

Partial Local Plan Review of the

Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan (1995)

Grand Harbour Local Plan (2002)

North West Local Plan (2006)

Central Malta Local Plan (2006)

North Harbours Local Plan (2006)

South Malta Local Plan (2006)

Gozo and Comino Local Plan (2006)

Alignment with the Commercialisation of Sports Facilities Regulations

First Draft



February 2026

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This partial local plan review is intended to revise the spatial planning policy framework to provide for the commercialisation of sports facilities including the facilitation and implementation of the subsidiary legislation S.L.455.12, Commercialisation of Sports Facilities Regulations enacted in January 2017 and amended in 2022 and 2023.
- 1.2 The current Local Plans' strategy and policies, which date back to 1995, 2002 and 2006, limit the commercialisation of sports facilities, and are thus restricting the implementation of S.L.455.12, resulting in the need for a partial review. The main scope of the review is to introduce a general policy which will prevail in case of a conflict with current Local Plans' strategies and policies.

2 Objectives

2.1 The Objectives for the Partial Review of the current Local Plans were put forward by the Minister in accordance with Article 53 of the Development Planning Act (DPA). The review is aimed at achieving the following proposed objectives:

- (i) To introduce a general planning policy in all local plans with clear provisions which:
 - a) takes on board the aims of the Commercialisation of Sports Facilities Regulations; and
 - b) set out the acceptable type, scale and form of commercial development on any land allocated for sports facilities; and
 - c) includes adequate safeguards to protect other interests of equal importance such as neighbour amenity, cultural heritage, the natural environment, transport and infrastructure.
- (ii) To amend or delete all other provisions in the Local Plans which are deemed to run counter to the overall objectives set out in paragraph (i) above.

2.2 These objectives were published for a public consultation period of three weeks that spanned between the 24th of June 2025 and the 15th of July 2025.

3 Public Consultation

- 3.1 During the first public consultation period on the review's objectives, seven submissions were received. These are included in Annex 2: Public Consultation Submissions and Responses on Objectives of this report.
- 3.2 Four submissions were received from members of the public. Other submissions were received from the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA), the Light Awareness Group as part of the Astronomical Society of Malta and finally from the Malta Premier League.
- 3.3 A common comment from the public submission was the importance that current sport facilities are not reduced to the detriment of commercial activities and that facilities on public land remain accessible to the public. Another submission queried whether yacht marinas fall under the definition of sport facility.
- 3.4 ERA supports this general planning policy in principle, subject to the introduction of the necessary safeguards for ODZ areas.
- 3.5 The Light Pollution Awareness Group welcomed the consultation's objective to include adequate safeguards for protecting neighbour amenity, cultural heritage, the natural environment, transport, and infrastructure. The group also encouraged the inclusion of clear and effective measures within planning policies and operational requirements to prevent and mitigate light pollution from both new and existing sports lighting installations.
- 3.6 The submission from Malta Premier League pointed out a need for policy flexibility to address the characteristics and requirements of member clubs' projects. The existence of clubs which do not have existing infrastructure was also pointed out. The submission suggested the allocation of sports facilities within already committed sites within the Outside Development Zone.

4 Background

- 4.1 A white paper entitled “The Commercialisation of Sports Facilities. Moving Towards the Financial Self-Sustainability of Sports Organisations in Malta and Gozo” was published in January 2016. The white paper proposed the enactment of legislation that would enable sports organisations to carry out economic activities within the land administered by them in order to enable sports clubs, national associations and federations to achieve financial stability required to transition into professional sports bodies. Legislation was felt to be required to allow sports organisations to either:
- a. Conduct their commercial activities within their properties; or
 - b. Lease their land to third parties for the generation of commercial activity under sub-lease agreements (operations agreement); or
 - c. Enter into partnerships with third parties for the generation of commercial activities in a system of expense and profit sharing.
- 4.2 As a result, Subsidiary Legislation S.L.455.12 - Commercialisation of Sports Facilities Regulations followed in January 2017, with subsequent amendments in 2020 and 2023. The legislation establishes definitions including but not exclusive to “commercial area”, “commercial activity”, “sports activity” and “sports ancillary activity”. It also establishes a Commercial Sports Facilities Commission, and an Appeals Panel intended to supervise the implementation of the regulations including the evaluation of applications, monitoring of commercial activities within sports facilities and ensuring the achievement of the regulations’ objectives. The Regulation establishes the procedures that a sports organisation requires to follow to apply for a permit with the Sports Commission, who after it is convinced that the activity will lead to the organisation’s infrastructural, financial and sporting growth; issues a certificate permitting the commercialisation of the organisation’s sports facility. It also provides terms for new contract of temporary emphyteusis based on the value of the land and for ground rents based on the commercial area’s designated floorspace.
- 4.3 The main parameters established in the subsidiary legislation that are directly related to planning and development are found in regulation 4(2)(e), which states that “The proposed sports area shall never be less in size than the area which is currently being used exclusively for the practice of the sporting discipline for which the sports organisation is registered with SportMalta. The sports area and the sports ancillary area shall invariably be at least sixty per cent (60%) of the total floorspace”.

