

Structure Plan Review  
**Monitoring Report 1990-95**

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**Volume I: Final Report**  
Planning Authority, March 1997

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# 0. Executive Summary

0.0.1 The Structure Plan Monitoring Programme aims to:

- gauge progress in the implementation of Structure Plan policy;
- review potential gaps in policy;
- identify areas of policy which may require re-evaluation; and
- identify key social and economic trends which may imply a need for policy review.

0.0.2 This Summary begins by considering broad contextual changes of relevance to Structure Plan implementation. The second section summarises progress so far in the implementation of the Structure Plan. The final section presents an overview of issues raised by the monitoring programme.

## 0.1 Context for Implementation

0.1.1 The early years of Structure Plan implementation have been characterised by consistent growth, both economically and demographically. In parallel with this strong growth, international and local environmental awareness has developed further, with extensive debate taking place regarding the requirements for sustainable development. Growth in the influence of European standards over local socio-economic and environmental policy has also been a consistent feature, reinforcing the strengthened international emphasis on environmental considerations.

### Economic Growth

0.1.2 Malta has experienced rapid economic growth over the monitoring period, accompanied by a high level of development pressure in many locations and in most sectors. Levels of confidence are high; investment in property is accelerating, partly fueled by growth in credit availability.

0.1.3 Growth in Government revenues has been strong throughout the monitoring period, but this growth has largely been absorbed by increases in recurrent expenditure.

### High Immigration

0.1.4 Population growth has been a little higher than anticipated. There has been a large migration component to this growth, linked particularly to the return migration of former emigrants.

0.1.5 There has been a strong increase in the labour force, combined with continuing labour shortages in some specialist skill groups. The resident population of working age is likely to decline in the longer term. The current base scenario for strategic planning purposes assumes that net migration will stabilise in the longer term.

### Demographic Slowdown

0.1.6 Natural population growth is already slow and is continually decelerating. This implies a shift towards population stability, with the possibility of some decline in the resident population in the longer term.

0.1.7 Household size continues to fall. Despite the stabilisation of population numbers, some increase in the number of households is likely. This is linked in part to the trend towards an aging population: the number of elderly people living alone is likely to increase. However, falling household size is also linked to patterns of social change, in particular: the increasing rate of

female participation in the workforce; choices on family size; the increasing number of separations; and the growing preference of some young, single people for independent living. The safest assumption, in the light of international experience, is that household size will continue to fall.

## **Aging Population**

0.1.8 The aging population issue was identified in the Structure Plan, but the rate at which the population is aging is running ahead of Structure Plan expectations. This is an important theme, with implications for: patterns of housing demand; the social and health services; and overall levels of public expenditure. The aging population structure also has implications for the educational system; school rolls are likely to stabilise or fall through the remainder of the Structure Plan period.

## **Relations with the EU**

0.1.9 The view of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Environment is that, whilst the Government is seeking the closest possible relationship with the EU that is compatible with Malta's particular social, economic and geo-political circumstances, the nation is not currently in a position to absorb the impact of full Union membership. There are potential implications across a wide range of topics, including: agriculture; industry; levels of migration; labour supply; levels of investment for infrastructure projects; and funding for conservation.

## **Sustainable Development**

0.1.10 Following the Earth Summit in 1992, there has been gradual progress towards an international consensus on a modified philosophy of planning which emphasises the goal of sustainable development. Greater importance is now attached to the management of growth and development, to ensure that today's growth does not irreparably damage the environment for future generations. There is a growing emphasis on the quality of development achieved and on environmental carrying capacity. The first Structure Plan Review will need to take account of the growing international emphasis on sustainable development patterns.

# **0.2 Initial Priorities in Implementation**

0.2.1. Once the enabling legislation was in place, and the Planning Authority formally established, a major initiative was necessary to create a functioning land-use planning system backed up by robust enforcement procedures. The Development Planning Act of 1992 has been reinforced with a framework of additional regulations and procedures. There has been a substantial qualitative improvement in the appraisal of environmental issues related to development projects. There are also improved opportunities for public involvement. During the first three years of Structure Plan implementation this has been the major concern, and the primary success, of the Planning Authority.

0.2.2 The Local Plans system is being established as rapidly as possible, to clarify the interpretation of Structure Plan policy at local level. One Local

Plan is now complete. Two other Plans are at an advanced stage and a third is in progress.

0.2.3 A strategy for Structure Plan implementation is in place. Success in the implementation of this programme has been partial:

- the treatment of major projects now functions with a high degree of consistency and quality;
- substantial progress has been made in the policy-making arena;
- initiatives to link capital budgeting to the Structure Plan implementation process have so far proved unsuccessful;
- the identification of further key projects needs to be progressed as part of the Structure Plan Review process; and
- cooperation amongst Government departments, parastatals and the private sector remains poor.

## **0.3 Implementation Agencies**

0.3.1 Interdepartmental coordination and strategic planning remains weak. Effective coordinating committees and improved informal relationships are required with a number of government ministries and departments. The operation of both the Planning Consultative Committee and the Interdepartmental Planning Committee requires review.

0.3.2 The integration of sectoral planning amongst government departments and the public utilities is a key priority. There is now a high level of planning activity in many departments and parastatal organisations, but there is still a lack of coordination in the preparation and implementation of strategic development plans. Limited use is made of the Structure Plan to guide investment and planning within Government departments and other public sector agencies.

0.3.3 The Local Councils have established a role as a major player in some localities, particularly through the implementation of environmental upgrading projects. The overall record on Structure Plan implementation would have been weakened considerably without their contribution, particularly in the area of environmental upgrading.

## **0.4 Information gaps**

0.4.1 Many areas have been identified where policy development is hindered by a lack of information. Examples where comprehensive and up-to-date national data sources are lacking include: agricultural land; rural land cover; the marine environment; the minerals industry and development completions.

## **0.5 Progress against Structure Plan Goals**

### **Accommodating Development**

0.5.1 Rapid development has occurred in most Structure Plan sectors. Within the housing and tourism sectors, this rapid development has largely been accommodated within designated development areas. However, there has been a failure to accommodate the commercial, industrial, social and community sectors within the designated areas for development.

0.5.2 Infrastructural investment remains substantial, but was running at higher levels in the early 90's. Basic problems of water and electricity supply have largely been solved, although the strategic plans involving the main utilities may have to be reviewed and modified. Action on roads and transport now needs to be accelerated.

0.5.3 There is no shortage of land for residential development. The Temporary Provision Schemes allocated land far in excess of current

requirements. However, an appropriate choice of sites for commercial, industrial and community facilities is lacking; this issue will be addressed in depth in the *Commerce and Industry Subject Study*.

## **Constraining Urban Growth**

0.5.4 Most development has occurred within the planned development zone. However, the Structure Plan allocates housing land well in excess of requirements during the Plan period; as a result, excessive amounts of virgin land have been given over to development and urbanisation is proceeding more rapidly than necessary.

0.5.5 The Structure Plan aims to foster the efficient use of land and buildings. Here, results have been mixed. Private sector developers generally seek to use their sites to the full. In fact, they are frequently reluctant to allow sufficient provision for circulation, proper access, parking, landscaping and other planning requirements. On the other hand, there is considerable under-utilisation of land and buildings in some areas. At a national level, there is a heavy emphasis on new-build development on virgin land within the Temporary Provision Schemes, rather than recycling of previously developed land.

0.5.6 Much land and property remains under-utilised in the older urban areas. The amount of vacant residential property is increasing. Populations are continuing to decline and age in many village core areas. Under-utilisation of industrial land is a continuing problem in established industrial areas. There are many derelict, despoiled or partly constructed sites within the urban areas.

0.5.7 Investment in rehabilitation of property by the public sector remains at a relatively low level. The private sector is increasingly becoming involved in the rehabilitation of selected older properties in certain fashionable pockets.

## **Upgrading the Environment**

0.5.8 The level of public sector investment in rehabilitation and conservation remains low. Government has yet to accept a role as a major player in the direct funding of rehabilitation work.

0.5.9 Progress in designating Urban Conservation Areas and the scheduling of buildings has been significant. Design guidance has been produced for the Urban Conservation Areas and the Heritage Advisory Committee have been very active, but there is concern over the lack of respect by some decision-makers for urban conservation policy.

0.5.10 The approach to urban conservation has so far been dominated by the development of control policies. There has, as yet, been little opportunity to develop proactive management policies and programmes for Urban Conservation Areas, tailored to individual places. More significant resources need to be devoted to rehabilitation and refurbishment projects, if urban conservation policy is to start to bite.

0.5.11 The general policy of protection for rural areas has successfully limited the volumes of new development in the countryside, with some exceptions. The main concern in rural areas is over the quality of new development which has occurred in the permitted sectors, particularly agriculture. Due regard to rural conservation objectives has not always been a priority.

0.5.12 There is now considerable activity on the proactive side of rural conservation, such as the planning of: country parkways; sites for recreation; management schemes; nature reserves and other similar projects.

0.5.13 The Planning Authority's early involvement in the control of the aquaculture industry has achieved some worthwhile results. Work on the

designation of marine conservation areas is still at an initial stage, partly due to the cost of the necessary survey work.

0.5.14 The Environmental Impact Assessment procedure has now become an established feature in the evaluation of major projects. Less formal assessment of the environmental impacts of small and medium sized projects remains a concern (see 4.7.2).

0.5.15 There has been some progress in achieving a general improvement in the quality of design and new development. The Planning Authority is in the early stages of formulating design guidelines for residential development. Design guidance has been completed in some specialist areas. There is considerable emphasis on a development brief led approach; several briefs have now been completed.

0.5.16 The Structure Plan's major theme of achieving a more rounded mix of development within the Temporary Provision Schemes has had limited success. Community services and commercial development are generally provided on an ad-hoc basis. It is proving difficult to intervene to improve this situation because most of the Schemed land is already allocated for residential purposes.

0.5.17 There has been little progress in tackling environmental problems related to poor construction practices, although some improvement has been achieved on large-scale projects.

0.5.18 Increasing importance is attached to environmental education, both in schools and at the University. Other initiatives in environmental education include publicity campaigns by both Government and NGOs, environmental clean-up campaigns and educational initiatives organised by the Planning Authority.

## 0.6 Issues for Structure Plan Review

0.6.1 Chapter six identifies a number of issues emerging from the Structure Plan monitoring programme which will need to be considered during the review process. A selection of these issues is listed below, in summary form.

### ***Settlement Pattern***

- i. The Structure Plan over-allocated land for housing; current allocations are likely to suffice for the next thirty years, at least.
- ii. The planning system has failed to match land release to development needs.
- iii. The geographic pattern of development is one of dispersal; there is a continuing loss of population in the inner harbour conurbation.
- iv. There is evidence of population loss, population aging and continuing physical decay in the village core areas.
- v. There is little incentive for property conversion or the regeneration of urban areas, whilst other development opportunities are so widespread.
- vi. The provision of social and community facilities remains largely ad-hoc.



### ***Built Environment***

- i. New residential design and performance standards are urgently required.
- ii. More intervention is required to improve the design of existing industrial and commercial areas.
- iii. Reliance on development permit conditions to improve standards of construction management has not been effective.
- iv. Access difficulties for the elderly, disabled and those with young children present a growing issue.

### ***Housing***

- i. A more controlled approach to the release of housing land, tied to need, is vital if the quality of residential areas is to be improved and some management of settlement growth is to be achieved.
- ii. Phased provision of housing land is required, with continuous monitoring to ensure that a reasonable choice of sites and locations is always available.
- iii. Specific housing allocations, expressed as a number of housing units required, should be determined for each Local Plan area.
- iv. Effective solutions will be required to bring the rapidly expanding stock of vacant residential property into use.
- v. A national strategy for special needs housing (for the elderly and disabled) is urgently required.
- vi. Measures may be required to control the flow of credit for housing development;
- vii. Housing subsidy from public sources should serve environmental as well as social goals, facilitating the refurbishment of urban dwellings and securing the redevelopment of poorly-utilised sites or sub-standard units.

### ***Social and Community Facilities***

- i. Relationships between the Planning Authority and relevant departments and ministries need to be strengthened.
- ii. Settlement patterns are changing and the distribution of social and community facilities needs to change accordingly.
- iii. A clear strategy for locating new facilities is required, providing for the safeguarding of appropriate sites.
- iv. The role of the private sector in the provision of social and community facilities, and the associated impact on public sector requirements, requires further evaluation.
- v. An updated strategy for the elderly is now required, leading to greater coordination amongst the relevant agencies.

### ***Commerce and Industry***

- i. A clear strategy for the location of new industrial development is required as part of the Structure Plan Review.
- ii. Greater flexibility is required in the support of industrial and employment-generating development on industrial estates.
- iii. There is a need for additional sites for small and medium sized enterprises, including garage industries.
- iv. Retail modernisation is happening on an ad-hoc basis. There is an urgent need to develop a strategy to mould a strong and sustainable retail hierarchy.
- v. There is a need to distinguish between the requirements of industrial warehousing units and retail warehouses/showrooms.
- vi. A clearer policy framework is required for small-scale office development.
- vii. An updated appraisal of the strategic context for the further development of Valletta/Floriana is required.

### ***Agriculture, horticulture and fisheries***

- i. The loss of agricultural land and the decline of the agricultural industry in general have decelerated. The fragmentation of landholdings nevertheless continues.
- ii. There is considerable investment and development activity in the intensification of the agricultural sector, creating potential conflicts with rural conservation policy.
- iii. Future relationships with the EU need to be assessed in further detail.
- iv. Agriculture is not just another industry but is responsible for the care of much of the Maltese environment.
- v. Initial progress in aquaculture management needs further assessment and development.

### ***Minerals***

- i. There are strong environmental arguments for re-evaluating the Structure Plan's stance on minerals production, with a growing emphasis on demand management.
- ii. The Structure Plan Review will need to appraise existing policy relating to environmental management in the minerals industry.
- iii. Progress in regularising existing quarry operations needs to be accelerated.

### ***Tourism and Recreation***

- i. The Mediterranean is gradually losing market share to the Caribbean and other long-haul tourist destinations: how will this affect the local tourist industry?
- ii. Market shifts are occurring, with reduced reliance on the UK market.
- iii. Potential for over-supply of tourist accommodation is now a concern.
- iv. The environmental impact of major tourism projects in sensitive coastal locations, within planned development areas, is a growing concern.
- v. Quality of the tourism product as a whole remains a major concern.
- vi. The Structure Plan Review will need to clarify the locational strategy for recreational, sports and entertainment facilities.
- vii. A strategy is required to accommodate further expansion of nightlife in different locations.

### ***Transport***

- i. An integrated transportation strategy is required linking the planning of both public transport and the highway network with wider land-use planning objectives.
- ii. Implementation of a major qualitative upgrading of the public transport service is vital, together with the provision of a wider range of public transport options.
- iii. Road network improvement priorities need to be reviewed.
- iv. Policy to improve the pedestrian environment requires review at a strategic level.
- v. Greater clarity is required on car parking standards.
- vi. Objectives of parking policy need to be reviewed as part of an integrated transportation strategy.
- vii. Legal and educational measures are best addressed by the departments directly responsible for their implementation.

### ***Urban Conservation***

- i. More resources need to be directed into the rehabilitation and refurbishment of Malta's heritage, if urban conservation policy is to start to bite.
- ii. The unpopularity of many village core areas as a place to live requires further investigation, leading to the development of appropriate enhancement policies.
- iii. There has been no real progress in the reduction of either traffic or parking within Urban Conservation Areas.
- iv. A more strategic, focused approach to scheduling is required to prevent the loss of important buildings, with appropriate revisions to the compilation of the National Protective Inventory.
- v. There is a fine balance between the need for restrictive development control policies within Urban Conservation Areas and the objective of urban regeneration in a number of historic areas.

### ***Rural Conservation***

- i. Clearly defined boundaries are needed for all protected areas, with specific guidance to determine the level of protection and its weight with reference to other policies.
- ii. Mechanisms to restrict 'exceptional' urban developments (under **SET12**) to the least sensitive parts of the countryside are required.
- iii. Relationships with other departments and agencies, particularly the Environment Protection Department and the Local Councils, raise issues over appropriate limits of Planning Authority policy and action.
- iv. The proactive side of conservation requires considerable development, leading to a greater role for the Planning Authority in countryside management and enhancement of the rural environment.
- v. Policy for farmhouses is a source of concern.
- vi. The approach to infill development needs to be clarified.
- vii. The level of consideration given to landscape and visual impact in the decision-making process appears to be inadequate.
- viii. Particular attention is required in mitigating the impacts of utility projects, because Government is the applicant and the projects are generally regarded as acceptable in principle.
- ix. More sophisticated strategic policy is now required to manage recreational uses in the countryside.

### ***Archaeology***

- i. The priority sites identified in the Structure Plan have not all been scheduled yet.
- ii. There is uncertainty over the Planning Authority's ability to respond quickly in a crisis to protect threatened archaeological sites.
- iii. The Structure Plan Review needs to address the issue of visitor management at archaeological sites.

### ***Coastal and Marine Conservation***

- i. Effective coordination is lacking amongst authorities dealing with coastal and marine management issues.
- ii. The high level of protection envisaged for sandy beaches in the Structure Plan has not yet materialised.
- iii. A comprehensive policy framework for coastal protection is required.
- iv. The Structure Plan fails to provide adequate additional protection for coastal areas within the development zone.
- v. Coastal access has emerged as a highly sensitive issue.
- vi. The Review will need to develop a broad protective framework for all coastal recreation areas, not just sandy beaches.

### ***Environmental Upgrading***

- i. Resources for proactive project work to upgrade the environment have been limited.
- ii. Further policy development is required to establish a relocation programme for obnoxious industry.

### ***Controlling the Impact of Development Projects***

- i. All Structure Plan policy will require careful review from the point of view of both the development control officer and the Development Control Commission.
- ii. The Structure Plan review must include a comprehensive appraisal of the Policy and Design Guidance documents. Appropriate material, with strategic implications, should be incorporated within the statutory framework of Structure Plan policy.
- iii. There has been some lack of clarity over the role of Environmental Impact Assessment (see 6.15.2).
- iv. Landscaping policy safeguards require review.
- v. The agencies involved in utility ducting require an integrated, coordinated approach.

### ***Environmental Education and Research***

- i. Structure Plan policy needs to accommodate and develop the national strategy for environmental education.
- ii. The Planning Authority could develop a role in applied research into technical and social solutions that would set the country more firmly onto a sustainability track.

### ***Public Utilities***

- i. An effective Interdepartmental Working Group is required.
- ii. A strategic approach to infrastructural investment is also required.
- iii. Waste management requires urgent attention: a clear landfill strategy is necessary; the incinerator issue needs to be tackled and resolved; and recycling needs to be moved forward.
- iv. Longer term energy options should be addressed at a strategic level.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Structure Plan

1.1.1 The Structure Plan is a strategic long term plan for the Maltese Islands covering the twenty year period to 2010. The Plan consists of a series of policies seeking to control development and improve the quality of environmental management. Although it is concerned with all aspects of social, economic, and physical structure, its basic concern is with land: what should be developed; where; when; and how.

1.1.2 The Structure Plan was prepared over the period 1989-90 and approved by Parliament in 1992. The Planning Authority has primary responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of the Structure Plan. However, effective implementation of the Plan is heavily reliant on a coordinated approach amongst a wide range of Government departments and public sector agencies, as well as the private and voluntary sectors.

## 1.2 Structure Plan Monitoring

1.2.1 The Structure Plan lies at the heart of all forward planning, development control and enforcement activity in the Planning Authority. To evaluate the continuing effectiveness of Structure Plan policy, the Planning Authority initiated a Structure Plan Monitoring Programme in 1995. This is an in-depth exercise, collating material from a wide range of organisations and data sources. It will provide the framework for Structure Plan Review over the period 1997-98.

1.2.2 This document reviews progress over the first three years of Structure Plan implementation (1993-95). Wherever possible, demographic and other data-sets have been updated to cover the period 1990-95. Actions and changes occurring in 1996 have not been included. This report is, in essence, a review of the Planning Authority's effectiveness in shaping development according to Structure Plan policy during this initial period.

## 1.3 Structure Plan Goals

1.3.1 The Structure Plan has three major goals;

- i. **Accommodating development;** *to encourage the further social and economic development of the Maltese Islands and to ensure, as far as possible, that sufficient land and support infrastructure are available to accommodate it.*
- ii. **Constraining urban growth;** *to use land and buildings efficiently and consequently to channel development activity into existing and committed urban areas, particularly through a rehabilitation and upgrading of the existing fabric and infrastructure thus constraining further inroads into undeveloped land and generally resulting in higher density development than at present.*
- iii. **Upgrading the environment;** *to radically improve the quality of all aspects of the environment of both urban and rural areas<sup>1</sup>.*

The Structure Plan Monitoring Programme reviews progress in achieving each of these three goals.

1.3.2 This report presents a concise summary of the findings and conclusions of the work, but does not include all the relevant supporting

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<sup>1</sup>Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands, Draft Final Written Statement, December 1990, p7.

material. Volume II of the *Monitoring Report 1990-95* should be consulted for a more detailed presentation of results. Both this report (Volume I: *Final Report*) and the more detailed supporting analysis (Volume II: *Monitoring Data*) are structured around the three goals of the Structure Plan. Volume II comprises amplified versions of section 2 (*Accommodating Development*), section 3 (*Constraining Urban Growth*), section 4 (*Upgrading the Environment*) and section 5 (*Framework for Implementation*) in this report.

1.3.3 The overall aims of the Monitoring Report are to review progress against each Structure Plan goal and to identify areas where policy may require modification, in order to improve the Planning Authority's management of the development process. This volume includes additional sections providing a *Summary of Issues for Review (6)* and details of the *Future Monitoring Programme (7)*.

## 2. Accommodating Development

2.0.1 The Structure Plan includes a wide range of policies designed to channel, encourage and coordinate social and economic development. These include:

- **initiatives to encourage social and economic development.** These seek to: improve public sector planning; establish appropriate standards for public sector provision; encourage private and voluntary sector involvement in development projects; designate land for future development requirements; promote specific key developments; and prepare development briefs and management schemes, where appropriate.
- **provisions to ensure that land and infrastructure can accommodate the required growth.** The intentions here are to: improve coordination of infrastructure planning and maintenance; establish improved infrastructure standards; upgrade the road network; enhance public transport; and implement a national system of irrigation water supply.
- **measures to improve the management of financial and land resources.** These include proposals to: encourage a more commercial approach to Government's estate management; capture private sector contributions to infrastructural work, in appropriate cases; and intervene to assemble appropriate development parcels, where necessary, to achieve effective urban regeneration.

2.0.2 This section reviews progress in these areas. The review begins with a general overview of the economic context within which social and economic growth, capital investment and development have taken place over the period 1990-95. Sectoral reviews are then presented for: housing; social and community facilities; commerce and industry; agriculture, horticulture and fisheries; minerals; tourism and recreation; transport; and public utilities. These relate directly to the policies in chapters 8-14 and chapter 16 of the Structure Plan.

### 2.1 Economic Trends, 1990-95

#### Economic Growth

2.1.1 Malta has seen strong and consistent economic growth since 1990, despite widespread recession throughout Europe during the period. Annual real growth in Malta's GDP has ranged from 4.5% to 6.3% between 1990 and 1995, following rates of 8.4% and 8.25% respectively in 1988 and 1989. Most European countries emerged from recession in 1992-93 and are currently logging growth rates of around 3% per annum.

#### Government Revenue and Expenditure

2.1.2 Government revenue increased from Lm 338m to Lm 429m over the period 1990-94, at current prices. This represents an increase in real terms of 12% over the period.

2.1.3 Growth in Government revenues has been absorbed by increased recurrent expenditure. Contrary to Structure Plan expectations, total public sector employment has increased by 8.3% over the period 1990-94. A large proportion of recurrent expenditure also relates to Government's social and welfare priorities; as the population ages through the remainder of the Structure Plan period and beyond, these commitments are likely to increase.

2.1.4 The Structure Plan proposes a landhoarding tax on undeveloped, derelict or abandoned sites which are ripe for development and on derelict

buildings and building shells (17.8). This was intended to encourage the efficient use of development land, rather than serve as a prime source of revenue. Nevertheless, no concrete progress has yet been made in implementing this proposal.

2.1.5 Capital investment has not kept pace with the overall growth rate in Government's financial resources. In real terms, capital spending has returned to the level of the late 1980's, following exceptionally high levels of investment during the construction of the Delimara power station and the Malta International Airport (1989-91). However, Government's infrastructural investment is likely to grow in the near future. Major planned investments include: the laying of new sewerage mains in Marsascalea, St. Paul's Bay, St. Julian's, St. Andrew's and Victoria, Gozo; the improvement of roads and related construction works; San Raffaele hospital; and St. Luke's hospital upgrading works.

2.1.6 Foreign loans represent a major, but volatile, component in Government's capital investment programme. Foreign loans totaled Lm 13.8 million in 1990, but loans contracted for 1996 amount to Lm 6 million. Following the positive international credit rating awarded to Malta in 1994, access to international development finance on the commercial markets has improved.

2.1.7 Throughout the 1980's and 90's, there has been a gradual escalation in financial support from the European Investment Bank (EIB). Under the current (4th) financial protocol, some ECU 15 million are targeted for works concerning the environment. Throughout the monitoring period, Malta enjoyed access to a number of EC funding programmes in addition to the main financial protocols. These include several Mediterranean programmes with an environmental, planning or development focus.

2.1.8 The view of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Environment is that, whilst the Government is seeking the closest possible relationship with the EU that is compatible with Malta's particular social, economic and geographical circumstances, the nation is not currently in a position to absorb the impact of full Union membership.

## **Private Sector Investment**

2.1.9 Consistent economic growth over the period 1990-95 has encouraged strong growth in private sector investment throughout the study period. Total local lending increased from Lm556m to Lm1,082m between 1990 and 1995 (at current prices), supporting real increases in the availability of credit to all sectors. The development industry, and house-building in particular, has benefited from this continuing expansion of available capital.

