



BirdLife Malta's objection to proposed zoning to residential terraced development 3 floors with semi-basement (17.5m) and changes to building alignment to create proposed extension to existing schemed public road (PC/00045/23)

29th August 2024

BirdLife Malta objects to PC/00045/23 which seeks the permission of zoning a total of 1,700sqm of land into residential terraced development of 3 floors with semi-basement (17.5m) and changes to building alignment to create proposed extension to existing schemed public road. This is not the first time that the site in question has been targeted for unnecessary development. Initially, the site has been subjected to the illegal development of garages leading to a Planning Enforcement through EC/00950/01 and which later sought sanctioning through PA/05389/01. Another application, PA/02446/07, sought the approval for the demolition of the existing garages and construction of underground carpark and 24 residential units and 4 penthouses, however these plans were never realised.

Now, the applicant is seeking once again to re-develop the site, leading to 25% increase of the development density of the site as the current maximum potential development of the site 970m² will increase to 1,200m². The proposed building will thus impinge on the density and visual amenity of the surrounding urban context, in breach of the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED), in particular Urban Objective 3.6, concerned with establishing appropriate development densities and heights. Inevitably, the proposed development shall increase the strain on infrastructure demands of the area, including traffic, parking, electricity, and water, thus contradicting SPED Thematic Objective (TO) 1.6 which promotes the reduction of development densities of urban settlements.

The proposed development site lies adjacent to the protected valley system of Wied il-Għasel, scheduled as an Area of Ecological Importance and Site of Scientific Importance under G.N. 1236 of 2012¹. In addition, the site is within the 100m groundwater safeguard area and less than 30m from the watercourse of Wied il-Għasel. The near-complete sealing and resultant risk to groundwater within safeguarded area jeopardises the integrity of the protected valley system. This is in breach of various TOs of the SPED, including TOs 6.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, concerned with the protection of natural protected areas including hydrological processes and prevention of soil erosion.

In view of the above, BirdLife Malta strongly objects to PC/00045/23 and calls on the Planning Authority to refuse this planning control application. We demand that the protected Wied il-Għasel valley system is safeguarded from any destructive development, including within its buffer zones.

¹ <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/GN-1236-of-2012.pdf>