5 Strategic and Local Planning guidance

SPED

- 5.1 The main principles of the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (2015) is to direct the bulk of development within the Urban Area and to promote the Rural Area for agriculture, together with the protection and management of the natural and cultural resources. The sustainable use of land and sea resources is guided on the principle of the sequential approach, directing development to the re-use of existing developed land and buildings, secondly to the redevelopment of existing developed land and buildings and finally where no other feasible alternatives exist, to the use of vacant land.

Current Local Plans' Position on Sport areas

- 5.2 The **Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan (1995)** recognises the fundamental importance of sports facilities and seeks to increase such facilities and protect the existing ones. Policy MC01 prohibits development that would result in the loss of sports facilities unless no alternative site can be found and the benefits to the local community are greater than the potential loss.
- 5.3 The **Grand Harbour Local Plan (2002)** acknowledges that the area's supply of sports related open space is considered the minimal provision, which should ideally be increased. Policy GC01 supports the efficient use of existing and proposed sports and recreational facilities on government owned land. Policy GC02 prohibits development that would result in the loss of sports facilities unless no alternative site can be found and the benefits to the local community are greater than the potential loss. Other site-specific policies focus on the provision of additional sports facilities such as within Kordin and the Cottonera fortifications, and the protection of existing ones such as in Marsa.
- 5.4 The strategy of the **South Malta Local Plan (2006)** is to encourage the upgrading and multi-use of existing sports and recreational facilities. Policy SMRE 01 encourages the development of new and the improvement and upgrading, as well as extension, of existing recreational/sports facilities within the urban settlements, provided this will not create any significant adverse impacts to the locality, as well as the multi-use of existing facilities whilst ensuring their retention. It prohibits any development that results in the loss of existing urban and rural public recreational/sports facilities. The policy also puts forward strict restrictions to new or extensions and upgrading of existing rural sports facilities, with preferred sites being disused quarries. The local plan limits extension of existing ancillary facilities to a low percentage of existing built-up footprint at basement level or with low building heights, depending on the location. However, policy SMIA 11 establishes the principle whereby existing quarries in the vicinity of residential areas and the Malta International Airport boundary may be designated for sports activities.
- 5.5 The **North West Local Plan (2006)** also seeks the promotion of regional and national centres for formal and informal recreation which would include both land and water sports, within sites

where the impact would be limited, particularly through the dual use of educational and sports facilities. Policy NWRE 4 protects existing facilities such that it prohibits development other than that which is ancillary to the main sports use. It also requires the compensatory replacement for the unavoidable loss of sports facilities. Site-specific policies focus on the provision of additional sports facilities within urban areas, limiting non-sport related uses to administrative and supporting amenities and in terms of floorspace, building heights as well as need for landscaping.

- 5.6 The **North Harbours Local Plan (2006)** focuses on the limited land supply and on the need to use intensive forms of provision such as multipurpose indoor/outdoor sports centres, whilst encouraging the protection and provision of areas for formal sports activities. Development considered in sports areas is limited to complementary uses occupying small parts of existing sport spaces.
- 5.7 The **Central Malta Local Plan (2006)** highlights the low provision of recreation and sports facilities with the consequent need to protect existing facilities. Development is considered in designated areas as long as the use is complementary and occupies only a part of the open space. The site-specific policies in the CMLP focus on protection of public open spaces and sports facilities.
- 5.8 Due to the low population density, the **Gozo and Comino Local Plan (2006)** acknowledges a fairly suitable provision of existing sports facilities. It focuses on the location of sports facilities within the development zones except for the exceptional circumstances of upgrades and extensions to existing sports facilities in the ODZ. Site specific policies focus on the protection of existing facilities with limited built extensions.
- 5.9 Overall the Local Plans' strategy is intended to protect existing sports facilities and zone land for additional, particularly in conjunction with education. In the cases where the Local Plans permit buildings in areas zoned for sports, these are limited in terms of footprint, heights and uses which are ancillary to sports.

