

Partial Review of the Grand Harbour Local Plan of 2002

Marsa Park Site (Policy GM15) Public Consultation Draft



PLANNING AUTHORITY

May 2016

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Government has directed the Authority to undertake a Partial Local Plan Review of the Grand Harbour Local Plan, 2002, for the site shown in Figure 1 which is affected by Policy GM 15 (Marsa Park Development) and Policy GM24 (Marsa Sports Complex). This review is required to update the planning policy guidance for the area and to facilitate the development of sites located within the Marsa Park site.

Figure 1: Site affected by the Partial Local Plan Review.



2.0 Proposed Revisions

2.1 The Government objectives for this Partial Review are as follows:

The objectives of the review are:

- **to realign the boundaries of the areas covered by policies GM15 – Marsa Park Development and GM24 – the Marsa Sports Complex to allow for consideration for the alternatives of Triq Dicembru 13;**
- **to re-evaluate the policy provisions in policy GM15 for the comprehensive planning of the Marsa Park Development Site and for the range and scale of the mix of land uses;**
- **to propose site specific land use and building height designations for different parcels of land within the Marsa Park development site.**

2.2. These objectives were published for consultation between the 3rd July, 2015 and 23rd July, 2015

2.3 Five submissions were received by the closing date of the last public consultation exercise followed in July 2015 and a summary with the Authority responses are included as Appendix 2 to this report.

2.4 The main proposed changes to policy GM15 to achieve these objectives may be summarized as follows:

a) Amend **Policy GM 15 Marsa Park Development** to delete the requirement for the comprehensive development of the area as it is deemed to be the main stumbling block for the attraction of investment in the site. This is in line with the Government policy direction to simplify the planning process and streamline the processing of development planning applications in this area. The area is subdivided into four main development parcels A, A1, B, C and D as indicated on Map 1.

b) The policy is also being amended to:

- consider a wide range of desired land uses on the parcels, and
- to follow an acceptable approach to development densities with additional development potential but subject to attention to a balanced approach in line with SPED Policies UO3.3 and UO3.6 in view of acceptable heights and density thresholds.

c) Replace **Figure 15 Marsa Park Development Strategy** of the Grand Harbour Local Plan of 2011 in line with the updated framework and direction.

2.5 The objective “**to realign the boundaries of the areas covered by policies GM15 – Marsa Park Development and GM24 – the Marsa Sports Complex to allow for consideration for the alternatives of Triq Dicembru 13**” has not been taken forward in order not to compromise the integrity of the policy boundary of GM24 and following re-consideration of the need to re-align Triq Dicembru 13.

3.0 Strategic Guidance

- 3.1. This Partial Review is guided strategically by the ‘Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED)’ which highlighted in Para 1.27 the promotion of the socio-economic growth potential of key commercial sectors. The SPED identifies Marsa Park as a Business Hub with the aim of promoting the regeneration of the Marsa area which has experienced urban decay. The area has the potential for regeneration and the improvement of the general environment of the area. The anticipated commercial development serves as an impetus to improving the quality of the area.
- 3.2 Para 2.18 mentions the Marsa Park as an area for predominantly commercial development (offices/retail) related to market services and employment.
- 3.3 Furthermore, the following summarised SPED Policies are also relevant for this area namely:
- Policy UO1.2 Designating the Grand Harbour Area as a strategic node for integrated regeneration.
 - Policy UO 1.5 Guiding the distribution of new jobs towards Business Hubs
 - Policy UO 1.6 Promoting the attractiveness of Business Hubs
 - Policy UO3.4 Identifies sites that are of poor quality and seek their upgrading through high quality development
 - Policy TO12.7 Ensures that the transport network serving the Harbour can accommodate their anticipated growth
- 3.4 The Marsa Park Development site was indicated as a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) area, as one of the locations designated as strategically appropriate for tall buildings as outlined in the ‘Planning Guide on the Use and Applicability of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) (May 2014)’.