2.1.10 The private sector also makes substantial direct contributions towards infrastructural investment under the provisions of the Development Planning Act (1992). The Planning Authority collects around Lm1.5m per year in infrastructure charges on behalf of the Government. Additional impact payments are collected from individual developers where major projects are likely to place a significant additional loading on off-site infrastructure.



## 2.2 Housing

### Housing Requirements to 2010

#### *Population Growth*

2.2.1 Population growth is currently running ahead of Structure Plan expectations. Updated forecasts suggest a population of 399,000 living in private households in 2010; some 5,000 higher than was forecast by the Structure Plan team. This acceleration in population growth is due to a combination of increased rates of immigration and a reduced mortality rate in many of the older age groups.

#### *Migration*

2.2.2 The Structure Plan Team estimated that immigration would remain at a low level, broadly similar to the emigration rate. In fact, there was an upsurge in immigration over the period 1990-1994, with a net annual average of nearly 930 persons arriving in Malta. However, recent data suggests that the rate of return migration has now passed its peak.

2.2.3 Future migration trends are uncertain. The Planning Authority's demographic projection model assumes that the current high level of net immigration will continue in the short-term, tapering to zero over a five year period.

#### *The Elderly*

2.2.4 Current projections suggest more rapid growth in the number of elderly persons than was expected in the Structure Plan. The Monitoring Study indicates that the 60+ population will reach more than 80,000 in 2010, an increase of 51% over the period 1990-2010. The Maltese population aged less than 15 years is expected to decrease by 5% in the period to 2010, implying a continuing long-term decrease in the natural growth rate.

#### *New Household Formation*

2.2.5 Structure Plan expectations for the number of new households are also likely to be comfortably exceeded. Reworked estimates show that, by 2010, an estimated 29,000 additional households will need housing units. This is 7,000 more new households than was anticipated in the Structure Plan.

#### **Demand for New Housing Units**

2.2.6 The latest estimate of housing demand for the period 1990-2010, incorporating the projected acceleration in population growth, suggests a requirement for 34,670 new dwellings, comprising the following elements:

<b>New Dwellings</b>	<b>Reason</b>
28,395	New Maltese households formed, 1990-2010 (excluding the proportion sharing a dwelling)
5,580	Additional second homes and holiday homes required by 2010. Mostly second homes; few additional tourist units are being licensed
690	Balance of additional vacant dwellings 'required', after an allowance for additional 'slack', to permit the smooth functioning of the enlarged housing market.
<b>34,670</b>	<b>TOTAL new dwellings required.</b>

2.2.7 The Structure Plan estimated a requirement for almost 60,000 new dwellings by 2010. This estimate was seriously flawed:

- The Structure Plan takes the figure of 59,260 as an indication of demand over the period 1990-2010, whereas it represents the 25 year period from 1985. This caused an over-statement of demand by some 8,000 units.

- The 59,260 figure includes a massive 14,400 housing 'deficit', which is based on a theoretical 'housing re-allocation hypothesis'<sup>2</sup>. This hypothesis assumes that an arbitrary number of dwellings will remain unused due to mismatch between the dwelling stock and the household size distribution. The resulting housing 'deficit' should be discounted as an element of demand as it represents an unjustified addition to the large stock of vacant dwellings, violating a central Structure Plan goal.

2.2.8 The Structure Plan team themselves produced competing estimates, in Technical Report 1.1<sup>3</sup>, based on a more straight-forward and robust set of assumptions. This suggested a requirement for somewhere between 24,340 and 38,700 new dwellings by 2010.

### **Comparison of Housing Supply and Housing Demand**

2.2.9 The dwelling capacity of the Temporary Provision Schemes is now estimated at 60,810 units, rather than the 50,000 estimated by the Structure Plan team. The revised figure includes the Replanning Areas, within the boundaries of the Temporary Provision Schemes, which were largely allocated as additional housing plots.

2.2.10 Under conservative assumptions, the projected housing supply will comfortably accommodate demand up to the year 2010 and beyond. There were 39,890 vacant or partially utilised dwellings in 1995, compared with 24,055 in 1985<sup>4</sup>. Without any additional land designations for housing, some 62,220 additional dwelling units can be accommodated over the period 1990-2010:

<b>Dwelling Supply 1990-2010</b>	<b>Comment</b>
54,810	Dwelling unit capacity of the Temporary Provision Schemes, less an allowance of 6,000 for units built during the period 1988-89.
12,750	Additional dwelling units built within existing urban areas or on land not zoned for housing purposes.
2,060	Dwelling units in the pipeline in development briefs and other major projects.
(-7,400)	Structure Plan team estimate of dwellings likely to be scrapped without replacement: this includes dwellings on excessively small sites, dwellings affected by infrastructure developments and dwellings in areas which are now considered unsuitable for residential accommodation.
<b>62,220</b>	<b>TOTAL additional dwellings.</b>

2.2.11 Given the continuing long-term decline in Malta's natural population growth rate, the large and expanding stock of vacant dwellings, and the growing tendency to build at higher densities, current land allocations for housing are likely to suffice for the next thirty years, at least.

### **Housing Development, 1988-1995**

2.2.12 There has been an accelerating rate of residential development, with a net increase in dwelling units each year of at least 3,000 over the monitoring period. This is likely to rise to over 4,000 units in 1995/96. This depicts a highly over-heated housing market, given that underlying demand can justify

<sup>2</sup> Structure Plan Technical Report 1.2: *Report of Survey: Settlement Patterns and Built Environment*, February 1991, p32-45.

<sup>3</sup> Structure Plan Technical Report 1.1: *Report of Survey: Population, Households and Dwelling Projections*, February 1991.

<sup>4</sup> 1995 data from the Water Services Corporation. Vacant units include all dwellings not in permanent occupation. 1985 data from *Census '85 Volume I*, table 33.

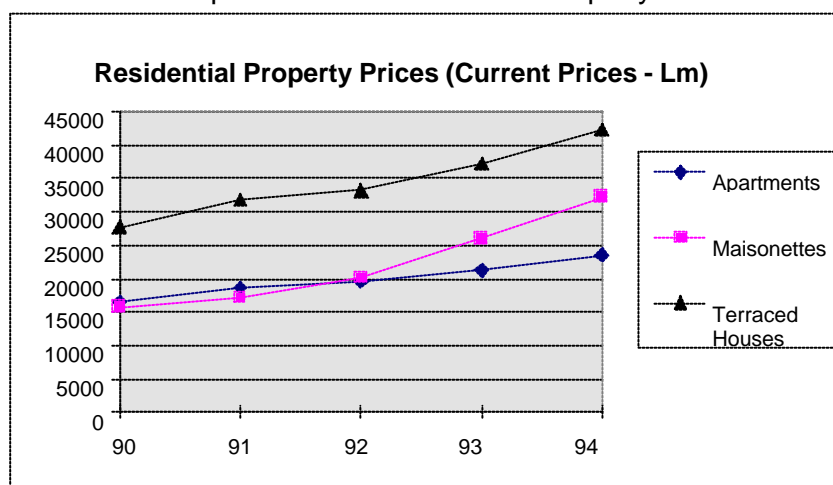
no more than 1,730<sup>5</sup> additional dwelling units per year. The net result can only be an increase in the number of vacant dwellings.

2.2.13 Take-up of land within the Temporary Provision Schemes has been rapid. On average, around 3,030 dwelling units per year have been constructed within the Temporary Provision Schemes since their creation in 1988. Nevertheless, some 550 ha of housing land remains vacant within the Temporary Provision Schemes (1994 data). There are significant amounts of available housing land in all Schemed areas, but large tracts lie vacant in the northern region of the Islands (particularly St. Paul's Bay and Mellieha) and in the south of Malta (particularly Marsascala and Zurrieq). A more detailed profile of development within the Temporary Provision Schemes is provided in section 3 (3.1.7-3.1.9).

## Residential Property Prices, 1990-1994

2.2.14 Monitoring of residential property prices for terraced houses, apartments and maisonettes has been possible through a survey of achieved sale prices conducted by the Association of Estate Agents for the period 1990-94. The survey areas reflect the locations in which estate agents are most active and may not reflect trends in other regions. The areas covered by the survey include St. Julian's, St. Andrew's, Attard, Balzan, Bugibba, Qawra and Marsascala.

2.2.15 Average residential property prices have increased consistently over the period 1990-94. Terraced houses and apartments have each increased in price by around 10% per year, on average, at current prices. Maisonettes have achieved more rapid increases of around 20% per year.



2.2.16 The demand for housing is made up of a great many factors related to dwelling size, quality, location, price, demographic pressures and purchasing power. There is no simple relationship between the supply of land and property prices. Dwelling prices are continuing to increase, despite the current plentiful supply of land allocated for residential development and the large stock of vacant dwelling units.

<sup>5</sup> 34,670 units needed over a twenty-year span = 1,733 units per year

2.2.17 Consistent dwelling price increases over the period 1990-94 are likely to have been fueled by a range of factors including:

- confidence in continuing growth in property prices;
- real economic growth, stimulating purchasing power;
- wider availability of credit for house purchases, combined with controlled interest rates;
- continuing inflationary pressures, maintaining the investment attractiveness of real assets; and
- slow growth in alternative investment opportunities.

In short, price rises are apparently being fueled by the attractiveness of land and property for investment purposes, rather than genuine demand linked to demographic trends or land shortages.

## **Pembroke**

2.2.18 The draft *Pembroke Action Plan* was written in June 1995 as a response to Structure Plan policies **HOU5** and **HOU6**. The Plan provides for the provision of over 650 new dwellings, as well as extensive provision for community and recreational uses and a new district shopping centre to serve local residents. Public consultation commenced in late 1995. Final amendments to the Action Plan are now in progress, prior to its formal consideration by the Planning Authority.

## **Rent Legislation**

2.2.19 The Structure Plan proposes the phased establishment of an equitable rental market, to stimulate the private market for rented housing. Legislation has been approved to relax legal controls and tenant protection on new leases, from June 1995 onwards. New tenancies are only subject to the conditions included in the lease. A modest increase has been observed in the press advertisements for dwellings to let, including occasional advertisements for property available to local residents.

## **Social Housing**

2.2.20 A new approach to social housing is foreseen in the Structure Plan, progressively phasing out the provision by Government of new social housing units. Provision of low-cost housing by the private and voluntary sectors for rent, as well as subsidised sheltered housing, is encouraged (**HOU8, HOU9**). Meanwhile, any new Government housing is to be located within existing or committed built-up areas (**HOU9**).

2.2.21 Government has retained an involvement in the direct construction of social housing of various forms. Altogether, a total of 3,490 social housing units have been constructed or subsidised over the period 1990-95 (including those currently in the pipeline).

2.2.22 In the period 1990-1995:

- 1,030 subsidised plots were provided, although the issue of subsidised building plots has now ceased;
- almost 300 Government flats were built and leased at subsidised rents, although the market for Government flats now appears to be saturated in many areas;
- 825 low-cost residential units were built by Government for sale at subsidised prices;
- an additional 450 Government units are under construction;
- an additional 460 units have been recycled from old dwellings in Urban Conservation Areas; and
- around 130 new residential units were built by Government and sold at commercial prices.

2.2.23 Despite the Structure Plan's intentions, neither the private sector nor the Church have produced any low-cost accommodation in recent years.

### **Special Needs Housing and Associated Establishments**

2.2.24 The Structure Plan envisaged that voluntary organisations would be encouraged to establish housing associations specifically catering to the needs of the elderly and the disabled (**SOC19**). This area of housing need is growing in excess of Structure Plan expectations (See 2.3.12).

2.2.25 Whilst housing associations have not yet become established, there has been some Government activity in this sector of the market. In total, 32 special needs residential units have been opened over the period 1990-95. Another four are known to be in the pipeline. Eleven homes for the elderly were opened within the period under review. The Local Councils are also becoming active in the provision of daycare centres for the elderly.

2.2.26 The Church has opened one home for the elderly since 1990 (Dar il-Kleru in Birkirkara). Five old people's/retirement homes have been opened by the private sector between 1990 and 1996.

### **Conversion of Tourist Accommodation**

2.2.27 The Structure Plan encourages the conversion of lower standard tourist accommodation into residential units (**HOU10**). During the period 1993-1995, no projects were approved by the Planning Authority for the conversion of tourist accommodation into housing units. In fact, the reverse is apparently more likely to occur; a project was approved for the development of a holiday complex to replace an unfinished apartment block in the Qawra area.

## **2.3 Social and Community Facilities**

2.3.1 The Structure Plan develops land-use and infrastructure planning policies for a number of key social services: health; education; care of the elderly; and provision for the disabled. This section reviews progress in these areas, together with progress in the provision of community facilities such as libraries and venues for cultural activities.

### **Health**

2.3.2 The Structure Plan highlights the need for expansion and modernization in the health sector. The Department of Health issued a draft Health Development Plan in December 1995. Entitled *Health Vision 2000*, this is intended to provide a blueprint for the Island's health policy over the next decade.

2.3.3 Refurbishment of St. Luke's hospital is currently being undertaken. This project is due to be fully completed within the next three years. In addition, three new hospitals have been approved:

<b>New Hospitals</b>	<b>Floorspace sq. m.</b>	<b>Beds</b>
<b>San Raffaele</b>	93,426	450
<b>St. Philip's</b>	6,461	75
<b>Capua Palace</b>	14,956	80

St. Philip's is already operating whilst Capua Palace and San Raffaele, a new public sector hospital, are still under construction. Initiatives from the private sector are being encouraged in a bid to improve choice, decrease pressure on the public sector and establish Malta as a regional health centre for both local and foreign patients.

2.3.4 There is an increasing emphasis on the decentralisation of health services, linked to the establishment of specialized medical centres. The Department of Health is planning new health centres at Kirkop/Zurrieq and Bulebel/Zejtun, as well as refurbishment of the Bormla health centre. Systematic safeguarding of land adjacent to existing health centres has not yet been achieved.

## **Education**

### ***Primary and Secondary Education***

2.3.5 Despite a projected decline in the school-age population, a high level of public sector investment is planned for the education sector. The Education Department is concerned to provide the required spaces for the increasing number of students staying on beyond the compulsory school age. They have developed a plan covering the building of new schools, the extension of existing facilities and the upgrading of older schools (as well as buildings not originally planned as schools). This is to be incorporated into the Ministry's business plan for the next five years. Over the monitoring period, however, there has been a reduction in Government's capital expenditure on schools, counterbalanced by rapidly increasing recurrent expenditure:

	<b>Education Department Recurrent Expenditure</b>	<b>Education Department Capital Expenditure</b>
'90	23,974,000	2,850,000
'95	35,544,000	2,150,000

2.3.6 Meanwhile, private education is also expanding. A continuing steady increase in the private sector now appears likely, for a number of reasons:

- there are more private primary schools than secondary schools. Even if the demand for private education at primary level stabilizes, the demand at secondary level is likely to continue to increase;
- demand, as reflected in development permit applications for the construction and extension of new private schools, remains strong; and
- social factors such as increased economic wealth and social mobility may lead to continuing growth in the demand for private education.

In 1994, the Planning Authority approved a Policy Paper establishing guidelines for the consideration of development permit applications for private schools.

2.3.7 A number of new schools have opened during the monitoring period. The Parents Foundation for Education were granted approval for development of a second school at Imselliet, adjacent to their existing school. Permits were also granted to the St. Michael's and St. Martin's private schools. New state pre-school facilities were opened at Ta' Paris. A new junior lyceum for girls is currently being built in Santa Lucija. The Education Department also has plans for a number of new secondary and primary schools.

2.3.8 In accordance with policy **SOC13**, the following schools were refurbished and/or extended during the monitoring period:

School
Victoria Technical Institute
Mosta Secondary School
Paola Boys' Secondary School
Gzira Boys' Secondary School
Victoria Girls' Junior Lyceum
Tarxien Girls' Secondary School
Mosta Primary School
Paola, Liceo Vassallo
Kirkop Primary School
Marsascala Primary School
San Miguel Special School, St.. Andrew's
Kindergarten at Attard, Birkirkara, Fgura, Marsaxlokk, Mosta, Kirkop, San Gwann and Santa Venera.

2.3.9 The Structure Plan seeks to safeguard land next to schools (**SOC10**). The Education Department requests a firmer implementation of this policy, reinforcing the fact that no land next to schools is to be released for residential purposes. Unfortunately, the possibility remains that such land will be taken up for residential purposes before the land can be bought.

### ***Tertiary Education (University)***

2.3.10 The tertiary sector is largely controlled by the public sector. Since 1987, there has been rapid growth in student numbers. Over the period 1990-95, the student population virtually doubled to a total of 6,168 students. This growth in the student population was coupled with an increase in the University's expenditure, particularly related to the expansion of academic and non-academic staff and increases in student stipends:

	Recurrent	Capital	Stipends	Global
'90	2,600,000	2,000,000	1,924,000	6,524,000
'95	5,800,000	1,750,000	3,700,000	11,250,000

A Master Plan is currently being drafted and discussed by the University authorities for the further physical development of the campus.

### ***Post-Secondary and Adult Education***

2.3.11 The Education Division is planning to increase the variety of courses available to students beyond the school leaving age and to offer retraining and upgrading courses for workers. The intention is to double the existing building provisions for this sector to provide the necessary facilities.

## Care of the Elderly and Disabled

2.3.12 Current projections suggest more rapid growth in the number of elderly persons than was expected in the Structure Plan. The Monitoring Study found that the 60+ population will increase by 51% over the period 1990-2010, whilst the *Old-Old* (75+ years) are likely to experience an even more rapid increase of 55%:

	60+ years	75+ years
1990	53,260	15,090
2010	80,340	23,460

2.3.13 The main thrust in the care of the elderly, and the elderly disabled, has been to decentralize care to community homes. This is being accomplished through the building of community homes for the elderly and the establishment of community-based, daycare centres. Private sector initiatives are also being encouraged. The intention is to provide a better choice in care whilst relieving pressure on the public sector. A number of new facilities have been provided during the monitoring period:

<b>Day care Centres:</b>	Dingli, Zejtun, Hamrun
<b>Government Retirement Homes:</b>	Floriana, Mosta, Gzira, Msida, Zejtun
<b>Private Retirement Homes:</b>	Casa Arkati (Mosta)

2.3.14 The Department for the Care of the Elderly has received approval for a retirement home at Luqa. In addition, Conservatorio San Giuseppe at Bormla is being renovated and is to be utilised as a retirement home. A private retirement home in Rabat has also been granted development approval. Four additional new homes for the elderly are planned for development over the period to 2001. The Department has purchased premises at Marsascala to be converted into an Adult Training Centre. Also, the Department for Social and Family Affairs is holding discussions with the Housing Authority in relation to future daycare centres.

2.3.15 Initiatives are also in the pipeline to improve facilities for the disabled. The voluntary sector has played a key role in this respect. The Eden Foundation has set-up a training centre for children with cerebral palsy at Bulebel Industrial Estate. In addition, a centre for the disabled is being set-up at Hal-Far by *Centru Handikappati*, another voluntary organization.

## Community Facilities

2.3.16 A range of community facilities were approved within established housing areas over the period 1993-95. These include pastoral centres, additions to churches, cemeteries, community centres, landscaped public areas and private sector facilities such as cinemas and sports complexes:

Public	Private
Civic Centres at Birkirkara & Mosta	Cinemas at St. Julian's
Community Centre at Zabbar	Sports Complex at Birkirkara
Sports Centres at Msida & Hamrun	MUSEUM doctrine centre at Zurriek
New Town Centre at Mtarfa	
Public Gardens at Attard, Isla, Ghajnsielem and Birkirkara.	

2.3.17 The scope for introducing social and community facilities into established and developing housing areas on a planned basis, as envisaged by the Structure Plan, is quite limited. Most schemed areas are already largely committed as residential land. Often, community facilities can only be provided on an ad-hoc basis. A rare opportunity for a more planned, participatory approach to community development arose at Pembroke; the *Pembroke Action Plan* provides for the development of such facilities at an early stage in the planned growth of a residential area.



2.3.18 The Structure Plan seeks improved provision of library facilities, with proposals for a new central library, as well as for district libraries in Qormi, Rabat and Luqa (**SOC21, SOC22**). The public library at Belt-is-Sebh is being extended in order to provide improved library facilities.

## 2.4 Commerce and Industry

2.4.1 Monitoring work has identified a high rate of commercial and industrial development over the period 1993-95, with current approvals in this sector running at around 140,000 square metres per year. The Structure Plan aims to ensure that a range of appropriate sites are available to cater for industrial and commercial re-structuring, modernisation and expansion. Whilst high rates of development have been achieved, these have not always been in line with Structure Plan strategy for commercial and industrial development. Some adjustment to policy is likely to be required to cater for evolving development trends; this will be addressed through the *Commerce and Industry Subject Study* in 1996/97.

### Offices

2.4.2 The Structure Plan seeks to address the lack of modern office facilities throughout the Maltese Islands, in both the public and private sector. The office sector has developed rapidly since 1993, with a growing number of projects receiving approval:

Offices	93	94	95
Projects Approved	20	40	46
Floorspace Approved	16,515	36,591	29,058

The restructuring and modernisation process has begun; larger office developments approved since 1993 include a new complex at Pinto Wharf, the financial services centre on the Mriehel by-pass, a large office/showroom at Mriehel, an office complex in Qormi and the new Mosta Civic Centre.

2.4.3 In addition, several major allocations for modern office accommodation were in the pipeline by the end of 1995:

- the proposed 140,000 square metre *Government Administration Centre* in Floriana (the project has since been withdrawn);
- the proposed *Pembroke Business Park*, which allocates up to 7 ha for low density office and business uses (currently under review);
- up to 30,000 square metres of office floorspace in the *Manoel Island/Tigné Point Development Brief*;
- around 7,500 square metres of new offices in the *Hilton redevelopment project*; and
- additional maritime offices within passenger and port areas and office space in Marsa Park, proposed in the draft *Grand Harbour Local Plan*; and
- office space in Rabat, in the draft *North West Local Plan*.

2.4.4 No action has yet been taken on the Structure Plan proposals for additional office provision at Marsa Park (**COM4**) and Luqa Airport (**COM3**), although the Marsa Park proposal is being actively investigated as part of the work for the Grand Harbour Local Plan.

2.4.5 The Structure Plan makes provision for additional office development on infill sites and through the conversion of existing residential and other uses in built-up areas. However, the Plan seeks to constrain growth in private sector office provision within Valletta/Floriana, until suitable transport access, vehicle parking and pedestrian circulation have been secured to accommodate employment growth in the capital (**COM2, 10.3**).

2.4.6 Over the period 1993-95, no more than 7% of additional office floorspace has been provided through changes of use, with a further 25% provided as extensions to existing office facilities, or through demolition and replacement of existing offices.

2.4.7 There has been a substantial amount of office development approved in Valletta/Floriana over the period 1993-95 (approx. 12,400 square metres), of which around 10% is in the private sector. A thorough review of office policy for Valletta/Floriana will be completed during 1996/97 as part of the *Grand Harbour Local Plan* and the *Commerce and Industry Subject Study*.

## Shopping

2.4.8 The Structure Plan's vision of retail modernisation through the development of very large indoor complexes has not been pursued, nor is it likely to be. The proposed regional shopping centres at Pembroke and Luqa, in particular, are unlikely to be implemented. The reluctance to implement this strategy harmonises with a broad shift in European thinking, which generally seeks to give more support to town centres and slow down the out-of-town development process. This change of emphasis is linked to evolving European policy which seeks to foster urban containment and the 'compact city', in line with recent thinking on sustainable development policy.

2.4.9 Although regional centres have not materialised, the pace of retail development has been rapid:

Shopping	93	94	95
Projects Approved	68	71	73
Floorspace approved	21,433	30,642	20,477

New shopping projects in Malta generally remain small-scale, with a dispersed geographical pattern. Retail expenditure is growing rapidly and this is likely to stimulate continued growth in this sector.

2.4.10 This rapid growth in shopping floorspace has been matched by recent growth in retail employment; the retail sector now accounts for over 10% of all employees, with 16% growth since 1988. In the short-term, growth in this sector is likely to continue; retail expenditure is growing rapidly (32% growth in real terms over the period 1988-1994).

2.4.11 Retail schemes in the pipeline include:

- provision for up to 25,000 square metres of retail floorspace at Manoel Island and Tigné Point;
- local shopping provision at Pembroke, on sites totaling up to 1 ha;
- potential specialised provision in harbour areas, under the draft *Grand Harbour Local Plan*; and
- potential shopping area in Qawra in the draft *North West Local Plan*.

Given the current rate of growth, and the limited retail development pipeline, some additional allocations for retail development may be required.

2.4.12 The Structure Plan indicates that Local Plans should include upgrading proposals for existing centres. The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* includes a range of proposals to strengthen the existing shopping centres in Birzebbuga and Marsaxlokk. The draft *Grand Harbour Local Plan* aims to strengthen the retail hierarchy through careful control of out-of-town retail development, in combination with measures to enhance the vitality and viability of existing centres. The draft *North West Local Plan* includes proposals to strengthen St. Paul's Bay, Qawra, Xemxija, Mellieha and Rabat.

## Manufacturing Industry

2.4.13 Growth in the industrial sector has accelerated since 1993:

Industry	93	94	95
Projects Approved	13	24	29
Floorspace Approved	22,698	39,688	65,757

2.4.14 The larger industrial projects approved include: pre-cast concrete plant and a new factory at Zebbug; silo bins at Kordin; the extended MOBC tank farm; factory extensions and the new Government Printing Press at Marsa; a large factory extension in Qormi; and a large factory extension at Xewkija. The average floorspace of approved industrial projects is large, at 1,940 square metres.

2.4.15 In line with rapid overall growth in the industrial sector, there has been consistent growth in the level of industrial floorspace within MDC estates over the period 1990-94, with a net increase of around 54,480 square metres (7%). The most significant growth has taken place at Mosta Technopark. However, recent updates from MDC suggest that there is little remaining capacity at the Technopark.