6 Policy Exclusions

- 6.1 Unless otherwise indicated by this policy, development proposed within public sports facilities and within school sports facilities, and within Ta' Qali National Recreation Centre, the Marsa Sports Centre, the Ex-National Swimming Complex at Marsascala and public national sports complexes at Kirkop, Cottonera, Rabat (Gozo) and the Tal-Qroqq National Pool; and other facilities such as motor-tracks/horse-tracks/cycling-tracks, marinas and model aircraft runways; shall remain governed by the respective Local Plan Policies.**

7 Existing Sports Facilities within the scope of S.L. 455.12

- 7.1 Development on sports facilities, as identified on the respective Local Plan Maps or covered by development permission on the adoption date of this policy, shall be limited to uses that are ancillary to the main sports function in line with current Local Plans, or otherwise consistent with the parameters established in S.L.455.12 – Commercialisation of Sports Facilities Regulations.**

Development applications submitted in line with the criteria established in S.L.455.12 – Commercialisation of Sports Facilities Regulations, will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

- a) applications are submitted by or on behalf of a sport organisation registered with SportMalta for at least ten (10) years;**
- b) are limited to already existing sports facilities or to those that are covered by permission on the adoption date;**
- c) have prior clearance from the “Commercial Sports Facilities Commission” established under regulation 3 of S.L.455.12;**
- d) do not result in a reduction or loss of existing or designated footprint for indoor and outdoor “sports activity”;**
- e) do not affect additional land beyond the area delineated by the perimeter of a sports facility. No new land Outside Development Zone (ODZ), and no open spaces within the development zone, shall be allocated for the proposed development, unless such land or space consists of adjacent or nearby legally established, underutilised, abandoned, or failing sports facilities, owned or entrusted to the sports organisation;**
- f) do not comprehensively result in a total floorspace as defined by this policy that is more than twice the area of the existing sports activity area;**
- g) the site shall include the provision of car parking spaces in line with current policies;**
- h) ensure that commercial activities must be secondary to the sport function, without compromising the site’s primary purpose as a sport facility. In these regards, the sports area shall invariably be at least 60% of the total floorspace while the commercial area which may include social and community facilities, should be limited to not more than 40% of the total floorspace;**
- i) do not exceed the building height limitation established by the Local Plan for the site. Where there is no established height limitation, the resulting building heights shall take into account the context of the surrounding environment;**
- j) In the case that the site is within a Development Brief area or an FAR site, the development of additional floorspace (as defined by this policy), equivalent to the size of the existing sports activity area, may be considered in addition to point (f) above, subject that this floorspace respects the other parameters of this policy;**
- k) development applications shall undergo environmental, heritage, visual and traffic impact screening/assessments and shall ensure that they do not contribute to negative impact on environmental and cultural heritage, traffic congestion, pollution, or urban disruption;**
- l) A phased approval system shall allow for gradual commercial expansion, contingent on its contribution to the long-term sustainability of the facility as long as the overall limits established by the policy, particularly those set out in points (d), (e), (f) and (g), are not exceeded.**

This policy shall prevail in case of conflict with other Local Plans’ policies directly related to sports uses

- 7.2 The policy review seeks to retain the Local Plan's strategy of protecting existing sports facilities within the respective Local Plan areas from incompatible development especially that which reduces the scarce land that is available for sports and public recreation. Conversely the review allows for the possibility of commercial development within sports facilities to enable sports clubs, national associations and federations to achieve financial stability required to transition into professional sports bodies. The policy includes development assessment parameters, together with a focus to retain the main use of the site for the provision of sports and sport ancillary activities.

8 Sports Facilities outside the scope of S.L. 455.12

8.1 The criteria set out in policy 7.1 shall also apply to other existing sports facilities identified in the local plans, which do not fall within the scope of SL 455.12.

8.2 Where sports organisations registered with SportMalta are not allocated facilities meeting the minimum international standards for their discipline, and where the SPED's sequential land-use approach has been applied to guide development, sites in ODZ areas shall be considered only as a last resort, and in such cases, only existing or redeveloped quarries shall be eligible, subject to the following general and specific criteria:

General Criteria applicable to (A) and (B):