4.0 Amended Policy

4.1 Changes to Area Policy GM15

4.1.1 Area Policy **GM 15 Marsa Park Development** is being amended as follows:

Policy GM15 Marsa Park Development Area

The area indicated on Map 1 (amending the Marsa Map Figure 15 Marsa Inset Map) in the Grand Harbour Local Plan, 2011) is designated as the Marsa Park Development Area and Business Hub as identified by the SPED (2015) to enable the establishment of a sustainable, multi-use and resource efficient urban employment node, which shall create a quality business, enterprise and residential community making a significant contribution to the regeneration of the Inner Harbour Area.

Development proposals on the sub-areas A, A1, B, C and D, shown on the respective Marsa Map 1, shall be subject to the following criteria:

i. **The Land Use Framework**

Overall, the land uses may include any one, or a combination of the following primary functions:

On sub-areas A, A1 and D

- **Offices**
- **Retail**
- **Light Industry**

On sub-area B

- **Offices**
- **Retail**
- **A mix of size and type of dwellings**

On sub-area C

- **Offices**
- **Retail**
- **General and Light Industry**
- **Storage and Distribution**

Provided that in sub-areas C and D development shall not have a direct frontage and vehicular access onto Triq Aldo Moro.

All sub-areas indicated above may include also a range of ancillary land uses such as food and drink outlets, assembly and leisure and child care facilities and other compatible uses. The distribution of floor spaces for both primary and ancillary land uses on individual sites should not compromise the objectives set out in the first paragraph of this policy.

ii. Building Height

The maximum overall height of buildings within the five sub-areas shall not exceed 22 metres.

Maximum building heights shall be measured above the highest level of any existing or planned access road bordering the perimeter of the individual block and shall include all levels of the buildings above this point. In the case of sloping ground or streets, adequate terracing and set-backs may be required to reduce the bulk of the building. No additional floorspace shall be allowed above this maximum height.

The allowable number of levels within the overall building height of 22m shall be interpreted in line with the provisions of Development Control Design Policy, Guidance and Standards, 2015.

The FAR mechanism can be applied to the site in line with the provisions of the 'Planning Guide on the Use and Applicability of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) (May 2014).

iii. Appearance

Innovative design approaches which enhance the quality of the buildings and the spaces between them will be encouraged. Particular attention must be afforded to the design of the facades of the buildings on Triq Aldo Moro within sub-area C and D and the buildings of sub-area A onto Triq Dicembru Tlettax in view of the prominent visual location of these roads. The texture, colour and materials of the buildings shall contribute to the attractiveness of the appearance, character and image of the Marsa Park Development Area and its surroundings.

iv. Landscaping and Public Open Space

Development proposals on the sites allocated as landscaped areas as shown on Map 1, shall only include landscaping schemes in line with the relevant Guidelines on Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Planting & Landscaping in the Maltese Islands (2002) aimed at improving their green appearance. In addition, an area of land of not less than 20 % of the gross developable footprint of sub-areas A, C (except the area to the north east already fully developed on separate small plots) and D, or part thereof, shall also be allocated for landscaped open space in any design scheme. A planting schedule and maintenance programme shall be a requirement for the assessment of development proposals and shall form part of the approved scheme.

In sub-areas C and D, a 6m setback is required from the alignment of Triq Aldo Moro and Triq tat-Tromba to allow for landscaping and/or improved vehicular access. The areas allocated for landscaping may be deducted from the 20% landscaped area requirement above.

v. **Environmental Sustainability**

Proposed buildings shall adopt environmental sustainability features including conservation of energy and water, design integrated renewable energy generation, measures to reduce trip generation and reduction of waste.

vi. **Transportation**

The development proposals shall be required to satisfy all of the technical and policy standards for junction capacities, parking, road safety and traffic circulation and may also be subject to a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), as necessary. The developer would also need to demonstrate that the public transport network has sufficient spare capacity to accommodate the anticipated additional growth in travel by public transport generated by the development. The assessment of other traffic related impacts such as noise, air quality and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions may also be required.