2.4.16 The availability of industrial land on MDC estates is limited, with the exception of 88 hectares of planned provision at Hal Far and a small extension to the San Gwann industrial estate. Some 28 hectares of allocated industrial land within the Temporary Provisions Schemes also remains vacant, from a total allocation of 40 hectares. In addition to allocations of vacant land for industrial use, there is known potential for improved utilisation of existing industrial land.

2.4.17 There is a concern that there may not be an appropriate mix and distribution of industrial sites on offer, with an excessive concentration of available industrial land in a single location. There is an additional concern regarding the degree of 'fit' between MDC criteria and current patterns of demand; currently, there are a number of unsatisfied requests for smaller units, in the range 500-1000 square metres.

2.4.18 The Structure Plan suggests that no new industrial uses are to be permitted in the vicinity of the Grand Harbour, pending completion of a Subject Plan dealing with potential for relocation to the Marsaxlokk Bay area. The Structure Plan also proposes that facilities for the oil and gas industry are to be established in the Marsaxlokk Bay area.

2.4.19 The relevant Local Plans are adopting a different approach:

- the *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* concluded that there is limited scope to relocate heavy port uses to the Marsaxlokk area, due to the limited area of suitable shoreline. This Local Plan does not implement the proposal to provide for expanded activity linked to oil and gas exploration, production and distribution in other parts of the Mediterranean (**IND14**).
- the draft *Grand Harbour Local Plan* aims to revitalise the Grand Harbour area, partly through further industrial development, although expansion of such uses will be related firmly to the concept of environmental capacity. New industrial uses could be accommodated on an estimated 21 hectares of under-used industrial land, from a total of 131 hectares. The draft Local Plan seeks to reinforce the port function of the Grand Harbour.

2.4.20 The Structure Plan advocates the designation of additional sites for small-scale service industry (**IND6**). Use of abandoned quarries is proposed for industrial sites which are inappropriate in urban locations (**IND9**). A number of applications have been received from the private sector for projects of this nature. The Local Plans are responding to this requirement. The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* designates a site in Birzebuggia for garage industries. Provision is also made at Hal Far for the needs of larger and

expanding garage industries. The draft *North West Local Plan* includes some designations for garage industry in former quarries. The draft *Grand Harbour Local Plan* is also likely to incorporate appropriate sites for small-scale garage industry.

## Warehousing

2.4.21 In line with other commercial and industrial sectors, warehousing project approvals have increased over the period 1993-95:

Warehousing	93	94	95
Projects Approved	34	44	53
Floorspace Approved	22,104	30,352	27,314

These figures include some large individual warehousing/storage projects, particularly the Freeport extension and a very large plant yard in Zebbug.

2.4.22 Under current policy, MDC only allocates land on their industrial estates for manufacturing uses, although some government-controlled storage operations have been introduced on marginal sites close to MDC estates. The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* encourages the provision of additional warehousing capacity on existing industrial estates, including an extensive reserve provision for warehousing at Hal Far. The lack of clear provision for the warehousing sector is recognised as an issue by the Planning Authority.

## 2.5 Agriculture, Horticulture and Fisheries

### Agriculture and Horticulture

2.5.1 As the sector which takes up the largest amount of land, agriculture occupies a key position in the Structure Plan's land-use strategy. It is a key economic production centre, with a role in the nation's long-term security. Subject to appropriate environmental management, the agricultural industry can also function as a protector of the countryside and natural heritage of the Islands.

2.5.2 The agricultural sector is undergoing considerable intensification characterised by the introduction of greenhouses, husbandry units and new crops. Much of this investment is, however, undertaken by individual farmers without any strategic direction.

2.5.3 The decline in agricultural activity noted in the Structure Plan has slowed down during the review period. Most of the land lost from cultivation was categorised as either marginal or dry. Figures for irrigated land are relatively stable, due to a combination of protective legislation, increased irrigation through the Sant' Antnin Sewage Treatment Plant (SASTP), and the increased adoption of modern irrigation techniques. Nevertheless, as landholdings have become increasingly fragmented, farming has become a largely part-time occupation. The number of full-time farmers decreased by 80% between 1956 and 1991, to only 1,470. The sector's proportional contribution to GDP has fallen from 4.4% to 2.9% over the ten-year period between 1986 and 1996.

#### ***Encouragement to agriculture and horticulture***

2.5.4 The Structure Plan includes a range of Government initiatives to encourage agricultural development (**AHF2, AHF10, AHF11, AHF12, AHF13**). Government capital investment in agriculture has totaled Lm 2.4 million over the last three years. Government-led development projects to improve the agricultural market have included:

- the introduction of a national irrigation water supply using treated sewage effluent (TSE);

- Agriculture Department funding for the improvement of rural roads;
- development of a micro-propagation centre and fruit nurseries;
- improvements and extension to Pitkali markets;
- improvements to the civil abattoir;
- improvements to Government farms;
- development of the packing and grading station at Ta' Qali, to be expanded under the draft *Ta' Qali Action Plan*; and
- planning of a resource centre for agricultural extension services.

2.5.5 The Structure Plan provides for land to be made available on long leases to secure investment in agriculture and encourages the introduction of measures to encourage the formation of larger farms (**AHF13**). As yet, there has been little progress on land availability measures to promote efficiency in the sector. Almost all government-owned agricultural land is rented out.

### ***Restructuring the Agricultural Sector***

2.5.6 The need to restructure the agricultural sector in Malta has been evident for some time. A 1993 FAO report on the agricultural sector in Malta recommends policy interventions in four major fields: intensification of production; development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors; an updated agricultural policy regime and effective institutional supports.

### ***Protection of the agricultural environment***

2.5.7 The Structure Plan aims to provide for buildings and structures in the countryside which are essential to the needs of agriculture, whilst ensuring that the rural environment is protected (**AHF5**). The policy and design guidance on *Farmhouses and Agricultural Buildings* is a key tool in the control of new agricultural development, working firmly within the framework of Structure Plan policy. The Local Plans are also developing policies to protect agricultural land for its cultural and landscape value, as well as for its intrinsic worth in agricultural production (See also 4.3.20-4.3.28).

2.5.8 The number of approvals for agricultural projects has increased steadily, from 43 applications in 1993 to 124 applications in 1995. Many of these are relatively minor developments such as new agricultural stores or reservoirs. However, the sector is undergoing considerable intensification characterised by the introduction of greenhouses, husbandry units and new crops. The demand for larger structures such as greenhouses and livestock farms is increasing.

2.5.9 Over 300 applications are pending with the Planning Authority for the agricultural sector. This represents more than half the agricultural applications ever received by the Planning Authority. In the light of the Structure Plan's strong policies to promote agricultural development, this is a cause for concern. Agricultural need is the single major policy argument under which projects may be permitted outside the development zone. Careful checking of the applicant's proposals is therefore essential, particularly where significant intensification is proposed. Even so, the Planning Authority recognises that a faster turnaround of agricultural applications must be achieved, as a matter of priority.

2.5.10 The trend towards increasing investment in the agricultural sector clearly remains strong. There are pending applications for 28 greenhouse application from 1995, 52 new farm stores and 37 reservoirs.

## **Aquaculture and Fisheries**

2.5.11 On the fisheries side, the Department is now providing a range of services that have become essential to the industry, including: cold storage; maintenance of ports; upkeep and development of the fish market; and financial aid to purchase large vessels. Further planned developments include: a small fisheries centre in the north of Malta; increased berthing facilities at Marsaxlokk; and further improvements to bring the fish market into line with European standards.

2.5.12 The Structure Plan aims to encourage marine-based aquaculture. Policy guidance for this sector was approved in May 1994 and is currently being updated. Aquaculture production rose from 3 tonnes in 1990 to some 1500 tonnes for export in 1995<sup>6</sup>. The Planning Authority has granted permission for two sea-based fish farms and a hatchery over the period 1993-1995, following completion of Environmental Impact Assessments. Some existing farms do not have a Planning Authority permit, since they were in existence prior to the setting up of the Authority.

## **2.6 Minerals**

2.6.1 The Structure Plan presents a twofold strategy for the minerals industry:

- i. unexploited minerals deposits will be protected from development; and
- ii. controls governing the siting, means of operation and restoration of mineral workings will be extended.

2.6.2 The Minerals Board has been established, to coordinate planning recommendations on new minerals applications or renewals of existing permits and to propose measures relevant to the protection of mineral resources. The Board has been effective in setting out guidelines for processing of permit applications and has established a code of practice for use in the Minerals sector.

### **Minerals production**

2.6.3 Published production figures are considered unreliable. Annual softstone production is likely to be in the region of 860,000 m<sup>3</sup> rather than the 276,750 m<sup>3</sup> reported by the Central Office of Statistics. There is an urgent need for reliable production statistics.

2.6.4 Marketing of softstone products is at present facing strong competition from concrete and steel substitutes in the construction industry. As a result, the use of softstone in the building industry has declined since 1991. This reduction in demand for softstone has contributed to substantial increases in inert waste derived from softstone quarries; it is estimated that at

least 50% of lesser quality quarried material is discarded. Both environmentally and economically, this is clearly unsatisfactory.

2.6.5 In view of the prevailing situation the softstone industry is facing a dilemma: the need to raise the cost of softstone products in order to protect

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<sup>6</sup> Estimates, 1994, 1995

the resource against sterilization must be reconciled with the need to maintain competitive prices.

2.6.6 The estimated annual production of hardstone products (aggregate, spalls, marble products, etc.) is in the region of 1,400,000 m<sup>3</sup>. Unlike the softstone industry, the extent of inert waste that results from hardstone quarrying and processing is relatively low (15%-25% of gross production). The hardstone industry has, since the mid-1960s, been steadily stepping up its production to cope with demand for concrete products.

2.6.7 Should present trends in the industry be allowed to persist, demand for progressively increasing quantities of hardstone products will necessitate the operation of an increasing number of hardstone quarry sites. Such a situation, without careful environmental management, may lead to premature depletion of limited hardstone reserves, disruption of related habitats and ecosystems and deterioration of rural landscape quality.

## Development Control in the Minerals Sector

2.6.8 The 1992 Development Planning Act, together with the Structure Plan, aims to strengthen environmental controls over the industry. Under the Structure Plan's interim policies for the minerals sector, existing quarries are required to make an application to the Planning Authority in accordance with the Development Planning Act of 1992 and with Structure Plan policies **MIN8**, **MIN9**, **MIN10** and **MIN11**. The new development control system for the minerals industry offers a number of potential improvements:

- Planning Authority permits are site and area specific (previously, licenses were tied to an owner);
- an Environmental Impact Assessment is required for quarry developments; and
- provision is made for landscaping and restoration of disused quarry sites, to be tied to bank guarantees.

2.6.9 During the period 1993/95, 40 Planning applications were received by the Planning Authority's Minerals and Waste Planning Team. Of these, 6 were for new quarries and 11 were for quarry extensions. The remainder were for development within quarries, including changes of use. By the end of 1995, just three of the estimated 108 quarries in Malta and Gozo had received Planning Authority approval. In these cases, the issue of permits was withheld pending agreement on the required restoration bonds.

2.6.10 The implementation of restoration and landscaping bonds has proved highly contentious. Negotiations have been under way since 1991. An Action Plan, agreed between industry representatives and Government, will look into concessions that can be made to the industry to improve viability whilst seeking a mutually acceptable solution to the implementation of restoration and landscaping requirements. Meanwhile, short term permits will be issued without the requirement for restoration bonds.

2.6.11 Within the context of falling demand, the Minerals Board is not considering applications for new softstone minerals workings favourably. In the case of hardstone, a restrictive stance is justified in view of the more limited stocks of the resource and the severe environmental impacts of its extraction.

2.6.12 During 1995, the Enforcement Unit developed a specialised team with expertise in the minerals area. The Local Councils are also proactive in monitoring quarry operations. Nevertheless, the Planning Authority intends to improve on the existing situation through increased trust and improved relations with quarry owners, wherever possible, rather than through an intensification of enforcement action.

2.6.13 The role of the Planning Authority in matters regarding the quarrying industry has been one of guidance, direction and enforcement. Although results have been achieved in a number of areas affecting the minerals industry, these have so far been sporadic. The Planning Authority is seen, by some operators, as an obstacle to increased profitability. The process of dialogue with the industry is still in its initial stages. The individualistic attitude of many quarry owners, coupled with trends in the minerals industry, have not facilitated the process of change. Nevertheless, further change must be based on mutual dialogue rather than on an authoritarian implementation of the planning process.

### **Developing a Minerals Strategy**

2.6.14 As proposed in the Structure Plan, a Mineral Resources Assessment was commissioned from Wardell Armstrong, an international minerals and environmental consultancy, in 1994. This was a comprehensive review of mineral resources in the Maltese Islands, providing a data source on which to base the Minerals Subject Plan. The report is now being evaluated by the Planning Authority.

2.6.15 The survey identifies 26 search areas for future extraction. Here, minerals development is considered, at this stage, to be potentially viable, although environmental considerations have not yet been incorporated into the assessment; a number of search areas are known to be in environmentally sensitive areas. Available softstone and hardstone reserves in these areas are sufficient for 260 and 120 years respectively, based on current extraction rates.

2.6.16 The Planning Authority is compiling a register of quarries, which is now 85% complete. This includes disused mineral workings. The major difficulty encountered has been the gathering of information on the relatively older disused quarries which have been reclaimed for agriculture. The Planning Authority has not yet prepared a programme for the restoration of disused quarries.

2.6.17 Terms of Reference for a Minerals Subject Plan are now being prepared. This will:

- develop policies to prevent sterilisation of existing resources;
- assess demand for mineral resources;
- propose measures to rationalise supply; and
- investigate measures to achieve effective afteruse and reclamation.



## 2.7 Tourism and Recreation

2.7.1 The Structure Plan recognises that tourism is a major factor in the economic well being of the country and therefore should be supported. However, it also notes that the tourism industry has been a major factor in the environmental degradation of the Islands and is beginning to destroy the very features which attract international tourists in the first place. The Plan seeks to:

- encourage appropriate forms of tourism development;
- concentrate development and refurbishment activity within existing built-up areas; and
- take additional steps to manage the environmental impact of the industry.

2.7.2 Broadly, the Plan's aim is to upgrade the tourism product in order to encourage higher spending tourists, rather than to stimulate a major increase in tourist numbers (13.1-13.2).

### Tourist Accommodation

2.7.3 Most of the Structure Plan's tourism policies relate to tourism accommodation. The overall strategy is to concentrate new tourism accommodation within existing built-up areas, either through the conversion of suitable properties and the development of infill sites, or within the Temporary Provision Schemes and primary development areas. The Plan's favoured areas for further development are the established tourist locations in the north and south of mainland Malta and the inner harbour area (13.4).

2.7.4 Growth in the tourism industry as a whole has exceeded expectations. The Structure Plan's estimated requirement for an additional 4000 beds by 2010 has already been exceeded. The net increase in beds in serviced accommodation (hotels, complexes, etc.) between 1989 and 1996 was 4,780. This was partially counter-balanced by a fall of almost 1,000 beds in the self-catering sector. A substantial number of beds in unlicensed self-catering apartments are excluded from these figures.

2.7.5 In addition, the Planning Authority has approved a further 4,252 beds in new projects and refurbishments, some of which are already under construction or completed. Such projects include the refurbishment/extension of the Dragonara, Coastline, Capua Court, Marina San Gorg and Excelsior hotels. New hotels approved include the Corinthia San Gorg, Bay Point and Fort Chambray projects. New projects approved between 1993 and 1995 are all located within the tourism areas as designated in **TOU4**, with the notable exceptions of the renewal of the PAPB permit for the San Lawrenz Hotel and the Solemar Hotel. Projects approved outside the development zone are mainly extensions or refurbishments to existing developments; these include works at the Seabank Hotel, the Mellieha Bay Hotel, the Coastline Hotel and the Paradise Bay Hotel.

2.7.6 Policy **TOU5** allocates the Marfa area for the development of tourist accommodation to replace illegal structures. This issue will be addressed in the North West Local Plan. Due to the high level of tourist accommodation provision elsewhere, the draft North West local plan is now considering the potential of this area for camping and caravans rather than for permanent tourist accommodation.

2.7.7 Other, longer term commitments which will include some level of tourist accommodation are Manoel Island/Tigne Point (500 beds), Ta' Cenc (number of beds not yet established) and the White Rocks Complex (an additional 456 beds). Both Manoel Island/Tigné Point and Ta' Cenc are

identified in the Structure Plan as areas having potential for tourist accommodation development.

2.7.8 Policy **TOU9** also encourages the conversion of existing buildings in Urban Conservation Areas which are not currently used for tourism purposes, to encourage the rehabilitation of vacant buildings. The refurbishment of the Capua Court hotel, in Sliema, is a rare example of the development of high quality tourist accommodation within an Urban Conservation Area. The Excelsior Hotel, in contrast, is a strident example of insensitive redevelopment within an Urban Conservation Area for which the permit was renewed during the early stages of Structure Plan implementation.

### **Development Briefs for tourism projects**

2.7.9 A Development Brief was prepared for Manoel Island/Tigné Point and for Fort Chambray, as required under policies **TOU6** and **TOU7**. The Development Brief for Fort Ricasoli is nearing completion whilst another brief was prepared for the Sliema/Chalet area and the White Rocks Development Project.

### **Tourism Policy Development**

2.7.10 A topic paper presenting *Guidelines for the Preparation of a Policy on the Planning and Assessment of Tourist Accommodation Projects* has been prepared. This document examines these issues in further detail and proposes a direction on which to base future policies. Terms of reference have also been prepared for a *Tourism and Recreation Subject Study* to address the full range of relevant issues for Structure Plan Review. This Study is now under way.

2.7.11 A Subject Study on golf has been commissioned by the Planning Authority, in collaboration with the Department of Tourism. A first stage report has been submitted and is still under review (**TOU12**). A *Yachting Development Subject Study* has been commissioned in collaboration with the Malta Maritime Authority. The second stage report has now been submitted (**TOU13**). No subject plan on diving has yet been carried out (**TOU14**).

2.7.12 The coast is an important element for both the Maltese tourism product, as well as for local recreational activities. The Structure Plan identifies the need to define a comprehensive policy for the coastal zone (**TOU15**). This aspect is being addressed in the *Coastal Zone Management Plan*, to be prepared by the Planning Authority (Section 4.5).

### **Heritage and The Countryside**

2.7.13 The identification of heritage trails and country parkways is stressed in the Structure Plan as a means to enhance the heritage product for recreational and tourism purposes (**TOU11**, **REC13** and **REC14**). The Planning Authority, together with the Local Councils, are currently identifying heritage trails to link nodes of both historical and ecological interest. Six routes were approved in the Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan and at least ten others are being included in the draft Local Plans. Additional routes have been identified by the Local Councils. Walking trails were identified by the Gozo Ministry in April 1995.

2.7.14 Management schemes have been implemented by Birdlife Malta for the Nature Reserves at Ghadira and Simar. Government and Planning Authority management schemes are being prepared for: Ta' Cenc; Qawra/Dwejra (Gozo); Hagar Qim; Ggantija; Delimara; Hal Far; Il-Mara; Ghajn Tuffieha; Buskett; Gnejna Bay; Ramla l-Hamra; Il-Maghluq; Ta' Qali; and Wied Ghollieqa.

## Recreation

2.7.15 The Structure Plan emphasises the need to provide adequate recreational facilities in a coordinated manner, with the participation of both private and public sectors (**13.7**). A number of recreational projects have been approved by the Planning Authority, financed by both public and private sectors:

	1993	1994	1995
Entertainment	3	3	
Sports	4	2	7
Community		1	7
Temporary facilities		3	8

The sports facilities include: a shooting club; sports complexes; a football club; a tennis court; and a squash court. A major sports centre, funded by Government, was approved at Tal-Qroqq, Msida. A number of district level sports facilities have also been approved. Entertainment projects included cinemas, leisure complexes and an open air theatre.

2.7.16 The Ta' Qali area is expected to accommodate further recreational and sports facilities, particularly those with a national catchment area, as specified in policy **REC7**. A draft Action Plan for this area is approaching completion and will be incorporated into the draft *North West Local Plan*. The overall aim is to promote and optimise opportunities for sport and recreation, in a coordinated manner, in cooperation with the range of public and private agencies involved. The open space recreational characteristics of Ta' Qali will be maintained, wherever possible, whilst adopting a policy that would try to optimise the site for further recreational development (**13.21**).

2.7.17 The provision of community facilities has gained in importance with the setting up of Local Councils. Seven projects, mainly public garden improvements and the upgrading of children's playground facilities, were approved in 1995.

2.7.18 The White Rocks camping and caravan site is now being implemented, as proposed in the Structure Plan (**REC11**), whilst policies for the Marfa area are being drawn up in the draft *North West Local Plan*. The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* designates a number of recreation sites, including: a camping site; a potential marina; a National Park at Delimara; and eight other recreational areas. Other recreational areas are being identified in the draft *North West, Grand Harbour and North Harbours Local Plans*. These include camping sites in the *North West Local Plan*, enhanced provision for open air recreation at Ta' Qali and the further development of recreational provision along the Marsamxett waterfront. The draft North West Local Plan is addressing the issue of major impact sports (e.g. off-roading) in some detail, since the area is pressured with such activities.

2.7.19 A number of temporary recreation facilities have also been approved, namely: bumper car facilities; trampolines; luna parks; and circuses. These were generally located in the main summer resort localities.

## 2.8 Transport

2.8.1 The Structure Plan presents a general transport strategy with five main elements (**14.1**):

- improved coordination of land use and transport;
- improvement of roads and the development of a road hierarchy;
- effective management of the road system and the traffic using it;
- improvement of public transport; and
- legal and educational measures to improve road transport.

## Coordination of transport and land-use planning

2.8.2 The Structure Plan calls for the establishment of a Transport Coordinating Committee. Despite considerable effort, this has not yet been achieved; there is continuing discussion regarding the Ministry towards whom this committee should report.

## Development and Maintenance of a Hierarchical Network of Roads

2.8.3 The Structure Plan aims to ensure that the existing road network is gradually upgraded to form a hierarchy of improved roads comprising: arterial roads; distributor roads; local access roads; and access only and pedestrian streets (**RDS1-RDS11**). Government spending on roads is now concentrating on upgrading the major arteries and distributor roads. Local access roads fall under the jurisdiction of the Local Councils.

2.8.4 A set of standards for road construction has been drafted by the Management Systems Unit, as outlined in **RDS3**. However, implementation of these standards is not yet comprehensive.

2.8.5 The following high priority projects have been undertaken:

- the Marsa-Msida link road was partly completed in 1991, through the construction of the Santa Venera Tunnels;
- a new link from the main road connecting Msida from Marsa to the south and Mriehel to the north has been completed;
- a tunnel was constructed below the Santa Venera section and an overpass constructed at the St. Philip Hospital roundabout;
- work is underway to construct the Tal-Qroqq section; and
- various projects were completed in the south east sector: works in the Marsa area; redirection of traffic near the Addolorata Cemetery; and a pedestrian crossing over the 13 December Road.

Whilst a number of network improvements are currently being implemented, there has been a failure to implement a substantial proportion of the high priority road network improvements according to programme.

2.8.6 Other capital projects which have been initiated or completed by the Roads Department<sup>7</sup> during the period under review include:

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Approach Road to New Air Terminal  
Birkirkara By-Pass/San Gwann Industrial Estate Link  
Extension of Blata L-Bajda Underpass  
Birkirkara Valley Road Bridge  
Marsa/Qormi Flood Relief Project  
Qormi/Balzan/Attard/Mosta service and rainwater drainage gallery  
Msida Bridge improvements and Hamrun Bypass Project  
Road extensions at Cirkewwa Ferry Terminal/Protection of roads at Cirkewwa  
Sliema Road/Regional Road Junction  
Embellishment works at St. Julian's Bay  
Improvements at Ghadira Bay  
Msida Flood Relief Scheme  
St. Paul's Bay/Qawra/Bugibba traffic scheme

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Source: Estimates 1990-1995

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<sup>7</sup> Estimates 1990-1995

2.8.7 A number of additional road improvement projects are in the pipeline:

- flyover at the Old Gas Tank area, San Gwann (outline application);
- Birkirkara-San Gwann link road (outline application);
- bridge across the Msida Valley; and
- Regional Road/Paceville junction improvements, linked to the Hilton and Dragonara developments.

2.8.8 Policies to prevent the development of new accesses directly onto the arterial road network are not proving wholly effective. New developments are sometimes being permitted which jeopardize the effectiveness of the arterial road network. One notorious example is the Mriehel by-pass converging into the St. Venera tunnels.

2.8.9 As proposed in the Structure Plan, impact payments are now collected where major projects are likely to place a significant additional loading on off-site infrastructure (**TRA3**). This approach has been taken with: the San Raffaele Hospital; the redevelopment of the Hilton; and the Dragonara extension. Contributions of up to Lm 200,000 per project have been secured.

2.8.10 The Structure Plan seeks to safeguard land required for new and improved links and junctions on the arterial and distributor networks from development (**RDS2**). There are a number of problems in the implementation of this policy. Additional land-use studies are required to establish the feasibility of the policy in specific cases. On occasion, the Planning Directorate has failed to sustain refusals of development permission on safeguarded land; the Development Control Commission and Appeals Boards are reluctant to support such recommendations where no detailed plans for road improvements have been prepared. Roads Department continue to operate on a largely incremental basis, with little attention to strategic forward planning. Further problems arise when safeguarded land is in private ownership and is required for development by the owners.

## **Effective traffic management**

2.8.11 The Structure Plan identifies a need for improved management of the road network, to complement road construction and improvement projects. An appropriate balance is required between the needs of traffic, pedestrians and the environment (**14.10**). Several initiatives have been introduced in this area, especially since the advent of Local Councils.

