to San Gwann's Town Centre.

16.4.3 Policy NHTR16 promotes the introduction of Resident Parking Zones at various locations throughout the Local Plan area. Residential streets that are subject to severe competition for on-street spaces by non-residents are prioritised for inclusion under an RPZ for San Gwann as shown in Map SG1.

16.4.4 A planning obligation will be attached to the development of the Town Centre Public Car Parks (see Policy NHSG03) to ensure that the San Gwann RPZ is implemented and running concurrently with the opening of the car parks. This obligation will include the need for the developer to undertake studies on demand for on-street parking around San Gwann's Town Centre. If possible, CPPS

funds will be made available to fund any necessary studies for the RPZ and to contribute towards the initial physical costs of the RPZ scheme.

- 16.4.5 The planning obligation and details of any use of CPPS funds will be drawn up by MEPA with regard to the principles established within the Qui-Si-Sana Development Brief, and the Sliema Town Centre RPZ Study 1999. It is anticipated that the scheme will be self-financing in the long-term and management of the RPZ will be through the San Gwann Local Council or any other competent body.

NHSG03

Public Car Parks

MEPA will promote government and/or the private sector to present proposals for suitable off-street public car parks to serve San Gwann's Town Centre at locations within the Town Centre or in close proximity to the designated Town Centre boundary. All proposals shall be subject to a satisfactory TIS and shall be acceptable in terms of traffic and amenity impacts.

MEPA would consider a mixed-use commercial development above these public car parks. An additional floor (above building height limitation as indicated in Map SG3 and 4) will be considered for proposals on sites that are located outside the areas designated with a maximum building height limitation of 4 floors only if MEPA considers this as being necessary to help cross-subsidise the scheme.

All proposals shall be expected to comply with Policy NHSG02. Where insufficient CPPS funds exist, the funding of the RPZ study and initial costs will be at the developer's expense.

- 16.4.6 Problems with parking are evident throughout San Gwann's Town Centre. Policies NHSG01 and 06 seek to improve environmental conditions and limit congestion problems within the Town Centre. Policy NHSG02 prioritises parking for residents around the centre. In order that the Town Centre remains accessible for people choosing to arrive by car, MEPA will promote the development of paying off-street public car parks. The number of spaces shall be determined through the undertaking of a TIS which must consider the likely future growth of retail and other commercial floor space in the Town Centre.

NHSG04

Upgrading of San Gwann Industrial Estate

MEPA will encourage the upgrading and the extension of the MIP managed San Gwann Industrial Estate for industrial and other related uses as further detailed in Policy NHCI02.

In order to increase the floorspace available for industrial purposes and the efficient use of land, additional storeys above ground floor level will be permitted within the limits of the Estate provided that their use is industrial or is ancillary to existing ground floor industrial uses, and provided that the vertical height and bulk of buildings shall have no adverse impact on residential areas neighbouring the Estate.

MEPA, in consultation with Malta Industrial Parks (MIP), will require applicants to justify unusually large building footprints in terms of the machinery needed and processes to be carried out.

The land to the west of the existing Industrial Estate shown on Map SG1 is identified and safeguarded for the future expansion of the Estate. Development permission will not be granted for proposals that prejudice this expansion.

16.4.7 The average size of units being used by firms are between 2,000 to 3,000 sqm but the trend is for more smaller units. Therefore MIP are rationalising units with excess capacity in order to accommodate more than one firm in certain units. Further unit space within the Estate is proposed by allowing vertical extensions to existing units. Where additional floors are considered, ancillary office functions and storage uses will be encouraged above ground floor level. The main industrial function of the unit will be encouraged at ground floor level. This policy aims to ensure that the applicant demonstrates and justifies the need for large floor areas. MEPA will require that applications for development permission include information on the estimated type, size and layout of machinery and labour within the plant and any anticipated needs for expansion in the future. On receiving this information, MEPA will consult with the MIP for a technical assessment to judge whether the proposals would entail plant and machinery being effectively organised and land and buildings used efficiently.

16.4.8 This Policy ensures that land lying to the west of the San Gwann Industrial Estate is reserved for the provision of industrial employment. The development of new units shall be subject to the provision of Policy NHSG04 and other policies contained within the Local Plan's general policy chapter on Employment and Industry.

NHSG05

Height Envelopes

Maximum building heights for San Gwann are designated as shown in Map SG3 and SG4. Specific building heights apply to public car parks in accordance with the provisions of Policies NHSG03 and NHSE04.

16.4.9 San Gwann's Town Centre is accessible and well located along a major public transport corridor. The Local Plan's general settlements and transport strategy is to reduce congestion in the Inner Harbours and promote employment nodes in locations, including San Gwann, which have good access to the Regional Road. Policy NHSE03 promotes employment uses in these locations and Policy NHRE01 specifically promotes investment in Town Centres. In accordance with these policies, the height envelopes are relaxed within the Town Centre and Edge of Centre beyond those established by the TPS (1988) to promote investment into retail, service and employment development and re-development.

16.4.10 Within San Gwann's residential areas, building heights will largely be retained to those established by the TPS (1988) and as amended by the 'Interim Review of Building Heights Pending Local Plan Completion (1993)' as per Maps SG3 and 4.

NHSG06

Environmental Upgrading of Vjal Rihan

MEPA will promote proposals to upgrade San Gwann's main shopping street (part of Vjal Rihan and Naxxar Road) as indicated on Map SG1 and SG2. Proposals should achieve an overall increase in pavement widths and pedestrian facilities, increased landscaping, measures to promote short-stay parking and a clear definition of on-street parking, whilst not reducing the total number of car parking spaces available in the town centre.

16.4.11 Traffic passing through San Gwann's Town Centre is a serious handicap to the further development of the centre, functionally and in terms of its attraction and environment. Policy NHSG01 promotes the use of Bella Vista road to relieve extraneous through traffic that would otherwise pass through the Town Centre. Following this change in road designation, MEPA will promote proposals for substantial environmental improvements along San Gwann's main shopping street.

16.4.12 Proposals should seek to enhance space given over to pedestrians along this route. Notwithstanding this, Vjal Rihan should remain an important vehicle access road to San Gwann and its Town Centre. Proposals should also include generous landscaping and physically defined safe parking spaces along the road.

NHSG07

Category 1 Rural Settlement

MEPA designates the area that contains a row of buildings along Triq San Giljan as a Category 1 Rural Settlement. MEPA will consider the development of infill sites and the re-development of existing buildings located within the Category 1 Rural Settlement boundaries provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:

- i. Development shall only be for residential purposes;**
- ii. Each dwelling unit shall be constructed strictly within the boundaries of the designated Category 1 Rural Settlement as indicated in Map SG1;**
- iii. The maximum building height limitation of two floors without semi-basement above road level shall not be exceeded;**
- iv. Particular attention shall be given to the design of the back elevation of the new development;**
- v. A side garden of at least 3m, with a suitably designed side elevation fronting onto it, will be required for “end of terrace” developments; and**
- vi. No new access into the valley at the back of any existing or new development is created.**

16.4.13 In the area, one cluster of terrace houses has been developed over time with planning permits. These terraced houses form ribbon development outside development zone which should not be allowed to expand any further since this cluster of buildings falls adjacent to a Valley Protection Zone (see Map CV5). Moreover, this row of terraced houses is located directly adjacent to Wied Ghollieqa where Structure Plan Policies RCO28 and 29 and other relevant policies in the Local Plan seek the protection of such valleys as important habitats, water catchment areas and as important geomorphological features. This cluster of buildings is therefore being designated as a Category 1 Rural Settlement where only minimal development and re-development for residential uses will be allowed. The area being designated as a Category 1 Rural Settlement measures about 1,840 sqm.

NHSG08

Community Facilities

The sites as designated on Map SG1 are safeguarded for the provision of recreational and community facilities as detailed below:

- i. Site A is safeguarded for the construction of a Pastoral Centre together with an adequate children play area. This development is permitted subject to the provision of a car park on site intended to serve the development itself, and to make up for any existing car parking spaces that will be lost due to this development.**
- ii. The primary and main use of Site B shall be for recreational and community facilities. At the discretion of MEPA, a limited number of dwellings and/or local shops may be incorporated as part of a mixed-use scheme for this site.**

MEPA will seek to maximise the dual use of all existing community facilities in San Gwann, including the ones designated at Sites A and B.

16.4.14 There is a high proportion of children and young adults within San Gwann. Children under 14 represent the single largest age group and 41% of the population is 24 or under. Existing sports and community facilities include the football ground which covers an area of 3,867 sqm and the bocci

pitch (362 sqm). Other open spaces include public gardens/playing fields, namely, at Misrah Lewza (1,173 sqm), Karen Grech (2,160 sqm) and one at Triq Sta Margerita (1,725 sqm).

16.4.15 The rapid rise in the area's younger population is likely to increase the demand for additional local sports facilities/play grounds during the plan period. This has been confirmed through consultation with the Local Council who have also highlighted this as an acute local issue.

16.4.16 Apart from the fact that community facilities are lacking in San Gwann, the limited facilities present are not used to their full potential. In line with both Structure Plan and the Local Plan strategy, the MEPA will seek proposals for the better and wider use of existing facilities.

17. Sliema and St. Julian's

17.1 Introduction

Combined Areas: 2.3km² (excluding Paceville)

Combined Population: 19,846 (excluding Paceville)

- 17.1.1 Sliema and St. Julian's (excluding Paceville) have a combined waterfront of 11.5km comprising approximately half of the plan area's 22km coastline. The extensive coast, promenade and associated entertainment facilities make the area a popular place to live and visit. There are two distinct commercial areas in Sliema and St. Julian's. Sliema in the last 20 years has developed a retail centre in the Bisazza Street/Tower Road area which supports mainly large non-food retailers and services including clinics, travel agents, professional and other offices. The Spinola Bay area in St. Julian's has developed as an area for bars, clubs, tourist apartments, retailing and other entertainment facilities. Both commercial areas generate considerable demand for on-street parking which limits the availability of parking for residents in surrounding streets. Sliema broadly caters for daytime activities whilst St. Julian's accommodates nighttime activities. Both have wide regional catchments. These two areas serve as important activity poles that support a frequent bus service and generate considerable traffic along the waterfront. Paceville, although included in St. Julian's Local Council area, is considered separately in this Local Plan due to the particularly acute environmental and planning issues associated with the entertainment industry present there.
- 17.1.2 A significant amount of medium/large retailers, offices, services and hotels have also located outside the main commercial areas of the St. Julian's and Sliema Town Centres. This trend for major retail and employment uses outside existing centres has meant deteriorating environmental quality in the residential areas of Sliema and St. Julian's. When large employment uses and shops are spread over wide areas, people are encouraged to drive between shops and places of work. This in turn increases congestion, pollution and parking problems for residents where non-local uses are located in residential streets. Dispersed non-local uses can also make access to the work place and other facilities difficult for people who rely on public transport or do not normally have use of a car.
- 17.1.3 Both Sliema and St. Julian's are centres of large residential populations. Although traditionally popular areas to live, between 1985 and 1995 Sliema's population fell from 14,137 to 12,768 whilst St. Julian's population (including Paceville) fell more dramatically from 10,239 to 7,205. This is attributed to the formation of fewer younger households in the area. Population structures for Sliema and St. Julian's in 1985 and 1995 show a resultant increase in the proportion of elderly. Although access to shops and services (such as clinics and pharmacists) is good, the ageing population will continue to demand particular services. Future demand for health care facilities and the pressing need to facilitate better access for the elderly over the coming years is an important issue in the area.
- 17.1.4 Away from the waterfront, there is also a major lack of open space and continued speculative demand for dwellings as an asset investment which results in the construction of large inappropriately sized apartment blocks in relation to the scale of the street and the surrounding road infrastructure. Many of these properties remain vacant for long periods. Housing is also becoming increasingly unaffordable to many households wishing to live in the area, particularly first-time buyers. Despite a supply of relatively affordable older properties within the UCAs, there is an overall lack of inward investment into the rehabilitation of property.

17.2 Issues

17.2.1 Increasing Traffic Congestion

- i. Increasing levels of congestion;
- ii. Parking problems for residents, particularly around the Town Centre; and
- iii. High volumes of traffic along the waterfront.

17.2.2 Loss of Residential Amenity

- i. Level and scale of residential redevelopment out of scale with prevailing vernacular buildings;
- ii. High number of vacant dwellings;
- iii. General infrastructure of the area under strain;
- iv. Limited open space for upgraded spaces along the waterfront; and
- v. Population ageing as new households establishing outside the area.

17.2.3 Inappropriate Commercial Development in Residential Areas

- i. Spread of non-local retail, office and other employment uses in residential streets.

17.3 Key Planning Objectives

17.3.1 Transportation and the Waterfront

- i. to free the waterfront from car domination and promote alternative transport forms; and
- ii. promoting and managing access to the coast and its associated open spaces.

17.3.2 Sliema and St. Julian's Town Centres

- i. focusing appropriate employment opportunities in the Town Centres;
- ii. enhancing the quality and attraction of Sliema as a Primary Town Centre;
- iii. improving conditions for pedestrians, particularly access for the elderly; and
- iv. enhance existing spaces and create new open spaces.