The following additional criteria shall also apply:

- **Road Network:** Since this plan is based on the layout of the current road network, an area of land on the western flank of sub-area A shall be reserved for the upgrading of the road network. This area is indicatively shown on Map 1.
- **Access:** Adequate, safe vehicular and pedestrian access to and within the sub-areas should be provided to the satisfaction of all responsible entities. A peripheral ring road around sub-area A and a service road along part of sub-area B, both of a minimum width of 8m, shall be reserved for the safe intersection with the Marsa by-pass, through a single entry point and one exit point for each respective ring road/service road. Apart from the provisions for sub-areas A and B above, no direct vehicular access shall be allowed on arterial and/or distributor roads;
- **Car Parking:** on-site car parking facilities for residents, employees and visitors shall be provided taking into account the established car-parking standards for the relative development type, the overall car parking provision

in the surroundings (especially the availability of on-street parking, public car parks and/or park and ride facilities) and the provision of public transport. Payment in lieu of on-site car parking facilities may be considered provided the funds go towards addressing the transport impacts resulting from the development. Payment shall not be favourably considered in lieu of car parking required for any residential component of the scheme;

- **Green Modes:** design and construction of new roads shall be required to provide priority measures to improve the safety and attractiveness of these green modes.

vii. Utilities Services

Infrastructural utility requirements such as power supply, water supply, sewers (foul and storm-water, including reservoirs), and telecommunications should be addressed through consultation with the relevant utility providers and regulators. Services should preferably be located underground or in internal spaces within the buildings and if located at roof level, their screening should be an integral part of the architectural design of the building, within the context of criteria (ii) and (iii) above, on Building Height and Appearance.

viii. Planning Gain

The developer/s of sub-area A and B shall be legally obliged to cover the full expenses for the construction and maintenance of the ring road or service road, additional internal road links and the junction intersections with Marsa By-pass required by criterion (vi) on Transportation (access). Additional contributions from all developers of the other sites may be required to other planning funds to be utilized in accordance with the rules and procedures governing the same funds and towards the provision of any necessary infrastructure upgrades.

The Marsa Park Development Area, with an area slightly larger than 10 ha, is not used efficiently and significant amounts of land and buildings lie vacant or derelict awaiting regeneration. Although the predominant use is industrial in nature, other uses include

a few shops and showrooms, small offices, residential and also horse stables and livestock farms. The high traffic volumes on the arterial and distributor road network and resulting associated impacts on noise and air quality are the other dominant characteristic of the area leading to urban decay.

The existing road network, Triq Diċembru 13 and Triq Aldo Moro along the southern perimeter and Triq it-Tigrija, Triq is-Salib tal-Marsa and Triq tat-Tromba along the northern and eastern perimeters, besides providing direct access to the land within the boundary of the Marsa Park Development Area as designated by this policy, subdivides the site into five separate parcels with independent access from each other A, A1, B, C and D. Some road junctions are currently poorly designed, direct accesses to properties can be a major traffic hazard and lack of on-site parking compels employees and visitors to park on the streets, often creating congestion.

The site is surrounded by mixed use areas with varying degrees of environmental quality. The north-western boundary faces a 1970s housing estate having reasonable residential amenity while the northern area on Triq it-Tigrija and Triq is-Salib tal-Marsa is dominated by industrial and warehousing development mixed with residential units, shops and a branch of a local bank. These uses are accommodated in a mix of one, two and three storey buildings dating from the earlier half of the twentieth century to more recent buildings from the 2000s. Parking problems and on-street un/loading activities are most acute on this stretch of road. The Open Centre for migrants is located on the eastern area beyond Triq tat-Tromba, separated from the Marsa Park by the hydrology/sanitary canal proposed for scheduling due to its historical importance. The southern perimeter has a more open character including the sports pitches at the Marsa Sports Complex and the golf course and outdoor sports facilities of the Marsa Sports and Country Club.