### ***Pedestrian Priority***

2.8.12 There have been a number of major initiatives to introduce pedestrian priority and traffic calming schemes, in addition to the established limited access areas in Mdina and Valletta. Pedestrian priority areas are now planned for Marsaxlokk, Valletta, the Three Cities, the Sliema waterfront, the Strand from Manoel Island to St. Julian's and the main road of San Gwann. The Local Councils of Zebbug, Siggiewi, Mellieha, Naxxar and Mosta have also taken initiatives to develop small-scale traffic management and pedestrian schemes, with the cooperation of the Planning Authority. The Local Councils are also becoming active in implementing footway improvement schemes and pressing the Traffic Control Board for improvements to pedestrian facilities.

2.8.13 The Planning Authority published traffic calming guidelines in April 1995. The Local Councils have, by and large, supported these guidelines, although reactions to planned and completed projects have been mixed. The Local Plans have also proposed the introduction of traffic calming measures in several localities.

- the *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* identifies schemes for Pretty Bay Road in Birzebuga and Xatt is-Sajjieda in Marsaxlokk;

- the draft *Grand Harbour Local Plan* gives priority to future studies for pedestrianization and will include specific proposals for Valletta; and
- the draft *North West Local Plan* has outlined several areas for traffic calming schemes.

### **Congestion at Junctions**

2.8.14 The Structure Plan seeks to review layouts, priorities and traffic management at congested junctions (**TEM2**). Local Councils are identifying problematic junctions and conducting their own surveys to gauge congestion. The Traffic Control Board approves such changes, although in some instances, a development permit would also be required. The Planning Authority also provides expert advice to the Local Councils in order to assist them when formulating junction improvement plans.

### **Footways & Crossing Facilities**

2.8.15 In conjunction with **TEM9** and **RDS7**, the Structure Plan outlined the need for the improvement of footways and their maintenance (**RDS9**). It also stated that designs will be adopted for the provision of different types of pedestrian crossings and that appropriate types will be provided (**TEM5**). These policies have rarely been applied, even where road maintenance projects provide an opportunity to improve provision.

2.8.16 Local Councils are now responsible for the maintenance of footways. A number of councils have opted to change most of the surfaces of their footways, and replace them by interlocking tiles. Some Councils are widening their footways to at least 1.5m, on the advice of the Planning Authority, to cater for pushchair and wheelchair users. However, the consistent application of appropriate design standards in these works is sometimes lacking.

2.8.17 The introduction of pelican crossings has been adopted enthusiastically by many local councils, although the investigation of need is sometimes inadequate. However, design standards for subways need to be improved to take account of the gradients of ramps for the disabled and to offer through-visibility on entry.

### **Parking Provision**

2.8.18 There is a growing awareness that 'accommodating' parking standards may be inappropriate in many urban situations. Restricted parking provision can prove a vital element in an integrated transport strategy seeking to reduce growth in car-borne travel. The Planning Authority are currently reviewing parking standards for local-level facilities in residential areas. They are also planning to review the interim parking standards in the light of recent experience of their implementation.

2.8.19 The Structure Plan calls for a comprehensive parking policy embodying a proper mix of on and off street, public and private parking space (**TEM3**). Some progress has been made in the capital city. A major transport study has been undertaken for Valletta/Floriana considering, amongst other issues, the multistorey MCP car park in Floriana and a park and ride system for Valletta (**PTR10**).

2.8.20 Little progress has been made in enforcement of parking regulations, although this is a vital element in an effective traffic management strategy.

2.8.21 The Structure Plan establishes interim parking standards for new developments (**TRA4**). This has become one of the most controversial policies in the Structure Plan. Whilst considerable progress has been made in gaining acceptance of the need for parking provision, the parking standards set out in the Structure Plan have been applied selectively. As a result, the average provision of parking spaces for projects approved over the 1993-1995 period was below the Structure Plan's Low standard. In addition, many

architects are not adhering to recognized design standards in their layout of parking areas.

2.8.22 The Structure Plan introduced the concept of commuted payments to provide off-site facilities which would normally be provided on site. A *Commuted Parking Payment Scheme*, charging developers Lm 900 per space, was launched in 1994. The scheme has proved to be unpopular amongst developers, although the alternative would normally be a refusal of development permission. The planning merits of the scheme have also been debated; in some cases, developments approved under this Scheme are contributing to localised parking and congestion problems.

### **Improved Public Transport**

2.8.23 The Structure Plan outlines a number of approaches to the improvement of public transport. The Plan envisages that public transport will continue to be provided primarily by bus and minibus, but anticipates a role for new ferry services to Valletta as well as potential light rail or tram rapid transit systems with underground sections (**14.16**).

2.8.24 A comprehensive agreement for upgrading the bus service has now been achieved between the Public Transport Authority and the Public Transport Association. This includes: a programme to replace the bus fleet within five years; identification of new areas with poor access to public transport or overloading; the introduction of some new routes; and improved ticketing systems. The agreement does not cover the rationalization of ownership, although the Structure Plan regards this as necessary in order to shift the bus system onto commercial lines and to generate sufficient revenue to renew assets (**PTR1**).

2.8.25 Progress in implementation of the agreement has been slow, although some achievements are being logged: the re-painting of existing buses, introduction of some block ticketing systems; the introduction of some new routes; the introduction of some new bus shelters; and some local public transport initiatives.

2.8.26 An agreement to liberalize the number of private buses was reached between the Public Transport Authority and the Unscheduled Bus Service.

2.8.27 The introduction of bus priority lanes and other priority measures has not been extended significantly from the initial route in Floriana. No study has yet been undertaken on the need for a high-speed public transport system to serve the Valletta/Floriana peninsula. Improvements to taxi services have not yet been achieved.

2.8.28 The *Valletta and Floriana Transport Study* evaluated requirements for a new bus terminus in Valletta. Remodelling of the Valletta Bus Terminus (**PTR7**) is now being actively pursued. The current application for a new terminus is awaiting further studies relating to the proposed Government Administration Centre. Other than this, little has been achieved to develop the inter-modal transport interchanges proposed in the Structure Plan (**PTR5**).

2.8.29 The Structure Plan suggests that the Planning Authority should seek to establish an island-wide car sharing scheme (**PTR14**). To date, organized car sharing schemes are practically non-existent, although agreements do exist between small groups of employees.

### **Legal and educational measures**

2.8.30 The Structure Plan includes a number of suggested legal and educational measures to reduce road accidents (**LEM1-LEM6**). These include revisions to the Highway Code, drink/driving laws, driving tests and vehicle tests, as well as the introduction of traffic wardens.

2.8.31 A number of changes to vehicle regulations have been introduced: modest changes to the Highway Code; drafting of seat belt legislation; and media campaigns to improve driving standards. Despite these changes, there has been a progressive increase in the number of accidents throughout the monitoring period, even after allowing for the increase in the number of registered vehicles. The core issues of vehicle road-worthiness and driving standards have yet to be addressed seriously.

### **Inter Island Sea Transport**

2.8.32 A study of inter-island transport was undertaken for the Ministry of Gozo in 1994. The findings are still under consideration by the Public Transport Authority. The second Cirkewwa quay has been improved to cater for crossings in most conditions. The Malta Maritime Authority is currently studying the feasibility of having a third quay and an extended breakwater.

2.8.33 Pinto Wharf has been upgraded and extended. The Sea Terminal has also been upgraded and is used both by passenger ferries, local catamaran services and other scheduled services such as the Libyan ferry ships.

### **Aviation**

2.8.34 The Structure Plan calls for a study to evaluate the case for a domestic air service between Malta and Gozo, perhaps using amphibious aircraft (**AVN4**). This has not yet happened, although the Planning Authority received an application by the Armed Forces of Malta for the construction of an airstrip at Ta' Lambert, Ghajnsielem (subsequently withdrawn).

2.8.35 The Structure Plan proposes that the Department of Civil Aviation establish:

- Public Safety Zones for both ends of airport runways; and
- A general safeguarding zone including absolute building height restrictions aimed at preventing development outside the airport boundary which could be hazardous to airport and aircraft operations (**AVN3**).

This policy is still under discussion.

## **2.9 Public Utilities**

### **Coordination of services planning**

2.9.1 The Structure Plan provides the various supply agencies with a common, comprehensive and long-term context within which to plan and operate. The Plan's intention is for utility agencies to produce 20 year development plans, within this comprehensive framework, and to operate within a formal interdepartmental working group structure to coordinate their activities (**16.1**).

2.9.2 The working group has not yet been established. The original intention was that the IDPC (Interdepartmental Planning Committee) would be a driving force in achieving implementation, but this has not yet occurred.

2.9.3 The public utilities have all initiated individual studies and planning exercises. Enemalta completed a draft Energy Plan to the year 2010 in 1994, having established a planning unit. This has not yet been officially approved and may require changes due to recent technological developments. A Sewage Master Plan for Malta and Gozo (1992) and a Solid Waste Management Strategy (1993) have also been completed. The Water Services Corporation are working on a Master Plan and have invested heavily in consultancy, research and information technology projects. The Malta Telecommunications Master Plan was outlined by the International



Telecommunications Union in March 1988 and implementation is now at an advanced stage.

## **Resource management and conservation**

2.9.4 The Structure Plan proposes that a major strategy of public utilities planning should be the efficient management and conservation of resources (**PUT3**).

2.9.5 Planning for the increased use of renewable energy options remains at a preliminary stage. During the monitoring period, the emphasis has been on the development of reliable energy supplies from conventional sources. However, Enemalta's draft *Energy Plan* does consider the potential contribution of solar energy and biomass energy generation, in general terms.

2.9.6 The Planning Authority is currently encouraging greater awareness of renewable energy sources and beginning thorough analysis of their land-use implications. Possibilities under consideration include turbines and windfarms, active solar systems, and a waste to energy plant. Power plant proposals using renewable forms of energy, with an output of more than 2 MW, will normally be subject to an environmental impact assessment.

## **Information systems for utilities planning**

2.9.7 A project is under way at the Planning Authority to plot reserved sites for utility developments onto the corporate Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This project will lead to an analysis of outstanding land-take requirements. A number of GIS projects are now in progress within individual utilities, to improve current systems. Drainage Department and Water Services Corporation already have a GIS under development, whilst the other utilities are actively considering the introduction of similar systems.

## **Capital investment in infrastructure, 1990-1995**

2.9.8 Investment in infrastructure has fluctuated over the period 1990-1995. Investment ran at very high levels during the first years of the decade, mainly due to the new power station at Delimara and the laying of the 132 kV distribution system. During the same period, the Pembroke RO plant was commissioned. Capital investment was reduced during 1992-1994, but approved estimates for 1995 indicate an increase in investment in infrastructural projects. This is largely due to the planned extension of Delimara Power Station and major sewerage works.

## **Water**

2.9.9 Development of additional water supply infrastructure is in progress. In 1994, the Pembroke RO plant was upgraded and a new RO plant in Marsascala is being planned. The Water Services Corporation have completed a number of major projects over the period 1993-1995; upgrading of the distribution network has been the major priority. A further 50 km of trunk and distribution mains and the start of construction works at the new RO plant is programmed for 1996. Other planned projects include: second class water distribution systems; purchase of equipment, including booster systems and tools; and acquisition of land for the new reservoir in Xwieki, for which an Environmental Impact Assessment is being prepared.

## **Sewerage**

2.9.10 A contract to prepare the *Sewerage Master Plan for Malta and Gozo* was awarded to the Danish Firm COWI consult in 1991 and completed in 1992. Implementation of this Plan began during 1995 and future projects will fall within the Plan's framework. A major objective is to meet European

standards for waste disposal; the target is that all sewage must receive secondary treatment by the year 2000.

2.9.11 Work remains at the planning stages for the systematic upgrading of sewage treatment facilities, as outlined in the Structure Plan. A process of site selection has commenced. An application has been approved for a new sewage outfall at Mgarr ix-Xini and an Environmental Impact Assessment is being prepared. Drainage Department have also applied to connect Xemxija to Ic-Cumnija in Mellieha through an 8 km system of underground galleries. Upgrading of the Sant' Antnin waste recycling plant has remained a highly topical issue and has been the subject of study by Dutch consultants. Costed options are now being evaluated.

## **Solid Waste**

2.9.12 Limited progress has been made in solid waste management, despite the Structure Plan's sense of urgency in this area. Work has yet to begin on the Waste Management Subject Plan, although the *Waste Management Strategy* was completed in 1993.

2.9.13 A Waste Management Committee has been set up to identify quarry sites for inert waste and consider long-term waste disposal options. Incineration is also under discussion; this suggestion has provoked some adverse reaction.

2.9.14 Progress has been achieved in the following areas:

- a solid waste transfer station is being evaluated at Il-Qortin ta' Ghajn Damma in Marsaforn;
- some initiatives have been taken by the Local Councils to establish controlled centres for refuse disposal;
- site selection is in progress for a managed landfill operation; and
- the Malta Freeport Terminal is absorbing up to two million tonnes of inert waste for land reclamation, providing some short-term relief to the problem of waste disposal.

2.9.15 The Environment Department initiated a campaign for waste separation at source in early 1995. However, this initiative has not yet taken off.

## **Energy**

2.9.16 Enemalta have made considerable progress in the establishment of an effective planning function; the Engineering Planning Department was established in 1994. The department has prepared a draft Energy Plan.

2.9.17 The planned 132 kV underground cable from Delimara to Marsa South Distribution Centre was commissioned in 1993 and has now been laid, using underground trenches (**16.9**). The Marsa Distribution centre has been extended. The second phase of the 132 kV network, to Mosta Distribution Centre, will largely be in a tunnel, with a small section to be laid in trenches. By 2005, three additional distribution centres are planned; work has already started in Mosta. Smaller distribution centres are also planned for Comino, San Raffaele hospital and the south.

2.9.18 Projects in progress during 1994/1995 include phase IIA at Delimara Power Station, a wide range of additional ancillary works at Delimara and the preparation of rock-soil surveys for phase IIB.

2.9.19 Additional Projects planned for the near future include: a fuel unloading station and additional fuel tank at Delimara; upgraded distribution facilities at Birzebuga, Corradino and Ras Hanzir; and various district offices, substations and stores.

## Telecommunications

2.9.20 The recent development of the telecommunications sector in Malta can be hailed as a major achievement. Telemalta are working to the recommendations of the *Malta Telecommunications Master Plan* as outlined by the International Telecommunications Union in March 1988. Progress has included:

- rapid expansion of the telephone network;
- full digitization of the switching and transmission network;
- introduction of a paging system;
- an increase in satellite circuits;
- laying of an optic fibre network; and
- installation works for an optic fibre submarine cable to Sicily.

2.9.21 Telemalta have also successfully managed continued growth in the provision of services associated with the advent of E-Mail, the Internet, and a range of on-line services.

2.9.22 Cable TV has also arrived, and expanded rapidly, throughout the monitoring period.

## Underground telecommunications cabling

2.9.23 The Structure Plan stipulates that all new telecommunications systems should be underground. A programme of progressive undergrounding is proposed for existing overhead cables and apparatus in built-up areas (**PUT25**). At present, most cabling works are still carried out overground. However, the Valletta Rehabilitation Project are conducting initial studies to evaluate approaches to the undergrounding of cables in the capital.

## Posts

2.9.24 The Public Company *Posta Ltd.* was set up in November 1994, taking over the effective management of operations in October 1995. This is, potentially, a first step towards the modernisation of postal services in Malta. *Posta Ltd.* has identified a building in Qormi for a new central mail room.

## 3. Constraining Urban Growth

3.0.1 The second goal of the Structure Plan promotes the efficient use of land and buildings by channeling development into existing and committed urban areas (3.5). The Structure Plan includes a range of policies aimed at conserving undeveloped land and revitalising existing built-up areas. These policies include:

- **measures to resist further development of virgin land.** The safeguarding of undeveloped areas is catered for through a number of policies which restrict new urban development to existing built-up areas and areas committed for development in the Temporary Provision Schemes or the Structure Plan's Primary Development Areas.
- **initiatives to revitalise existing built-up areas.** Structure Plan strategies to encourage development within the urban areas include: phasing out Government subsidies for new housing in undeveloped areas in the form of low cost land plots and loans; redirecting Government housing subsidy into urban areas, offering grants and low-cost loans for the refurbishment of private property; and substantial public sector investment in the upgrading of urban infrastructure and public buildings. To make more efficient use of existing infrastructure, by reducing the volume of home/workplace travel, particular encouragement is given to residential development in the Inner Harbour area.
- **provisions to promote the efficient use of land and buildings.** The Structure Plan identifies a severe lack of activity in the private rented sector. Phasing out of rent control legislation is proposed to bring more vacant property into use and to foster realistic pricing of residential space in the rented sector. Conversion of large dwellings into two or more smaller dwellings is also proposed.

3.0.2 This section reviews progress in these areas by analysing patterns of development over the period 1993-95. The review begins with an analysis of rates of development, both within existing settlements and outside the designated areas for development. Progress in initiatives to revitalise existing urban areas, including rehabilitation initiatives within Urban Conservation Areas, are then discussed. The section concludes with a review of the recycling of previously-developed land and the conversion of buildings into and out of residential use.

### 3.1 Channeling Development into Urban Areas

3.1.1 The Structure Plan aims to encourage development within existing urban areas. This has a dual function; to maintain and enhance the environment of the urban fabric and to steer development away from undeveloped land. The Plan places special emphasis on revitalising the Inner Harbour area, which has been steadily losing population as households move to newer areas in search of acceptable housing<sup>8</sup>. Since most jobs are situated within the Inner Harbour area, this decentralisation of population tends to increase distances between homes and jobs and thereby exacerbates traffic congestion and pollution.

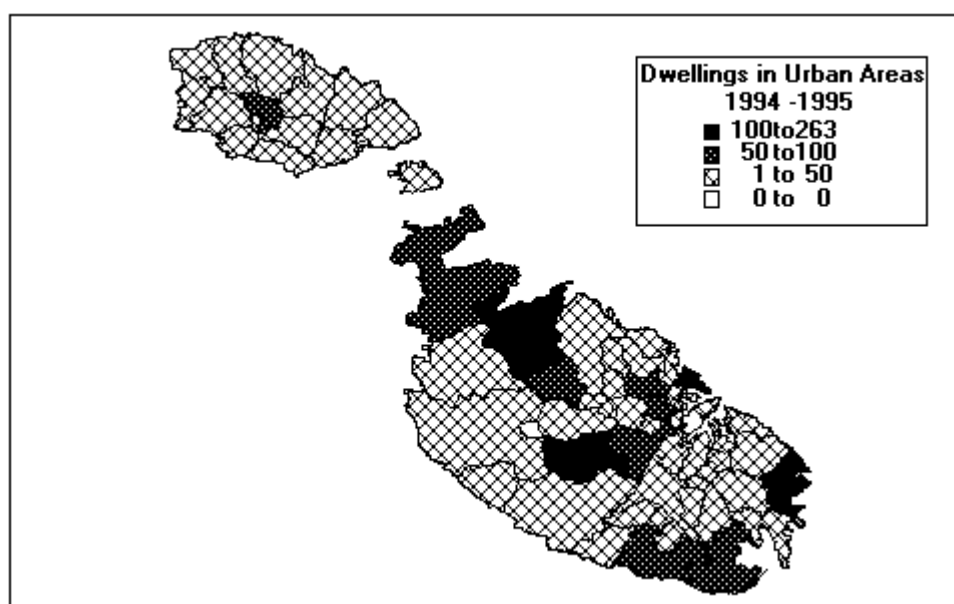
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<sup>8</sup> Inner Harbour Area Councils are: Birgu, Bormla, Floriana, Gzira, Hamrun, Isla, Kalkara, Marsa, Msida, Paola, Pieta, Santa Lucia, Sliema, Ta' Xbiex and Valletta. The Inner Harbour region as described in this section includes the same areas as mentioned in the Preliminary Report, Census 1995, Central Office of Statistics, March 1996.

## New development within existing Urban Areas

3.1.2 During the period 1993 to 1995, 11,770 dwelling units were granted development permission. Some 35% of these approved dwelling units are located within existing urban areas, but not on land zoned for new housing development in the Temporary Provision Schemes. Many of these units are in extensions and additions to existing properties, or are new buildings on previously developed sites. This is a relatively high proportion, in comparison with Structure Plan expectations; the Plan estimated that of the 60,000 dwellings required by the year 2010 (8.3), just 8,000 (13%) would be provided within existing urban areas.

3.1.3 Almost half of these new urban dwellings are located on previously developed land. Particularly high levels of activity were noted within the existing urban areas of St. Paul's Bay, Sliema, Zebbug and Marsasclala:



Four councils saw little or no development of new dwelling units within their urban areas: Mdina, Floriana, Isla and Birgu.

3.1.4 Despite the Structure Plan's intention, the Inner Harbour area has continued to lose population. Between 1985 and 1995, the Inner Harbour lost 14% of its population<sup>9</sup>:

Area	1985	1995	% Change	New Dwellings in Urban Areas 94-95	New Dwellings in Schemes 94-95
Inner Harbour	101963	87997	-13.7	313	78
Outer Harbour	98610	112262	+13.8	354	834
South Eastern	42475	50556	+19.0	352	762
Western	44580	51787	+16.2	255	469
Northern	32108	44660	+39.1	496	937
Gozo	25682	29073	+11.0	255	344

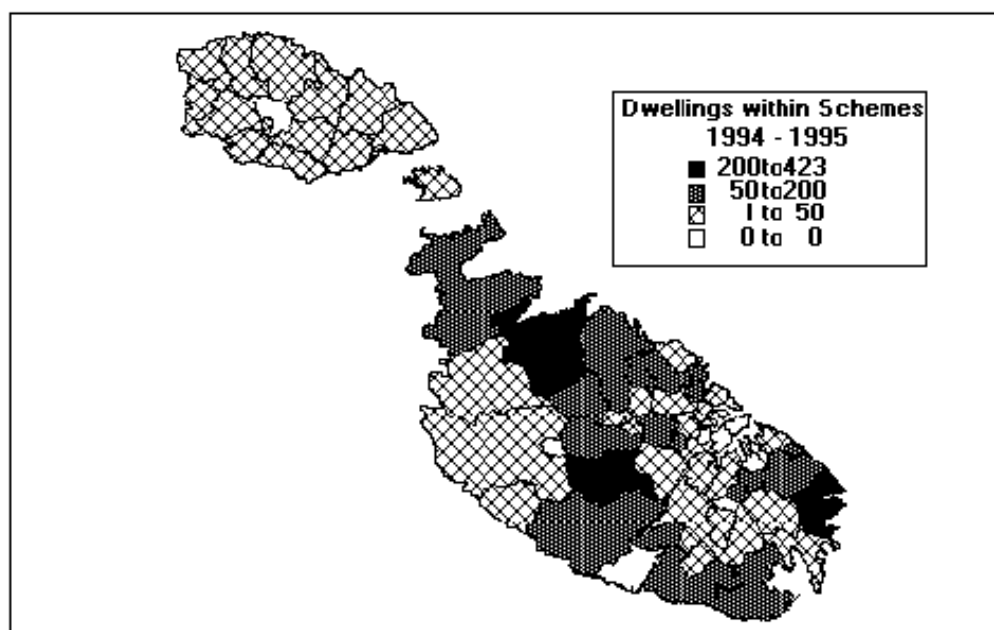
3.1.5 Most regions reveal a clear preference for development on virgin urban land (in the Schemes) rather than development within existing urban areas.

3.1.6 The number of dwellings approved on urban land within the Inner Harbour area is broadly consistent with rates of development in other regions, despite the population decline. This indicates that there are some fashionable pockets of growth within the Inner Harbour area, despite the general climate of decline.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Central Office of Statistics, Preliminary Report: Census of Population and Housing, March 1996.

## Development within the Temporary Provision Schemes, 1988-94

3.1.7 In 1988, 798 hectares of undeveloped land were available for new housing development within the Temporary Provision Schemes. By early 1994, 245 hectares (31%) of this land had been developed. Activity is particularly intense in the northern, Outer Harbour and south eastern areas of the island:



3.1.8 Regional differences in the level of dwelling development within the Temporary Provision Schemes are largely explained by the distribution of land allocated in 1988:

	Vacant 1988 (ha)	Developed 1994 (ha)	Developed 1994 (%)
Inner Harbour	22.0	6.3	29
Outer Harbour	212.4	73.6	35
South Eastern	159.0	45.8	29
Western	95.6	34.4	36
Northern	181.5	57.1	31
Gozo	127.2	27.8	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>797.6</b>	<b>245.0</b>	

3.1.9 This highly dispersed pattern of development is frustrating the Structure Plan's goal of concentrating new residential development in areas close to the major employment centres. The Inner Harbour region, in particular, is hosting a small proportion of new housing development. Contrary to the Structure Plan's intention, patterns of housing growth and population movement are increasing levels of commuting and the length of the average journey to work. A small proportion of available housing land is located within the Inner Harbour region; this implies that population can only be increased in this area through increased rates of land recycling and redevelopment. Unfortunately, the decentralisation of population to outer regions is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

## Development in Non Urban Areas

3.1.10 The Structure Plan prohibits any form of urbanisation outside existing built-up areas, the Temporary Provisions Schemes and the designated Primary Development Areas (6.9). The need to restrict development to designated areas is one of the better understood policies within the Structure Plan. Nevertheless, some breaches of policy have occurred. To clarify their policy stance on development in non-urban areas, the Planning Authority

approved a Development Control Guidance Note in January 1995<sup>10</sup>. This note emphasizes that existing and committed built-up areas do not include:

- land outside the limits of development which contains sporadic development;
- sites where a previous development has fallen into disuse; or
- sites outside the limits of development with an expired development permit.

The Appeals Board, however, do not necessarily accept this interpretation. They view a committed area as any site, either inside or outside Scheme, where development is existing or there is physical development which is not currently in use.

3.1.11 Some 4.5% of dwellings approved in 1994 were outside designated areas for development, representing around 185 new dwelling units. In 1995, the proportion fell to 3.3% of residential approvals, representing around 155 new dwelling units. Whilst a small minority of individual dwelling units are approved outside the development zone, it is clear that policy breaches have occurred; the numbers approved exceed those which can be justified under the strict criteria defining essential dwellings for full-time farmers.