17.3.3 Urban Conservation Areas

- i. establish a street categorisation system for St. Julian's UCA (and update the one for Sliema);
- ii. careful control of heights in streets with predominantly undisturbed 2/3 storey buildings;
- iii. upgrade Dingli Street to incorporate landscaping;
- iv. promote rehabilitation of dilapidated dwellings; and
- v. allow rehabilitation to non-residential uses where such uses will not harm residential amenity.

17.3.4 Building Heights

- i. overall, restraining building heights;

17.3.5 Population and Residential Areas

- i. provision of smaller dwellings and housing types for the elderly; and
- ii. protecting local residents from the effects of traffic.

General Strategy

17.3.6 In brief the strategy for Sliema and St. Julian's is as follows:

The overall strategy for Sliema and St. Julian's is to consolidate new employment and activities arising in high trip generation within existing retail centres at Sliema, St. Julian's and planned uses at Tigné Point. Environmental improvement of the area's amenities including the waterfront, UCAs and Town Centres are to be promoted in line with Structure Plan Policies COM7 and RDS7 and the Local Plan's strategy for settlements and transport. Outside the Town Centres, the focus will be on protecting the visual qualities of residential streets (through UCA policies and general urban design policies) and promoting rehabilitation to residential uses rather than demolition and redevelopment where streets have townscape value. Along the waterfront, public open spaces will be prioritised for embellishment and better priorities for public transport will be promoted.

17.4 Policies

NHSJ01

Traffic Management

In consultation with the ADT, the Traffic Control Board and the Sliema and St. Julian's Local Councils and resident groups, MEPA will assist in efforts to establish a traffic management strategy for Sliema and St. Julian's that will help to:

- i. Establish priorities for public transport along the waterfront;**
- ii. Improve public transport drop offs along the waterfront;**
- iii. Establish a circular bus route to better connect the Savoy area to other parts of Sliema;**
- iv. Further examine the viability of a park and ride scheme between Paceville and Sliema (see Policy NHTR04);**
- v. Reduce car domination along the waterfront;**
- vi. Establish, where possible, new pedestrian spaces along the waterfronts;**
- vii. Improve conditions for cyclists;**
- viii. Reduce extraneous traffic within the UCAs;**
- ix. Improve safety at pedestrian crossings; and**
- x. Maintain reasonable access, by car, for residents.**

Furthermore, MEPA shall support proposals for the comprehensive upgrading of major routes in Sliema and St. Julian's at appropriate locations where proposals will:

- a. improve traffic flows along the upgraded route;**
- b. introduce trees and other formal landscaping along the street;**
- c. improve crossing points for pedestrians;**
- d. formalise chevron parking (45 degrees to the kerb); and**
- e. install appropriate traffic management measures.**

MEPA will not be the implementing body in traffic management schemes but will encourage and assist the relevant agencies in achieving these objectives, including providing advice on traffic modelling and impact assessment.

17.4.1 Resolving an unacceptable transport situation and relieving congestion is seen as a key step towards improving the quality of life for residents and ultimately helping to reverse the trend of families and younger people leaving the area.

17.4.2 The Local Plan can encourage the adoption of traffic management solutions to specific sites or clearly defined residential or commercial areas as, for example, the centre of Paceville (see Map PV3) and St. Julian's UCA (see Map SJ2). This Policy clarifies MEPA's general stance in relation to traffic in Sliema and St. Julian's. MEPA recognises that full traffic management proposals will come from Sliema or St. Julian's Local Councils or another competent body and not from MEPA

itself. This policy, however, sets objectives which MEPA will use to judge any future proposals for traffic management.

- 17.4.3 Currently very high levels of through traffic pass along the waterfront. Any proposed traffic management system for Sliema and St. Julian's should seek to discourage unnecessary vehicular traffic from using the waterfront and entering residential areas. Instead, such traffic will be encouraged to utilise the Regional Road. As a consequence of reduced traffic along the front, proposals should examine the viability of improving the recreational potential of the waterfront. Possible improvements may include a wider promenade to improve facilities for walkers, cyclists, skaters etc. and the creation of new pedestrian priority spaces along the front. Public transport drop-off points for the waterfront should be prioritised at important pedestrian routes. Particular attention should be paid to drop-offs in relation to commercial centres, small groups of shops/services, and open spaces. As far as Ferry Landing Points are concerned, these are safeguarded through Policy NHTR06. MEPA will require that coach drop-offs are designed to a high standard and not sited at peripheral and/or dangerous locations which involve alighting directly onto busy roads/crossing points.
- 17.4.4 In line with the Local Plan's strategy to enhance urban areas, MEPA will encourage the Local Councils and other relevant bodies to environmentally enhance main streets. Proposals should aim to improve pavements and secure a boulevard planting effect. Attention should be made to design criteria established under Policy NHSE05 Upgrading of Public Open Spaces, following guidance given in Appendix 1.

NHSJ02

Resident Parking Zones

Maps SJ1 and SJ2 show priority streets for inclusion in new Resident Parking Zones for Sliema and St. Julian's. In conjunction with the ADT, the Traffic Control Board, Local Councils and local residents groups the implementation of a Resident Parking Zone shall be encouraged in the areas as stipulated in the following table:

Area	Phasing Priority	Infrastructure Requirements
Sliema Town Centre	1	Must be implemented immediately prior to the opening of the Qui-Si-Sana Car Park (refer NHSJ03)
St. Julian's Village and The Gardens	1	Must be implemented immediately prior to the opening of the Spinola Bay Car Park (refer to Policy NHSJ03)
Inner Sliema	2	Following the introduction of the RPZ for Sliema Town Centre

- 17.4.5 Policy NHTR16 promotes the introduction of Resident Parking Zones throughout the Local Plan area. Streets that are subject to a severe lack of on-street parking for residents in Sliema and St. Julian's are proposed for inclusion under RPZ schemes. The introduction of car parks, pedestrianisation schemes and other improvements relating to public transport are programmed in parallel to RPZs. It is anticipated that RPZs will be managed by the relevant Local Council and, in the long run, will be self-financing. In cases of strategic public car parks at Qui-Si-Sana and Spinola, CPPS funding may be used to establish RPZ schemes in their locality. In these instances, the use of CPPS funds to cover the initial capital and management costs of RPZ schemes is considered appropriate to ensure the long-term viability and success of major off-street public car parks. The planning obligation and details of the use of CPPS funds will be drawn up by MEPA

with regard to the principles established within Section 6 of the approved Qui-Si-Sana Development Brief (2002). The following priorities for RPZs are outlined for Sliema and St. Julian's:

St. Julian's Village and The Gardens, St. Julian's

- 17.4.6 The introduction of Resident Parking Zones in St. Julian's Village and The Gardens will put further pressure to enforce traffic regulations in this area which generates a lot of activity relating to bars, restaurants and promenading. A primary objective of the plan is to encourage people to enter this area by public transport. Further parking enforcement is likely over the next ten years in addition to a local plan that positively discriminates in favour of public transport along the Front. Consequently access to this area by public transport is expected to become a social norm for locals as well as visitors who already make considerable use of public transport in this area. A RPZ for these streets surrounding Spinola Bay should only be implemented once a public car park for Spinola is operating (see NHSJ03).

Sliema Town Centre

- 17.4.7 The Sliema Primary Town Centre covers a distinct commercial area requiring improvements to parking and traffic management infrastructure. Environmental improvements to Bisazza Street and Lower Tower Road may happen independently of the construction of new public car parks as detailed through the Qui-Si-Sana and Chalet Development Briefs, and the Qui-Si-Sana Development Brief (2002) stipulates the introduction of the Sliema Town Centre RPZ prior to the operation of the car park. If the RPZ is not operating before the Qui-Si-Sana car park is constructed, the car park will not be feasible and traffic (particularly relating to short-stay visitors) will continue to dominate residential streets around Sliema Town Centre. In the Interim Period, the Sliema Car Park and other off-street car parks may take up parking displaced through the introduction of Resident Parking Zones. In the long term, alternative sites close to the Town Centre, such as Qui-Si-Sana, should be utilised for off-street public car parking. This will promote competitive pricing and improve capacity.

Inner Sliema

- 17.4.8 The streets surrounding Manwel Dimech Street and Dingli Street are particularly inadequate to accommodate early - mid evening traffic associated with promenaders entering the area by car and parking in streets close to the Front. Consequently evening parking is very difficult for the residents of the area. An RPZ for this area may be considered with emphasis on time management - i.e. allowing commercial and visitor parking by day and reducing this by night.

NHSJ03

Public Car Parks

Strategic Car Parking Sites which support the area's traffic management strategy are identified at:

i. Qui-Si-Sana and Chalet

In line with the Qui-Si-Sana Development Brief (2002) and the Chalet Development Brief (2000), new underground car parks will be constructed. The Qui-Si-Sana car park is planned below the level of the Qui-Si-Sana Gardens, as indicated on Map SJ1. In considering this development, MEPA will also consider the development of appropriate tourist related facilities located below ground level as outlined in the approved Qui-Si-Sana Development Brief (2002). No further change of use of the existing High Street Public Car Park will be permitted until the designated Qui-Si-Sana Car Park becomes operational.

ii. Spinola Bay

A new underground car park will be promoted with access along the eastern boundary of Anglu Mikiel Borg Street as shown in Map SJ2. Prior to the construction and operation of the car park

at a capacity to serve the Spinola Bay Area, MEPA will require the St. Julian's Village and The Gardens Resident Parking Zones to become operational. The car park operator with the consultation/co-operation of St. Julian's Local Council shall initiate these RPZs. However the implementation of these on-street parking controls will be undertaken by the Local Council and not the developer of the car park. In considering this development, MEPA will also seek the development of new community and sports facilities as outlined in Policy NHPV09.

Qui-Si-Sana

17.4.9 The need for off-street car parking to serve Sliema Town Centre is expected to increase considerably with the phasing of various environmental improvements in and around the Town Centre, and the introduction of Resident Parking Zones. The Qui-Si-Sana site is situated near the northern boundary of the perimeter of the designated Town Centre and is considered well located for access to the shops and employment. The principle planning objectives for the site are detailed in Section 3 of the Qui-Si-Sana Development Brief. This Brief also identifies the car park site as being suitable for the location of tourist related facilities located below ground level in line with Policy NHTO04.

Spinola Bay

17.4.10 This public car park is required to relieve the problems of congestion in this area, particularly traffic generated at night in association with the concentration of restaurants and other activities around Spinola Bay. Traffic leaving the car park should be in the direction of the Regional Road junction. It is essential that operation of the car park be tied to the implementation of Resident Parking Zones in the locality.

NHSJ04

Parking and Environmental Improvements

Where large scale environmental improvements or associated freeing of traffic from key junctions occur, MEPA will seek to ensure that any loss of on-street parking for residents is replaced in their locality. Nearby off-street parking shall be secured in advance of Resident Parking Zones for the locality and should be in operation prior to embellishment/works.

17.4.11 The area transport strategy outlines some key road spaces where existing surface parking may be removed. These spaces include Lower Tower Road and Bisazza Street, Qui-Si-Sana area, much of Tower Road, Spinola Square and St. George's Bay. The upgrading of these spaces is intended to improve the promenade and increase open space provision for residents and visitors. Removal of some on-street parking and the introduction of Resident Parking Zones is intended to encourage non-residents to use public transport to gain access to the area or use paying off-street public car parks. Loss of on-street parking should be balanced by the assurance to residents that parking will be made available in close proximity.

17.4.12 Smaller embellishments such as those identified in Policy NHSE05 (Small Squares Initiative) may occur regardless of this policy where the loss of on-street parking is minimal.

NHSJ05

Environmental Improvement of Town Centres

MEPA will encourage the comprehensive upgrading of Lower Tower Road, Bisazza Street, the Ferries areas and the Spinola Bay area as identified on Maps SJ1 and 2. Proposals should conform to the following objectives:

Spinola Bay

- i. **Create a major pedestrian space around the existing central statue;**
- ii. **Ensure the square no longer functions primarily as a traffic roundabout by incorporating a single junction between Anglu Mikiel Borg Street and the waterfront;**
- iii. **Improve bus drop offs and pedestrian links to them (including waterside bus drop off); and**
- iv. **Designate areas for short-stay parking.**

Sliema Town Centre

- a. **Improve the existing bus drop off area and traffic circulation;**
- b. **Seek to reduce or remove through traffic from Bisazza Street and lower Tower Road;**
- c. **Improve conditions for pedestrians;**
- d. **Highlight and make very clear public transport priorities, car routes, pedestrian areas, and include full details of traffic management arrangements to restrict private cars; and**
- e. **Revert St. Anne's Square into a public open space after the current restaurant lease expires.**

In addition to physical embellishments, all proposals must include well considered traffic management proposals.

17.4.13 The area around Spinola Bay is currently dominated by surface car parking and serves primarily as a traffic roundabout. This policy encourages the closing of access from Spinola Bay Roundabout to St. Julian's High Street and the enhancement of the area to the east side of the square as a pedestrian space. To achieve this, the existing function of the square as a traffic roundabout will be rationalised and one junction only will be created between the junction of Anglu Mikiel Borg Street and the Front. This will allow for a permanent pedestrian zone for restaurants/bars and community activity. This area is also covered by Policy NHSE05 as indicated on Map SJ4. Further guidance is given in Appendix 1.