The environmental problems of the area generated by the heavy increase in traffic flows through the main traffic arteries combined with the incremental intensification of the incompatible mix of uses, insensitive interventions on the existing fabric and a degree of urban decline and abandonment make the need for a strong injection of

investment more urgent. The potential of the site for development, mainly emerging from its strategic location and land supply, have long been recognized since the beginning of the 1990s. Previous policy direction, including the Grand Harbour Local Plan (2002), had provided the planning and development policy framework for this area but the implementation mechanism to take this framework forward was not put in place and required further considerations. This revised policy is intended to introduce more flexibility in the development of the Marsa Park Development Area but still guide future projects towards the provision of sustainable business developments within the Business hub. This policy seeks to ensure an adequate level of co-ordination between different proposals by dividing the site into five distinct sub-areas (A, A1, B, C and D), on the basic assumption that the alignments of the existing roads shall not be drastically changed but providing for road widening where this is essential for the efficient operation and servicing of the area through ring roads and service roads where required.

The range of acceptable uses has been guided by the core objectives of the Business hub as a primary development area and employment node, creating a location for a significant number of jobs supported by ancillary facilities and open space. There is a strong element of flexibility to the developer in the choice of scale and range of land uses which may eventually be developed on the separate sub-areas, especially the range of ancillary uses, but always within the overall development density parameters established in the policy.

The Marsa Park Development Area although located strategically and providing an important element in the availability of commercial hub space contains a number of limitations that need to be addressed. These limitations are mainly related to:

- a very complex and busy transport network and junction component that serves the north/central to south connectivity of the Island and includes the major link to the Airport whose unhindered continued use is of paramount importance;
- an existing road and block layout that is highly compromised through existing permitted developments and multi-ownerships that do not permit major

- changes to the overall urban design of the area;
- the visually prominent streetscape of the Marsa Park area along Triq Dicembru 13 and Triq Aldo Moro and the evident lack of landscaped space and poor quality design of existing development in this area; and
 - the need to balance out a mix of uses including an existing element of residential use.

These limitations are taken into account in the planning consideration of Marsa Park area and appropriate development heights, and site coverage are being established, whereby a building height of 22m (DC2015) is zoned with the possible application of the Floor Area Ratio. These development parameters have the potential to generate around 225,000 sqm of developable floorspace (GDF) within the whole of Marsa Park which implies a slight increase over the allocation in the 2002 Local Plan. These density levels are balanced with the provision of adequate open space (landscaping provision) to ascertain an overall sustainable quality of new development in view of the requirements of SPED Policies UO3.3 and UO3.6.

The designated landscaped areas within the policy boundary are a distinguishing feature and their scale makes them amenable to adding a green feel to the area. It is important that they remain undeveloped and this policy seeks to retain them and encourage their enhancement. In addition, an area of land of not less than 20 % of the gross developable footprint in the sub-areas which have potential for major redevelopment or part thereof shall be allocated for landscaped open space.

The provision of adequate infrastructure and car parking is vital to a successful development. The scale of these projects makes it even more fundamental, that the capacity of the existing networks to accommodate the increase in demand is determined as early as possible through the appropriate studies in the development application planning stage with the responsible agencies and any shortfalls rectified. Transport Malta have already indicated that an area of land is required for the upgrading of the arterial road network and this has been integrated and reserved in the policy along with requirements for possible road widening in Areas C and D.