- a) the application must be submitted by, or on behalf of, a sport organisation that has been continuously registered with SportMalta for at least ten (10) years at the time of submission;
- b) the overall project will result in the environmental improvement of the area through quarry restoration by means of infilling with inert waste and significant introduction of soft landscaping in addition to the green surface used for the actual practice of the sporting discipline;
- c) the proposed development has prior clearance from the "Commercial Sports Facilities Commission" established under regulation 3 of S.L.455.12;
- d) the site is not located on and does not affect a scheduled, designated or protected area including Areas of Ecological Importance, Sites of Scientific Importance, Areas or Sites of Archaeological Importance, Areas of High Landscape Value or Nature Reserves;
- e) the siting has no significant adverse impact on adjacent protected areas, ground water vulnerability areas, nearby settlements or high quality agricultural land;
- f) site is easily accessed from the existing road network and entrance to and exit out of the site does not cause a traffic flow hazard. Furthermore the site should be easily serviced with all the required infrastructure without any significant adverse impact to the surrounding environment;
- g) the site shall include the provision of car parking spaces in line with current policies;
- h) development applications shall undergo environmental, heritage, visual and traffic impact screening/assessments and shall ensure that they do not contribute to negative impact on environmental and cultural heritage, traffic congestion, pollution, or urban disruption;
- i) no new land ODZ beyond the quarry boundary shall be allocated for the proposed development, unless such land or space consists of adjacent or nearby legally established, underutilised, abandoned, or failing sports facilities, owned or entrusted to the sports organisation.

(A) Specific criteria for proposed new sports facilities within existing re-developed quarries permitted before the adoption date of this policy:

- a) the development of additional floorspace (as defined by this policy), may be considered on top of the existing development within the quarry.
- b) at least 60% of this additional floorspace shall be used for sport uses and sport ancillary uses. The remaining 40% may be used for warehousing or commercial development;

- c) **this additional floorspace shall not exceed 9.8m above the existing highest road level bordering the quarry.**

(B) Specific criteria for proposed new sports facilities within existing quarries which are less than 250m from residential areas and which are currently operational or used for obnoxious industry, redevelopment of such quarries may be considered subject that:

- a) **the quarrying activity should cease and any obnoxious industry removed;**
- b) **the re-development of such quarries may be considered and shall include the part infilling with inert waste (at least 40% by volume) and floorspace, on top to be used as a sports activity area, sports ancillary activity area and commercial activity area as defined by this policy. Social and community facilities and warehousing may also be considered as acceptable uses;**
- c) **at least 60% of the floorspace (as defined by this policy), shall be used for sport uses and sport ancillary uses. The remaining 40% may be used for warehousing, commercial development and/or social and community facilities;**
- d) **The overall project will result in the environmental improvement of the area through quarry restoration by means of infilling with inert waste and significant introduction of soft landscaping in addition to the green surface used for the actual practice of the sporting discipline;**
- e) **the resulting building must be situated within the quarry, below the road bordering the quarry;**
- f) **the roof of the resulting building shall be integrated as part of the quarry restoration scheme and should not exceed the pre-excitation site levels, except where it is not feasible to achieve level sport activity areas.**

This policy shall prevail in case of conflict with other Local Plans' policies directly related to sports uses and to quarry after-use.

8.3 In line with the SPED's general principles, preference is to be given to firstly the re-use of existing developed land and buildings through change of use and secondly to re-development of existing developed land and buildings. Due to the limitation of suitably sized sites, this policy recognises the potential that sports facilities may be allocated in ODZ areas, however it restricts such development to quarries, where such development would result in substantial environmental improvement, including the rehabilitation of the quarry site.

This general policy also follows the strategy of the South Malta Local Plan which acknowledges that sports facilities proposed ODZ will need to be carefully examined and a site selection exercise will have to be undertaken by the developer which would include the shortlisting of sites amenable for the development being proposed whilst adhering to the conditions identified in this policy.

Annex 1: Definitions

Definitions

For the purpose of Policy 7 and Policy 8, the following definitions apply:

"commercial area" means the designated area of the sports facility which shall be used exclusively for the commercial activity;

"commercial activity" means that activity within the commercial area which shall be used for the construction and operation of buildings for commercial activity by the sports organisation, that is offices, retail units, shopping malls, supermarkets, catering establishments (for use at any time of the day according to the relative licence), language schools, childcare centres, and any parking spaces that are in excess of the car-parking requirements according to the policies of the Planning Authority required for the operation of such buildings:

"floorspace" means the total area of the built structure including that of the sport activity (indoor and outdoor), the sports ancillary activity area and the commercial activity area, deriving from the computed aggregate of all floors within the structure, measured from the external face of the development's walls (or in the case of party walls measured up to half the width of such walls), including all internal and usable external spaces, such as balconies, terraces and gardens;