3.1.12 There is some evidence that the 'infill' argument is too readily accepted for new housing outside the development zone. To accord with the Structure Plan, infill developments must be justified either as:

- i. exceptions to the general prohibition against urban development outside existing and committed built-up areas, under **SET12**<sup>11</sup>; or as
- ii. agricultural dwellings for full-time farmers.

Applicants for infill developments are rarely required to satisfy this test.

3.1.13 Excluding projects related to agricultural production, the following *commercial and industrial* applications were approved in non-urban areas over the period 1993-95:

	Projects Approved	Floorspace in m <sup>2</sup>
Industrial	22	55,120
Warehousing	14	12,890
Retail	14	7,330
Offices	12	5,185

3.1.14 The major concentrations of recent industrial and warehousing development outside the development zone are at Tal Handaq (limits of Qormi) and Triq L-Imdina, Zebbug. Retail approvals also include a concentration on Triq L-Imdina, Zebbug, as well as some development beside arterial routes, along the developed coastal strip and amongst ribbon development. Some new office floorspace was also identified outside designated areas for development, although the office component is generally ancillary to another use.

3.1.15 Three of the industrial project approvals fall within the Structure Plan's definition of obnoxious industry (**10.16**); a fireworks factory and two concrete batching plants. The Structure Plan recognises that these industries have special locational requirements and recommends: allocation of specific sites, perhaps within abandoned quarries (**IND9**); and evaluation of incentives to secure relocation (**IND10**).

3.1.16 The development of *tourist accommodation* has in most cases been limited to built up areas within the Temporary Provision Schemes, as outlined in policy **TOU4**. Projects approved outside the development zone during the

<sup>10</sup> Developments Outside Built-Up Areas, PLP20, January 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Policy SET11 prohibits urban development outside existing and committed built-up areas and primary development areas.

review period are mainly extensions or refurbishments to existing developments, although the San Lawrence Hotel is a notable exception.

3.1.17 Twenty-five projects for *social and community facilities* were approved outside designated areas for development. Around a third of these are for utility projects (road works, sub-stations, sewage pumps, etc.). Of the six school projects, only San Anton school at l'Imselliet provided a completely new facility. The remainder provide additional classrooms or other facilities within the existing curtilage. Other social and community approvals include: cemetery extensions; two hospitals (San Raffaele and St. Philip's); two extensions to homes for the elderly; and two museums, each linked to a specific historic location (Ghar Dalam and Ta' Qali airfield). Approvals for social and community facilities which are harder to justify include a religious centre at Kercem and a club house linked to existing tennis courts at Zejtun.

3.1.18 It is clear that substantial policy breaches have occurred, particularly in the industrial, commercial and retail sectors. The issue has already been acknowledged by senior development control staff; there are a number of areas, outside the development zone, which are predominantly industrial in character, where previous decision-making has established a precedent for further approvals which has become difficult to resist. The issue has been compounded by limited availability of land for social, industrial and commercial development within the development boundaries and existing industrial estates.

## 3.2 Rehabilitation and Renewal

### Institutional and Legislative Initiatives

3.2.1 The Structure Plan proposes re-direction of housing subsidy to encourage development within existing urban areas and the rehabilitation of existing properties. Under the Structure Plan, new areas for subsidised land plots, outside existing and committed built-up areas, will not be allowed. Home ownership subsidies for rehabilitation and renewal will be introduced, together with grants and loans for the rehabilitation of privately-owned homes (**SET3, SET4**).

3.2.2 Progress so far has been partial. Subsidised plots are no longer issued and a limited number of grants are now available for the rehabilitation of housing from the Department for Social Accommodation.

3.2.3 The Plan also urges review of rental legislation, to increase incentives for building rehabilitation (**SET5**). Legislative changes in the rent laws were passed through Parliament during December 1995. These changes are expected to liberalise the rental market, to some extent; it is still too early to evaluate the full effect of this law on the property and rental market.

### Development within Urban Conservation Areas

3.2.4 The Structure Plan encourages rehabilitation and suitable conversions within Urban Conservation Areas, particularly: residential development (**HOU2, HOU7**); upgrading of shopping centres (**COM7**); and the sensitive introduction of tourist uses (**TOU9**).

3.2.5 There is little evidence of large scale rehabilitation within Urban Conservation Areas, although a small number of successful rehabilitation and redevelopment projects can be identified. Over the period 1993 to 1995, 5% of all new and refurbished floorspace was located within the Urban Conservation Areas. The Sliema Urban Conservation Area accounts for over half of this development.



3.2.6 New and refurbished dwellings account for most of the development within Urban Conservation Areas. Other projects have included: offices; parking facilities; the Capua Court Hotel; and social and community facilities (the Capua Palace Hospital and a private home for the elderly in Rabat). Large office developments within Urban Conservation Areas include the Planning Authority offices in Floriana and a Public Administration block at Pinto Wharf, Floriana.

### **Rehabilitation of Rural Buildings**

3.2.7 Within Rural Conservation Areas, the Structure Plan allows for the rehabilitation and suitable change of use of existing rural buildings, providing that the overall aim of improving the rural environment is satisfied (**RC02, 15.28**). In total, 60 approvals for conversion of rural buildings were registered between 1993 and 1995. These projects are widely scattered over Malta and Gozo and are largely related to the conversion of farmhouses and rural buildings.

## **3.3 Using Land and Buildings Efficiently**

3.3.1 The Structure Plan incorporates a number of strategies to encourage the more efficient use of land and buildings. These include: encouraging development on previously used (recycled) land; the phasing out of rent control legislation, to bring more vacant residential property into use; and the conversion of large dwellings into two or more smaller dwellings.

### **Development on Recycled Land**

3.3.2 Rates of land recycling in urban areas are relatively high, in comparison with Structure Plan expectations. This is a positive result, partly explained by rising property prices in many areas. Excluding development in the Temporary Provision Schemes, almost half of new urban dwellings are located on previously developed land. Almost a quarter of new floorspace in larger projects approved over the period 1993-95 is on previously developed urban land. Examples of larger projects utilising recycled land include: additions to the Mosta Civic Centre; the demolition and re-erection of Capua Court Hotel in Sliema; the Capua Palace Hospital; development of a retirement home in Luqa; and the Planning Authority Offices in St. Francis Ravelin. As with development on virgin land, most of the land recycling is taking place in outer areas, reinforcing the trend towards population decentralisation.

### **Conversion of Buildings**

3.3.3 The Structure Plan also encourages conversion projects. Almost 180 conversions were approved over the period 1993-95. As a proportion of all development occurring over the period, this is tiny.

3.3.4 Currently, the main financial incentive for conversion projects relates to the provision of commercial units in established centres. Most of the approved conversions are creating retail outlets from dwelling units. In the residential market, the preference is for purpose-built units. Overall, conversion activity is leading to a small net loss of dwelling units.

## 4. Upgrading the Environment

4.0.1 The third and final goal of the Structure Plan is to radically improve the quality of all aspects of the environment of both urban and rural areas (3.5). The Structure Plan introduces a comprehensive set of policies, covering all land and coastal waters in the Islands, aiming to achieve the general upgrading of all aspects of the environment. The major policy directions are:

- **the designation of Urban Conservation Areas.** Here, policies are established for the retention and enhancement of all buildings, structures and spaces of architectural or historical interest. Traffic and parking are to be rationalised and controlled, introducing pedestrian priority measures where appropriate. Cables are to be relocated underground and the quality of townscape and landscape improved wherever possible.
- **strict development control and design guidelines for new urban areas.** The Plan aims to ensure that new areas do not repeat the mistakes of previous developments in terms of: inadequate provision of community facilities; poor quality infrastructure provision; abandonment of construction rubble and other refuse; and insensitivity to the surrounding townscape and landscape.
- **halting the spread of urban development into the countryside.** Along with prohibiting new urban development in rural areas, the Plan designates large Rural Conservation Areas within which agricultural, ecological, archaeological and landscape interests are protected. Guidelines are included to assist in resolving conflicts and to establish and maintain a high standard of environmental quality in the countryside.
- **positive enhancement of the rural environment.** As well as prohibiting new urban development in rural areas, the Rural Conservation Areas are intended to provide the physical context and institutional means of positively channeling effort and investment into the enhancement of the rural environment (15.28).
- **developing policy for Marine Conservation Areas.** The Plan recognises the need for safeguarding of vulnerable marine and coastal environments by controlling destructive land-based activities, prohibiting certain marine-based development and controlling both fishing and recreational water-sports, where appropriate.

4.0.2 This section begins with a review of: urban conservation areas; listed buildings; rural conservation and landscape protection; archaeology; and coastal and marine conservation. This is followed by a discussion of proactive initiatives to upgrade the environment. Attention then moves to more general considerations, including: environmental considerations in development control; design guidelines and standards for new development; standards of construction management; environmental education and research; and environmental appraisal in strategic and Local Planning.

### 4.1 Urban Conservation

4.1.1 The overall strategy of the Structure Plan for built heritage is based on the designation of Urban Conservation Areas. The Plan's strategy rests on particularly strict control of development in these areas, coupled with an injection of public and private funds for rehabilitation (15.3).

4.1.2 The process of designating Urban Conservation Areas is now well established:

UCA Designated (93-95)	UCA pending approval in 1995
Valletta	Dingli
Floriana	St. Paul's Bay
Mdina	Rabat
Cittadella	Mgarr
Birzebbuga	Mellieha
Marsaxlokk	Senglea
	Cospicua
	Kalkara
	Sliema
	Birgu

The Three Cities and Hamrun, along with the remainder of the 55 village cores designated in the Temporary Provisions Schemes, still require review and specific designation as Urban Conservation Areas.

4.1.3 The Structure Plan clearly identifies Valletta, in conjunction with the adjacent harbours, as the principal Urban Conservation Area (**15.9**). The draft *Grand Harbour Local Plan* is developing policy for the *Valletta Harbours Heritage Conservation and Improvement Area (UCO3)*. The Local Plan's principal aim is the reinforcement of the vitality and viability of Valletta as the nation's capital, regenerating the fabric of the city and reinforcing it as a residential, commercial and tourist centre. However, this is to be achieved without jeopardising the very characteristics which make the city a unique and pleasurable place. Specific policy directions include: the fostering of a 'mixed use' capital city; better use of existing buildings; urban renewal; improved public transport; increased vehicle access; and parking provision which is related to environmental capacity.

## Rehabilitation Initiatives for Urban Conservation

4.1.4 The Structure Plan is committed to the enhancement of Urban Conservation Areas (**UCO12**). The Plan encourages rehabilitation and suitable conversions, particularly: residential development (**HOU2, HOU7**); upgrading of shopping centres (**COM7**); and the sensitive introduction of tourist uses (**TOU9**). As a general approach the Plan states that, wherever possible, buildings, gardens and other structures of historical interest will be conserved through a combination of control and positive intervention (**UCO13**). The Structure Plan envisaged recycling of fees and fines as upgrading grants for buildings in Conservation Areas, through a Land Tribunal and Trust. It also proposes the establishment of an independent Heritage Trust, funded jointly by government and the private sector (**15.19, 19.7, UCO12, UCO13, UCO17**).

4.1.5 Although limited data is currently available, the indications are that some village core areas are continuing to lose population. Analysis for the *North West Local Plan* area, using electoral registers, suggests that the populations of Urban Conservation Areas are continuing to fall, with a steadily aging profile amongst those remaining. At a larger scale, preliminary results from the 1995 Census suggest that the Valletta/Floriana conurbation is continuing to lose residents. The strategy for urban conservation appears to be highly vulnerable; careful re-evaluation of policy in this area is likely to be required.

### **Public Sector Initiatives**

4.1.6 There has been a limited injection of public funds into urban conservation. Although central government is a major source of funding, the level of provision is declining:

	1993	1994	1995
Restoration works at Cittadella	39,585	31,004	15,000
Enhancement of public areas	185,947	245,289	60,000
Valletta Rehabilitation Project	354,968	323,353	250,000
Cottonera Rehabilitation Project	254,703	232,305	200,000
Personal Emoluments	220,500	220,500	260,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,055,703</b>	<b>1,052,451</b>	<b>780,500</b>

The Valletta and Cottonera rehabilitation projects received the majority of government funding in this area.

4.1.7 Some funding for the upgrading of historic fortifications has been made available from international sources, such as the EU Med-Urbs programme and the Order of St. John.

4.1.8 The Planning Authority has taken steps to actively promote urban conservation. An *Urban Environment Improvement Partnership Scheme* was initiated in 1995 to help Local Councils by financing up to 50% of the costs of a high quality urban renewal project. In 1995, the Planning Authority prepared a proposal for a Lm 15,000 pilot project for historic buildings grants.

4.1.9 The Land Tribunal and Heritage Trust have not yet been established, although draft legislation on a Heritage Trust has been presented to Parliament. In the meantime, non-government organisations such as Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna and Din L-Art Helwa continue to carry out restoration of buildings and monuments of national importance.

4.1.10 A number of Local Councils are becoming involved in urban upgrading projects, using a combination of their own funding, special funds from government or private sector sponsorships. Recent projects include urban upgrading in Siggiewi, Senglea, Balzan, Hamrun, Mellieha, Zejtun, Attard, San Lawrenz and Sliema.

4.1.11 Most restoration projects on religious buildings are funded by the respective parishes. The Curia has funded a number of additional projects, such as the restoration of Santa Barbara Church in Valletta. The armed forces also occupy a number of historic fortifications and fund their upkeep.

#### ***Private Sector Investment***

4.1.12 Private sector expenditure on buildings of architectural and historical interest is difficult to measure. However, it is clear that there is a good deal of private sector activity. Major private sector rehabilitation projects include the Fort Chambray project and the Capua Palace Hospital. A large proportion of the development capital injected into Urban Conservation Areas relates to private dwellings, many of which are of architectural or historical interest.

## Development Control in the Urban Conservation Areas

4.1.13 The Planning Authority has made great progress in establishing the framework for development control within Urban Conservation Areas. In addition to the designation of protected buildings and Urban Conservation Areas, this has involved:

- developing an appropriate framework of policy and design guidance for urban conservation (*Development Control within Urban Conservation Areas, 1995*); and
- establishing an appropriate decision-making framework which ensures that adequate specialist advice is available on urban conservation matters, through the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC). The HAC dealt with some 770 proposals affecting historical buildings in 1994 and 95. The HAC have made substantial achievements in protecting Malta's built heritage from damage or demolition.

4.1.14 An urban conservation team has been established within the Planning Authority's Environmental Management Unit, providing a concentration of expertise on urban conservation matters. This team work very closely with the HAC. There are also professional staff within the development control teams, holding specialist qualifications in related fields, and sharing a deep commitment to the preservation of Malta's built heritage. A specialised enforcement team is being established to work on urban conservation issues.

4.1.15 In all, around 80,000 square metres of additional or replacement floorspace was approved for development within Urban Conservation Areas over the period 1993-95. Most of the development comprised new, replacement or refurbished dwellings and offices. The Floriana, Sliema and Rabat Urban Conservation Areas were particularly affected by development. Sliema alone accounts for 43% of permissions granted for development in all Urban Conservation Areas; permissions granted here were mostly for dwellings, parking, or community and social facilities. Permissions in Floriana were mostly for office and community facilities, whilst those in Rabat were mostly for community facilities.

4.1.16 The Planning Authority's urban conservation team have identified a detectable improvement in the quality of restoration projects, although the approach to the work tends to vary between areas. Awareness of the value of the local architectural heritage is slowly increasing. It is nevertheless apparent that some development control decisions have failed to respect the Structure Plan's urban conservation policies. In the early stages of the monitoring period, the quality of case officer's assessments was variable. The Development Control Commission do not necessarily follow either the HAC's or the case officer's recommendation and will on occasion consider that 'social' needs outweigh arguments related to urban conservation.

4.1.17 There is a potential conflict between policy objectives for urban conservation and urban regeneration in historic areas. Over the period 1993-95, 125 rehabilitation projects were refused permission, largely because they were regarded as bad neighbour developments within a Urban Conservation Area (as defined in **BEN1**) or to satisfy urban design considerations (in **BEN2**). Further evaluation of the application of urban conservation policy within target areas for regeneration is required.

## Traffic and parking in Urban Conservation Areas

4.1.18 Policy **TEM10** states that restraint will be sought on peak hour car journeys to the Valletta/Floriana Peninsula. Despite this policy, the Planning Authority approved a 1,500 space car park in Floriana. This is in line with

Structure Plan policy to provide peripheral parking for Urban Conservation Areas (**TRA4**). However, peripheral public parking for Urban Conservation Areas forms part of a coherent strategy to reduce vehicle activity within the historic core and can only be effective if it is linked to improved enforcement of parking regulations and enhancements to the public transport system. So far, there has been no real progress in the reduction of either traffic or parking within Urban Conservation Areas.

## 4.2 Listed Buildings

4.2.1 The Structure Plan calls for the designation for conservation of all buildings listed in the National Protective Inventory (NPI) and continued research to add to the list (**15.10, UCO4**). Almost 8,000 properties have been surveyed for the NPI between 1988 and 1995. Even so, it is likely to be at least a decade before all historic village cores have been surveyed for the first time for the NPI. In this space of time, many valuable buildings and localities could be lost or damaged. The NPI needs to be reviewed on three counts: progress in covering the most important buildings; depth of coverage of individual properties; and the prioritisation of the work programme.

4.2.2 Around 18% of buildings in the Inventory are likely to be recommended for scheduling at either grade 1 or 2. Since the Inventory includes many buildings which are not appropriate for listing, Structure Plan policy requires some revision. The scheduling process should not necessarily be linked directly and automatically to the NPI survey work.

4.2.3 Scheduling of properties has fallen behind the National Protective Inventory survey work. Some 450 properties were scheduled during 1994 and 1995. This includes a number of properties in areas most at risk from development, particularly in Sliema and St. Julian's.

4.2.4 The Structure Plan seeks to improve the condition and appearance of listed buildings, where appropriate, by relocating inappropriate uses and removing inappropriate accretions (**UCO5**). The Planning Authority has had some success in applying this policy to control new permanent development around the bastions of Valletta and Floriana. It has had less success when seeking to apply the policy to a number of obnoxious industries around the Cottonera, despite numerous complaints from Local Councils of the area. The Valletta Rehabilitation Project have taken action to remove unsightly wiring in Valletta, but the lack of cooperation from other departments has limited progress to date.

## 4.3 Rural Conservation and Landscape

### Designation of Rural Conservation Areas

4.3.1 The Structure Plan designates Rural Conservation Areas to protect the countryside from urbanisation and to prevent the development of structures or activities which are inappropriate in a rural location (**RCO1, RCO2, RCO3, RCO4, RCO5**). In addition, the designation provides the physical context and institutional means to channel positive effort and investment into the enhancement of these areas (**RCO3, RCO6**).

4.3.2 Rural Conservation Areas cover almost all the countryside of Malta and Gozo. They are drawn so widely that they cannot meet their initial objective of 'positively channeling effort and investment' (**15.28**). In practice, the Rural Conservation Areas provide an additional set of generic conservation policies which apply to almost all non-urban land.

4.3.3 The Local Plans programme has included extensive survey activities to refine the network of protected areas in the countryside.

4.3.4 Within the Rural Conservation Areas, a number of sub-areas have been identified as of value due to their ecology, paleontology, geology, geomorphology, ornithology, archaeology, agriculture or landscape. Between 1993 and 1995, the Planning Authority designated 50 sites or areas of ecological, scientific or archaeological importance. In total, 56 hectares of rural area have been designated within Malta and Gozo. Sites such as the coastal wetlands at L-Ghadira s-Safra and Qaliet Marku, freshwater pools at Ta' Qassiesu, Il-Qammieh and Il-Qattara, and clay slopes at Ghajn Tuffieha, have all been protected.

4.3.5 The Planning Authority has not yet designated any national parks. However, it is guiding the studies and management plans for the development of a Heritage Park at Ta' Cenc, Gozo (**TOU10, RCO14**). A call for tenders has been issued for environmental resources surveys for the development of the Dwejra/Qawra (Gozo) Heritage Park.

### **Tree Preservation Orders**

4.3.6 The Structure Plan offers protection for trees or stands of trees of aesthetic, historical, cultural, arboricultural or scientific interest in the form of Tree Preservation Orders (**RCO33**). No Tree Preservation Orders have yet been issued in accordance with **RCO33** and section 48 of the Development Planning Act 1992, although a number are in the pipeline. However, two Emergency Conservation Orders have successfully been issued on trees of conservation value.

### **Minor Islands**

4.3.7 The Structure Plan provides special protection for the small, uninhabited islands of the Maltese archipelago (**RCO34**). This position has been strengthened by action of the Secretariat for the Environment, which has declared three minor islands as nature reserves, albeit not managed ones. So far, no development control problems related to this policy have been encountered.

## **Conservation and Management Projects**

### ***Heritage Trails***

4.3.8 A number of Heritage Trails have been identified and preparatory work is being carried out, mainly by the Local Councils. A network of picnic areas will form part of the projected management plans. Wied Zembaq is the Planning Authority's first walkway project. This stemmed from the Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan and is a linear route linking Birzebbuga with Gudja.

4.3.9 The Xghajra and Zabbar Local Councils have planned a coastal military architecture Heritage Trail along the coast between Ricasoli and Marsascala. The Planning Authority is also working on a project for Wied Ghomor, in conjunction with St. Julian's Local Council. Provisions for Access Agreements and Access Orders are being made in the draft amendments to the Development Planning Act.

### ***Wildlife protection***

4.3.10 The Planning Authority has no specific policy for wildlife protection in accordance with policy **RCO13**, which covers areas such as hunting and trapping and the protection of flora and fauna. This area of policy overlaps with the remit of the Environment Protection Department, as set out in the Environment Protection Act of 1991.

4.3.11 Bird sanctuaries, managed by Birdlife (Malta), are at L-Ghadira, Is-Simar (l/o St. Paul's Bay) and at Wied L-Ahmar, Kemmuna. The funds for the

projects come from a combination of foreign contributions, volunteer efforts, government aid and public/membership contributions.

### ***Countryside management***

4.3.12 To date, the Planning Authority's involvement in managed areas has been limited to participation in a number of management committees. Inter-agency work on countryside management is in progress at a number of locations, including: Ta' Cenc; Buskett; Ta' Qali; Hagar Qim/Mnajdra; Ghajn Tuffieha; Gnejna Bay; Ramla l-Hamra, Gozo; Il-Maghluq Marsaxlokk; and Il-Maghluq Birzebbugia.

### ***Trees***

4.3.13 Tree cover is currently estimated at 137 hectares, or 0.4%, of total land area.

4.3.14 Afforestation with native species, as proposed in the Structure Plan, has been actively promoted by the Planning Authority. Several Local Councils have readily adopted the idea, to the extent that Government nurseries are now having difficulty in keeping pace with demand for indigenous trees. The Planning Authority also places relevant planting conditions on all development permits.

## **Development in Rural Conservation Areas**

4.3.15 No form of urban development is allowed within Rural Conservation Areas, except for agricultural, environmental or archeological projects, and improvements to the landscape (**RCO2**).

4.3.16 The broad principle of resisting inappropriate development in the countryside has generally been upheld. Policy prohibiting urban development within Rural Conservation Areas has been very important for development control and in some cases has withstood the acid test of appeal. Where development is approved in rural areas, planning conditions have often been used to mitigate the damage a project might have on the environment. The main pressures are for: new rural dwellings; social and community provision; tourist accommodation; industrial and commercial provision; and recreational facilities.

4.3.17 There is considerable concern regarding the level of inappropriate illegal development in the countryside. The Planning Authority has limited data in this area, but casual observation and selected spot-checks have confirmed that there are some genuine problems.

4.3.18 The Structure Plan does not prohibit built structures of various kinds which are normal and legitimate inclusions in the non urban scene: farmhouses and other genuine agricultural buildings; reservoirs; picnic area toilets and car parks; and control buildings and walls/fences at archaeological and ecological sites. Nevertheless, the provision of such structures must be controlled in order to preserve and enhance the environmental quality of the countryside.

4.3.19 The remainder of this section evaluates the controls applied to legitimate development types within rural areas, in particular; agriculture, minerals, utility projects and appropriate recreational activities.



## **Agriculture**

### *Protecting the agricultural environment*

4.3.20 Some progress has been made in the implementation of positive action to improve the agricultural and rural landscape. The Agriculture Department is introducing measures to encourage protection of the rural environment, including; incentives for use of a system of *Integrated Pest Management*; and incentives for the use of drip rather than sprinkler irrigation systems. The Planning Authority have established design and policy guidelines for farmhouses and agricultural buildings (**AHF1, RCO8**). In terms of minimising conflicts between agricultural development and the environment, more conditions were introduced relating to landscaping, rubble walls and mitigation measures to reduce the impact of farm buildings (**AHF7, AHF8**). However, the enforcement of planning conditions remains a weak link.

4.3.21 Agricultural buildings must either blend with the landscape or be hidden from long-distance views (**AHF5, RCO4**). These policies are proving difficult to implement effectively. There is, apparently, some reluctance to allow aesthetic criteria and considerations of visual impact to over-ride arguments related to agricultural need. There is also a lack of clear parameters to guide decision-making in this area. Landscape evaluation of the countryside is still in its infancy, although a firm step forward has been taken with the completion of the North West Malta Landscape Assessment (**RCO2**).

4.3.22 The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* protects a large section of rural hinterland as a Rural Conservation Area. Here, priority is given to the needs of agriculture, stressing the importance of maintaining traditional features (MA01, MA02). The agricultural landscape will form the backdrop for a set of managed recreational footpaths in which appropriate afforestation will be encouraged to improve landscape quality.