17.4.14 Sliema Town Centre attracts shoppers and workers from throughout the North Harbours and other settlements. Whilst the Town Centre has a range of goods and major retailers comparable with Valletta, the quality of the public realm is poor. Lower Tower Road and Bisazza Street accommodate significant traffic volumes between the Paceville area and the Gzira Strand that degrade the shopping environment. Major opportunities exist to reconcile pedestrian and vehicle conflict, reduce congestion and improve the waterfront and public transport connections in this area. By designating Sliema Town Centre as a Primary Town Centre, MEPA recognises the importance of this part of Sliema in the provision of employment, leisure and shopping facilities. In line with Policy NHRE01, MEPA will support Government in improving the infrastructure in the area for shoppers, residents and workers. The emphasis should be to create an accessible environment (particularly for the elderly and those choosing to enter Sliema by public transport). The following design and management issues should be considered as integral to future proposals for enhancement:

- i. Access and design for the elderly.
- ii. The need to adequately consider service needs, but prevent heavy service traffic particularly during shopping hours.
- iii. Arrangements for resident parking.
- iv. Appropriate design of the main interchange at the Ferries area to link to the Strand upgrading.
- v. Consider the durability and detailing of materials, landscaping and other finishes.
- vi. The need for maintenance budgets, management plans and after care of the upgraded spaces by the Local Council.

17.4.15 MEPA has encouraged dialogue between Sliema Local Council, the Sliema Embellishment Committee and other appropriate agencies regarding the issues raised for greater pedestrianisation. Residents of Tigne` Peninsula are particularly concerned that full pedestrianisation will lead to more traffic circulating around the Peninsula. Through this policy, MEPA is therefore adopting less interventionist methods which include introduction of traffic calming and restrictions on private vehicles at certain times of the day.

Maximum building heights for Sliema and St. Julian's are designated as shown in Maps SJ3 and SJ4. Specific building height guidance applies on the following sites/areas:

Sliema and St. Julian's Urban Conservation Areas

Within the Sliema and St. Julian's UCAs, additional levels over existing buildings may be permitted subject to the conditions of Policies NHSE04 and NHSE09 being satisfied. Where Receded Floors are permitted as indicated in the relevant Building Heights and Urban Design Maps, each Receded Floor is to be setback by 2m from the building alignment of the underlying floor and not necessarily by 4.25m as specified in the DC2005. However penthouses are to be receded by 4.25m from the front façade of the building as specified in the DC2005.

Townhouses within the Sliema Urban Conservation Area

Where the maximum building height limitation designated in Map SJ3 is two floors or two floors with plinth or raised ground floor, MEPA will consider granting permission for an additional floor above this maximum building height limitation provided that all the following list of conditions are strictly adhered to:

- i. The existing building is not located within a street that is designated in Map SJ5 as Category A or Category B plus (B+) streetscape in accordance with the provisions of Policy NHSE09;
- ii. The extension at second floor level will be used for residential purposes only (Class 1 of the Use Classes Order, 1994);
- iii. The extension at second floor level is linked internally to and forms a part of the dwelling below it and is not a separate unit of accommodation;
- iv. Where the width of the street where the site is located is narrower than 8m, the extension at second floor level shall be setback by at least 2m from the building alignment of the underlying floor in accordance with the provisions of Policy NHSE04. The design and the materials used for the façade of the second floor shall be compatible with the remainder of the building and with the character of the area;
- v. If the width of the street where the site is located is wider than 8m, then the permitted second floor may be constructed without any setback from the building alignment. The architectural design of the second floor shall reflect that of the underlying floor; and
- vi. A stairwell/stairhood and a washroom may be permitted on the roof of the second floor in accordance with the provisions of DC2005 on condition that the façade of the building referred to in Paragraph 10.3 of DC2005 shall be taken to mean the façade of the recessed second floor.

The provisions of this Policy will apply notwithstanding that they are not in conformity with the criteria stipulated in Paragraph 10.5 of the DC2005.

Blank Party walls in the Sliema Urban Conservation Area

Within and on the boundary of the Sliema UCA, in cases where due to the difference in the Maximum Building Height Limitations between two adjacent sites there results a side blank party wall that is 2 or more floors high, MEPA may consider the construction of additional floors over the immediately adjacent single property with the lower building Height Limitation, notwithstanding that this will not conform with the maximum building Height Limitation for the lower property as indicated in Map SJ3, provided that all the following conditions are satisfied;

- a. The permitted number of additional floors shall be equal to half the difference between the Building Height Limitations (in floors) of the two adjacent properties (if this difference is a non-integer number, the next higher integer will be applied). An additional penthouse level shall be

permitted above these additional floors provided that this conforms with the provisions of the DC2005;

- b. The frontage width of the permitted additional floors shall be more than 5 metres, but less or equal to the width of the single property on site;
- c. The remaining side party wall between the two adjacent properties and the side party wall resulting from the new development are to be treated with suitable architectural features and/or soft landscaping that compliment and enhance the streetscape; and
- d. The architectural design of the façade of the additional floors is to compliment the character of the existing building.

The principles and criteria of this Policy will also apply to those sites located inside the Sliema UCA where within a block frontage with a low Maximum Building Height Limitation there is an existing legitimate high building with neighbouring low buildings resulting in blank side party walls that are 2 or more floors high.

The construction of additional floors over the lower property as allowed by this Policy will be permitted by MEPA only on a one-off basis per party wall. Consequently this one-off permission will not be used as a precedent for allowing the construction of additional floors above Maximum Building Height Limitation over the other neighbouring properties within the same block.

In those cases where Policy NHSE09 does not allow the construction of additional floors due to the Street Classification of the relevant sites, then the provisions of Policy NHSE09 will take precedence over the provisions of this Policy.

Frontage Widths along the Sliema and St. Julian's Waterfronts

To avoid pencil development along the Sliema and St. Julian's waterfronts, proposals for new high buildings having a façade width that is less than 25m will not be permitted except where the proposed facade will have a design that is identical to, and that is continuous with, that of its existing neighbouring building.

Development Brief and Opportunity Areas

Parameters on building heights are given in the relevant detailed planning guidelines for these sites.

17.4.16 In line with the overall objective to promote rehabilitation and upgrading rather than intensification and redevelopment in Sliema and St. Julian's, in general this Policy is not intended to relax buildings heights. Within the Sliema UCA, Building Height Limitations reflect the predominance of existing commitments. However, it is to be pointed out that there are legitimate buildings that do not confirm to the indicated height limitation. In such cases, the policy is designed to aesthetically tone down the harsh punctuation created in a streetscape when the difference between two adjacent properties is two or more floors.

17.4.17 This policy also aims to safeguard the area from further intensification of unsuitable building types, particularly within the UCAs. Where streets within the UCAs have retained the scale and character that contributed to their initial inclusion in the UCA, MEPA will aim to safeguard this character by limiting the number of new apartment dwellings within the UCAs. The provision of additional residential units not only changes the historic character of the area but also results in a pressure for basement garages. This results in new garage openings onto the street and, in turn, limits the amount of on-street parking spaces available to other residents. Limiting availability of on-street parking will also jeopardise proposals for Resident Parking Zones set out in Policy NHSJ02.

17.4.18 Where additional floors are allowed above existing vernacular buildings whose façades positively contribute to the streetscape, the Local Plan has adopted either of two solutions as described below:

- a. The first solution is to allow the construction of additional floors with a suitable setback from the existing facades of typically two storey high townhouses. This option allows for the retention of the original proportions and human scale of the vernacular buildings in question, especially as seen by the pedestrian at street level. Another advantage is that when a vernacular building already exhibits an interesting architectural feature at roof level in the form of a heavily decorated cornice or a ‘frontispizju’, then any additional setback floors would retain these features. Furthermore, individual interventions are not as visually conspicuous as when undertaken directly over the existing street façade. This is relevant when considering that streetscapes are very rarely developed comprehensively. In cases where the setback solution is reverted to, the extra floors may be either designed in an appropriate and compatible modern architectural style, or alternatively using the same architectural treatment as the existing façades. The setback floor solution would need to be applied along a whole stretch of street in order to ensure its effectiveness. This first solution has been applied to those streets that have long terraces of two storey high townhouses punctuated by a small number of high buildings (typically of about 5 or 6 floors high) since the additional floors would bridge the building height gap between the townhouses and the higher buildings whilst not adversely effecting the roofline of the townhouses.
- b. The second solution (applied to those cases not covered by the first solution) is to allow the construction of additional floors on the building alignment of the existing vernacular buildings. The design of such additional floors must be strictly dictated by the height, proportions and the architectural style of the existing and surrounding buildings. Therefore, for example, a proposed second floor should be built in a similar proportion to the underlying floors and not simply eleven courses because that is the usual practice. It is also important that the levels of string and roof cornices follow those of adjacent buildings.

17.4.19 Penthouses within UCA’s are not considered to be an automatic right for buildings constructed above four floors due to the fact that these may create intrusive blank party walls. Due to the highly varying contexts that are found within the Sliema UCA, each case will be treated on its own merits by MEPA but with the primary aim of ensuring that no new obtrusive blank party walls are created.

17.4.20 Given that generally the Sliema UCA is characterized by buildings that do not have any semi-basements, no such semi-basements are allowed unless these are completely hidden from public view. In such cases the ground floor level is to be designed such that it looks like a whole floor with the desired height, proportions and fenestration. In addition, the provisions of Para. 5, Part A of the ‘Design Guidance: Development Control within Urban Conservation Areas’ (1995) are to be adhered to.

17.4.21 Within the Sliema Urban Conservation Area there are many town houses that have a limited floor area and which may, as a consequence, be left vacant. The addition of a second floor which provides the needed further habitable accommodation for the dwelling unit below may help to bring these dwellings back into use and so may contribute to the regeneration of the historic core of Sliema. However for any building that is located within a street that is designated as Category A or B plus (B+) in accordance with the provisions of Policy NHSE09, an additional second floor will not be allowed by MEPA since this development will most likely detract from the high architectural value of the existing building and from the character of the streetscape. The formation of an additional unit/s of accommodation as a result of the permitted second floor is not allowed in order to avoid increasing the residential density in Sliema. This is very important when one considers that the existing density in this locality is already high. As with all development in UCAs, the form and design of the additional floor is important. Consequently, the permitted second floor should be set back from the front façade where the street is narrow, and it should be designed so that it does not detract from the character of the rest of the building or of the area.

17.4.22 Within many locations in Sliema, building height limitations had been relaxed in the past resulting in a substantial number of visually intrusive blank party walls. In order to address the existing negative visual impact created by these blank party walls, MEPA will consider the construction of

additional floors over the adjacent lower property so as to break down the visual mass of the existing blank party wall. Additional required visual mitigation measures include the treatment by using suitable architectural features and/or soft landscaping of the resulting exposed blank party walls. Restrictions to the frontage width of the additional floors are being imposed so as to ensure that the resulting development will not be proportionally too narrow in comparison to the existing buildings, and are also intended to introduce a clear cut-off point as to where this policy applies.

17.4.23 Recent high-rise developments occurring along the Sliema and St. Julian's waterfronts have resulted in a series of pencil developments with bland third party walls and inappropriate architectural compositions. The Policy addresses this issue by applying strict control on development proposals for new high buildings along the waterfront.

NHSJ07

Vehicle Access to the Coast

MEPA will refuse permission for new vehicle access points along the Sliema and St. Julian's coast. Where possible, the Authority will seek to further restrict car access to the coast by promoting or requiring signage or physical barriers to access.

17.4.24 There are various locations where vehicles can gain access to the rocky coast along the length of the Sliema and St. Julian's coast. Vehicle access is justified only to provide access to boathouses and slipways and for emergency access. Despite this, illegal access by car still occurs for bathing and barbecues, amongst other uses. Vehicles driving or parked close to the coast are inconvenient to other users of the coast and disturb views of the coast. Parts of the coast are Ecologically Protected Areas (see Policy NHCV01) and vehicles threaten the ecological status of these areas.

NHSJ08

Blue Flag Beach

The stretch of coast from The Fortizza to Balluta Bay is identified as a likely candidate for Blue Flag Status. MEPA will favourably consider necessary infrastructure in view of achieving this award, providing such infrastructure will not cause harm to the ecological and environmental status of the coast in line with Policies NHCV01 and NHCV03.

17.4.25 The Blue Flag Campaign is an award scheme that seeks to reward local government and its partners for providing safe and clean beaches and marinas. The award, the Blue Flag, is given annually to beaches and marinas that satisfy a number of essential criteria. Progress in reaching a further set of guideline criteria is also taken into consideration in the annual award. The criteria used for beach selection are: water quality, beach management and safety, and environmental information and education.

