BirdLife Malta objection to proposed changes to ground-mounted solar farm and ancillary infrastructure approved in PA/03421/22 (PA/01632/25)

22nd September 2025

BirdLife Malta would like to submit its formal objection to PA/01632/25.

The proposed site lies within an Outer Development Zone and partly overlaps with the Natura 2000 site MT0000015: L-Inħawi tal-Għadira, designated both as a Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and as a Special Protection Area through Government Notice 112 of 2007. In addition, the planned extension is located close to an archaeological buffer zone linked to Bronze Age and Punic-Roman cart-ruts, identified as an 'Area of Archaeological Importance Grade E' in Map 34 of the North West Local Plan.

The area on site previously described as "disturbed" should not be further developed for solar farm purposes. Instead, in line with the recently enacted Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 on nature restoration, ecological restoration of such land should be prioritised. Restoring the surrounding garrigue habitat would not only safeguard biodiversity but also enhance the visitor experience at the Mellieħa Holiday Centre by increasing the ecological value of the surrounding area.

In the previous application (PA/03421/22), alternative options were not thoroughly explored where the justifications provided in document 90a of PA/03421/22 lack supporting studies. The alternative of installing smaller-scale solar systems on the roofs of existing service buildings and bungalows should be applied for this extension. This solution would have the lowest environmental impact while making efficient use of the holiday centre's existing footprint.

Finally, the proposed solar farm would create a significant additional visual impact, both from medium and long-distance viewpoints, thereby impacting the cultural and rural landscape character of this important area.

For these reasons, BirdLife Malta respectfully requests that PA/01632/25 be refused. Priority should instead be given to restoring the site's natural habitats and exploring rooftop solar alternatives, which would provide renewable energy benefits without further harming biodiversity and heritage value.