Contributions from the developers towards infrastructure are also a requirement of the policy. However, contribution in-lieu of car parking is only being permitted provided the proposal does not include a residential component, to avoid situations where residents' vehicles are parked on the streets.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Planning Authority invites individuals and organizations to send their representation pertaining to revised area policy. Representations are to be made in writing to the:

The Director of Planning

Planning Authority

Partial Review of the Grand Harbour Local Plan (Marsa Development Site)

P.O. Box 200, Marsa GPO 01

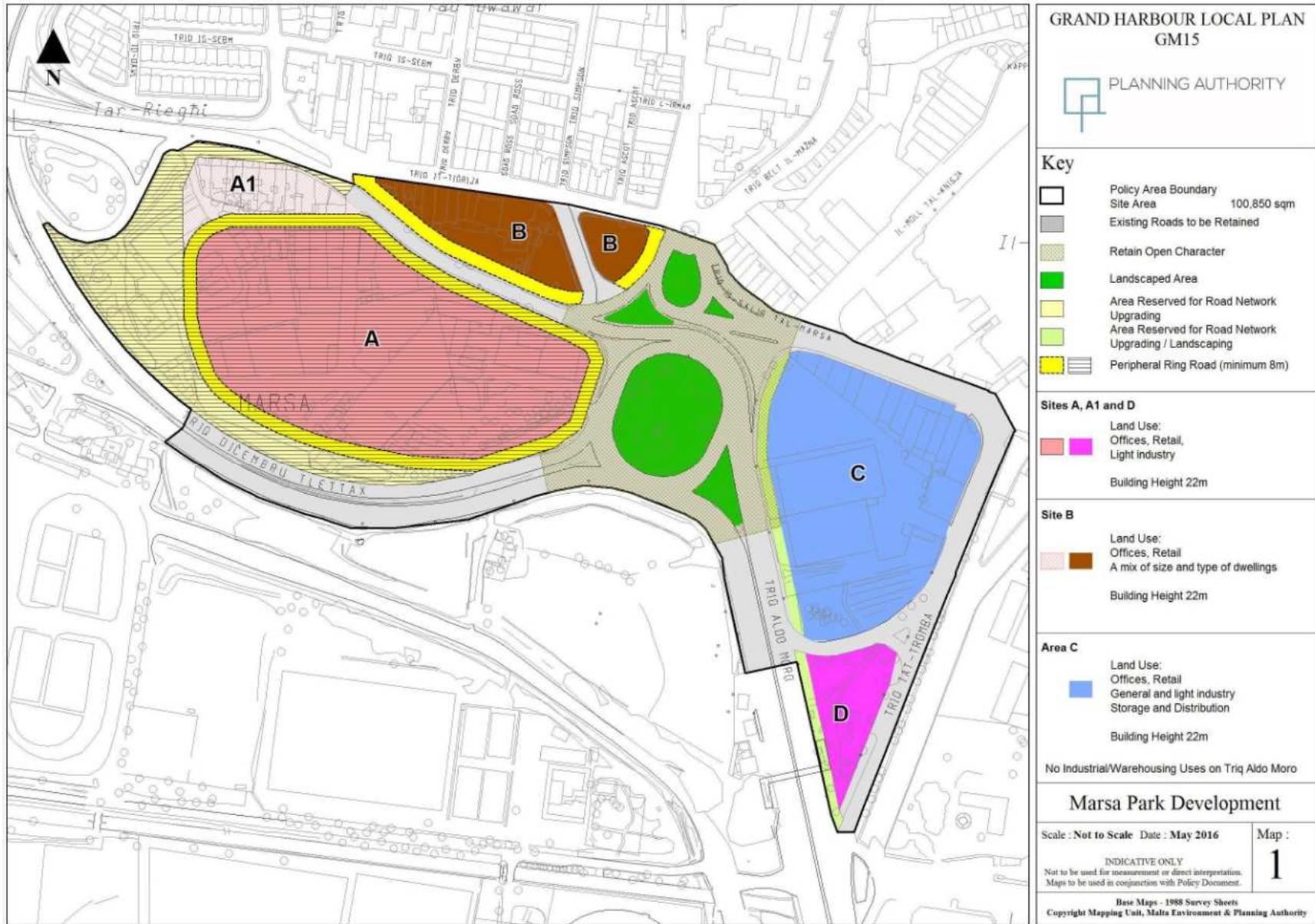
or on the email address: **ghlp@pa.org.mt**

The Grand Harbour Local Plan may be viewed on the Authority's website

www.pa.org.mt.