NHSJ09

Boat and Public Access at Spinola Bay

MEPA designates the coastal area at Spinola Bay for the land uses as designated in Maps SJ2 and SJ7. The layout of these land uses is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- i. To safeguard areas required for the local fishing industry, for boat hardstanding and for related storage facilities (particularly for part-time fishermen);**
- ii. To safeguard unobstructed public access along the coast, and**
- iii. To define areas appropriate for the placing of tables and chairs.**

MEPA, in conjunction with relevant agencies including the MTA, the St. Julian's Local Council, the Ghaqda Sajjieda San Giljan and restaurant owners, supports the formulation and implementation of an enhancement scheme for the area. MEPA is to be satisfied that this enhancement scheme will:

- a. **safeguard the fishing activity;**
- b. **enhance coastal access as a tourist attraction;**
- c. **establish physical limits to the different land uses;**
- d. **assist in the management of the overall area; and**
- e. **enhance the aesthetics and townscape character of the area.**

17.4.26 The fishing industry at Spinola Bay has historically played an important part in shaping the character and function of this part of St. Julian's. The industry with its full-time and part-time fishermen and their boats adds colour and life to this vibrant part of St. Julian's. However restaurant and bar uses are slowly encroaching upon the traditional uses along parts of Spinola Bay. Uncontrolled further encroachments, such as the placing of tables and chairs on the quay of Spinola Bay, would interfere with and displace other more important uses such as pedestrian access along the quay and fishermen's work at Spinola Bay to the detriment of the character of the locality. In order to achieve a proper balance between the competing demands of the local fishing industry and the tourism industry, lands uses are being clearly designated on Map SJ7 so as to separate conflicting uses and to allow for the efficient functioning of all activities including the fishing boat industry and the unobstructed public access to the coastal area. MEPA is also highlighting the need for a proper landscaping scheme for this area to assist in the implementation and setting of physical limits to the various land uses. An enhancement scheme is also recommended in order to promote the further upgrading of this important location.

NHSJ10

Site at Triq St. Elija, St. Julian's

In line with the overall Local Plan strategy for land use and transport, this site is safeguarded for residential purposes in line with Policy NHH001. A flexible approach to dwelling densities will be considered, provided:

- i. **The development includes a pedestrian access leading onto Triq Birkirkara;**
- ii. **The building height limitation for frontages on Triq Sant' Elija' is 3 floors. New development in the rear parts of the site that adjoin properties that have their frontage on Telghet Birkirkara are not to exceed a building height limitation of 3 floors measured from the level of Telghet Birkirkara;**
- iii. **The character and appearance of the development is compatible with the surrounding urban environment; and**
- iv. **Proposals have full regard to all the relevant Local Plan's policies and the provisions of DC2005 relating to landscaped open space and amenity standards in residential development.**

17.4.27 In line with Policy NHSJ01 and the Structure Plan, major traffic generating uses will not be encouraged in the UCA. Given the sensitive surroundings and the narrow access roads that characterise this UCA, careful attention should be made to the design of elevations onto Triq Sant Elija, including vehicle access. Given the site's proximity to an existing important public transport route along the waterfront, MEPA will require the development of a pedestrian link onto Birkirkara Road in order to make access to public transport more convenient.

NHSJ11

Balluta Site

As soon as is practicable, MEPA will formulate a Development Brief for the site at Balluta as indicated in Map SJ2. This Brief is to provide detailed guidance on permissible land uses, density and layout of development, building heights, vehicular and pedestrian route layout, protection of areas of environmental value and open space provision. In the interim period, until this Development Brief is approved, any proposals requiring development permission that would, in the opinion of MEPA, in any way prejudice this Development Brief will be refused.

17.4.28 The designated area that includes part of Il-Wied ta' Balluta is located within the Limits of Development, but safeguarded by the TPS (1988) as 'public open space'.

17.4.29 The designation in the TPS was made in the absence of detailed environmental surveys, and it is for this reason that the site is currently zoned in the TPS "for re-planning". In other words, the TPS did not plan the designated site in detail since it was acknowledged that environmental surveys and further planning work needed to be undertaken first. As a consequence of this, to date the TPS designation has been ineffectual and creates ambiguity and uncertainty.

17.4.30 A Development Brief is therefore required in order to remove this ambiguous situation and so as to satisfactorily reconcile the various planning issues involved. The aim of this Brief is to allow limited development that would be planned in a comprehensive manner and that would fully respect the context and environmental value of Balluta Valley.

NHSJ12

Ta` Giorni Opportunity Site

In line with the overall Local Plan strategy for land use and transport the Ta` Giorni Opportunity Site is safeguarded for future mixed uses. This site is designated as indicated in Map SJ2. If, during the period of the Local Plan, the site is presented for redevelopment, MEPA will ensure proposals:

- i. Are comprehensive and include the whole site;**
- ii. Include uses which are either educational, institutional or residential, or an appropriate mix and layout of these uses;**
- iii. Provide good access to bus services;**
- iv. Upgrade existing nearby junctions to create safe and convenient access onto the Regional Road;**
- v. Limit through traffic in surrounding residential streets;**
- vi. Have full regard to the Local Plan's policies and to the provisions of the DC2005 relating to landscaping, open space and amenity standards; and**
- vii. Have building heights that do not disrupt important local and long distance views.**

This policy does not prejudice the continuation of the current use of the site for educational purposes. A proposal for development relating to this use will be positively considered providing it complies with other relevant policies in the Structure Plan and the Local Plan.

17.4.31 This site is well placed in relation to the Regional Road and major existing and growing centres of population. The Local Plan's strategy is to encourage the redevelopment or take up of sites within designated Town Centres or near major junctions with the Regional Road. The site is currently occupied by a technical institute and includes large areas of under-utilised space and buildings. Through this policy, MEPA will promote the more efficient use of land and the future use of the site for a suitable mix of uses, provided development does not adversely affect the residential amenity of surrounding residents. This policy is in no way intended to prejudice the present use of the site or stimulate its relocation.

NHSJ13

Villa Bonici

The Villa Bonici site as indicated in Map SJ1 is designated as a Development Brief area. The Brief is to provide detailed guidance on land uses, building layouts and heights, conservation issues, open space provision, accesses, parking provision, landscaping and other urban design measures. Subject to more detailed feasibility studies, and provided that all parts of this property and its gardens that have historical and architectural value are protected, this Development Brief will take into consideration the following recommendations:

- i. The development of a limited part of the site for Residential Accommodation for the Elderly;**
- ii. The provision of a limited amount of off-street residents' parking spaces for the Savoy Area;**

- iii. **The provision of a landscaped and publicly accessible garden; and**
- iv. **The provision of good public pedestrian links through the site. These links should preferably improve public access between the Strand and the Savoy area in order that public transport routes and shopping/leisure facilities are made more accessible.**

MEPA will not allow the piecemeal development of this site, and will refuse any planning applications that are likely to compromise the objectives of the Development Brief for the designated area.

17.4.32 This site falls between the Savoy Local Centre and the Sliema Strand. In addition the site is well placed in relation to existing public transport routes at the Strand and the planned circular bus service for Sliema Town Centre in the Savoy area. Therefore in considering the physical design and layout of proposals, MEPA will require that convenient public pedestrian routes are introduced to maximise the ability of residents to gain access to the coast, local facilities and public transport. The Development Brief should also consider accommodation for the elderly in anticipation of the increasing need for specialised housing for the elderly in the Inner Harbours area. Thirdly, MEPA will also examine the possibility of providing some on-site parking for use by residents of the Savoy area of Sliema. However this parking provision is not to conflict with the overarching need to protect all those parts of this property and its gardens that have historical and architectural value.

NHSJ14

Community Facilities at St. Patrick's

The St. Patrick's site as indicated in Map SJ1 is safeguarded for the following uses:

- i. **Off-street parking for residents of the St. Patrick's area;**
- ii. **Residential accommodation for the Elderly; and/or,**
- iii. **Indoor/covered sports provision.**

17.4.33 This site falls within easy access of the waterfront and a main public transport link to Sliema and St. Julian's Town Centres. It is currently utilised as a school and has significant open space. There is scope to complement existing uses and provide for better provision for the ageing population of Inner Sliema. The site is well situated to accommodate future housing for the elderly and incorporate additional (off-street) parking for local residents in this area that suffers from acute under-provision of parking for residents. In considering parking provision, MEPA will require that spaces are necessary to complement the future introduction of a Resident Parking Zone for the residents of Inner Sliema (see Policy NHSJ02).

NHSJ15

Development of New Hotels in Sliema

Applications for the development of new hotel projects within the areas identified for Hotel development in Map SJ1 will be considered favourably provided the following criteria are met:

- i. **The prior approval of the Malta Tourism Authority is obtained;**
- ii. **The proposed development is not likely to create significant adverse impacts on the local amenity;**
- iii. **The scale of the proposed development is consistent with the building height limitation and the character of the area;**
- iv. **High quality design in terms of height, volume, layout, elevations, materials, finishes and landscaping is achieved;**
- v. **The proposal will not compromise existing and future proposals for traffic management in the area as established in Policies NHSJ01 and NHSJ05;**
- vi. **Development proposals are to comply with established standards for access, on-site parking provision, coach parking facilities and alighting points. In those cases where on-site parking provision is not desirable, the developer will be required to pay the appropriate level of contribution to the CPPS applicable to the relevant area; and**

vii. The proposal is in conformity with all relevant Policies in this Local Plan.

17.4.34 This policy encourages additional hotel development within the areas identified for Hotel development. The areas identified for Hotel development consist of the Secondary Town Centres, the ex-Union Club redevelopment site and the Fort Cambridge Development Brief area as identified in Map SJ1. This policy therefore ensures that hotels development does not spread into the surrounding residential areas. The specified criteria will ensure that the permitted development is in line with the Malta Tourism Authority's policies, is in harmony with the surrounding area and will not result in significant adverse impacts.

18. Swieqi

18.1 Introduction

Area: 3.05km²

Population: 6,688

- 18.1.1 Swieqi was formally constituted as a Local Council in 1995 when St. Julian's was split into three areas (Pembroke, Swieqi and St. Julian's). In the 1960s the area was zoned for residential expansion through the Temporary Provisions Schemes (1988) and has since experienced rapid growth through the construction of maisonettes, flats and villas.
- 18.1.2 The Local Plan's general strategy for settlements, housing and population promotes Swieqi as an area for residential growth within existing urban boundaries (Policy NHHO03). There exist dwelling densities as low as 9 dwellings per hectare in parts of Swieqi compared to 72dph in Msida and Pembroke.
- 18.1.3 The area's rapid growth in housing has not been matched by the provision of appropriately located local shops, services and amenities to support a community of its size. Consultations with the Local Council and residents reveal that residents aspire to retain the area's residential character and there is dissatisfaction with the current provision of formal open spaces and local shops and services (MEPA Household Quality Survey 1996). Particular threats to the amenity of residents are perceived as being the ad hoc spread of retail outlets (often inappropriately converted from domestic garages), the effects of non-residential traffic relating to Paceville and the Regional Road which, due to heavy traffic separates Swieqi from Pembroke and has resulted in dangerous difficult access from and into residential streets. In addition current trends in Swieqi show that developers' efforts in maximizing the use of each site is resulting in high density developments that may adversely affect residential amenity.
- 18.1.4 40% (1.25km²) of the Local Council area lies outside the Limits of Development on Swieqi's rural fringe which includes numerous environmentally sensitive valleys such as Wied Ghomor and its tributaries and Wied il-Harrub. Growing local awareness to the area's vulnerability to illegal development, dumping and spoiling led in June 1999 to the scheduling of Wied Ghomor and a commitment from the Works Division to introduce a management programme for maintenance. The Local Plan recognises the importance of this rural fringe, as both a recreational space for residents and a strategic natural buffer between San Gwann to the south and Gharghur to the west.

18.2 Issues

18.2.1 Residential Amenities and Facilities

- i. Community facilities, shops and other local services inadequate and dispersed;
- ii. Concern that entertainment uses from Paceville will encroach into Swieqi;
- iii. Concern over high density developments in the terrace house areas; and
- iv. Late-night noise and disturbance caused to residents by visitors to Paceville.

18.2.2 Traffic

- i. Visitors to Paceville create competition for limited on-street parking and congestion;
- ii. Regional Road Junctions can be improved;
- iii. Regional Road causes severance between Swieqi and Pembroke; and
- iv. Wide main roads generate fast traffic routes through Swieqi.

18.2.3 Take-up of Land for New Housing

- i. 55% of Swieqi's undeveloped housing land designated in the TPS (1988) at lowest densities in North Harbours area.

18.2.4 Public Realm and Rural Fringe

- i. Lack of civic/public open spaces; and
- ii. Encroachment into the valleys by development.

18.3 Key Planning Objectives

18.3.1 Protecting Swieqi as a Residential Area

- i. Enhance Swieqi as a residential area and prevent overdevelopment;
- ii. Restrict encroachment of Paceville entertainment uses into Swieqi; and
- iii. Improve provision of/access to, local shops, open spaces and services for residents.

18.3.2 Traffic Management

- i. Promote a Resident Parking Zone for residents near the boundary of Paceville;
- ii. Mitigate against negative effects caused by the Regional Road traffic; and
- iii. Discourage main roads in Swieqi from being used as fast short-cuts to/from San Gwann.

18.3.3 New Housing

- i. In line with the Plan's Settlements and Transport Strategies, review the zoning of residential dwellings in Swieqi to make more efficient use of vacant housing land where appropriate; and
- ii. Protect the residential areas of Swieqi from overdevelopment.

18.3.4 Improving Management of Rural Conservation Areas

- i. Protect and enhance Swieqi's Rural Fringe; and
- ii. Prioritise proposals to improve pedestrian access to recreational space.

General Strategy

18.3.5 The brief strategy for Swieqi is as follows:

The overall strategy is to maintain and enhance Swieqi as a residential area and contain new housing within the existing Limits of Development. Given Swieqi's predicted population growth and existing under-provision of community facilities and spaces, small centres for local shops, services and community facilities will be designated to improve residents' access to essential local uses and, where possible, additional open spaces. Elsewhere, ad-hoc retail development including change of use of garages will not be permitted. In streets close to Paceville, the spread of entertainment uses into Swieqi will not be permitted. Outside the urban area, the rural fringe which includes Wied Ghomor and its tributaries, will be safeguarded from further urban sprawl and promoted for appropriate recreational pursuits.