"footprint" means the total area delineated by the perimeter of a site and shall be taken to include all outer spaces, which area is measured from the external face of the walls (or in the case of party walls measured up to half the width of such walls);

"legally established" means a sports facility which is either covered by development permission, or which has been carried out before such time as specified in the Development Planning Act that renders it exempted from enforcement procedures;

"social and community facilities" means the classes and uses listed in S.L. 552.15, Development Planning (Use Classes) Order, Category B – Social Uses;

"sports activity" means that part of the sports area which shall be solely used for the actual practice of a sporting discipline by the sports organisation, that is indoor or outdoor, single or multi-use pitches and courts, indoor or outdoor swimming pools and gymnasiums;

"sports ancillary activity" means that part of the sports area which shall be used for the construction and operation of buildings that form an integral part of the operation and the achievement of the sporting objectives of the sports organisation, that is spectator stands, dressing rooms, warm-up areas, clubhouses (including administrative offices, meeting and conference rooms, catering facilities to be used during sports events only, lounges, media areas, sports museums and e-sports arenas), sports academies, high performance training centres, medical and health facilities (including recovery centres, medical centres and physical rehabilitation centres), spas and personal care centres, class 3A hostels, and necessary parking spaces according to the policies of the Planning Authority required for the operation of such buildings;

"sports area" means the designated area of the sports facility which shall be used exclusively for the sports activity and the sports ancillary activity.

Annex 2: Public submissions with responses

Partial Review
of the
2006 Local Plan Policies to Align with the
Commercialisation of Sports Facilities Regulations - Phase 1

Public Submissions on Objectives
with responses
Phase 1

Ref	Name/Company	Date	Comments Received	Remarks
PR-SP-Com(1) - 1	Mr Matthew Aquilina	30/06/25	<p>Would like to recommend that the PA review the objective and add that commercial activities should not remove any of the actual sport facilities and replace it with commercial use, there have been a number of sport facilities which completely removed the sport from the location and replaced it with a commercial venture, leaving the residents in the town with no sport facility as the actual sport was moved out of the town to other towns or locations. There have been others that have reduced the sports area that is available to them leaving them with less space for sport.</p> <p>Any commercialization should not come at the expense of degrading or losing sport facilities in that location and the area allocated for the sport should remain intact and not reduced by the addition of a commercial venture.</p> <p>The commercial activity should not be the main focus of the sports facility but the sport activity should be.</p>	<p>The Commercialisation of Sport Facilities Regulations requires that "The proposed sports area shall never be less in size than the area which is currently being used exclusively for the practice of the sporting discipline". Furthermore, the draft policy includes as part of the required criteria that proposals "do not result in the reduction or loss of existing or designated footprint for indoor or outdoor sports activity". The policy also requires that commercial activities must be secondary to the port function.</p>
PR SP-Com(1) - 2	Ms Vera Jankovic	01/07/25	<p>I would like to express my interest in participating in this consultation. Please include me in any related communications or updates moving forward</p>	<p>Comment noted</p>
PR- SP-Com(1) - 3	Mr Joseph Bonett	03/07/25	<p>Is-suggeriment tieghi hu li gurnata fil-gimgha l-facilitajiet ikunu jistu' jintuzaw verament b'xejn min terzi ladarba l-art hi publika u ghandu jkun hemm ritorn lil gid komuni.</p> <p>Apart, meta taghmlu tiklam f'gurnal it-tipa (text) ghandu jkun iswed u mhux griez biex jinqara ahjar.</p>	<p>This policy has no remit to change existing agreements between sports organisations and SportMalta with respect to the administration of facilities allocated to sports organisations.</p>

			U riklam li tistiednu input ghandkom taghmluh ukoll fil-gazzetta "il-Lehen".	Comment noted
PR- SP-Com(1) - 4	Mr Stefano Miceli obo ERA	03/07/25	ERA supports this general planning policy in principle, subject to the introduction of the necessary safeguards for ODZ areas.	Comment noted. The draft policy includes safeguards against the take-up of additional uncommitted land ODZ and restricts new sports facilities to quarries subject to specific conditions which target environment improvements, including rehabilitation. It also requires the assessment of development applications to undergo environmental impact screening/assessments to ensure that they do not contribute to negative impact on the environment
PR- SP-Com(1) - 5	Perit Noel Debattista	07/07/25	I trust that marinas housing multimillionEuro yachts are not to be regarded as a sporting location. Just to make it clear, in my previous email, I was referring to boats / yachts that are 'gin palaces, weekend motor boats that their sole function is to provide either days out on the water or to travel abroad on. I was not referring to sailing schools or similar	Marinas are specifically excluded from this policy. Moreover, this policy is intended to provide a framework to guide development applications by sport organisations registered with SportMalta for at least ten years.

