

**PA 00299/05: Erection of multistorey office block including underlying car-parking, business centre/ conference theatre, at, Block T14 Tigné North Phase, Ix-Xatt Ta' Tigné', Sliema; and,**

**PA 04160/10: Construction of two residential blocks (superstructure only), including catering outlets at ground floor with external seating area. Construction of north shore beach club, at, Block T17 E & W, Tigné Point, Ix-Xatt Ta' Tigné', Sliema.**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) requested an update to Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed developments referred to above. The original EIS prepared for PA 02135/94 was carried out to assess the likely environmental impacts associated with the development of the proposed master plan for the Tigné and Manoel Island area.

In May 2008, following changes in the approved Master Plan submitted through PA 00621/05, MEPA had requested the applicants to submit an EIS update, focusing on the landscape and visual amenity of the area in view of the changes in height of the structures in comparison to what had been approved in the outline application and since they were likely to have a significant effect on the visual amenity of the area.

In 2009, following further submissions by the applicant (namely photomontages), MEPA carried out screening of the proposed development in accordance with Schedule IB of the EIA Regulations, 2007 (Annex III of the EIA Directive, 85/337/EEC) and concluded that the assessment of impacts from these viewpoints may be significant given the effect on the Valletta skyline. This EIS Update was certified as per Regulation 24(2) of the EIA Regulations, 2007, in December 2009, however the development as proposed was not pursued further and therefore no public hearing was carried out. In the light of further modifications to the Tigné Master Plan, MEPA requested the applicant to update the EIS accordingly, focusing on: air quality and traffic and any other environmental considerations. Following submission of this latter EIS Update however, the applicant notified MEPA (in September 2011) that the relevant application (PA 621/05) was being withdrawn.

In October 2011, following discussions with MEPA, the applicant submitted a further EIS update, related to the change in heights of the Tigné blocks T14 and T17, and was certified accordingly. The said update focused on impacts that the proposals may have on the landscape and visual amenity of the area in question and is the version of the update being discussed in this report.

## **2. EIA CONSULTATION**

As part of the EIA process, a public consultation exercise was carried out following EPD's certification of the EIS Update. A hard copy of the document was delivered to the Sliema Local Council. The EIS Update was also made available for public consultation from 4<sup>th</sup> November to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at the Sliema Local Council, MEPA and on the MEPA website. No comments were received within the stipulated deadline.

A public hearing was also held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011 (minutes of which can be found as Appendix I to this report), and no comments were received within the stipulated timeframes.

## **3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The proposed development mainly relates to Blocks T14 and T17 of the Tigné development project. Block 14 is proposed as an up-market office development for corporate and top-end users. Together with the already constructed south-west – south – east residential development and The Point shopping mall, Block 14 is considered to form the enclosure, which demarcated the central piazza of the Tigné Point Development, namely the Tigné Plaza. With respect to the two T17 Blocks, these are principally residential developments, with commercial uses at the ground-floor level in the West block. The apartments in these

buildings are smaller and more compact than the already constructed ones, which are located to the south-west, south and east of the Tigné Plaza. Application PA 4160/10 also proposes a beach club on the northern coast of the peninsula. Most of the area enclosed by Blocks T14 and T17 would be taken up by a private garden. These buildings will be constructed on top of an underground parking facility which has already been approved under PA 1528/06.

Block T14 will provide a total of 16,620m<sup>2</sup> of office space and ancillary facilities and will be nine floors high (from ground floor level upwards). On the other hand, Blocks T17 would both be 14 storeys high (from ground floor level upwards) and would comprise 102 apartments, including six penthouses, plus 444m<sup>2</sup> of commercial floor space. The floor space in the club house would amount to 205m<sup>2</sup>. 38 of the apartments (including three penthouses, would be located in the East block and the remaining 64 (including three penthouses) in the West block. All the commercial facilities are to be located in the West block.

#### **4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

Given the proposed amendments to the approved Master Plan, the EIS update focused on the landscape assessment and visual amenity.

##### ***Landscape Assessment and Visual Amenity***

The EIS Update in terms of landscape and visual amenity included the following:

- The presentation of a detailed Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) (Appendix Two of the EIS Update);
- The preparation of new baseline photographs from Viewpoints within the ZVI;
- The preparation of verified photomontages of the proposed development.