18.4 Area Policies

NHSW01

Local Centres

In accordance with the provisions of Policy NHRE02, Local Centres are designated at the following locations as indicated in Maps SW1 and 2:

- i. Triq Ta' L-Ibrag; and
- ii. Triq l-Uqija.

The area indicated on Map SW2 at Triq il-Keffa is designated for the following land uses:

1. At least 50% of the area is to be retained as an open public and landscaped area as indicated in Map SW2;
2. Community facilities including a Local Council Office and 2 local shops are to be located at ground floor level only of the developable part of the site as indicated in Map SW2. No other commercial land uses are allowed in this development; and
3. Residential development on the upper floors of the developable part of the site overlying the community facilities.

The development of these land uses at the designated Triq il-Keffa area is subject to the following conditions:

- a. An outline development application is to be submitted for the entire designated area;
- b. The provisions of Policy NHSO02 (Provision of Public Civic Facilities) may be applied to this area;
- c. Required community facilities are to be identified following a study of the level of community service provision in the Swieqi area that is to be researched prior to the outline proposals by the Local Council and relevant agencies;
- d. The required 50% public open space is to be fully landscaped by the developer at his own expense prior to the built development becoming operational; and
- e. Only limited surface car parking will be permitted within the designated area.

The Local Plan also designates specific convenience shopping areas at Triq Is-Sidra and within the Central Madliena Opportunity Site (refer to Policy NHSW08). These convenience shopping areas are earmarked for a maximum of 5 local shops each, and provided that each shop has not more than 50sqm combined sales and storage area. In line with Policy NHHO02, proposals for all new local retail and office uses will not be acceptable in Swieqi's designated Residential Priority Areas.

18.4.1 In Swieqi, the Local Plan establishes a number of small local centres to direct local shops and services to locations that will encourage access by foot rather than by car. The size in terms of number of local shops of the specific shopping areas is envisaged to be small (five to twelve small shops). This hierarchy is established to promote better provision of local shops and services and to discourage inappropriate commercial development in the area's residential priority streets. In order that the development of these local centres and specific convenience shopping areas is not compromised, no new retail or office uses will be permitted Swieqi's Residential Priority Areas. The following guidance for each designated area will be adopted:

Triq Ta' L-Ibrag and Triq l-Udija

18.4.2 These two centres are defined by the cluster of existing shops near the junction of the Regional Road/Triq Ta' L-Ibrag and the second cluster of shops next to Ta' L-Ibrag Church. Local retail uses will be contained within the boundaries of these centres together with smaller scale commercial uses along the remaining terrace house frontages on Triq ta' L-Ibragg stretching from the Regional Road

up to the church. These areas will continue to serve the retail and community needs of residents in the surrounding area. Given the local centres' location on a main route through Ta` L-Ibrag, many shoppers and users of the church arrive by car. This can have a negative impact on residents within or adjacent to the local centre. To resolve this, provision for limited paying on-street public car parking, traffic calming and parking restrictions along Triq Ta`l-Ibrag are detailed through the Policies of this chapter.

Triq il-Keffa

18.4.3 This site in the centre of Swieqi is designated through the Temporary Provisions Schemes (1988) as a 'Green Area' and is in Government ownership. To date no embellishment has been undertaken and the area is vacant and walled. Given the site lies within walking distance of most of the residents of the Swieqi area, the Local Plan proposes the relocation of community facilities to this site together with overlying residential development.

18.4.4 The site is well placed to accommodate the planned re-location of the Swieqi Local Council offices which currently occupy unsuitable premises at the Regional Road, and are not well located for residents wishing to arrive by foot. The Local Plan will safeguard further space for other community facilities (possibly to include a sub-post office and polyclinic) and the retention of at least 50% of the area as a green space. The design of the whole area including all uses, open spaces, bus pull-in and parking areas will be subject to an application for outline development planning application. Buildings shall be concentrated on one part of the site only. As part of this application, MEPA will require a study of the level of community service provision in the Swieqi area. With the co-operation of Swieqi Local Council, Posta Limited, The Department of Health and other relevant agencies, the applicant should indicate potential users of space reserved for community facilities as part of the outline application. Although it is anticipated that an outline application is likely to be made by the Local Council, MEPA will consider applications from other parties providing all the local plan requirements are met.

Madliena

18.4.5 Policy NHSW08 outlines the Local Plan's position regarding the development of a major 6.2 hectare site in the centre of Madliena. The main use of the site will be residential. Ancillary retail facilities will be sought as detailed in the Table SW(a). These shops are designated to serve residents of the development on site and the surrounding Madliena area. The number of local shops is to be small (5 local shops). Details of the development of this designated residential area and the specific convenience shopping area are given in Policy NHSW08.

Triq is Sidra

18.4.6 The area shown on Map SW2 is currently being used for agricultural purposes and is designated for housing. Part of the site is reserved for a small retail area with a limited number of local shops (5 local shops only). This local retail area is planned primarily to serve existing and future residents living within this part of Swieqi which has seen a rapid growth in housing in recent years. Should the current agricultural use of the site cease over the Local Plan period, proposals for retail development at this location should demonstrate good pedestrian links to any new adjacent housing.

18.4.7 The following table summarises the key requirements for development at these sites:

Designates Areas	Ta' L-Ibrag and Triq l-Udija	Triq il-Keffa	Triq is Sidra	Madliena
Designation Prior to Local Plan	Mainly Terr. Houses	Green Area	Terr. Houses	White Area
Outline Application for all shops/facilities required?	N/A (existing centre)	See NHSW01	N/A	See NHSW08
Other requirements of Planning Application	N/A	See NHSW01	Must respect planned pedestrian routes	Retain Central Pedestrianised Axial

			(see PC007/97)	Route and Central Open Space
Requirement for Car Park	* See NHSW03	Limited Surface car parking only.	No - Very limited retailing allowed – (5 local shops) arrival by car will not be encouraged.	No - Very limited retailing allowed – (5 local shops) arrival by car will not be encouraged.
Development should have regard to the provision/location of telephone kiosks, bus shelters etc...	N/A	*	*	*

TABLE SW(a). Planning criteria for Swieqi’s designated shopping areas.

An (*) denotes the need for provision of identified facilities.

NHSW02

Resident Parking Zone

Map SW2 shows streets that are identified for inclusion within the Swieqi Resident Parking Zone (RPZ). In conjunction with the ADT, the Traffic Control Board, and the Swieqi and St. Julian’s Local Councils, an implementation plan and management system for RPZs shall be encouraged in this part of Swieqi in order to relieve the adverse effects of parking generated by visitors to Paceville.

18.4.8 Policy NHTR16 promotes the introduction of Resident Parking Zones at various locations throughout the Local Plan area. Residential streets that are subject to severe competition for on-street spaces by non-residents are prioritised for inclusion under a RPZ scheme for Swieqi and shown in Map SW2.

18.4.9 A planning obligation will include the need for the developer to undertake studies on demand for on street parking within Paceville and on the boundaries of Swieqi. The planning obligation and details of the use of CPPS funds will be drawn up by MEPA with regard to the principles established within Section 6 of the Qui-Si-Sana Development Brief. It is anticipated that the scheme will be self-financing in the long-term and management of the RPZ will be implemented by the Swieqi Local Council.

NHSW03

Road Upgrading

MEPA shall support proposals for the comprehensive upgrading of Triq Ta’ L-Ibrag, Triq Is-Swieqi and Triq il-Qasam. In line with this objective, proposals for these roads will be required to:

- i. narrow existing carriageways and introduce traffic calming measures;**
- ii. widen pavements;**
- iii. formalise parking layouts and provide safe short-stay on-street parking;**
- iv. consider proposals for off-street long-term parking for employees of businesses;**
- v. improve crossing points for pedestrians;**
- vi. introduce appropriate flood prevention measures in Swieqi Road; and**
- vii. introduce trees and formal landscaping.**

18.4.10 Through this Policy, the local plan is encouraging measures to improve the pedestrian environment and traffic safety along Triq Ta` L-Ibrag. The Plan indicates the need to introduce measures to restrict on-street parking along this part of Ta` L-Ibrag and introduce paying on-street car parking. The Plan assumes that more trips to Ta` L-Ibrag for local shopping or church visits will be encouraged by foot. In turn, these measures will improve the quality of life of people living in or adjacent to these local centres by reducing the disturbance of traffic. MEPA will encourage an early

pre-application meeting to discuss these objectives and any initial proposals with the Local Councils, ADT, Traffic Control Board and any relevant implementing bodies. The policy also seeks to free parking spaces along the main road from being occupied for long periods throughout the day by commuters.

18.4.11 Through consultation with Swieqi Local Council, Swieqi and Qasam Roads are identified as being used as short-cuts by non-residential traffic. Vehicles often arriving from, or going to San Gwann (via Wied Ghomor), use these wide roads as through routes. Given the generous widths of these roads, high speeds are reached which endanger the safety and quality of life of Swieqi residents. Through this policy, MEPA will promote projects by the Works Division or other competent bodies to resolve this situation in line with points (i) to (vii) of the policy.

18.4.12 The planned commercial, retail and residential developments in Pembroke (See Policies NHPE07 and NHPE09) will generate significant extra traffic along St. Andrew's Road. To accommodate this, sections of the road will need to be improved, together with various junction improvements and traffic management measures. Details of these works will be determined by a supporting TIS. Through the EU TEN-T Project it has already been proposed how these improvements to the arterial road shall be carried out.

NHSW04

Height Envelopes

Maximum building heights for Swieqi are designated in Maps SW3 and SW4. Specific building height guidance applies to the Central Madliena Opportunity Site as detailed in Policy NHSW08.

18.4.13 The Plan takes on board the height relaxation policy applicable to terrace house areas as stipulated in the 'Interim Review to Heights Limitations' pending completion of the Local Plans. Thus, in line with the area strategy for Swieqi, which is to retain the area's residential character, no further overall relaxation of building heights is stipulated during the local plan period.

NHSW05

Specific Zoning Conditions

In Swieqi, dwellings to be constructed in the areas zoned for detached/semi-detached dwellings as designated in Maps SW1 and SW2 shall comply with the requirements for dwelling type, minimum site area, maximum number of habitable floors and other conditions as set out in the Table SW(b) below. This policy supersedes zoning conditions for detached and semi-detached dwellings as prescribed in the DC2005. However the other provisions of DC2005 still apply.

The Blocks marked J and K as indicated on Map SW4 are being rezoned from Detached and Semi-Detached Dwellings to Terrace Houses, Maisonettes and Flats.

For sites that are located in areas zoned for the development of terrace houses, maisonettes and flats in Swieqi as designated in Maps SW1 and SW2, the development or redevelopment of residential units will only be allowed by MEPA provided that the net floor area of each residential unit exceeds 120 sqm. This provision supersedes the DC2005 policy relating to the minimum size of dwellings for residential development applications in the areas zoned for the development of terrace houses, maisonettes and flats in Swieqi.

18.4.14 Much of the Swieqi Local Council area is currently designated for villa development (25% and 40% plot coverage) and accommodates dwelling densities as low as 9 dwellings per hectare (compared to 72 dph in parts of Pembroke and Msida and 234 dph in Sliema). In practice many areas in Swieqi have developed to higher densities than specified through the TPS (1988). Thus, in an effort to make such zoning requirements clearer, the following Table SW(b) puts forward the specific zoning

conditions for the areas of Madliena, L-Ibrag and Swieqi and other blocks as shown in Maps SW3 and 4.

Area/Site	Permissible Development	Dwelling Type	Min Site Area	Max Site Coverage	Min Site Curtilage	Max No. of floors	Garage Within
Madliena/Ibragg (excluding the Madliena Opportunity Site)	Villa	D/SD	1 Tumoli	30%	6m	2*	BL
Swieqi	Villa	D/SD	N/A	40%	3m	2	BL/SC
Blocks A to E	Villa	D/SD	1 Tumoli	30%	6m	2*	BL
Block F	Villa	D/SD	N/A	40%	3m	2	BL/SC
Blocks G, H, I	Villa	D/SD	N/A	40%	3m	2	BL

Notes: D = detached; SD = semi-detached; BL = building line; SC = side curtilage; N/A = not applicable; * = area of first floor not to exceed 85% of ground floor area

Table SW(b). Specific Zoning Conditions.

18.4.15 Existing terrace house development on three sides surrounds the Detached and Semi-Detached dwellings in Block J presently fronting Triq il-Kwarta,. As such, there would be no objection from a planning point of view in using the land in this block that is presently zoned for villas in a more efficient way by redeveloping it into terrace houses, maisonettes and even flats (refer to PC Zoning File 39/04). Block K is being rezoned from detached and semi-detached dwellings to terrace houses in view of the fact that most of the block has already been committed to terrace houses (refer to PC Zoning File 21/03).

18.4.16 Current trends in Swieqi show that developers' efforts in maximizing the use of each site in areas zoned for the development of terrace houses, maisonettes and flats is resulting in high density developments. The cumulative affect of this trend may result in these Residential Areas and Residential Priority Areas of Swieqi being developed in a manner that is excessively dense to the detriment of the quality of life of residents. This Policy is thus intended to ensure that any redevelopment takes place at a density that is more compatible with the surrounding areas.

