



BirdLife Malta's objection to alterations to existing farmhouse and construction of an extension to same building including excavation for pool with deck area in Wied Ghomor (PA/06798/24)

24 October 2024

BirdLife Malta objects PA/06798/24, a planning application seeking extension of a small rural farmhouse including excavation for pool with deck area in Wied Ghomor. The site is an ODZ and is identified as an Area of Ecological Importance/Site of Scientific Importance with Level of Protection 3 and 4, within the North Harbours Local Plan. The area was also declared a Bird Sanctuary (L.N. 41 of 2003).

The proposal aims to expand the footprint and total area of the structure, increasing it to more than double the size of the pre-1967 building currently present. This development will replace the existing traditional rural structure with a modern three-story building, including parking spaces and a swimming pool.

The current proposal represents a major deviation from the approved plan in PA 1353/93, which focused solely on rehabilitating the existing dilapidated structure through internal and external structural modifications.

The planning application contradicts:

- **The Rural Policy and Design Guidelines (RPDG) (2014):** The proposal includes excessive lateral and vertical extensions, deviating from rehabilitation principles and contradicting Policy 6.2A(3). The size and features (e.g., swimming pool) are incompatible with the rural context, also contradicting Policy 6.3(2). The extensions also visually dominate the existing dwelling, in breach of Policy 6.3(5).
- **Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED) (2015):** The proposal contradicts Thematic Objective 1, which aims to limit unnecessary development in rural areas. It also fails to protect the cultural and natural landscape, further degrading the sensitive valley environment. Additionally, it does not support the goals of rehabilitating and enhancing degraded landscapes, thereby violating Rural Objective 4 and Rural Objective 5.

The proposed hard surfacing is likely to alter the area's hydrodynamics, potentially causing significant changes to the valley's ecology downstream. This could result in



shifts in the vegetation communities that define the valley, with serious consequences for the species and habitats it supports.

Given these concerns, the proposal is deemed unacceptable from both sustainable rural development and environmental perspectives, as there is no valid justification for intensifying the existing dilapidated structure into a residence with a swimming pool and deck in an Area of Ecological Importance/Site of Scientific Importance and ODZ.