Fifteen (15) viewpoints within the ZVI were identified: (A) From the sea, (B) Valletta – Triq I-Assedju il-Kbir, (C) Fortizza – Ghar id-Dud, (D) Kalkara, (E) Bighi, (F) Birgu, (G) Manoel Island – Bridge, (H) Fort St. Angelo, (I) Birgu – Kalkara side, (J) Marsamxett, (K) Mdina, (L) Smart City – Ricasoli, (M) St. Julians, (N) University of Malta (Tal-Qroqq), and (O) Breakwater – Valletta. The Tigné peninsula is best viewed from Viewpoints A, B, C, G, J, M and N, that is, from locations in the north of Valletta, in Marsamxett Harbour, Sliema, San Giljan and Gzira.

##### ***Impacts on Landscape***

The EIS Update identified the following significance of impacts with respect to visual amenity:

- Viewpoint (A) – From the open sea to the east of the Site: Moderate when the development is compared to the 1999-scheme, given the absence of the western tower and moderate when one takes into consideration the presence of the recently approved Fort Cambridge development;
- Viewpoint (B) Valletta – Triq I-Assedju il-Kbir: Low, as the proposed development will not effectively challenge the dominance of the Fort Cambridge apartment blocks;
- Viewpoint (C) Fortizza – Għar id-Dud: Moderate, as the proposed development will not challenge the impact of the recently approved developments;
- Viewpoint (D) Kalkara: Insignificant;
- Viewpoint (E) Bighi: Low to moderate;
- Viewpoint (F) Birgu: No impact;
- Viewpoint (G) Manoel Island – Bridge: Low to insignificant;
- Viewpoint (H) Fort St. Angelo: No impact;
- Viewpoint (I) Birgu – Kalkara side: No impact;
- Viewpoint (J) Marsamxett: Low;
- Viewpoint (K) Mdina: Low;
- Viewpoint (L) Smart City – Ricasoli: Low to insignificant;
- Viewpoint (M) St. Julians: Low to insignificant;

- Viewpoint (N) University of Malta (Tal-Qroqq): Low to insignificant;
- Viewpoint (O) Breakwater – Valletta: Low.

Potential receptors of visual effects, identified in the EIS update, included the following:

- *Residents of Sliema (Qui-si-Sana and Tigné)*: Residents of Sliema, particularly the ones who live in the areas closer to the site, may be affected by the change in the visual scene. This is especially the case for residents of the Qui-si-Sana-Tigné stretch. Due to the proximity of the development site and the potential effect on amenity, the sensitivity of these receptors is considered high. The magnitude of impact is also considered high, as major changes in the visual scene can be expected. The significance of the visual impact on residents on Qui-si-Sana and Tigné is therefore high.
- *Other residents of Sliema*: Due to the scale of the proposed development, it may reasonably be expected that the change in the visual scene will also apply to residents who live further away from the development site within the locality of Sliema. However, their sensitivity is considered low, as the view of the development will likely be intermittent and a less integral component of their daily life. The mitigating effects of other high-rise developments in the area should also be borne in mind. The magnitude of the impact is, nevertheless, considered high, as it will lead to major changes in the visual scene. The significance of the visual impact on other Sliema residents is therefore considered moderate.
- *Residents of the Valletta coastline*: The view of the Tigné peninsula is a prominent component of the visual scene to which several Valletta residents are exposed, particularly those who live on the Marsamxett waterfront. They are therefore highly sensitive to any changes in the view, particularly where these are of large magnitude. The impact is therefore considered to be high magnitude.
- *Residents of other areas of the Maltese Islands, from where the development will be visible*: Given the high-rise nature of the development, it will be visible from many areas of the Maltese Islands, and all people affected by the change in the visual scene may thus be considered to be receptors of visual effects. Their sensitivity is, however, considered as low due to their relatively low frequency exposure to the view. The magnitude of the impact is considered moderate, as despite the large scale of the development, there will also be mitigating effects of distance. The significance of the impact is therefore considered moderate.
- *People who casually frequent the Sliema and Valletta coastlines, and neighbouring areas such as Manoel Island*: Several individuals regularly frequent the commercial and recreational hubs of Sliema and Valletta, as well as neighbouring areas, for various purposes. All of these individuals may be expected to be affected by a change in the visual scene, although due to their relatively infrequent exposure to such changes, their sensitivity is considered low. The magnitude of the impact is, however, high and based on the criteria detailed in the EIS Update, the significance of the impact is considered as moderate.

Given the nature of the proposed development, no mitigations measures were identified and no residual impacts have been identified in the EIS Update.

## **5. ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION DIRECTORATE COMMENTS**

The Environmental Protection Directorate (EPD) agrees with the conclusions of the EIA Coordinator.

No new permit conditions are being proposed by EPD given that issues assessed in this EIS update are already covered by the permit conditions imposed for the approved permits related to the same project (i.e. outline application for the Master Plan for the Manoel Island and Tigne project and the respective full development applications submitted subsequently).

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**15 December 2011**