NHSW06

Wied Ghomor Rural Conservation Strategy

Management Strategy

MEPA will support relevant agencies in their efforts to restore degraded areas within the valley and improve informal public access. To achieve this, MEPA shall require prior agreement on a detailed long-term management strategy for the valley.

Any development or activity that would jeopardise the protected status or the conservation of the valley will not be permitted by MEPA.

Existing Cattle Farm

Proposals for the change of use/redevelopment of the existing cattle farm in the valley will be considered by MEPA provided that the proposed use and built development are compatible with the sites' rural location, the protected status of the valley and the public's enjoyment of Wied Ghomor for rural recreation.

Existing Quarry

MEPA will favourably consider the rehabilitation of the Wied Ghomor quarry provided all the conditions of the current planning permit for this site are satisfied. The detailed rehabilitation scheme for the entire site to be submitted by the developer is to include:

- i. **the intended after-use of the site ensuring that the proposed use does not run counter to the policies of the Structure Plan, this Local Plan, the Minerals Subject Plan and any other relevant development control provisions for the adjacent land uses;**
- ii. **provision for new building development that is to occupy only a minimal part of the site area to the satisfaction of MEPA;**
- iii. **the sequence and phasing of restoration including the demolishing and removal from the site of all existing buildings, structures and plant machinery;**
- iv. **the final levels of the restored land;**
- v. **a timetable for the completion of all works to restore the site; and**
- vi. **a landscaping scheme to the satisfaction of MEPA.**

18.4.17 Wied Ghomor and its tributaries were scheduled by the MEPA as protected areas in June 1999. The scheduling, through Structure Plan Policies RCO 10 and RCO 11, Areas of Ecological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance as shown on Map CV2. Through liaison with Swieqi, San Gwann and St. Julian's Local Councils and MEPA, the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure is promoting a long-term management strategy of enhancement to promote the valley as an area for country walks and informal recreation. As part of this programme, wardens will be sponsored by participating Local Councils to ensure no further degradation of the area occurs. MEPA will support these measures providing prior agreement is made on the Ministry's long term recreation strategy for the area. This strategy should set out the locations of anticipated infrastructure such as signage, paths, picnic areas, wardens post or any other development necessary for the long term management of the valley. Proposals should promote the rural identity of the area and avoid unnecessary infrastructure and buildings that might compromise the area's setting and character. In considering subsequent applications for development (made with reference to the agreed management strategy), MEPA shall require that all structures are unobtrusive in terms of their design, size and bulk. Structures should use materials that are sensitive to their surroundings.

18.4.18 The active quarry at Wied Ghomor covers an area of 27,350sqm. Hardstone has been extracted from the valley since the 1960's and is the only operational quarry within the Plan area. The privately owned quarry was recently extended beyond the permitted boundary without a permit and was subject to enforcement action. The Planning Permit PA6163/97, as approved in May 2001, sanctioned the illegal excavation together with over-excavation (depth) within the licensed boundaries and further excavation in other parts of the site. Any new further excavations will be subject to the conditions contained in PA6163/97. This permit includes a number of conditions in order to secure a reduction in the impact of the quarrying operations upon nearby residential areas and other provisions for landscaping and restoration schemes. Through this Policy and the conditions as set out in PA6163/97, MEPA will favourably consider the rehabilitation of the quarry preferably to include horticultural uses. Developments will be considered by MEPA provided all precautions are taken to protect the ecological value of the site and the scheduling status, and therefore such proposals may be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment. It is stressed that building development in the quarry is to occupy only a minimal part of the total site area. The major part of the site will be heavily landscaped in order to ensure that views particularly as seen from the opposite side of the valley are enhanced.

NHSW07

Category 1 Rural Settlement

MEPA designates the area that contains a row of buildings along Triq Pedidalwett as a Category 1 Rural Settlement. MEPA will consider the development of infill sites and the re-development of existing buildings located within the Category 1 Rural Settlement boundaries provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:

- i. **Development shall only be for residential purposes;**
- ii. **Each dwelling unit shall be constructed strictly within the boundaries of the designated Category 1 Rural Settlement as indicated in Maps SW1 and SA3;**

- iii. The maximum building height limitation of two floors with semi-basement above road level shall not be exceeded;
- iv. Particular attention shall be given to the design of the back elevation of the new development;
- v. A side garden of at least 3m, with a suitably designed side elevation fronting onto it, will be required for “end of terrace” developments; and
- vi. No new access into the valley at the back of any existing or new development is created.

18.4.19 In the area, one cluster of terrace houses has been developed over time with planning permits. These terraced houses form ribbon development outside development zone which should not be allowed to expand any further. Moreover, this row of terraced houses falls within Wied Mejxu where Structure Plan Policies RCO28 and 29 and other relevant policies in the Local Plan seek the protection of such valleys as important habitats, water catchment areas and as important geomorphological features. This cluster of buildings is therefore being designated as a Category 1 Rural Settlement where only minimal development and re-development for residential uses will be allowed. In order to address the blank party wall that exists at one end of this row of buildings, an End Plot is being proposed with side garden and apertures. The area being designated as a Category 1 Rural Settlement measures about 6,300 sqm.

NHSW08

Central Madliena Opportunity Site

The Central Madliena Opportunity Site is designated as indicated in Map SW5. This site is safeguarded for low-density and high quality residential development. The site is to be developed in a comprehensive manner and the developer is to demonstrate to the satisfaction of MEPA that the proposal adheres to the guidelines on densities and other matters as outlined below:

A. Boundaries of Site

- i. Only villa development (detached/semi-detached dwelling type) is permissible at the edge of the site as indicated in Map SW5 with the following conditions:
 - a. Minimum site area of 1 Tumoli;
 - b. Maximum site coverage is 30%;
 - c. Minimum site curtilage is 6m;
 - d. Maximum number of habitable floors is 2 floors with the area of the first floor not to exceed 85% of the ground floor area; and
 - e. Garage to be within the building.

B. Centre of the Site

- ii. Higher density dwellings other than those typical of very low-density villa areas will be sought towards the centre of the site providing the proposal integrates with the existing and proposed development in this area;
- iii. Detached development (detached/semi-detached dwelling type) is permissible at the centre of the site as indicated in Map SW5 with the following conditions:
 - a. Minimum site area not applicable;
 - b. Maximum site coverage is 40%;
 - c. Minimum site curtilage is 6m;
 - d. Maximum number of habitable floors is 2 floors; and
 - e. Garage to be within the building.
- iv. A maximum of 4 dwelling units in each free standing detached building;
- v. A maximum of 5, centrally located, local shops having not more than 50sqm combined sales and storage area for each shop. These are to form a cluster of shops located at ground floor level;

- vi. Proposals are to include a uniform and permeable design of the boundary wall where the development overlooks the public access and open space areas, including the existing axial route, as shown in Map SW5; and
- vii. Development is to broadly reflect the prevailing villa character of the area.

C. Whole of the Site

- viii. All buildings are to read as detached buildings of high quality design;
- ix. In order to protect the Class B archaeological site that is located within the designated Opportunity Area, a planning obligation will be imposed on the developer so as to secure satisfactory archaeological investigations and recording for the eventual conservation of the site that is to be carried out by a competent archaeologist. Permission for development will only be granted provided that MEPA, in consultation with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, is fully satisfied that such development will not adversely affect the archaeological site in any way;
- x. The character of the existing high wall along Madliena Road should be retained. Openings for vehicle access will not be permitted within this wall although sensitive pedestrian openings may need to be created;
- xi. The existing axial route and areas of vegetation shall be retained;
- xii. Proposals are to include a minimum of 30% of the site area for landscaping with generous foliage provision particularly along side curtilages; and
- xiii. Where public access and open space areas are shown on Map SW5 these are to be not less than 5m in width;

D. Amenity Space and Access Points

- xiv. Pedestrian access into and out-of the site shall be maximized. Indicative minimum routes for pedestrian access are shown on Map SW5; and
- xv. Residential amenity space is to be incorporated in line with the relevant provision of the DC2005.

18.4.20 This 5.4 hectare area forms one of the largest vacant sites available for development within the North Harbours. The development of this site as outlined in this Policy is pivotal in pursuing the local plan's area strategy for Swieqi which is to retain the residential character of the area and promote access to basic every day shops for residents. Large scale commercial floor areas will not be acceptable in this development as such uses would conflict with the Local Plan's objective to protect Swieqi from non-residential traffic in the area. The number and size of local shops is specified in this Policy and indicated in Table SW(a).

18.4.21 The townscape of Madliena is characterised by large open spaces and numerous retained rural features including high rubble walls, pockets of dense vegetation and the chapel at Madliena Road. The retention of existing features within and on the boundary of the site will be sought (see Map SW5) in addition to public open space. A mix of densities is promoted on this site to achieve more efficient use of land and to ensure the development is visually sensitive to the surrounding townscape. In order to achieve a development that respects its context, lower density dwellings/villa type housing will be required around the boundaries of the site and higher densities will be achieved towards the centre of the site. It is estimated the site may accommodate up to 66 new dwellings (approximately 34 villas and 32 other dwelling types) at an overall density of 12 units per hectare.

NHSW09

Swieqi ex-Hotel Site

MEPA will consider granting planning permission for the following land uses should this site come up for re-development;

- i. The major part of the site is to be developed into Class 1 residential units (Use Classes Order, 1994);
- ii. Class 5 offices (Use Classes Order, 1994) to be located on the northern part of the site that fronts onto Triq Sant' Andrija thereby acting as a buffer use; and
- iii. Part of the designated Local Centre at Triq l-Uqija, with land uses to be in conformity with Policy NHSW01.

That part of the site that was zoned for Detached and Semi-Detached Dwellings in the Temporary Provisions Scheme (1988) is being re-zoned to Terrace Houses, Maisonettes and Flats. However the piecemeal redevelopment of existing Detached and Semi-Detached Dwellings located in the designated Site will be discouraged by MEPA.

The entire site shall be re-developed comprehensively up to a Maximum Building Height Limitation of 3 floors with semi-basement as indicated in Map SW4, notwithstanding that the existing building on this site is constructed higher than the specified Maximum Building Height Limitation.

18.4.22 The existing Hotel on this site has come up for re-development, and this presents MEPA with the opportunity of allowing re-development for land uses that have a lesser impact on the surrounding residential units. To this effect, MEPA will consider the redevelopment of the site in part for residential development in line with the predominant use of the locality.

18.4.23 MEPA will also consider the development of office uses on that part of the site that fronts onto Triq Sant' Andrija since these would act as a suitable buffer between the arterial road that is used by large volumes of traffic and the residential development on the remaining part of the site. The redevelopment also presents the opportunity to establish a properly planned small cluster of shops laid out around a pedestrianized space, together with a few local offices as required by the local community.

18.4.24 The building height for the entire block is being changed to three floors with semi-basement (as defined in DC2005) since this is the predominant height limitation for the area. Similarly the zoning of this block is being changed from Detached and Semi-Detached Dwellings to Terrace Houses, Maisonettes and Apartments since the latter is the predominant zoning of the area and a substantial part of the site is already developed as an existing hotel. The revised height limitation will apply notwithstanding that the previously existing hotel was built to a higher level.

NHSW10

Residential Buffer Zone

In order to limit the impact of night-time uses on nearby residential priority streets bordering the St. Julian's/Paceville Secondary Town Centre, MEPA will apply the following provisions to development proposals affecting the Residential Buffer Zone as designated on Map SW2:

- i. Terraced development with front gardens will be permitted on this Site instead of the previous zoning for detached and semi-detached dwellings;
- ii. The building height limitation is of 3 floors.
- iii. Servicing arrangements must be undertaken within the site curtilage and the developer is to provide for adequate parking provision for the development. Alternatively contribution to CPPS funding will be considered; and
- iv. The following uses will be considered by MEPA provided that these uses will not cause any deleterious impacts on the neighbouring residents;
 - 1. Uses permitted in General Policy NHHO01;
 - 2. Class 4 (Use Classes Order, 1994) shops that are larger than what is permitted in Policy NHHO01, provided that they comply with all the relevant sections of the DC2005 (design, access, amenity, etc.); and

3. **Class 5 (Use Classes Order, 1994) offices that are larger than what is permitted in Policy NHHO01, provided that they comply with all the relevant sections of the DC2005 (design, access, amenity, etc.).**

18.4.25 This area forms a key protective buffer between the town and entertainment centre of Paceville, which is largely committed for leisure and entertainment uses, and the adjoining villa areas. In this Buffer Zone, the Local Plan will promote development that has a minimal impact on the adjoining residential areas, particularly with regard to noise and operating times.

APPENDIX 1

Upgrading of Public Open Spaces (POLICY NHSE05)

Environmental criteria for the redesign of various road spaces throughout the North Harbours:

GZIRA & TA'XBIEX (See Map GT2)

GTS1 Savoy Hill

Site area: Approx. 1,700sqm

Environmental Objectives

To improve the setting of the Savoy Guest House, Villa Portelli and surrounding buildings. This is an important space that marks as an entry into Sliema and Gzira.