4.3.23 The draft *North West Local Plan* aims to protect agricultural land for its cultural and landscape value, as well as for its intrinsic worth in agricultural production. The draft plan proposes a number of sites as areas of cultural, scenic or agricultural value. Development such as greenhouses will be restricted, within scheduled or designated areas. The plan is also proactive in dealing with soil erosion and water resources, favouring the rebuilding and conservation of rubble walls. The draft *Grand Harbour Local Plan* also safeguards a small amount of agricultural land at Kalkara.

4.3.24 The *White Rocks Development Brief* designates an 8.4 hectare site as an Area of Agricultural Value, in accordance with **RCO1**. The *Fort Chambray Development Brief* retains marginal agricultural activity on the clay slopes surrounding the fort, allowing minimal intervention for footpaths and agricultural improvements. A small amount of land at Wied Harq Hammiem and Pembroke has been safeguarded by the draft *Pembroke Action Plan*.

4.3.25 No comprehensive survey and classification of agricultural land quality, as stipulated in **AHF3**, has yet taken place. This lack of data makes conservation of the most valuable land difficult.

4.3.26 Lack of supply of soil for agricultural use has led some to question whether agricultural uses should have priority over recreational uses such as gardens. The restricted supply of soil is making the public more conscious of soil conservation; reports of "misuse" or dumping of soil are often made to the Agriculture Department.

### *Farmhouses and farm buildings*

4.3.27 *Farmhouses* have proved to be a contentious form of agricultural development over the monitoring period (1993-95). The main legitimate form of new housing in rural areas is residential accommodation for *bona fide* registered full time farmers/breeders. Nevertheless, it appears that new farmhouses account for a minority of the 150-200 new dwellings per year which have been approved outside the development zone.

4.3.28 *Farm stores* are the most common type of agricultural development on the Islands. Between 1993-95, there were 63 permissions for new stores. The number of *animal breeding farms* continue to rise, with 42 new units granted a permit between 1993-1995. *Irrigation facilities* are a further common category of agricultural development. Between 1993-1995, 35 reservoirs and 6 pump rooms were granted permission. There have been 24 approvals for *greenhouses* over the three year period from 1993-1995. The Planning Authority is now in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture regarding the restriction of such uses in certain areas.

### *Fish hatcheries*

4.3.29 Some demand for the development of land-based aquaculture projects has emerged during the monitoring period. A permit for one land based *fish hatchery* has been approved in Qala, whilst a permit for a farm in Qormi has been refused.

### **Minerals**

4.3.30 The Planning Authority has made limited progress in introducing a degree of environmental management to the quarry industry. Some 75% of all quarries are now operating under a PAPB/Police permit; site boundaries have now been confirmed for most quarries, together with imposition of additional environmental controls on permit renewal. Just three quarries have received formal Planning Authority approval, as outlined in the Structure Plan<sup>12</sup> (see 2.6.9). A Code of Practice for minerals operations has been introduced. This is distributed with all permits and concerns issues such as machinery (noise levels, vibrations), dust (correct sheeting of trucks, covering of plant in quarries) and emissions. Before a permit is granted for a new minerals extraction project or an extension to an existing site, an environmental impact assessment is required (**MIN8**). The applicant is required to produce a landscaping scheme to protect the surroundings before operations begin, accompanied by a bond. A restoration scheme is also required. The final form of the restoration bonds scheme is currently under discussion with representatives of the industry.

4.3.31 Closer management of minerals production to match current needs is required, to minimise damage to the Rural Conservation Areas.

### **Utilities**

4.3.32 As with agricultural development, the Structure Plan aims to ensure that the location and design of infrastructure facilities are carefully planned to minimise environmental impact (**RCO5**). Few projects have been approved in this category over the review period. However, some form of environmental assessment is now required for large infrastructure projects, such as sewage treatment plant.

4.3.33 Utilities planning has been incorporated, to some extent, into the local planning process (**PUT5**). The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* has indicated a reserve site of 7 hectares, south of the existing power station for public utilities services provision. A new sanitary landfill is to be created for disposal of

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<sup>12</sup> Subject to payment of restoration bonds.

waste, and the *North West Local Plan* is seeking a site for the landfill. In addition, the Department for the Environment is searching for a site for a waste incinerator.

### **Recreation**

4.3.34 Some popular recreational activities can only take place in the countryside and careful planning is required to mitigate any potential negative impacts. The Planning Authority has become involved in a number of initiatives to improve the planning of recreational facilities, particularly in connection with the draft *North West Local Plan*. So far, no major recreational projects have reached application stage, so no environmental impact studies have been required.

## **4.4 Archaeology**

4.4.1 The Structure Plan identifies Malta's cultural heritage as 'one of the most important of the Mediterranean region' (15.42). Although primary responsibility for this sector lies with the Museums Department of the Ministry for Justice and the Arts, the Planning Authority does hold responsibility for protecting the country's archaeological heritage from damage caused by development. As with ecological sites, the Planning Authority's strategy is to identify Sites and Areas of Archaeological importance and to give them the required level of protection in order to avoid further dilapidation or destruction.

4.4.2 An Operations Review of the Museums Department was taken in hand during 1994 and a comprehensive report, including recommendations for restructuring, staffing and functioning of the Department, was presented during 1995. The Museums Department is engaged in a programme of reform which will enable it to be more responsive to the needs of the public and to be more effective in its tasks of preserving and presenting the nation's heritage. This reform programme involves the following priorities: the upgrading of the Hypogeum; the comprehensive upgrading of the Museum of Archaeology to significantly improve the interpretation of the exhibits; the second phase of the Hagar Qim/Imnajdra Heritage Park, to include a visitor centre; a visitor centre at the Ggantija Temples; and the visitor centre at Tad-Dejr Catacombs, Rabat.

### **Protection and management of archaeological sites**

4.4.3 The scheduling process for archaeological sites began in 1994. During 1994 and 1995, 37 Sites of Archeological Importance were listed. This compares with some 200 archaeological sites referred to in the Structure Plan as requiring protection (15.42).

4.4.4 Much valuable archaeological survey work has been commissioned under the Local Plans programme (ARC7). A number of sites were scheduled in the *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan*. It is envisaged that many additional sites will be scheduled during 1996 and 1997, particularly resulting from the archaeological surveys prepared for the *North West and Grand Harbour Local Plans*. Some 300 sites have been identified in the North West Local Plan area and a further 20 sites in the Grand Harbour area.

4.4.5 In accordance with Structure Plan policy for priority sites, Hagar Qim, Mnajdra and Ggantija Temples have been scheduled. A management scheme for Hagar Qim/Mnajdra is being coordinated by the Ministry of Tourism in accordance with ARC4. An Archaeological Park is planned for Hagar Qim/Mnajdra, to include a visitor centre. The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* identifies the area of Wied Dalam and Borg in-Nadur as reserved for a Heritage Park, and requires the drafting of a Development Brief for the area. Other priority sites are to be tackled through the Local Plans programme.

4.4.6 There has been some discussion regarding the need to protect the natural setting of archaeological sites, in addition to the site itself. The Structure Plan provides for a minimum 100m buffer zone around Class A sites (**ARC2**). Although this buffer might be realistic in some cases, a rigid application of the 100m minimum might be too mechanistic an approach, for example within an urban area. The draft *North West Local Plan* already designates buffer zones of 20m for sites of lesser importance.

## 4.5 Coastal and Marine Conservation

4.5.1 The Structure Plan calls for the establishment of a Coastal Zone Management Unit (**CZM1**) and the preparation of a Coastal Zone Subject Plan (**CZM2**). Although preparation of the Coastal Zone Subject Plan has not yet begun, the Planning Authority now has a professionally qualified planning team for coastal issues.

### Designation of Marine Conservation Areas

4.5.2 None of the Structure Plan's fourteen candidate sites for Marine Conservation Areas have yet been designated. The main constraint impeding the legal designation of these areas has been the financial cost of the necessary underwater surveys. Although no work has yet been undertaken, surveys are planned for Mgarr ix-Xini, Qawra/Dwejra and the coastal strip of the North Harbours Local Plan area.

### Access to the coastal zone

4.5.3 The Structure Plan aims to secure public access to the coastline, either adjacent to the sea or along cliff tops. All the coastline is to be brought into public ownership within a specified period (**CZM3**).

4.5.4 In this area of policy the Planning Authority has achieved limited success. In new coastal developments, care has been taken to retain public access to the foreshore. Development briefs, such as the Fort Chambray Brief, also stipulate that cliff tops and the sea shore should remain open to the public. There has not, as yet, been any government acquisition of illegal developments or encroachments on the coast. It is difficult, in practice, to revoke permission on an existing site which is covered by a building permit or other operating license.

### Development control in the coastal zone

4.5.5 The coastline is one of the country's main tourist and recreational assets: its landscape value and quality mean that it represents a real resource with strong potential. This potential is however threatened. The rural coastal landscape is often characterised by loss of landscape related to agricultural abandonment. Low lying coastal areas face extreme development pressure, primarily from the tourism and recreation sector. More remote coastal cliff areas, particularly in Gozo, face pressure for minerals extraction. There is an urgent need to reconcile such development pressures, especially those related to tourism and recreation, with conservation of the unique coastal landscapes and ecosystems of Malta.

4.5.6 Implementation of the Structure Plan's strategy for development control in coastal areas remains at a preliminary stage, despite substantial efforts during the initial years of the Planning Authority's life. The Structure Plan provides a strong framework for resisting all inappropriate development in rural and coastal areas outside the development zone and places considerable emphasis on the need for an integrated approach to coastal zone management. Bold policies are included to take shorelands into public

ownership, guarantee public access to the coastline (**CZM3**), remove all alien structures (**RCO16, RCO2**) and strictly control all new development.

4.5.7 Implementation and enforcement remain weak in these areas. The sheer pressure for development in coastal areas is a major problem, diverting the attention of the professional team from essential pro-active work. Adequate response to ad-hoc issues is often frustrated by a lack of scientific data and research on the coastal zone.

4.5.8 Pressure from new tourist development on the coastal zone has been particularly intense throughout the monitoring period. A series of major projects have been approved which increase the intensity of coastal development in areas which are already highly pressured. There is an urgent need to reconcile such development pressures with conservation of the unique coastal landscapes and ecosystems of Malta.

4.5.9 Beaches are subject to particularly intense development pressures which threaten their fragile and unique ecosystems. The Structure Plan proposed the removal of existing structures from sandy beaches. This has not happened, although 55 illegal boathouses at Cirkewwa have been demolished. Poor coordination between the Planning Authority and the police (who control trading licenses), HCEB (who license hot food kiosks) and Lands Department accounts in part for the weak implementation of this policy. The Planning Authority issued planning guidance entitled *Development Control Guidance: Kiosks* in May 1994, partially in order to address these difficulties.

4.5.10 Little progress has been made in restricting vehicle access to beaches or preventing camping on beaches, as proposed in the Structure Plan.

## Coastal Erosion

4.5.11 The Planning Authority has received a number of applications requesting permits for: beach creation; beach replenishment; structures on beaches; construction of breakwaters; and construction of coastal structures ranging from reverse osmosis plants to water polo pitches. Developments of this nature generally have an effect on coastal erosion; careful evaluation is required.

## Aquaculture

4.5.12 The Structure Plan encourages development in the aquaculture industry (**AHF15, AHF16**). It also requires the establishment of detailed planning criteria and conditions for aquaculture production units in order to control the industry properly from its beginnings (**AHF15**).

4.5.13 The Planning Authority approved Policy and Design Guidance on *Fishfarming* in May 1994. The guidelines set ceilings on aquaculture development, both in terms of the industry as a whole and in terms of the extent of individual sites. The approach of the Planning Authority has been to use development permit conditions to limit production and to ensure environmental monitoring. Enforcement of monitoring and other conditions now needs to be strengthened.

4.5.14 Four fish farms are located in candidate sites for Marine Conservation Areas (**MCO1**). The Planning Authority's policy guidance on fishfarming does not preclude this, although stringent conditions are laid down; there must be a significant positive contribution from the fishfarm to the effective management of the Marine Conservation Area as a whole. At present, this is not happening.

## 4.6 Environmental Upgrading Initiatives

4.6.1 The Structure Plan contains a number of proposals for positive action to upgrade the environment. This section examines the experience of the last three years with respect to the: control of erosion; protection of valleys; management of the minerals industry; relocation of obnoxious industry; and provision of access for all.

### Control of erosion

4.6.2 The Planning Authority has scheduled a number of sites which are prone to erosion, principal among which are Ghajn Tuffieha and Ramla l-Hamra. Management schemes are being set up for these areas. The Department for the Protection of the Environment also has a policy for the protection of sand dunes and coastal slopes. Some Local Councils have projects for the protection of soil; these include policies for afforestation in Siggiewi, quarry reclamation in Mqabba, rebuilding of rubble walls at St. Paul's Bay and the clearing of rubble dumped over coastal fields at Xghajra.

4.6.3 The Structure Plan encourages projects to repair breached retaining walls (**AHF7, AHF8**). The Planning Authority seeks to implement this policy, through the inclusion of maintenance conditions in development permits.

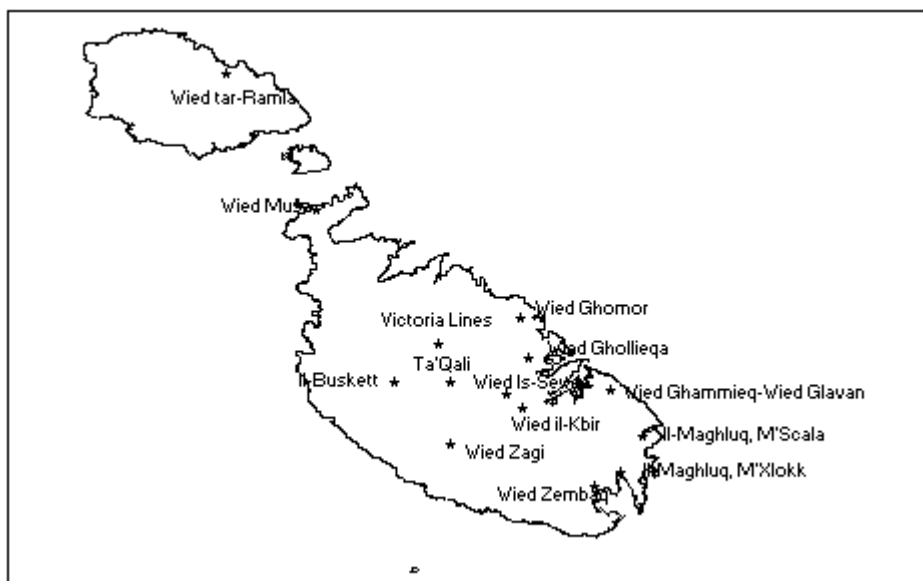
4.6.4 The Structure Plan highlights the need for soil conservation measures on agricultural projects (**AHF4, RCO24**). Recommended improvements in this area have been drafted. The Planning Authority is currently upgrading its procedures for notification of the Agriculture Department regarding approvals on agricultural land.

### Management of valleys

4.6.5 The Structure Plan calls for the protection of valleys as important water catchment areas (**RCO28, RCO29**). Despite some difficulties in delineating boundaries, a number of valley systems, individual valleys and marshlands located at the mouths of valleys have now been scheduled.

4.6.6 The Water Services Corporation have initiated a *Joint Aquifer Protection Committee*, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and the Sanitary Department. Also, the Water Services Corporation started a project to upgrade valleys as a cooperative effort with the Ministry of the Environment, Local Councils, the Armed Forces of Malta and the Italian Military Mission. Coordination in the approach to these projects, and in the technical approach taken, needs to be improved. There is also an initiative to move polluting livestock breeding units to less sensitive areas.

4.6.7 A number of projects have been initiated for the recreational use of valleys. Project locations are illustrated below:



Source: Local Council Postal Survey, March/April 1995

4.6.8 The wide range of partners involved and the variety of projects in progress suggest that recreation/conservation projects of this type may provide fertile ground for inter-agency cooperation. Local Councils are playing a key role, particularly in mobilising government funds for conservation purposes.

4.6.9 The Structure Plan seeks to prevent new development on valley sides, and especially watercourses, except for projects aimed at soil or water conservation. Despite the difficulty of identifying the extent of valleys, valley protection policy has been used to good effect in a number of cases. In Xlendi, Gozo, a hotel development on a valley slope was refused by the Planning Authority, using this policy. Despite some failures, valley protection policy is applied quite consistently outside the development boundaries.

4.6.10 The difficulties encountered in protecting valleys include:

- concessions awarded to applicants requesting extensions of existing developments;
- inadequate legal backing for the control of dredging activities; and
- conflicts with the 1988 Temporary Provisions schemes, despite the provisions in **BEN1**, **BEN2**, **BEN3** and **RCO15**.

## Environmental Management of the Minerals Industry

4.6.11 The Structure Plan calls for a programme to promote the acquisition, reclamation and afteruse of existing worked out quarries by government (**MIN15**). A reclamation fund is to be established, using levies on mineral production. The Planning Authority programme for quarry reclamation has not yet been started. However, a bonds system is being designed to constrain quarry owners to rehabilitate their worked out quarries after use (See also 2.6.12).

## Underground Space Strategy

4.6.12 The Structure Plan calls for an underground space strategy, especially for vehicle parking in urban areas (**MIN18**). No progress has been made in this area.

## Management of Obnoxious Industry

4.6.13 The Structure Plan requires consideration of incentives to relocate obnoxious industry and other development which causes nuisance in residential areas (**IND5, IND9, IND10, AHF9**). As a first step, a postal survey was carried out in November 1994 inviting Local Councils to identify industries which had been a cause for residents' complaints. Thirteen councils replied. Livestock breeding farms and chemical industries were mentioned most frequently, although there were many other problem areas. The most common reasons for complaint were: waste; air pollution; traffic; and noise/smell.

## Access for All

4.6.14 In general, the Maltese Islands offer very poor standards of access to anyone with impaired mobility. Even for the able-bodied, pedestrian access is often difficult and dangerous. The public environment is particularly problematic, with haphazard provision of pavements, appalling standards of maintenance, unprotected construction and repair sites, badly designed junctions and limited design control over access arrangements to public buildings. Standards in private buildings compound these problems, with many steep changes of level, both internally and externally, long staircases without landings and a typical house format spread over three or more levels.

4.6.15 The Structure Plan aims to improve access for the disabled, the elderly and children in prams and pushchairs to all public buildings and facilities, including public transport and footpaths (**BEN15, SOC24 and COM7**). Some initial steps have been taken in planning for improved access provision:

- the Planning Authority published *Access for All* guidelines in 1995;
- new building regulations have been drafted by MSU;
- a number of new public gardens have been developed with improved access standards;
- the new road underpass at Birkirkara and the pedestrian flyover at Marsa have been completed to a high standard of accessibility;
- a commitment has been made by government that new buses must be accessible to all;
- a number of hotels, banks and other private sector institutions have upgraded their access standards;
- the Housing Authority has begun to provide lifts with its new housing developments; and
- a number of new public buildings, including the Planning Authority offices at St. Francis Ravelin, have applied improved standards.

## 4.7 Controlling the Impact of Development Projects

### Environmental considerations in planning decisions

4.7.1 The Structure Plan introduces general controls on development which either has negative environmental impacts or is poorly designed. Special care is required in Urban Conservation Areas, in the countryside and where scheduled property is affected.

4.7.2 The *Development Control File Audit* in early 1995 found that the range of issues considered in the evaluation of development permit applications was often inadequate. Fundamental planning issues such as landscape impact and the effect of a proposed change of use were not being fully considered. Other factors which received inadequate treatment, in some



cases, included: design and layout; traffic impacts; and nuisance factors such as noise, smell, dust or other forms of pollution. Training has now been put in place to improve the quality of the evaluation. New forms have been introduced to improve the information supplied by the applicant, particularly for commercial, industrial, tourist and other non-residential projects. Further monitoring is required to evaluate whether the quality of project assessment has now reached an acceptable standard in the majority of cases.

## Environmental Impact Assessment

4.7.3 The Structure Plan introduces a requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Traffic Impact Statements (TIS) on large-scale projects, projects in sensitive locations and for projects with unusually complex or potentially harmful effects. The Planning Authority issued policy guidelines on the environmental assessment process in October 1992. These guidelines were updated in 1994 and are in the process of being converted into environmental assessment regulations.

4.7.4 Implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment process is now reaching a stage of some maturity. Environmental Impact Statements have been prepared for 15 projects, Environmental Planning Statements for another 20 projects and Transport Impact Statements for 16 projects. A number of Statements of each type are also being prepared.

4.7.5 In general, tourism, quarrying and waste projects have undergone assessment procedures, as required. The record is not so good for industrial, transport and other infrastructural development projects. Both large industrial developments (over 1000 square metres) and new roads, when outside areas zoned for development, should have been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment; this provision has apparently not been implemented.

## Landscaping

4.7.6 The Structure Plan introduces landscaping requirements for development projects and calls for the development of landscaping concepts and guidelines in Local Plans (**BEN17**, **BEN18**). The Planning Authority's emphasis on landscaping requirements is proving partially successful, but this is a difficult area of enforcement and implementation.

4.7.7 The Planning Authority has produced draft guidelines for landscaping schemes entitled *Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Landscaping in Malta and Gozo*. The design guidelines for *Development Control within Urban Conservation Areas* also include extensive material on: the treatment of spaces between buildings; the development of gardens and backyards; trees and soft landscaping; street furniture; and street surfacing.

4.7.8 Landscaping schemes are rarely submitted as a matter of course, although they are requested on the standard *Guidance Notes for Applicants* issued with development permit application forms. Schemes are frequently requested for major projects, as well as for smaller projects on rural sites and for some sites in Urban Conservation Areas. The quality of submitted schemes can be poor. A handful of developments have been completed which illustrate the potential of well-conceived and carefully-implemented landscaping schemes. Negotiated scheme improvements include landscaping schemes for a number of recently approved major projects, including: Fort Chambray, Gozo; Coastline Hotel, Salina Bay; St. Philip's Hospital, Santa Venera; San Raffaele Hospital; and the Planning Authority offices at St. Francis Ravelin.

4.7.9 A number of hard landscaping schemes have been successfully completed in public areas by the Local Councils. Examples of the latter may be found at Paola, Birgu, Naxxar, Mosta and Siggiewi.

4.7.10 The Malta Development Corporation are implementing an *environmental improvement programme* to upgrade the quality of roads, street lighting, signage, landscaping, reservoirs, service trenches and other infrastructure on their estates.

4.7.11 In line with the general objective of environmental upgrading, the Structure Plan proposes a programme of undergrounding of electricity supply and telecommunications (**BEN3, 7.4**). Little progress has been made in this area.

### **Extension of Planning Control to new development types**

4.7.12 The Structure Plan, together with the Development Planning Act 1992, broke new ground in bringing advertisements, billboards, signs, satellite dishes and quarries within planning control. The Planning Authority moved strongly to bring billboards and advertisements under control, through the publication of design and policy guidance<sup>13</sup> and the implementation of successive enforcement initiatives against illegal advertisements during 1993 and 1994. In the minerals sector, quarry owners were actively urged to regularise their operations by applying for development permits during 1993 and 1994, but compliance has been limited (See 2.6.9).

4.7.13 There has been progressive growth in the numbers of applications for advertisements and satellite dishes since 1993, as awareness of the requirement to seek development permission has widened. The number of applications for new mineral extraction sites is relatively small, reflecting the nature of the industry.

## **4.8 Design Standards and Guidelines**

4.8.1 The Structure Plan provides an array of policies aimed at improving the quality of design for urban development. A particular objective is the integration of a wider range of social and community facilities into the new urban areas. The Structure Plan sees the Local Planning system as the appropriate mechanism to achieve the redesign of layouts in the Temporary Provision Schemes. The Plan also seeks to set general standards and guidelines for new development, particularly relating to access, parking and infrastructure provision. It also calls for the development of design guidelines in other areas.

### **Review of Temporary Provision Schemes in Local Plans**

4.8.2 The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* includes a number of detailed proposals which address the Structure Plan's wider objectives for urban design. Policy and proposal maps are included for the relevant former Schemed areas. These identify areas to be covered by Development Briefs and designate Opportunity Areas, Design Priority Areas and Action Areas. Whilst it would be difficult to review Scheme layouts, once commitments have already been made, plot coverage and building height regulations are reviewed where appropriate. Urban Conservation Area boundaries are also defined. The draft *North West* and *Grand Harbour Local Plans* include similar policy and proposal maps for a number of Schemed areas.

4.8.3 The 1988 Temporary Provisions Schemes included 26 Replanning Areas, which required further detailed planning. All but one of these have now been replanned, but only four include social and community facilities. This

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<sup>13</sup> *Billboards and Signs*, Planning Authority Policy and Design Guidance, May 1994.

exercise was a lost opportunity to improve provision for social and community facilities in the Schemes.

## Design Guidance for Urban Areas

4.8.4 The Local Plan process has identified the improvement of the urban environment as a major priority and is producing a wide range of design-orientated policies, geared to the individual requirements of each locality. This emphasis has been supported by design guidance at a national level, particularly relating to: development control within Urban Conservation Areas (July 1995); shopfronts (May 1994); billboards and signs (May 1994); and vending machines (May 1994).

## Residential Design Guidelines

4.8.5 The Structure Plan proposes the development of rules and guidelines concerning densities, building heights, design, and parking and other standards for residential areas (**HOU3**). Preparation of formal design guidance for residential areas is being approached through the revision of form **DC 1/88** (*Conditions for Development and Design Control*). This is a highly influential note used in the routine evaluation of residential applications within the development control teams. A draft discussion paper, reviewing the existing conditions and regulations in detail, was completed in mid-1995. A revised and updated version, with a clear statutory status, is urgently required.

## Design Guidance for Industrial Areas

4.8.6 The Structure Plan seeks a review of zonings and design standards within industrial estates and proposes that industrial estates are zoned into smaller areas and developed to high density (**IND1, IND4**). The Plan also proposes guidelines for both the visual and functional aspects of industrial estates (**IND1**).