<p>PR- SP-Com(1) - 6</p>	<p>Light Pollution Awareness Group, as part of The Astronomical Society of Malta</p>	<p>15/07/25</p> <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>With regards to the public consultation titled "Partial Review of Local Plans to Align with the Commercialization of Sports Facilities: Regulations - Phase 1" (https://www.pa.org.mt/en/consultation-details/partial-review-of-local-plans-to-align-with-the-commercialisation-of-sports-facilities-regulations-phase-1), the Light Pollution Awareness Group (LPAAG), a sub-group of The Astronomical Society of Malta (ASM, V000239) welcomes the consultation's objective to include adequate safeguards protecting neighbour amenity, cultural heritage, the natural environment, transport, and infrastructure.</p> <p>We take this opportunity to strongly encourage for the inclusion of clear and effective measures in planning policies and operational requirements to prevent and mitigate light pollution from both new and existing sports lighting installations.</p> <p>1. Introduction : Light Pollution as an Environmental and Social Concern</p> <p>Outdoor sports facilities frequently rely on high-intensity floodlighting to ensure visibility for players and spectators during evening hours. However, poorly specified, installed, or operated lighting can generate excessive artificial light at night (ALAN), causing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skyglow: Artificial brightening of the night sky, which obscures celestial bodies, impacting astronomical heritage and the human connection to natural darkness. [1,4] • Light Trespass: Unwanted light spilling beyond intended boundaries, intruding on residential properties and sensitive habitats. • Glare: Excessive brightness which contrary to common belief, is actually counterproductive and dangerous, causing discomfort and reducing visibility for pedestrians and drivers [7] • Ecological Disruption: ALAN interferes with nocturnal wildlife physiology and behaviour, including insect attraction, bird migration, mammal foraging, as well as plant health [2, 3, 8-11] • Human Health Effects: Exposure to ALAN, particularly high-intensity and blue-rich ALAN disrupts melatonin production and circadian rhythms, increasing risks of sleep disorders [12] and chronic diseases, including cardiovascular morbidity [6] and several cancers, notably breast [5], as well as colorectal and prostate [13] 	<p>Comment noted. The draft policy includes safeguards against the take-up of additional uncommitted land ODZ. It also requires the assessment of development applications to undergo environmental screening/assessments to ensure that they do not contribute to negative impact on the environment and on pollution (which includes light pollution).</p>
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Given these significant impacts, it is essential that the planning framework mandates the highest standards of lighting design and management to minimise light pollution in the development and commercial operation of sports facilities.

What is light pollution?
Light pollution is the human-made alteration of outdoor light levels from those occurring naturally. When we over-light, fail to use timers and sensors, or use the wrong color of light, we negatively affect many parts of our world.

Learn more about light pollution →

Light pollution...

- Destroys critical wildlife habitat**
Plants and animals depend on Earth's daily light and dark cycle to govern life-sustaining behaviors. Research shows that artificial light at night has adverse and even deadly effects on many species.
- Decreases safety and security**
There is no clear scientific evidence that increased outdoor lighting deters crime. In fact, glare from unshielded streetlights can decrease personal safety, contributing to both crime and accidents.
- Wastes energy and money**
Most outdoor lighting is wasted. This energy waste increases greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change and wastes billions of dollars each year.
- Robs us of our night sky heritage**
Our ancestors experienced a night sky that inspired science, religion, philosophy, art, and literature. Now, millions of children across the globe will never know the wonder of seeing the Milky Way.
- Harms human health**
Studies indicate that artificial light at night negatively affects human health by increasing our risks for obesity, sleep disorders, depression, diabetes, breast cancer, and more.
- Inhibits scientific research**
Satellites in low Earth orbit create visible trails in the night sky, inhibiting astronomical research and jeopardizing NASA's early warning system for asteroid collisions.

Summary of the harmful effects of light pollution
(Adapted from DarkSky International <https://darksky.org/resources/public-outreach-materials/>)



Graphic showing unacceptable vs. DarkSky-approved lighting fixtures

(Source: DarkSky International)

Five Lighting Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting

1 Useful
Use light only if it is needed.
All light should have a clear purpose. Consider how the use of light will impact the area, including wildlife and their habitats.