Access and Traffic

This area acts as an important junction between Sliema Road leading to the Regional Road and Rue D'Argens. It is also on a main public transport route between Gzira and Sliema. Although there is a bus pull-in adjacent to the Savoy Guest House, this only serves buses between Sliema and Gzira. In considering the re-design of this area an alternative bus stop should be considered on the north-bound side of Rue D'Argens. Further scope exists to widen pavements, formalise limited parking spaces and improve pedestrian links across Sliema Road. The possibility of formation of a mini-roundabout to better manage this junction should also be investigated.

Development Control Implications

Given the importance attached to establishing a new bus, pull-in, early consultation with the ADT should be sought.

GTS2 Gzira Gardens - Junction of Ix-Xatt/Sir A. Bartolo

Site area: Approx. 1,400sqm

Environmental Objectives

To widen pavements, improve pedestrian links and enhance the setting of the Ta' Xbiex UCA.

Development Control Implications

This may be considered as a valid off-site consideration in considering the development of the Ta' Xbiex Opportunity site (Area Policy NHGT15).

GTS3 Junction of Abate Rigord/Princess Margaret Streets

Site area: Approx. 3,140sqm

Environmental Objectives

To create a new public open space and playground area. To limit the impact of L-Abate Rigord Street on adjacent residential occupiers and calm traffic travelling through the Ta' Xbiex Peninsula.

Access and Traffic

The construction of the Manoel Island Link Road and controls on the location of office uses in Ta' Xbiex will result in lower traffic loads along Abate Rigord Street. Opportunity exists to introduce traffic calming in this area and claim current road spaces for embellishment and use and gardens/playing areas.

Development Control Implications

Whilst initiation of this scheme will be welcomed from any competent Authority, the onus will be on the Housing Authority to carefully consider this embellishment as part of the planning obligations stipulated in Area Policy NHGT09.

MSIDA & PIETA' (See Map MP2)

MPS1 Open Space at Triq Tal-Hriereb

Site area: Approx. 1,620sqm

Environmental Objectives

To reduce the dominance of the road space, formalise parking and create a landscaped or playground area for residents overlooking this square.

Access and Traffic

Priorities for traffic entering this junction are poor. There is scope to physically adapt much of this area to encourage access only traffic and discourage through traffic between Tal Qroqq and Gzira using University Road, in line with General Policy NHTR13.

Development Control Implications

In considering re-design of this area there may be scope to consider a limited area for tables and chairs associated with existing bar activity fronting the square, subject to any issues of residential amenity being resolved. This area is prioritised for student housing (see Area Policy NHMP10). Such designs should consider infrastructure such as cycle parking.

MPS2 Open Space at Junction of Triq Ta' Bieb it-Torri / Triq Victor Denaro

Site area: Approx. 2,130sqm

Environmental Objectives

To rationalise existing open space and clarify vehicle priorities, improve pedestrian links across this area and introduce landscaping.

Development Control Implications

Potential exists to ensure that underground reservoirs are incorporated to partially or fully irrigate any greenery introduced in the landscaping of this square.

MPS3 Open Space at Junction of Il-Barrieri/G. Mamo

Site area: Approx. 1,500sqm

Environmental Objectives

As above (MPS2)

Development Control Implications

As above (MPS2)

MPS4 Open Space at Government Sixth Form Misrah G. Debono

Site area: Approx. 2,700sqm

Environmental Objectives

Introduce traffic calming and improve pedestrian links across this space, upgrade the setting to the entrance of the Government Sixth Form, introduce design elements such as seating and more shade, for this important meeting area and rationalise traffic junction by clarifying vehicle priorities introducing traffic calming measures.

Development Control Implications

Proposals should seek to safeguard existing landscaping and introduce new self irrigated landscaping.

MPS5 St. Luke's Entrance Telgha Ta' G'Mangia

Site area: Approx. 4,500sqm

Environmental Objectives

Improve pedestrian links across square and upgrade existing bus drop-offs ensuring priority for buses over other vehicles is given.

Development Control Implications

The need to improve public transport connections is a prime objective in considering the redesign of this area. If proposals coincide with the refurbishment and re-use of the St. Luke's Hospital Development Brief Site, developer contributions should be sought.

MPS6 Open Space at Junction of Triq Pietru Xuereb / Triq Hookham Frere

Site area: Approx. 625sqm

Environmental Objectives

To rationalise traffic junction and formalise pavements and parking areas.

MPS7 Open Space at Junction of Triq Mountbatten / Triq Joe Cassar

Site area: Approx. 1,750sqm

Environmental Objectives

Formalise junctions and parking areas and improve pavements and pedestrian links across this space.

MPS8 Open Space at Junction of Triq Guze` Ellul Mercer / Triq Indri Grima

Site area: Approx. 1,500sqm

Environmental Objectives

Formalise parking and improve pedestrian links across this space.

MPS9 Open Space at Junction of Triq Misrah Il-Barrieri / Triq Oscar Zammit

Site area: Approx. 1,200sqm

Environmental Objectives

As above (MPS2)

Development Control Implications

As above (MPS2)

PEMBROKE (See Map PE2)

PES1 Open Space at Pembroke Parish Church Triq Camillo Sceberras

Site area: Approx. 2,400sqm

Environmental Objectives

To create a quality new civic space for Pembroke's community. Proposals should seek to introduce pedestrian and cycle routes between the Parish Church and community centre to the shopping area and community uses planned through the Pembroke Development Brief. High quality durable materials should be utilised in this area to differentiate it from vehicle only road space.

Access and Traffic

Measures such as speed tables, road narrowing and textured surfaces should be sought. It is essential that designs should seek to reduce car speeds substantially and give priority of movement to pedestrians and cyclists moving between the church, planned local centre area and existing playground. On street car parking should be limited and restricted to short-stay only and facilities including the siting of post boxes, telephone kiosks, cycle parking etc...should be carefully considered from the outset of the design process.

Development Control Implications

The Pembroke Development Brief should promote the embellishment of this area as an urban design requirement and introduce walkway/cycle routes in Pembroke. Very careful consideration should be given to these objectives as this area will form the focus to Pembroke's planned local centre (see Area Policy NHPE09).

PACEVILLE (See Map PV2)

PVS1 Open Space Adjacent to Dragonara Hotel, Triq Dragonara

Site area: Approx. 2,200sqm

Environmental Objectives

Proposals to upgrade this area should clearly define pedestrian space, introduce a soft landscaping feature and create a gateway feature into the coastal walk proposed through the Hilton Project.

Access and Traffic Implications

This area currently accommodates a large road space with a poorly functioning roundabout at the junction of Wilga Street and Dragonara Road. Part of the area is used informally for parking (area adjacent to the wall of the Dragonara Resort). It is envisaged that the eastern end of Wilga Street will serve mainly as an emergency access to the Hilton Resort in the future. Given this the roundabout should be restored to a simple cross-road with a pedestrian priority crossing linking Wilga Street to the Hilton Resort as this forms the beginning of formal public access to the coast in this area.

Development Control Implications

The site is bound by the Local Plan's Secondary Town Centre, Resort Zone and Resident Protection Zone. Embellishment of this area should enhance the setting of surrounding buildings and may be partly sponsored by future redevelopment of existing sites.

SAN GWANN (See Map SG3 & 4)

SGS1 Triq Gladjoli/Triq Qronfol

Site area: Approx. 3,510sqm

Environmental Objectives

Enhance area as a residential space, introduce soft landscaping, improve pedestrian paths through the space and formalise parking areas whilst reducing dominance of road surfaces.

SGS2 Space at Government Housing Estate, Triq Felic Borg

Site area: Approx. 2,190sqm

Environmental Objectives

Upgrade residential area.

Development Control Implications

This important Government owned green space should be retained for use by residents. A small scale local use such as a clinic or local shop may be considered provided the main use of the area is for a publicly accessible landscaped area.

SLIEMA (See Map SJ3)

SLS1 Fond Ghadir, It-Torri / Triq Windsor

Site area: Approx. 3,500sqm

Environmental Objectives

Proposals should seek to widen the existing promenade beyond the existing kiosk and bus stop in order to create and improve this important meeting area, especially for young people. Infrastructure such as cycle parking, shading and an improved public transit drop-off should be included.

Access and Traffic

On street parking spaces should be included for residents and the reduced road space should be carefully designed to ensure vehicle speeds are kept low and there are enough opportunities for buses to pass.

Development Control Implications

MEPA will seek to ensure that problems of traffic and pedestrian conflict are minimised. This area provides an opportunity to create a new civic space and improve the amenity of residents.

SLS2 Annunciation Square, Triq San Vincenz / Il-Lunzjata

Site area: Approx. 750sqm

Environmental Objectives

To improve the setting of the Grade 2 Scheduled Buildings fronting the square. The upgrading/resurfacing of the square should include modest physical works. Important improvements include pavement widening, defined parking spaces and the introduction of trees for shade and to define the square. The physical design of surfaces should reflect the dual use of the square as a market as well as for parking.

Traffic and Access

The square accommodates approximately 30 cars. Landscaping and pavement widening is likely to require the loss of a limited amount of spaces. At least 20 spaces should be retained as part of any upgrading and lost spaces will be compensated through the introduction of the Sliema Town Centre RPZ which covers this Square (see Area Policy NHSJ02).

Development Control Implications

Most of the square is designated as a Category A Protected Streetscape under Policy NHSE09 and the majority of the buildings facing the square are scheduled. As redevelopment is restricted it is likely that an application will be instigated by Sliema Local Council or other relevant bodies rather than being tied to any major redevelopment. The upgrading of this square should be focused mainly on the appropriate use of materials and finishes in order that the square enhances the settings of the buildings surrounding it (in line with Policy NHSE09 and Structure Plan Policy UCO 6).

SLS3 Dingli Circus, Triq Sir A. Dingli / Karm Galea

Site area: Approx. 1,480sqm

Environmental Objectives

To improve the setting of Dingli Circus in line with the upgrading of Dingli Street. The square is to be reorganised to incorporate formal parking spaces, landscaping and reduce road spaces in order that in crossing this area, pedestrian activity conflicts less with traffic. Particular attention in the physical design should be made to access and mobility for the elderly and persons with special needs.

Traffic and Access

The design should incorporate a public transit drop-off and a coach drop-off for the use of nearby hotels. The carriageway of Dingli Street should remain wide enough to allow two-way traffic along Dingli Street.

Development Control Implications

These works may come about through a major redevelopment/development in close proximity to the square. Surface finishes should be textured and ramped in order to take special account of the existing elderly population in the locality and its anticipated rise. It is very important that the carriageway of the square is in alignment with the whole street upgrading. Materials, landscaping and other finishes should also be co-ordinated.

ST. JULIAN'S (See Map SJ4)

STS1 St. Julian's Church

Site area: Approx. 1,050sqm

Environmental Objectives

Land to the east and north of this square shall be upgraded from the existing car park to a landscaped seating/play area for community use. The square shall be retained as a public open space and to complement the use of the adjacent Parish Church and Youth Centre. The square should remain open for local views onto the Church from Spinola Square and visa versa.

Access and Traffic Implications

Access to the entrance of the Church shall be retained for the persons with special needs, a mini-bus, service vehicles and functions such as weddings. Most parking spaces shall be displaced although off-street car parking spaces (no more than 5) shall be retained at the Lapsi Street entrance. The access route and turning circle should take a minimal area and be sympathetically paved to blend with adjacent pedestrian only surfaces/play spaces.

Development Control Implications

In consideration of any major project along the south eastern boundary of Spinola Square MEPA shall seek to secure underground parking for community benefit in association with the use of the Church. Access for persons with special needs for such a car park shall be a priority and installation of a lift from the lower car park below the square to street level (Lapsi Street) shall be sought. Vehicle access to any major car park below this square shall be sought from Spinola Square in order to minimise traffic into St. Julian's Village Resident Parking Zone (see Area Policy NHSJ02). Access for a small underground car park serving the church only will be considered from Lapsi Street.

STS2 Neptune's Pitch

Site area: Approx. 1,250sqm

Environmental Objectives

In line with Area Policy NHSJ01 which aims to improve the public service infrastructure along the waterfront, this road space shall be upgraded as a public transport drop-off. Given the limited opportunity for shade and seating at such locations the physical infrastructure including surfaces should be geared to the comfort of people using the public transport. This proposal will involve the loss of informal parking spaces but the retention of the number of existing legal spaces. The proposal should investigate opening out of existing bars onto a safe pedestrian environment.

Access and Traffic Implications

Area Policy NHSJ01 promotes limiting through traffic in the Village area of the St. Julian's UCA. In line with these policies and in consultation with ADT, the road area shall be narrowed in favour of the pedestrian access and vehicle access exiting only from St. Julian's Hill/High Street to the front. Appropriate measures to calm traffic leaving the area could involve a pinch point or speed table and bollards.

Development Control Implications

It is crucial that the detailed design of any scheme does not compromise prioritising the square as a bus drop-off. Also given that this area is subject to large flows of surface water run-off, paving/surfaces should be designed accordingly and reservoirs for landscaping incorporated.

STS3 Libyan Institute

Site area: Approx. 1,350sqm

Environmental Objectives

To re-organise this road space to provide formal car parking spaces and a small amenity space for local residents. Embellishment should include the greening of the square and preferably be partly or solely irrigated by surface water run-off.