4.8.7 The *Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan* addresses industrial development issues in some detail. A zoning scheme is included for Hal Far Industrial Estate. For future developments, MDC is to submit outline planning applications to establish phasing, layout, access, landscaping and design principles prior to the approval of any full development permit applications. No progress has yet been made within the Planning Authority in the preparation of design guidelines for industrial estates.

## Planning Award Scheme

4.8.8 The Planning Authority is taking positive action to promote best design practice through the introduction of a biannual Planning Award Scheme. Prizes are awarded for outstanding design, provision of a model project for urban renewal or use of the principles of sustainable development.

## 4.9 Construction Management

4.9.1 The Structure Plan proposes a comprehensive attack on environmental degradation, particularly degradation associated with building sites and construction refuse. As an element in this approach, it is proposed that permit conditions should preclude unneighbourly construction procedures, unfinished surfaces and the permanent dumping of building materials on or near the site (**BEN9, BEN11**). This policy is not yet implemented on routine applications, although tailored conditions relating to construction procedures have sometimes been imposed. It is clear from casual observation that frequent problems persist on construction sites.

4.9.2 For large-scale developments a construction management plan is normally required, which tackles both construction practices and waste

transport/disposal issues. The quality of such plans is often high, although enforcement of their implementation can prove problematic.

4.9.3 The Structure Plan proposes the development of criteria for the certification of building contractors capable of undertaking various types of construction work. Conditions requiring the use of suitably certified contractors may then be included on development permits (**BEN16**). This proposal has not been pursued, as yet.

4.9.4 The Structure Plan proposes the preparation of comprehensive Building Regulations. It is suggested that all building designs will require Building Regulations approval, with separate applications to be submitted at the same time as the full development permit application (**BEN20**). Implementation has begun in this area. A revised set of Building Regulations has been prepared, in draft form, by an MSU consultant. These draft regulations are currently undergoing extensive consultation procedures.

## 4.10 Environmental Education

### Initiatives in Environmental Education

4.10.1 The Structure Plan includes policies to promote environmental educational programmes, to create positive behavioral patterns and to raise public awareness of conservation, as a means of achieving conservation objectives (**RCO39, UCO16**).

4.10.2 There is a growing emphasis on the environment in the school curriculum, although the topic has sometimes been treated as a second-class, subsidiary subject. In 1991, UNESCO funded a project run by the University of Malta's Faculty of Education, called the Environmental Education Programme. The need to target a wider range of influential adult and professional target groups for environmental education has also been highlighted in the National Environmental Education Strategy Business Plan (October 1995).

4.10.3 Government activities in this sector include: environmental clean-ups; the Xummiemu Club; educational spots on TV; aid to NGOs; and the establishment of the Cleaner Technology Centre. The Planning Authority has also carried out a number of educational initiatives, including: site visits with secondary school students; in-house courses on environmental management; and exhibitions. No environmental education resource centre has yet been established, although encouragement has been given by the Planning Authority to the development of interpretive visitor centres at managed areas. A number of conferences on environmental topics were also organised during the report period.

### Environmental Research

4.10.4 The Planning Authority has also commissioned a certain amount of environmental research and survey work, largely in connection with the local plans programme. Environmental resource surveys have been commissioned for the North West Local Plan and for the Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan. In addition, a range of environmental research is carried out during the EIA process. By sponsoring the postgraduate studies of a number of students, the Authority also promotes environmental research.

4.10.5 A number of conferences on the environment were also organised during the report period, which produced valuable debate on key subjects such as land markets, urban conservation and the integration of environmental issues into economic planning. The Authority is disseminating information about the environment through the publication of reports such as the Structure

Plan Monitoring Report and the projected publication of a set of Sustainability Indicators for Malta.

4.10.6 The University has the potential to play a key role in the dissemination of environmental research and, in turn, to stimulate new work. The number of students studying environment-related disciplines is increasing, particularly due to new postgraduate degrees in environmental management and related topics.

## 4.11 Environmental Appraisal of the Structure Plan

4.11.1 Currently, the Structure Plan does not explicitly address the issue of sustainability. It was formulated before the 1992 *Earth Summit* in Brazil, where Heads of State met for the first time to discuss environmental and developmental problems together, and the subsequent ratification of *Agenda 21*, an action programme for sustainable development. It also came before the publication of the EU's *Fifth Action Programme* for sustainable development, although these initiatives were largely in place by the time the Structure Plan was formally approved. The first review of the Structure Plan will need to take account of the growing international emphasis on sustainable patterns of development. To support this approach, new systems will be required to support an environmental appraisal of the Structure Plan, with associated environmental monitoring.

4.11.2 The Planning Authority is coordinating an in-house consultative process to develop a comprehensive set of sustainability indicators. The objective is to identify a broad range of environmental factors which are likely to be affected by Structure Plan implementation. This will provide the basis for an environmental appraisal matrix to be applied throughout Structure Plan monitoring and review.

4.11.3 Environmental appraisal of plans will be based on a common set of criteria, arising out of the Planning Authority's sustainability indicators. It is envisaged that the current approved Structure Plan will be appraised in order to accomplish the following objectives: to test methodology; to highlight main impacts and whether they contribute or detract from sustainability; to provide ideas that move development in the direction of sustainability; to establish general conclusions; and to help with the drafting of review policies. The process of environmental appraisal will be an iterative one, which will ensure sustainability concerns are fully integrated into the plan making process.

## 5. Framework for Implementation

5.0.1 This section reviews progress in establishing the required legal, procedural and administrative framework for implementation of the Plan. First, progress in establishing effective development control and enforcement systems is evaluated. This is followed by a review of changes in the relevant legal and procedural context over the period 1993-95. Finally, progress in establishing a formal Structure Plan implementation programme is discussed.

### 5.1 Development Control System

5.1.1 There is a fundamental assumption underpinning the Structure Plan that an effective, transparent system of development control can be implemented in Malta. This is a major assumption, given the widespread flouting of land-use and development controls in recent years. Implementation of an effective development control system, and the achievement of a high level of compliance from developers and the general public, can only be a gradual process. Nevertheless, without such compliance it will be impossible to manage development in accordance with the wide range of strategic land-use policies included in the Plan.

5.1.2 During the first three years of Structure Plan implementation, establishing the legal and administrative framework for effective land-use planning has been the major concern, and the chief success, of the Planning Authority. There is now a clear political consensus that the system is here to stay.

5.1.3 The Structure Plan team prepared a draft *Development Planning Act*, subsequently approved by parliament in 1992. A wide range of other supporting legislation has since been prepared by the Planning Authority over the period 1993-95. A number of *Policy and Design Guidance* documents have also been prepared. However, the status of these documents remains uncertain; they have yet to be issued as Development Orders in accordance with the Development Planning Act of 1992.

5.1.4 A more detailed policy framework for development control is being established through the Local Plans programme. The Planning Authority approved a Local Plans Programme in 1993. The first Local Plan to be completed, for Marsaxlokk Bay, was approved in May 1995.

5.1.5 The Development Planning Act paved the way for a major step forward in the transparency of the planning process. The Local Planning process has incorporated a high level of public consultation throughout. Advance publicity is now given to all development permit applications. Any interested party can make representations to the Development Control Commission (DCC). Commission and Board meetings are open to the public. The agenda is published a week in advance and all decisions are made available for public inspection. These measures enable more informed involvement in decision-making by both DCC members and other interested parties. Applicants have extensive rights of appeal.

#### Consistency and quality of decisions

5.1.6 The Planning Directorate undertook an audit in 1995 to review the quality and consistency of development control decisions in the light of Structure Plan policy. The first *Development Control File Audit* was undertaken in March 1995. An estimated 40% of files were regarded as satisfactory in all important respects. Many of the defects identified in the remaining 60% of cases were minor. However, almost 25% of files revealed a

serious lack of consideration of appropriate material considerations or policies, or used inappropriate reasons for refusal.

5.1.7 Senior development control staff have identified a number of areas of policy where the DCC interpretation appears, on occasion, to conflict with the Structure Plan:

- Policy for *Urban Conservation Areas* is not applied consistently by the DCC. The Committee does not always give weight to the advice of the Heritage Advisory Committee.
- Divergent views are commonplace relating to whether a proposal constitutes *bad neighbour* development (**BEN1**) and whether the *quality of urban design* (**BEN2**) is adequate.
- Exceptions are often granted for individual new dwellings outside the development zone, apparently without due regard for **SET11** (which prohibits urban development outside committed built-up areas).

5.1.8 A range of initiatives have been implemented to improve the quality of processing:

- vetting by senior management of development control reports;
- return of files to the case officer for re-working, where necessary;
- establishing an in-house *continuing technical development* programme;
- consolidation of the *Major Projects Group*; and
- preparation of a range of *assessment sheets* to guide case officers in their appraisal of development permit applications.

5.1.9 In addition to inconsistencies in the application of Structure Plan policy within the Planning Directorate, there are differences of interpretation between the Planning Directorate and the DCC. The DCC rejected 25% of the Planning Directorate's 1,460 recommendations for refusal in 1995, although only 1% of recommendations for approval were overturned. However, it must be stressed that the DCC sometimes re-negotiates a scheme, in order to effect a positive recommendation.

## Enforcement

5.1.10 The Structure Plan seeks to overturn a deeply-entrenched culture of permissive development, establishing in its place a regulated approach subject to strategic and local-level planning policies. Without very determined enforcement, this attempt at profound cultural change would almost certainly fail. The political and organisational determination required to implement effective enforcement in this environment should not be under-stated; it would be unrealistic to expect overnight success in this area.

5.1.11 Control over unauthorised development has become progressively more effective throughout the first three years of Structure Plan implementation. The Enforcement Unit handled over 1,400 cases in 1995, compared with 840 in 1993. They have progressively switched from pursuing action through the Courts to taking action under its own powers under the Development Planning Act 1992. This is proving both more effective and speedier.

5.1.12 In 1993, the Planning Authority took action to carry out court orders and demolish a number of unauthorised structures. Further demolitions took place in 1994, including the removal of an extensive, incomplete development of terraced houses near Attard. Demolition operations became more frequent in 1995, with 26 actions involving the removal of illegal structures. The threat of direct action has also led to the removal of infringements by the developers themselves. It is now planned that *direct action* operations will take place regularly throughout Malta and Gozo.

## 5.2 Legal and Procedural Context

5.2.1 The Structure Plan includes a number of policies relating to the wider legal and procedural context for the operations of the Planning Authority. Emphasis was placed on: the introduction of comprehensive land ownership registration (19.7.6); legislation for multiple-owner schemes (19.13); and the use of competitive development tendering for major projects (19.14).

5.2.2 Considerable progress has been made in the introduction of *Land Ownership Registration*. Appropriate procedures are now in place, including recording of all registrations using a Geographic Information System. Current policy ensures that all new transfers of property are registered, including most of the property recently acquired by the government from ecclesiastical entities. Achievement of land registration for the entire country will, inevitably, take many years.

5.2.3 The Structure Plan advocates the application of *multi-ownership* arrangements for a wide range of specialist housing developments, including: housing for the elderly; specialist markets such as health farms and language schools; low-cost housing projects; residential units in marina developments; refurbishment projects in historic properties; and tourism projects (19.12). Multi-ownership involving freehold sale, as described in the Structure Plan, is not currently being pursued. However, controlled forms of multi-ownership which avoid the intrusive marketing characteristics of timeshare properties are being developed within the tourism sector.

5.2.4 Prior to the Structure Plan, Government tended to rely on ad-hoc proposals from individual developers for private development on publicly-owned land. The Structure Plan advocates a more pro-active approach, based on a competitive development tendering process structured around the issue of a development brief (19.14). Development briefs have been (or will be) used as a basis for *competitive tendering* on the following projects:

- i. *Manoel Island/Tigné Point*; development consortium appointed;
- ii. *White Rocks*; selection of consortium in progress;
- iii. *Government Administration Centre*; draft development brief prepared;
- iv. *Marine Aquarium*; development brief being prepared; and
- v. *Fort Ricasoli*; development brief being prepared.

## 5.3 Implementation Programme

5.3.1 This section of the Monitoring Report considers progress in the development of an implementation strategy for the Structure Plan and identifies related issues for Structure Plan review. It should be noted that there is no formal requirement to develop an implementation strategy under the existing Structure Plan.

5.3.2 A *Preliminary Implementation Strategy* paper was prepared by the Planning Directorate in February 1992. The full *Structure Plan Implementation Strategy and Planning Authority's Role Paper* was produced in September 1993 and was formally approved in principle by the Authority in October 1993. A detailed *Action Programme* was endorsed by the Planning Authority in March 1994.



- 5.3.3 The implementation strategy consists of eight main elements :
- i. positive involvement in, and technical support for, development control (DC);
  - ii. identification and promotion of key projects for implementation;
  - iii. producing a Structure Plan communications strategy;
  - iv. improved capital budget planning and allocation;
  - v. improved liaison and coordination with public and private sectors;
  - vi. monitoring and review of the Structure Plan;
  - vii. preparation of Local Plans; and
  - viii. preparation of Subject Plans, policy guidance, Action Plans and Development Briefs.

5.3.4 Following consideration by the Planning Authority, two additional items were added:

- ix. establish relations with the national executives of the main political parties; and
- x. prepare an Integrated Development Programme.

Progress on each element of the implementation strategy is briefly reviewed below.

### **Positive DC involvement and technical support for the DC process**

5.3.5 The *Major Projects Group* has been operating successfully for over two years. The assessment of major projects is now subject to improved consistency, with the application of a comprehensive policy framework and regular progress review. Assessment reports are now more comprehensive, with an improved structure. Fully worked examples of negotiations, assessment reports, correspondence, draft permits and final approvals have now been prepared for a number of major projects. A seminar series was held in 1993 to discuss and explain relationships between planning and developers and to provide training in negotiating skills.

### **Project Identification and Promotion**

5.3.6 There has been substantial progress on a number of key Structure Plan projects:

- *Fort Chambray*; Development Brief prepared and development permits issued.
- *Manoel Island/Tigné Point*; Development Brief prepared, developer selection process completed and outline scheme proposals developed according to the Brief.
- *Ta' Cenc*; Terms of reference for the Heritage Park Management Plan completed and technical studies prepared.
- *Golf Subject Study*; Phase 1 report was submitted and is still under review.
- *Fort Ricasoli*; Development Brief prepared in draft form. Registrations of interest released and a report on interested companies completed.
- *Revitalising the Three Cities*; preparatory work completed and incorporated into the draft Grand Harbour Local Plan.

### **Structure Plan Communications Strategy**

5.3.7 A draft Communications Strategy for the Structure Plan was prepared in August 1992. There has been little follow-up on this, as yet.

## Capital Budget Planning and Allocation

5.3.8 Capital budget request guidelines for public sector initiatives were issued by the Budget Office, Ministry of Finance in September 1992. No action was taken by any department or parastatal on these guidelines. No further progress has been achieved.

## Public/Private Sector Liaison and Coordination

5.3.9 The Planning Consultative Committee and Interdepartmental Planning Committee have now met several times. Relationships have been developed with many Government departments and parastatals and are steadily improving.

5.3.10 The Structure Plan indicates that relationships should cover the following departments and agencies:

- Health (Policy **SOC1**);
- Education (Policy **SOC10, RCO40**);
- Agriculture (Policy **RCO6**);
- Environment (Policy **RCO6, MCO4**);
- Care of the Elderly (Policy **SOC17**);
- Tourism (Policy **TOU2**; liaison has been established in this area);
- Civil Aviation (Policy **AVN2, AVN3**);
- Enemalta (Policy **PUT22**);
- Telemalta (Policy **PUT24**); and
- Posts (Policy **PUT27**).

5.3.11 Whilst Local Councils were not in existence when the Structure Plan was drafted, it is clear that they should also be incorporated into the Planning Authority's programme of liaison and coordination.

## Structure Plan Monitoring and Review

5.3.12 The Structure Plan Monitoring Programme was completed in January 1996 and formally approved by the Planning Authority in February 1996. The monitoring process began in July 1995 and this is the first Monitoring Report. Subsequent Monitoring Reports will be released in May/June each year. The first Structure Plan Review is scheduled for 1997/98.

## Local Planning

5.3.13 The Planning Authority approved the *Local Plan Preparation* paper in 1993. This set out the form and content of Local Plans, designated the seven Local Plan areas and established a programme for Local Plan preparation. The Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan was formally approved in January 1995. Work is now at an advanced stage on the *Grand Harbour Local Plan* and the *North-West Local Plan*. Work is also in progress on the *North Harbours Local Plan*.

## **Subject Plans, Policy Guidance, Action Area Plans and Development Briefs**

5.3.14 The terms of reference for the *Yachting Development Subject Study* was completed in February 1995. Stages I and II of this Study were prepared and are now awaiting final review. Detailed proposals for three Subject Studies are now at an advanced stage. These cover: tourism and recreation; commerce and industry; and housing. An extensive range of policy guidance material has been approved by the Planning Authority. Draft *Action Plans* have been prepared for Ta' Qali and Pembroke. A number of *Development Briefs* have been prepared and approved, either by Government or the Planning Authority.

## **Establish relations with the Political Parties**

5.3.15 The Planning Authority met with the PN, MLP and AD in 1995.

## **Integrated Development Programme**

5.3.16 An *Integrated Development Programme* proposal document was prepared in August 1992 and the EC Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave written comments in August 1993. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Finance did not respond.

## 6. Summary of Issues for Review

6.0.1 This section identifies a number of issues emerging from the Structure Plan monitoring programme which will need to be considered during the review process. These issues may address a need to either change existing policy or develop new approaches to additional problem areas. Weaknesses or delays in implementation, where policy appears to be sound, are not dealt with in this section.

### 6.1 Settlement Pattern

#### Housing land surplus

6.1.1 The Structure Plan over-allocated land for housing; current allocations are likely to suffice for the next thirty years, at least. This creates a situation where the Planning Authority has limited influence over the development of settlement patterns throughout the Structure Plan period and beyond. The settlement patterns determined in the Temporary Provision Schemes of 1988 will continue to unfold for several decades.

6.1.2 So far, the planning system has failed to match land release to development needs. This is a critical and fundamental weakness which must be addressed in the review. The revised Structure Plan needs to: apply clear and agreed methodologies for evaluating development needs; establish development thresholds for the short and medium-term; and develop mechanisms for the control of land release in line with those thresholds.

6.1.3 The current housing land surplus raises a number of policy issues:

- Is there any potential for introducing some phasing to the release of Schemed land, linked to housing allocations for each Local Plan area?
- Is there scope for re-allocating some residential land within Scheme for other purposes, for which allocations in the near future are required?
- Can the status of land zoned for development in the Temporary Provision Schemes be reconsidered where other Structure Plan objectives are jeopardised (e.g. land on valley sides)?

6.1.4 The Structure Plan Review must also address the operation of the housing land market in further detail. The current surplus and continuing pressure for extensions to the Temporary Provision Schemes are fostered by continuing demand for land for investment purposes. Yet the treatment of land and property as pure investment commodities is thwarting a number of environmental goals. Although solutions to this issue are likely to extend beyond the remit of the Planning Authority, the Structure Plan Review will provide an appropriate opportunity for a full consideration of appropriate policy options at a national level.

#### Ineffective settlement strategy

6.1.5 The geographic pattern of development is one of dispersal. Despite policy **SET2**, there has been a continuing loss of population in the inner harbour conurbation. The most rapid growth is taking place in the outer regions, especially the north-west and south-east. The current distribution of vacant housing land within the Temporary Provision Schemes suggests that these trends will continue.

6.1.6 Relevant issues for the review include the following:

- Is it possible to intervene in the development of the Temporary Provision Schemes areas to encourage more sustainable and rational settlement patterns?
- Can regeneration of the inner harbour areas be achieved to reverse population decline?
- What regeneration strategies are appropriate to create attractive development opportunities within the inner harbour area?
- Can regeneration be achieved in the inner harbour areas without compromising on urban conservation policy?
- Can parking, traffic and transport difficulties in the inner harbour area be resolved to improve the attractiveness of the region as a residential area?
- Is partial redevelopment likely to be necessary to reverse the situation, or can the objective be achieved through rehabilitation?

## **Urban regeneration**

6.1.7 The village core areas are not, in general, thriving communities. There is evidence of loss of population, of an aging population and of continuing physical decay. Issues to be addressed include the following:

- Can modern requirements, especially for traffic access and parking, be accommodated within these areas?
- Are existing strategies for parking restraint within the village cores working?
- Are financial incentives appropriate to encourage rehabilitation within village core areas?
- What opportunities can be realised through the redevelopment of vacant and under-utilised sites within inner urban areas?

6.1.8 Whilst there is a willingness to invest in some of the more fashionable urban areas, these tend to be within the outer areas. Such investment is to be encouraged, but the dangers of town cramming need to be avoided:

- Can carrying capacities for existing urban areas be defined?
- Are standards of open space provision and upper limits for residential densities required?

6.1.9 Property conversion is relatively rare, except where dwellings are converted into shops. There is little incentive for property conversion, whilst other development opportunities are so widespread:

- Can incentives be provided to facilitate appropriate conversions, to encourage the efficient use of buildings?

## **Creating balanced settlements**

6.1.10 The provision of social and community facilities remains largely ad-hoc. Where facilities are provided, localised traffic and congestion problems are often generated. Elsewhere, residential areas are lacking in facilities; this encourages a high volume of car-borne trips for convenience shopping trips which could be avoided, with carefully planned local provision. There is little scope to improve provision on virgin land within the Temporary Provision Schemes, since most of the replanning areas have now also been reserved for housing. Creative solutions are needed to address this problem in both existing and new residential areas, encouraging the development of community, commercial and recreational centres wherever appropriate.

6.1.11 Solutions are needed to cater for major new residential areas which have developed without a community/commercial core, as well as for the provision of effective local and district services in individual housing areas.

6.1.12 The Structure Plan's reactive, control-based approach (in policy SET7<sup>14</sup>) is not working. Proactive planning will be required, through:

- identification of appropriate sites for social and community provision;
- preparation of development briefs; and
- facilitation of land assembly, where necessary.

Where community and commercial facilities are lacking, the Local Plans are seeking appropriate sites for future provision. Strategic support for this approach would be valuable.

## 6.2 Built Environment

6.2.1 The Built Environment section of the Structure Plan incorporates a number of policies to define Development Permit application procedures. The requirement to include such policies within a strategic planning document has been superseded. Several aspects are dealt with in the enabling legislation, whilst more detailed procedural issues are covered in associated regulations and guidelines.

6.2.2 The scope of this section requires some redefinition in the Structure Plan Review. Since the Planning Authority is a unitary authority, responsible for all development control matters, it is appropriate to include a wider range of design standards and guidelines than would normally be found in a UK Structure Plan. Standards for residential densities, landscaping, open space provision and access provision, for example, may form appropriate material for this section.

### Design Standards and Guidelines

6.2.3 There has been limited progress in improving the quality of housing design within the Temporary Provision Schemes. New residential design and performance standards are now urgently required. More intervention is also required to improve the design of existing industrial areas. The Planning Authority needs a more proactive role in this area, in support of the Malta Development Corporation's environmental improvement programme. Appropriate standards and guidelines for industrial and commercial development are required.

### Construction Management

6.2.4 The need for more universal solutions to the lack of construction and site management, which has a direct effect on the quality of the urban environment, is still being felt. The current reliance on planning permit conditions has not been effective. Appropriate standards and regulations are required. Some of these problems will be addressed through the implementation of new Building Regulations, with associated increases in the level of inspection on construction sites. However, additional solutions need to be evaluated to tackle this problem, possibly including the use of certification and the introduction of fiscal disincentives for practices such as shell-building.

6.2.5 For major projects, there is also a need for the use of checklists in the development and monitoring of construction management plans.

### Access for All

6.2.6 Access difficulties for the elderly, disabled and those with young children present a growing issue. Prevailing standards are low. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of the accessibility issue. The elderly

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<sup>14</sup> SET7 identifies priority land-uses for urban sites, in general terms. Preference is to be given to community, employment and retail uses, rather than housing.

population is expected to grow rapidly. Progress has been made in establishing guidelines, but implementation is weak, especially in the public environment.

6.2.7 The issue is treated fairly superficially in the current Structure Plan. Accessibility considerations need to be incorporated into a wider umbrella of policies dealing with urban design issues, transport, settlement patterns, social and community provision and housing.

## **6.3 Housing**

### **Matching housing land provision to housing need**

6.3.1 Overheating in the housing sector has been facilitated by excess land allocations. The Structure Plan acknowledges that it is good practice to ensure a rolling 5-year provision of housing land, yet in fact provided much more. A more controlled approach to the release of housing land is vital, if the quality of residential areas is to be improved and some management of settlement growth is to be achieved. Fiscal measures may also be required to control the flow of credit for housing development.

6.3.2 As a fundamental principle, it is vital that housing land release be tied to real housing need. Phased provision is required, with continuous monitoring to ensure that a reasonable choice of sites and locations is always available.

### **Regional assessment of housing need**

6.3.3 The current Structure Plan does not incorporate policies dealing with housing requirements at regional level. The tendency has been to assume that a past record of growth will imply a need to provide more housing land in the future. The revised Structure Plan should provide a regional assessment of housing need as an input to site-specific housing allocations through the local planning process.

6.3.4 Demographic estimates of housing need must be evaluated in conjunction with assessments of the carrying capacity of individual settlements, as well as strategic considerations regarding settlement patterns. Numerical housing allocations for each Local Plan area should be determined at the strategic planning level and incorporated into the Structure Plan Review process. The review may also provide guidance on the mix of housing types required within each local plan area and the allocation of additional housing units to selected individual settlements.

### **Utilising the stock of vacant property**

6.3.5 To deal with the after-effects of overheating, effective solutions will be required to deal with the expanded stock of vacant property. Further expansion of the rented sector will be vital. Policy on conversion out of residential use may need to be re-evaluated. Fiscal penalties for retaining vacant housing stock may also be required. As noted earlier, phasing of further new development may be a requirement, to allow demand to catch up with supply.