2 Targeted
Direct light so it falls only where it is needed.
Use shielding and careful aiming to target the direction of the light beam so that it points downward and does not spill beyond where it is needed.

3 Low Level
Light should be no brighter than necessary.
Use the lowest light level required. Be mindful of surface conditions, as some surfaces may reflect more light into the night sky than intended.

4 Controlled
Use light only when it is needed.
Use controls such as timers or motion detectors to ensure that light is available when it is needed, dimmed when possible, and turned off when not needed.

5 Warm-colored
Use warmer color lights where possible.
Limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue-violet) light to the least amount needed.

Responsible outdoor lighting is

DarkSky Illuminating

The Five Lighting Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting

(Source: <https://darksky.org/resources/guides-and-tools/lighting-principles/>)

2. Technical Recommendations for Lighting Design and Operation

Drawing on authoritative guidance from

- *DarkSky International*, of which Malta is a recognised chapter (<https://darksky.org/who-we-are/chapters/>), and from their broader resources (<https://darksky.org/>), particularly their *Dark Sky Approved Outdoor Sports Lighting Programme* (<https://darksky.org/what-we-do/darksky-approved/outdoor-sports-lighting/guidelines/>)
- The *Illuminating Engineering Society (IES)* (<https://www.ies.org/advocacy/light-at-night/>), specifically the IES RP-6 guidelines (Illuminating Engineering Society, ANS/IES RP-6-24, *Recommended Practice: Lighting Sports and Recreational Areas*, New York: IES, 2025), and
- The *Guidelines for the Reduction of Light Pollution in the Maltese Islands* (refer to page 33, 'Outdoor Recreational Areas and Sports Lighting', published by ERA: <https://era.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Guidelines-for-the-Reduction-of-Light-Pollution-in-the-MI-PC-Draft.pdf>).

we set out the following detailed recommendations:

A. Lighting Fixture Specifications

- **Dark Sky Approved Fixtures:** Use luminaires certified by the DarkSky International's **Dark Sky Approved Outdoor Sports Lighting Programme** (<https://darksky.org/what-we-do/darksky-approved/outdoor-sports-lighting/guidelines/>). These fixtures meet rigorous criteria to limit light spill, glare, and skyglow, including being fully shielded with zero light emitted above the horizontal. No light fixture, once installed and aimed in its final position, may emit any light above the horizontal plane. Even if a fixture shows zero candlepower of luminous intensity at or above the horizon when pointed directly downwards, it does not comply if, in its installed position, it is tilted upward (aimed above the nadir)
- **Optical Control for Targeted Use:** Fixtures must feature precision optics designed to confine light to the playing surface and prevent overspill beyond the sports area boundaries. At least 85% of the total lumens generated by the downward-aimed sports lighting luminaires illuminating the field of play must fall inside the targeted area.

- **Appropriate Mounting:** Mount lights at heights and angles that avoid light spill and glare while maintaining optimal playing surface illumination. Dark-Sky International recommends design according to the sport's specific lighting needs following standards such as IES RP-6.

B. Illuminance Levels and Uniformity

- **Targeted Lighting Levels:** Design lighting to meet the precise illumination required for the sport and competition level, as per IES RP-6 recommendations, to avoid over-illumination and reduce energy consumption. The average illuminance on each field of play shall be no more than 10% above the average target illuminance levels defined by the relevant standard, based on the sport and the class of play.
- **Uniformity:** Maintain consistent lighting levels across the playing area to minimise harsh contrasts that can cause glare and discomfort.
- **Lighting Calculations:** Lighting calculations should be carried out using software approved by Dark Sky International and must demonstrate compliance through a plan view and an illuminance grid. The calculations should include the average, minimum, and/or maximum illuminance levels at the height recommended for the specific sport, as outlined in the relevant standard. The spacing between points on the illuminance grid should follow the standard's specifications, or if none are provided, the points should be no more than 3 metres (10 feet) apart.

C. Spectral Considerations

- **Warm Colour Temperature:** Employ LED light sources with correlated colour temperature (CCT) at or below 3000K to reduce blue light emission, which is highly disruptive to wildlife and the night sky.
- **Minimised Blue Emission:** Choose fixtures with spectral power distributions that limit short-wavelength emissions, helping to decrease skyglow and biological impacts.

D. Lighting Controls and Operation

- **Adaptive Controls:** Incorporate dimming technology, timers, and zoning controls to dynamically adjust lighting levels according to actual usage, thereby minimising excess light during times of low activity. The control system should support both automatic and manual dimming to provide consistent and adjustable illumination tailored to various field tasks and

sports practice requirements. Preset dimming levels should be programmed for each specific use, allowing adjustment anywhere between 25% and 100% of full brightness.