Submissions must be sent to the Authority by the **22 July 2016**.

APPENDIX 1: Public Consultation Draft Map 1



APPENDIX 2: Public Consultation Submissions Phase 1

Grand Harbour Local Plan 2002 as amended in 2011 (Revisions 2015)

**Public Submissions on
Objectives for Partial Review**

Ref	Respondent	Date	Summary of Comments Received	Response
GHMP/15 - Obj 1	Mr Kurt Grima Obo Bezzina Brothers Limited	22-7-15	<p>We have vested interest in the subject matter of the Partial Review of the Grand Harbour Local Plan (Marsa).</p> <p>Can you kindly send us further details and relevant documents for our perusal.</p> <p>May we also kindly ask you to extend, the date by a week within which our submissions, if any, are to be submitted</p>	The detailed policy will be issued for public consultation at a later stage.
GHMP/15 – Obj 2	Perit David Xuereb Obo George Pisani, Victor Bezzina, Salv. Bezzina & Sons Limited, Mr Angelo Xuereb, AX Holdings, Baron Gino Trapani Galea Feriol	22-7-15	<p>Industrial and warehousing uses are incompatible uses. Social uses should be allowed.</p> <p>Building heights should not be stipulated in policy but FAR principle should apply Built floorspace and volume should not be stipulated by policy but FAR principle should apply</p> <p>High quality landscaped open space should screen the development from the arterial road network</p> <p>A holistic approach for the Opportunity Area albeit ideal is not considered to be realistic and rational.</p>	The principle of retaining or otherwise the comprehensive approach, landscaping, respective land uses and building heights will feature in the revised policy for the area.
GHMP/15 – Obj 3	Perit Edwin Mintoff Obo Baron Trapani Galea, Lewis Camenzuli & Son Limited	22-7-15	<p>Different property owners are allowed to develop their property separately and are not be subject to any overall conditions or policies. This would ensure that the area can start to be redeveloped into a high quality development.</p> <p>The objective to realign the boundaries of the</p>	The principle of retaining or otherwise the comprehensive approach, landscaping, respective land uses and building heights will feature in the revised policy for the area.

			<p>areas covered by policies GM15 and GM 24 to allow for the consideration of alternatives for the alignment of Triq Dicembru 13", does not change the property boundaries and frontages of the different land parcels of clients.</p> <p>Policy should allow for a more flexible development of the area. The existing policy limits the development of different land uses through defined maximum floor space for each land use.</p> <p>Client's properties should be zoned for Retail and Offices land uses with supporting leisure and catering amenities, with a height designation of 9 floors.</p> <p>FAR policy should apply to the site.</p> <p>The transport interchange which was removed through the Partial Review of 2011 will not be reintroduced since park and ride facilities are already in operation in Marsa.</p>	
GHMP/15 – Obj 4	Perit Edwin Mintoff Obo J & M Property Limited	23-7-15	Site owned by clients should be included within the boundary where policy GM 15 applies. It should be zoned for retail and offices and supporting leisure and catering uses. It should have a building height of 9 floors.	Amendments to boundary followed in the 2011 Partial Review are being retained.
GHMP/15 – Obj 5	Perit Alexander Bezzina Obo Bezzina Brothers Limited	23-7-15	Bezzina factory premises command a strategic location in terms of display and showroom facilities. The proposed downgrading of Aldo Moro Road and the realignment of 13 th December Avenue will mean planning blight in terms of business. These are not really	<p>This issue is a transport related matter which is not the competence of the PA.</p> <p>The principle of retaining or otherwise the comprehensive approach, landscaping, respective land uses and building heights will</p>

			<p>required since the current road network copes well and only requires minor modifications.</p> <p>The land uses currently advocated with the possibility of other mixed uses should be retained/allowed by the new policy.</p> <p>Medium/high rise development should be allowed.</p> <p>Owners' site should be excluded from a comprehensive planning policy.</p>	<p>feature in the revised policy for the area.</p>
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