Access and Traffic Implications

Following future vehicle priorities for the St. Julian's UCA that need to be introduced in conjunction with a future Resident Parking Zone for the area, Policy NHSJ01 advocates reducing through traffic in UCAs. On implementation of changes in road priority, this junction will become a cross-roads to two one-way streets rather than two two-way streets. Kerbs and other elements of the design should be re-aligned in order that the road carriageway may be narrowed even further.

Development Control Implications

The embellishment of this square is likely to materialise through the implementation of the St. Julian's Village Resident Parking Zone. If, prior to this, a major redevelopment of the adjacent Institute Site is proposed, negotiations should be entered into to ensure that this square is incorporated as part of the whole project. Proposals for refurbishment or redevelopment of the house at the North East corner of the site should ensure that the upgrading of the square is not compromised.

STS4 Spinola Square

Site area: Approx. 4,800sqm

Environmental Objectives

Area Policy NHSJ05 (see Map SJ2) proposes that vehicle access from Spinola Bay Roundabout to St. Julian's High Street shall be closed and a major new civic space for St. Julian's is created. The area to the east of the square shall be closed to traffic in order to provide a pedestrian zone for restaurants/bars and community activity.

Access and Traffic

The existing statue in the centre of Spinola Square should cease to function as a traffic roundabout. The existing situation creates unnecessary vehicular/pedestrian conflict and is unnecessary other than to provide a limited number of car parking spaces along the eastern edge of the square. Instead designs should incorporate a single junction onto the Front. This junction is likely to be situated towards the north western side of the Square. The main traffic link between Anglu Mikiel Borg Street and the Front will be aligned along the western edge of the square. The existing car park at the southern end of the square may be retained although parking spaces elsewhere in the Square should be reduced to an operational minimum.

Development Control Implications

The upgrading of this square forms an important element of the area strategy for St. Julian's Town Centre (see Area Policy NHSJ05). As this will form an important meeting place in St. Julian's Town Centre, the Authority should seek high quality paving, street furniture and associated infrastructure including cycling parking. As with all public transport drop-offs special attention should be paid to kerbs, paving for the persons with special needs, seating and shading areas. It is likely that the majority of these works can be funded through major projects likely to occur on sites adjacent to the square. Policy NHSJ03 safeguards land nearby for the location of a public car park to serve this town centre and entertainment area. In considering access routes and turning circles for service vehicles to businesses on the western edge of the site, potential access for a public car park on this side of the square should also not be compromised.

APPENDIX 2

SSIs & AEIs - THREATS AND CONFLICTS (POLICY NHCV01)

1. Quaternary Deposits at Sliema Terraces

A few Quaternary patches from St. Julian's Tower to Ghar id-Dud are still preserved. These deposits are unique in character, not found anywhere else in Malta. They are from 1 to 3 m thick, circular in shape and under 10m in diameter. Features of interests which have been observed in these deposits include rare stratified stalagmite beds, chaotic melange and banded breccia. The site is undoubtedly of significant scientific importance in structural geology and stratigraphy.

Threats

Several of these unique Quaternary deposits have been destroyed in the past 100 years in the construction and widening of Tower Road and the erection of adjacent houses. Levelling with concrete of parts of the coast near the road, the erection of lidos, beach encroachments and concessions and the recent landscaping near St. Julian's Tower has also destroyed some deposits. Any further development of the coast presents a potential hazard to the remaining deposits.

Conflicting Interests

Coastal and recreational developments and the widening of Tower Road are highly incompatible with site conservation. Works involving excavation and laying of services could also be damaging.

2. Wied id-Dis and Wied il-Faham

Wied id-Dis is a spectacular deep gorge cut in the Globigerina Limestone and the Lower Coralline Limestone. Although most of it falls outside the NHLP area, parts of its eastern slopes at Madliena Fort lie within the Swieqi area. Although the valley is obstructed by a dam, the valley bed is highly permeable and not much surface water flows even after heavy downpours. The site is of particular scientific significance in geomorphology, hydrology, hydrogeology and stratigraphy.

Threats

The site has suffered irreparable damage from major excavations associated with housing development on the slopes of the valley. Further encroachment of building developments presents further threats.

Conflicting Interests

Urbanisation presents an existing major conflicting interest.

3. Cave and valley at Harq il-Hamiem, St. George's Bay

The cave consists of a karst feature in the Lower Coralline Limestone. The cave is reported to contain a plentiful supply of fresh water presumably from the Mean Sea Level Aquifer. The cave is of significant importance in Karst hydrogeology, and possibly Quaternary palaeontology. Private extraction of water apparently unauthorised, is carried out by means of a pump.

Threats

The cave site is under no threat apart from human intrusion. Over extraction of water may however cause sea-water intrusion into the cave.

4. Disused Public Wash-house at Msida

The site consists of a disused public wash-house located on an exposed part of the Mean Sea Level Aquifer at Msida, a short distance from the coastal discharge of the aquifer at Msida Creek. The site provides a unique location in Malta, together with the galleries, where the groundwater dynamics at the top of the aquifer can be directly observed. On this account the site is of significant scientific importance in hydrology and hydrogeology.

Threats

The cave site is under no threat apart from human intrusion, although its setting could be substantially improved.

5. Gorge at Wied Mejxu

A pronounced gorge is located at the head of Wied Mejxu in Swieqi, a short distance from the road leading from Tal-Balal to Madliena. At the surface, this feature is in the form of circular depression bounded by near-vertical circular walls of Lower Globigerina Limestone. The site is of scientific significance in geomorphology, hydrology, hydrogeology and possibly Quaternary palaeontology.

Threats

The site lies just outside the development boundary and is potentially under threat of being developed.

6. Wied il-Balluta

Wied il-Balluta constitutes the seaward part of a larger valley which has a source at Misrah Lewza in San Gwann and discharges at Balluta Bay in St. Julian's. The valley as a whole is intensely urbanised and has lost its geologic and geomorphologic importance with the exception of its lower parts known as Wied il-Balluta, which is still in a relatively pristine and well preserved state.

In spite of the small area of the valley, agriculture is relatively active. The field terraces are well preserved. Wied il-Balluta is of significant scientific importance in geomorphology, hydrology, hydrogeology and possibly Quaternary palaeontology.

Threats

Urban development encroaching further in the valley side.

7. Wied Ghollieqa

The northern slopes of the valley at Kappara are intensely developed whilst the southern slopes are only slightly developed. The flourishing of numerous carob trees, particularly along the valley bed and along the sides of rubble walls has given the area a high aesthetic value. The geology of the valley is relatively very simple. The site is of significant importance in geomorphology, hydrology and hydrogeology.

Threats

With the exception of parts of the northern slopes of the valley at Kappara and San Gwann and the area beyond Regional Road in the direction of Gzira, the valley presently falls outside the development scheme. Further encroachment of this scheme however poses a threat to the conservation of the valley.

Some recreational facilities near the Regional Road have also spoilt some of the aesthetic value of the valley.

8. Victoria Lines Fault

One end of the Victoria Lines Fault extends into the North Harbours Plan producing a very pronounced geomorphological change along the course of its scarp. This fault-scarp gives rise to a sharp change in elevation at Madliena Tower which becomes progressively less pronounced in the direction of Pembroke. The fault extends into other Local Plan areas. The site is of significant scientific value in the field of structural geology and geomorphology.

Threats

There are no significant threats to the site.

9. Terminal Lower Coralline Limestone Hardground at Tigné

The extent of the site is restricted to the coast of Tigné west of Dragut Point. This hardground is exposed on the coast where a limited outcrop of Lower Coralline Limestone passes into the overlying Globigerina Limestone. The site is of scientific significance in stratigraphy and petrology.

Threats

The site may be affected by the development of a tourist complex at Tigné.

10. Exposures of Lower Coralline Limestone at Wied il-Kbir and Wied Ghomor

The site consists of the exposed Lower Coralline Limestone along parts of the valley beds of Wied il-Kbir and Wied Ghomor. This outcrop renders the valley beds very permeable in an otherwise impermeable area. This has a significant effect on the drainage of the area and on aquifer recharge. One exposure, near the head of Wied Ghomor, experienced quarrying for hardstone aggregate.

The site is of scientific significance in hydrology, hydrogeology, stratigraphy and geomorphology.

Threats

As long as the site remains outside the development zone, the only significant threat to the site is the quarrying of hardstone.

Conflicting Interests

Quarrying is in sharp contrast with the preservation of Wied Ghomor. Encroachment of urbanisation is also a potential conflicting interest.

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES (POLICY NHCV02)

Class A

- Remains of a Roman Tower at Ta` Cieda, San Gwann (Site 1 in Map CV6).

This national monument should not experience further encroaching urban development and be properly fenced off, managed but kept visible and carefully signposted. Map CV4 shows the boundary of the site, buffer zone and protective boundary grid reference (100m radius from 531.45 E and 739.95 N). Urban development within the protective area to be graded Class E. The site requires cleaning and managing in collaboration with San Gwann Local Council and Heritage Authorities.

Class B

- Cart Ruts at Mensija Road, San Gwann (Site 2).
- Roman and Saracenic remains and reservoir at Triq il-Baruza , San Gwann (Site 5).
- Cart Ruts at Wied Harq Hamiem, Pembroke (Site 8).
- Punic Tomb at Tal-Qroqq, University Campus (Site 13).
- Late Roman Tombs at Sacred Heart School San Giljan. (Site 10).
- Cart Ruts at the Mater Dei hospital site (Site 17).
- Madliena Cart Ruts (Site 15).

A site or monument in this classification is of national or local importance which must be preserved. All the above sites are still visible and are surrounded by undeveloped land. Preservation measures will have precedence over public accessibility. Protection will extend to a “buffer” zone of at least 50m from the perimeter of the site.

Class E

- Cart-Ruts in San Gwann (50m radius from 52812 E 74518 N) (Sites 3 and 4).
- Punico or Roman Tomb in San Gwann (50m radius from 5347E 7439 N) (Site 6).
- Punic rock cut Tomb in Ta` Xbiex - Princess Margaret Street (542E 730N) (Site 7).
- Bronze age deposit in San Gwann - Triq il-Fjamma, Kappara (5365E 7410N) (Site 11).
- Punico - Roman Tomb, Kappara (534E 740N) (Site 12).
- Punico -Roman remains at Villa Frère in Pieta` (545 76E 726 70N) (Site 9).
- Late Roman Catacomb in Gzira, Fawwara (Site 18).
- Tombs in Triq il-Wied, Msida (Site 16).
- Tombs in Madliena (Site 14).

A site or monument known to have existed as referred to in written documents, prints, maps, paintings or photographs, but at present is no longer visible. May have been destroyed or covered.

NOTE: This list is subject to review and new archaeological features may be added from time to time.

APPENDIX 4

RATIONALE FOR DESIGNATION OF THE TA' XBIEX, PIETA' AND MSIDA URBAN CONSERVATION AREAS:

The waterfronts of Msida, Ta' Xbiex and Pieta' form important settings for the World Heritage Site of Valletta and the Floriana UCA. Since the designation of the village core boundaries in 1988 (in Msida and Pieta') there have been substantial development pressures on the area's historic townscape. In other parts there has been considerable neglect to the townscape and the original character the area has become degraded (especially around Valley Road). Many properties are under pressure for use as Houses of Character while their attached gardens are typically under pressure for development for additional housing or garages. In Ta' Xbiex, specific pressures relating to office development have resulted in insensitive alterations to waterfront villas.

Structure Plan Policy UCO 2 requires the Local Plan to revise these boundaries, where necessary, and formally identify Urban Conservation Areas within this plan. Formalised UCA boundaries for Msida, Pieta' and Ta' Xbiex are shown on Maps MP4 & 5 (Msida and Pieta') and GT3 (Ta' Xbiex).

The following summarises the special character of each area and justifies departures from the original 1988 Village Core Boundaries:

Pieta' Urban Conservation Area

Pieta' originally expanded in the nineteenth century as one of Malta's first resort areas. It became characterised by its picturesque garden villas such as Villa Frère. In time, the area developed into a distinct suburb that attracted people migrating from the capital in the second part of the century. In the early 20th century the establishment of St. Luke's Hospital provided a catalyst for further residential expansion in the area. The hospital limited the inward development of the waterfront villas and, given its monumental size, has influenced the layout and typography of surrounding streets.

Msida Urban Conservation Area

Some areas that were formally designated under the Msida Village Core have undergone insensitive modern development/redevelopment on an unacceptable scale, particularly in the vicinity of Valley Road and parts of the waterfront near Msida Marina. Consequently some areas of the original village core boundaries have been omitted from the new UCA boundary for Msida. Instead the new boundary consolidates the Msida UCA in the vicinity of the Parish church. Conversely, where streets or buildings of historic townscape value were previously overlooked or not included within the original 1988 village core boundaries, they are now included.

Ta' Xbiex Urban Conservation Area

The villa area around the Ta' Xbiex waterfront dates to the 1930s. These villas contribute to the peninsula's formidable and characteristic waterfront setting. Development pressure for offices necessitated a careful approach to considering uses and alterations in this prominent two-storey villa area. Distinct visual breaks have been used to set the boundaries to the UCA. These have been provided by the newer development to the western extremities of the boundary and by the gardens to the north. To the south, the boundary ends by incorporating the refurbished Whitehall Mansions and by the shoreline to the east. The UCA boundary includes a stretch of vacant land at the tip of the peninsula which requires specific design guidance for this part of the UCA.