- **Curfews:** Implement strict lighting curfews to ensure lights are switched off or dimmed following events and during late-night periods. Automatic control systems with remote access, such as smartphone apps or direct communication to the managing company or facility, must be used to enforce shutdowns by the local curfew time, which should not extend beyond 11:00 p.m.
- **Separate Controls:** Lighting control zones are required to separate fields of play into different zones and to separate the down lighting and uplighting for each field into different zones. The lighting for other areas such as concessions stands and parking lots shall be zoned independently of the playing field lighting. However, these must still adhere to the requirements being discussed.
- **Motion Sensors:** Incorporate sensor-triggered lighting for ancillary areas like parking and walkways to minimise constant lighting.

3. Retrofitting Existing Sports Lighting Systems

Many existing sports facilities currently operate with lighting systems that do not meet these Dark Sky Approved standards. Most currently installed floodlights often use non-shielded fixtures, higher colour temperature lamps, and may lack modern control systems, resulting in significant light trespass, glare, and skyglow.

Therefore, we recommend that the planning authority:

- Mandate retrofitting of existing sports lighting to meet the above-mentioned guidelines.
- Require replacement of outdated fixtures with Dark Sky Approved luminaires or equivalents meeting full cutoff, low CCT, and high optical control standards.
- Implement upgrades to include modern lighting control technologies such as dimmers, timers, and occupancy sensors.
- Consider financial incentives or grants to support community facilities in retrofitting efforts.

4. Environmental Impact Assessments and Monitoring

- Sports lighting facilities should not be located within or close to Environmentally Sensitive Zones. DarkSky International does not certify sports lighting facilities located in areas especially sensitive to lighting, such as CIE Environmental Zones E0 and E1 or IDA/IES Lighting Zone LZO. As per DarkSky International, LZO is defined as an area where the natural environment will be seriously and adversely affected by lighting. This zone must therefore not have any ambient lighting.
- Require a comprehensive Light Pollution Impact Assessment as part of all planning applications involving new or upgraded sports lighting installations. This should include detailed photometric modelling predicting illuminance, luminance, light trespass, glare, and potential skyglow impact.
- Establish baseline measurements of night sky brightness and require periodic post-installation monitoring to ensure compliance with permitted lighting parameters.
- Impose conditions for routine maintenance to preserve fixture shielding and performance.

5. Conclusion

Implementing these evidence-based recommendations will significantly reduce light pollution while ensuring high-quality sports lighting, reducing energy waste, supporting sustainability, and safeguarding the wellbeing of the community and the natural environment.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. We would be pleased to provide any further information or clarification if required.

Kind regards,

Light Pollution Awareness Group
The Astronomical Society of Malta



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<p>PR- SP-Com(1) - 7</p>	<p>Dr Joseph Muscat (Chairman) obo Malta Premier League</p>	<p>03/07/25</p>	<p>Reference is made to the ongoing consultation regarding the partial review of the Local Plan policy aimed at aligning with the Commercialisation of Sports Facilities Regulation.</p> <p>The Malta Premier League (MPL), as a registered organisation representing clubs competing in the highest division of Maltese football, welcomes this important policy initiative.</p> <p>On behalf of our member clubs, we express our support for the proposed policy direction. We respectfully urge that, in its implementation, and in the formulation of any subsequent policies, adequate flexibility be maintained to take into account the specific characteristics and requirements of individual projects.</p> <p>We also appeal to the Planning Authority to adopt a forward-looking approach that goes beyond the existing inventory of sports facilities. A number of clubs currently lack infrastructure that meets the standards required for hosting international competitions. Addressing this gap is crucial to the continued growth and professionalisation of the sport in Malta.</p> <p>While we fully acknowledge the critical importance of protecting ODZ areas, we are confident that the Authority can identify appropriate solutions within already committed zones. These solutions would that balance environmental stewardship with the legitimate needs of the sports industry. We believe that with the right planning framework, collaboration between the planning sector and the sporting community can yield outcomes that benefit both sectors and the broader public interest.</p> <p>We thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and remain available for any further engagement on this matter.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The policy includes safeguards intended to direct development to respect the context of its surroundings without contributing to negative impacts.</p> <p>The second part of the policy (Policy 8.2) is intended to address sports organisations registered with SportMalta, which do not have access to sports activity area of sufficient size or adequacy to meet the minimum international competition standards for its respective sporting discipline.</p>
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