## **The planning system and house price regulation**

6.3.6 Concern over house prices underpinned the vast land allocations in the 1988 Schemes, yet the scale of the allocations has failed to achieve effective price control in the longer term. The housing market is distorted by the continuing investment attractiveness of property. Allocating more land is not necessarily an effective mechanism for restraining prices, where demand is linked to investment aspirations rather than real need.

6.3.7 Effective planning requires that land and property be priced realistically, to reflect the environmental costs of development. The rise in property prices has fostered two important trends, each consistent with Structure Plan goals; a high level of property redevelopment and a tendency to develop at a higher density:

- Property redevelopment within existing built-up areas has been strong in selected locations. Whilst the dangers of town cramming must be recognised, policy measures to encourage this redevelopment trend should be evaluated (e.g. review of height and density restrictions in appropriate locations).
- Development is already tending to occur at a higher density; more maisonettes and flats are being built. Household sizes have been declining over a long period and this trend continues. In future, strategic assessments of housing need must take account of both the changing household size profile and the tendency towards higher density development.

### **Special needs housing**

6.3.8 Rapid growth of the elderly population indicates the need for specialised housing. The implications for housing design and standards are not yet being adequately addressed. This is an urgent problem, given the rapid pace of demographic change; an increase of over 50% is anticipated in the 60+ population over the period 1990-2010.

6.3.9 The goal is to gear specialist housing provision for the elderly to local needs. A national strategy for special needs housing is urgently required, supported by appropriate needs assessments and design guidance, placed within a wider framework of appropriate social policy.

### **Government housing policy**

6.3.10 Rather than concentrating subsidy on the provision of new housing on virgin land, any available housing subsidy from public sources should serve environmental as well as social goals by facilitating the refurbishment of urban dwellings or by securing redevelopment of poorly-utilised sites or sub-standard units. This trend is already becoming established in housing policy, but further development of the approach is required within the Structure Plan Review process, in conjunction with the relevant public sector housing agencies and departments.

## **6.4 Social and Community Facilities**

### **Interdepartmental Planning**

6.4.1 Coordinated interdepartmental working is a vital pre-requisite for the effective planning of social and community facilities. Whilst planning activity is becoming more sophisticated within individual departments, the integrated planning approach envisaged by the Structure Plan has not yet materialised. There is little flexibility in the current Structure Plan policies, which require a



standard twenty year planning period and do not consider interim phasing requirements.

6.4.2 It is suggested that:

- Provision is made in the Structure Plan Review for shorter term planning periods, probably linked to an overall 20 year strategy; and
- Relationships between the Planning Authority and relevant departments and ministries are strengthened. The need for development planning needs to be stressed so that the Planning Authority can assess future demands for development permission. The Planning Authority can help by providing support in terms of data provision (e.g. population projections, land availability) and holding regular meetings to evaluate and monitor the requirements of each department.

## **Changing settlement patterns: servicing the new communities**

6.4.3 Settlement patterns are changing and the distribution of social and community facilities needs to change accordingly. The Temporary Provision Schemes have largely been implemented as housing estates, with minimal planned provision in their layouts for commercial centres and community facilities. Whilst mobility levels have also increased, the objective is to secure local-level provision of social and community facilities, wherever possible, to minimise the number and length of car-borne trips.

6.4.4 Particular problem sectors include education, health and commercial facilities. Proactive planning for these sectors is now required, allocating and reserving appropriate sites. A clear locational strategy is required in each case.

## **Land safeguarding**

6.4.5 The Structure Plan includes numerous references to the safeguarding of land. More thorough evaluation of land-take and locational requirements is required, linked wherever possible to appropriate master plans for major facilities.

## **Private sector versus public sector provision**

6.4.6 The role of the private sector in the provision of social and community facilities is also an issue. The case for variations in planning criteria must be evaluated for schools, hospitals, private clinics, homes for the elderly and other facilities. There are also implications for the level of demand for state facilities. Growth in the private sector is adding to uncertainty over patterns of demand for many government social and community facilities.

6.4.7 Private schools, in particular, require attention during Structure Plan Review. Following approval of the Planning Authority's Private Schools Policy, appropriate adaptation of the Structure Plan is required. This should be linked to a wider government strategy for private education. A sectoral study investigating land-use, land-take and demand and supply issues may be necessary, investigating the implications of a number of scenarios including:

- a falling school population; and
- a decrease in demand for state education, leading to under-utilisation of schools and their possible re-use.

## **Expansion of the University**

6.4.8 Given the rapid rate of growth of the University during the monitoring period, the long-term alternatives for continuing development need to be investigated during Structure Plan Review. Building on the framework of

recent consultations on the University Master Plan, further policy development work is required:

- land-use and space management within the University needs to be investigated;
- the possibility of re-locating ancillary University facilities outside the University may be considered;
- anticipated patterns of future growth, and associated land-use requirements up to 2015, need to be established in close consultation with the University.

## **Care of the Elderly**

6.4.9 The Structure Plan has addressed the problem of an aging population in general terms (**SOC18, SOC20**). An updated strategy is now required, leading to greater coordination amongst the relevant agencies:

- the full planning implications of local-level provision of facilities for the elderly need to be addressed;
- standards of access for the mobility impaired, and the implementation of such standards, need to be improved; and
- further work is required to investigate the likely pattern of future demand for homes for the elderly and to evaluate the scope for further public and private sector provision.

6.4.10 The Structure Plan deals with the issue of the elderly and the disabled together. These two issues are closely related and projected growth amongst the elderly must lead to increased emphasis on the care of the disabled. However, disabled citizens from all age groups exist within the local community. The Structure Plan Review must consider the requirements of these sections of the community in greater depth.

## **Community services - joint use of school facilities**

6.4.11 Little progress has been made in achieving the joint use of school facilities (**SOC14**) and further work is required to establish the feasibility of this approach.

6.4.12 A strategic approach to recreational provision has been lacking, to date. A range of policies is required in the Structure Plan Review to improve the standard and distribution of recreational provision, with close attention to mechanisms for implementation and the potential for private sector provision.

# **6.5 Commerce and Industry**

## **Provision for industrial growth**

6.5.1 Economic growth has been strong throughout the monitoring period, resulting in consistent growth in employment, an acceleration in consumer spending and additional demand for all types of commercial and industrial floorspace. Additional provision for industrial activity is likely to be required in the Structure Plan Review; employment growth has exceeded Structure Plan expectations by a large margin. The Structure Plan aims to ensure that a range of appropriate sites are available for industrial and commercial restructuring, modernisation and expansion. Available evidence suggests that there is an inadequate quantity and variety of land available for development to meet this objective. Land is currently being released for industrial and commercial development on an ad-hoc basis, outside the development zone.

6.5.2 The Malta Development Corporation needs to adopt a more flexible approach to the support of industrial development, yet they currently have insufficient resources and land to support a more broadly-based strategy.

Their available land is excessively concentrated in one location; potential investors require a choice of appropriate sites.

## **Strategy for the location of Commerce and Industry**

6.5.3 A clear strategy for the location of commercial and industrial development is required as part of the Structure Plan Review, taking full account of the requirement for sustainable patterns of development. This must be developed in close consultation with the Malta Development Corporation and other interested parties. Key issues to be addressed include:

- the need to relate growth of commercial and industrial centres to recent spatial patterns of population growth;
- the environmental costs and benefits of alternative strategies for either concentration or dispersal of employment growth;
- the potential for strengthening and revitalising the Grand Harbour as an industrial area, rather than seeking to relocate heavy industry away from this focus of activity;
- further development of policy and proposals to encourage recycling of previously developed industrial and commercial land and premises;
- an increased emphasis on support for industry supplying the local market, and for small and very small enterprises in particular;
- the potential requirements of the distribution/warehousing sector; and
- the future commercial role of Valletta and Floriana (see 6.5.6-6.5.11).

## **Garage industry**

6.5.4 The need for additional sites for garage industry has emerged, repeatedly, at a local level. This issue must be addressed in the Structure Plan Review; the problem is sufficiently widespread to require a strategic planning solution. It links to wider initiatives aiming to broaden the pattern of support for industrial growth and offer more to the small entrepreneur.

## **Retail modernisation**

6.5.5 Retail modernisation is happening rapidly, but on an ad-hoc and unplanned basis. There is now an urgent need to impose a strategy, shaping and channeling development into appropriate locations and moulding a strong and sustainable retail hierarchy. A clear development strategy for retail warehouses and showrooms is likely to be required; the Structure Plan fails to distinguish adequately between the requirements of industrial warehousing units and retail warehouses/showrooms.

## **Small-scale office development**

6.5.6 Current Structure Plan policy relating to small-scale office development is vaguely specified and poorly drafted (Structure Plan paragraph 10.5). A clearer strategic policy framework for small-scale office development is required.

## **The long-term future of Valletta/Floriana**

6.5.7 The Grand Harbour Local Plan, currently being prepared, is addressing a broad range of land-use planning issues affecting Valletta and Floriana. The Structure Plan Review will need to update the strategic context for the further development of the capital city, taking a longer-term view than the Local Plan.

6.5.8 The capital appears to be commercially strong, despite continuing concerns over a lack of evening activity. The retail centre is lively, there are strong cultural facilities and there are high levels of commercial activity. There is already considerable private sector refurbishment activity within Valletta and some evidence of demand for office development (which is currently being

resisted). Redevelopment of the Opera House site will strengthen this position further.

6.5.9 The continuing loss of population in Valletta is a vital strategic concern; this relates to the broader issues of urban regeneration and the Structure Plan's failing settlement strategy.

6.5.10 The current Structure Plan proposes the development of a Government Administration Centre outside Valletta. Since the proposal to develop such a Centre in Floriana has recently been withdrawn, this policy will probably need to be updated. This issue is closely bound up with the current constraint on private sector office development in the capital city. The future for private sector commercial property within the capital, particularly in combination with a Structure Plan proposal for a declining Government presence within the city, is a major area of uncertainty which cannot be tolerated for long.

6.5.11 The Structure Plan Review will also need to address:

- delay in resolving parking, pedestrianisation, access and transport difficulties in Valletta and Floriana; and
- slow progress in urgently required maintenance of the historical fabric of Valletta.

## **6.6 Agriculture, horticulture and fisheries**

### **Agricultural intensification**

6.6.1 The loss of agricultural land, and the decline of the agriculture industry in general, have decelerated. There is now considerable investment and development activity in this sector, although the industry is not a major contributor to the economy and employment is largely part-time. The fragmentation of land holdings continues, compounding the trend towards part-time farming. The Structure Plan Review will need to evaluate mechanisms for addressing this problem, perhaps through land consolidation legislation or the encouragement of agricultural cooperatives.

6.6.2 The Structure Plan outlines a strongly supportive approach for the agricultural sector, but this has not materialised in practice. Agricultural projects are treated with caution and are generally processed very carefully. This gap between policy and practice needs to be closed. However, policies towards agriculture may need to be adjusted to reflect the real environmental conflicts inherent in much of the pressure for agricultural intensification. The stance that agricultural development is always an appropriate land-use for the countryside may need to be modified. Some intensive agricultural activities are more akin to industrial processes and perhaps need to be sited accordingly.

### **Relationship with the EU**

6.6.3 The Structure Plan Review will need to address Malta's relationship with the EU in further detail, in the light of current Government policy (see section 2.1.8).

### **Husbandry of the countryside**

6.6.4 The need for a vital agricultural sector extends beyond the industry's contribution to the economy. Agriculture is not just another industry but is responsible for the husbandry of much of the Maltese environment. Agricultural development in the countryside needs to coexist with a variety of tourist and recreational uses. The Structure Plan Review must ensure that strategic land-use policy for rural areas reflects this multiple role adequately.

## **Managing further development of aquaculture**

6.6.5 A clear strategy for the growth of the aquaculture industry is required. A number of viable units have now been established and there has been progress in the development of appropriate controls. Conflict with marine conservation policy is likely to become an issue if further growth in the industry is envisaged.

6.6.6 Initial progress in aquaculture management needs further development. Early initiatives in establishing and working to policy and design guidance now need to be followed up. Policy guidance needs updating in the light of experience. Locational policy may require review as thinking on the designation of Marine Conservation Area unfolds. Monitoring and enforcement need to be strengthened.

## **6.7 Minerals**

### **Need for demand management**

6.7.1 Current policy places considerable emphasis on safeguarding minerals production and on maximising self-sufficiency in building materials. There may now be a case for a shift of emphasis, given the experience of:

- recent over-production and falling demand in the minerals (softstone) industry;
- high levels of wastage and associated solid waste management problems;
- conflict with environmental protection objectives in the hardstone industry, due to growth in demand and the concentration of workable resources in environmentally sensitive areas;
- continuing very high environmental costs of minerals production and the failure, so far, to implement an adequate system of restoration bonds; and
- an over-heated construction sector, with levels of development exceeding real needs.

6.7.2 The evidence suggests that Malta is quarrying increasing volumes of stone it doesn't yet need, at a high environmental cost. A proportion of the material which is used for construction purposes is contributing to an excess stock of vacant and under-utilised property. There are strong environmental arguments for re-evaluating the Structure Plan's stance on minerals production, with a growing emphasis on demand management, perhaps through the use of a higher proportion of imported materials. Is it still appropriate to achieve self-sufficiency in the use of building materials, other than cement, given the associated environmental costs?

### **Environmental controls on the minerals industry**

6.7.3 The existing Structure Plan contains extensive measures to improve environmental controls over the minerals industry. Implementation and enforcement of these measures is proving troublesome. The Structure Plan Review will need to appraise existing policy in the light of recent experience, with particular attention to the introduction of additional measures to facilitate implementation. Particular problem areas relate to: the issue of Planning Authority permits to existing operators; Environmental Impact Assessments in the minerals industry; and afteruse and reclamation.

## 6.8 Tourism and Recreation

### Declining Share in World Tourism

6.8.1 The Mediterranean is gradually losing market share to the Caribbean and other long-haul tourist destinations. The Structure Plan Review will need to evaluate the long-term implications of this trend:

- Is it appropriate to retain the same degree of reliance on the tourism industry?
- What can be done to minimise the damage caused by this market shift?

### Mass markets and niche markets

6.8.2 Malta has for some years been encouraging the growth of niche markets and seeking to reduce reliance on classic mass market summer tourism. Shifts are occurring, with reduced reliance on the UK market. This raises a number of issues for the Structure Plan Review:

- What are the implications for accommodation policy? Is there a need to move away from the current locational strategy, which targets traditional tourist centres for further growth?
- What are the desired niche markets and what environmental impacts will be associated with their development?
- Are the appropriate planning policies in place to foster the growth of appropriate niches (such as diving and yachting)?
- Is investment in the new niches happening fast enough to substitute for the decline in traditional markets?
- If mass market summer tourism declines, what are the planning implications of excess capacity in those locations which are reliant on Malta's old tourism formula?

6.8.3 Since the Structure Plan was approved, specialist studies have been undertaken in the golf and yachting sectors. A *Yachting Development Subject Plan* will be in place by the time the Review takes place. Existing Structure Plan policy, calling for a number of Subject Plans relating to specific niche markets, will need updating in the light of these studies.

### Tourist Accommodation

6.8.4 Tourist accommodation has grown at a faster rate than anticipated in the Structure Plan. Potential for over-supply is now a concern, particularly in the context of a strategy to increase tourist expenditure rather than tourist numbers. This raises some critical issues:

- Should the revised Structure Plan endorse a moratorium on the development of new tourist accommodation? If so, of what form?
- What exceptions should be made, if any?
- How can planning policies be adjusted to encourage further investment in the refurbishment and upgrading of existing facilities, rather than further additions to the stock of tourist accommodation?

### Coastal Impacts

6.8.5 In the tourism sector, activity outside the development zone is less of an issue than the management of major projects in sensitive coastal locations within planned development areas. Issues to be addressed by the Review include the following:

- Is there enough control over major tourism accommodation projects on the coast?
- Is the environmental impact of new tourism accommodation projects on the coast acceptable, both individually and cumulatively?

- If additional controls over the intensity of development and the quality of design are required, what form should they take?

## **Quality of Tourism Product**

6.8.6 Quality of the tourism product as a whole remains a major concern. The case for subsidy to the industry requires careful analysis. The need to directly subsidise the upgrading of tourism establishments may be questioned; the tourism industry in Malta has demonstrated its ability to raise large volumes of development capital, for both upgrading and new build projects, throughout the monitoring period. However, upgrading of the entire tourist infrastructure is required and public sector investment is vital in this wider context. Examples of wider upgrading requirements related to the tourist product include: visitor facilities at key attractions; provision for coastal and countryside recreation; the degraded fabric of Malta's heritage; improvements to road infrastructure; and the need for an improved public transport system.

## **Weak recreational strategy**

6.8.7 As disposable incomes have increased, recreation has become one of Malta's growth industries. The planning strategy for the recreation, sport and entertainment sectors is far from clear. Informal, car-borne recreation is creating conflicts and environmental problems, particularly in coastal and countryside areas. New attractions, such as heritage trails and parkways, are being created in the countryside. Whilst this is encouraged by the Structure Plan, careful assessment of the environmental impact of increased coastal and rural recreation is required. The Structure Plan Review will need to clarify the strategy for the location of recreational, sports and entertainment facilities.

## **Nightlife**

6.8.8 The development of entertainment and nightlife facilities has taken place on an ad-hoc basis. The current concentration of facilities in Paceville raises major planning issues which need to be addressed at both strategic and local levels. Environmental improvement and the management of traffic, access and pedestrian priority are local planning issues. However, Paceville also has a national role which requires strategic evaluation:

- Can Malta's primary entertainment centre absorb further growth?
- Would the dispersal of new facilities be appropriate or feasible?

A strategy is required for the accommodation of further expansion in this sector in additional locations.

## 6.9 Transport

### **Integrated transportation strategy**

6.9.1 An integrated transportation strategy is required, probably as part of the Structure Plan Review. Improved coordination in the planning of road network improvements and public transport planning is vital. The impacts of further improvements in the road network and in levels of parking provision on overall traffic growth require careful evaluation. Investment in measures to improve the quality and convenience of public transport services needs to be evaluated against comparable, cost-benefit criteria.

### **Radical upgrading of public transport**

6.9.2 Development in the public transport sector has been disappointingly slow. Whilst vehicle traffic growth has continued, patronage of the public transport system has declined. Agreement on a package of improvement measures was a major achievement, but implementation has been slow. So far, action has been limited to the repainting of buses and introduction of some new routes, although up to 100 new buses should come on stream in 1996. A much more radical and effective approach will be required, if prevailing trends are to be reversed. A major qualitative upgrading of the service is vital, together with the provision of a wider range of public transport options.

### **Enhancing the road network**

6.9.3 The road building and enhancement programme is proceeding, but not according to Structure Plan strategy. Road network improvement priorities now need to be reviewed. The impact of network improvements on further traffic growth need to be considered, particularly on routes where effective public transport alternatives can be created.

### **Restricting the scope of Structure Plan policy**

6.9.4 The Structure Plan's Transport section contains a number of non-planning policies dealing with legal and educational measures. These address topics such as the Highway Code, drink/driving, driving standards and certification of road worthiness. Whilst these are clearly important issues, they are probably best dealt with directly by the agencies and departments responsible for their implementation.

### **Improving conditions for pedestrians**

6.9.5 Little improvement has so far been achieved in pedestrian priority and pedestrian safety. Basic provision of pavements, refuges and proper crossing facilities is lacking. Progress in the creation of pedestrian priority areas has also been slow, although a number of proposals are in the pipeline. More sophisticated projects such as traffic calming, popularised in countries with much higher standards of highway engineering, should not obscure the need to get these basic facilities in place. Policy to improve the pedestrian environment requires review at a strategic level.

### **Car Parking Provision**

6.9.6 Greater clarity is required on car parking standards and improved application of standards is necessary. Objectives of parking policy need to be reviewed as part of an integrated transportation strategy. The case for more restrictive policies in some areas and at major traffic generators, to discourage use of the car, must be evaluated.



## **Inter-Island Sea Transport**

6.9.7 The key Structure Plan Review issue related to inter-island sea transport is the need to coordinate improvements to ferry passenger terminals and to develop their linkages to the wider public transport network (**IIT2, IIT3, IIT4**).

## **Aviation**

6.9.8 There are two key issues for the Structure Plan Review related to aviation:

- the continuing requirement for formal public safety zones at the ends of runways, along flight paths and as general safeguarding zones in the vicinity of the airport (**AVN3**); and
- the need to evaluate the demand for and full implications of a domestic Malta/Gozo air service in further detail (**AVN4**).

# **6.10 Urban Conservation**

## **Resources for rehabilitation**

6.10.1 More resources need to be directed into the rehabilitation and refurbishment of Malta's heritage, if urban conservation policy is to start to bite. The mechanism for funding such rehabilitation requires thorough consideration. The Structure Plan Review should evaluate:

- the potential role of the private sector in funding rehabilitation projects;
- the appropriate framework for the management of urban rehabilitation, defining the respective roles of the numerous public and non-governmental agencies involved. This would include consideration of the policy framework and terms of reference for the Land Tribunal and Heritage Trust; and
- other fiscal, legal and institutional measures which may be required to increase the overall level of resources directed towards urban rehabilitation.

## **Settlements strategy and urban rehabilitation**

6.10.2 The relationship of urban conservation and regeneration policy with the housing land surplus also needs to be considered:

- Can urban conservation policy be effective, with such a wide range of opportunities to develop elsewhere?
- How can the settlement strategy and associated development control policies be amended to channel a higher proportion of investment into established urban areas?

## **Revitalising the village cores**

6.10.3 The unpopularity of many village core areas as a place to live requires further investigation. The suitability of smaller housing units and potential solutions to the frequent problems of dampness, traffic and parking need serious consideration, in the light of current housing tastes and preferences. Are these tastes changing, or likely to change, given rapidly increasing house prices and smaller household sizes?

## **Traffic and parking within Urban Conservation Areas**

6.10.4 There has been no real progress in the reduction of traffic within Urban Conservation Areas. The Structure Plan's parking strategy for Urban Conservation Areas requires review. Residential parking requirements need to be accommodated, without jeopardising conservation objectives.

## Commercial activity within Urban Conservation Areas

6.10.5 The role of commerce in Urban Conservation Areas also needs to be re-evaluated. Specific policies are required to deal sensitively with the accommodation of appropriate commercial activities within urban conservation areas which also function as town centres. An unduly restrictive approach risks moving commercial activity out of historic centres, which ultimately will not assist the objectives of urban conservation.

## Development Control Policy and Regeneration

6.10.6 There is a fine balance between the need for restrictive development control policies within Urban Conservation Areas and the objective of urban regeneration in a number of historic areas. This potential conflict is particularly acute in the Grand Harbour Local Plan area. Further evaluation and refinement of urban regeneration and conservation policy is required in the Structure Plan Review.

## Strategy for Listed Buildings

6.10.7 The Structure Plan links the listing of buildings to the National Protective Inventory. This survey is proceeding too slowly to serve as the primary data source for the protection of Malta's built heritage. The survey includes a significant proportion of properties which do not merit listing, yet is too superficial to satisfy the Planning Authority's information requirements on the most important buildings. The Structure Plan Review should assess the approach to scheduling in further detail and provide the policy framework for a more strategic, focused approach.

# 6.11 Rural Conservation

## Defining the Rural Conservation Area concept

6.11.1 The Structure Plan designates most of the non-urban areas of Malta and Gozo as Rural Conservation Area. Policy for Rural Conservation Areas therefore sits uncomfortably between more general policy for non-urban areas, Local Plan policy for specific rural areas and proposals for more specific protected areas:

- Are the Rural Conservation Areas, as defined in the Structure Plan, too large to serve as a mechanism for concentrating conservation and management resources?
- Is the concept of a conservation area helpful, when attached to such a vast proportion of non-urban land?

6.11.2 There are dangers in the excessive use of Conservation Area designations:

- Once boundaries are drawn too widely, it becomes difficult to apply strict conservation policies (e.g. **RCO2**) without making exceptions, which then become damaging precedents; and
- The Planning Authority faces the charge of indiscriminately trying to 'conserve everything'.

General policies to restrict urban growth can, in any case, be applied very effectively to all non-urban areas, without any requirement for a Rural Conservation Area designation.

6.11.3 Some rural conservation policies have proved to be too generic; for example, policy for the protection of valleys. Clearly defined boundaries are needed for all protected areas, with specific guidance to determine the level of protection and its weight with reference to other policies.

6.11.4 As in other areas of conservation, the initial thrust has been on designation of protected areas, with less involvement in the development of effective management plans. To what extent should the Planning Authority become involved in rural conservation at the project management level?

### **Coordination with other agencies**

6.11.5 Relationships with other departments and agencies, particularly the Environment Protection Department and the Local Councils, raise issues over appropriate boundaries of policy and action. For example, to what extent should the Planning Authority get involved in wildlife protection? Or in the implementation of countryside management programmes? These issues need to be resolved and the boundaries of policy adjusted accordingly.

### **Degraded land within Rural Conservation Areas**

6.11.6 So far, there has been little opportunity to address the problems of abandoned and degraded landscapes and buildings within rural areas. The proactive aspects of conservation and countryside management require considerable development. This is likely to require an injection of public funds; how should this be managed and by whom? Can Planning Agreements be used as a tool to secure rehabilitation in connection with appropriate development projects in rural areas?

### **Development threats in the countryside**

6.11.7 The countryside is under threat from many forms of development. This has included a number of applications for major projects including: San Lawrenz Hotel; the San Anton/San Andrea Schools; expansion of the Comino Hotel (not yet determined); and the redevelopment of the Verdala Hotel (not yet determined).

6.11.8 Whilst policy to resist urban encroachment on the countryside is generally strong, a number of weaknesses have appeared. The approach to infill development, in particular, needs to be re-evaluated and clarified. This should include a careful appraisal of development boundaries in rural settlements. There is also concern regarding conversions from agricultural to other uses. The level of consideration given to landscape and visual impact appears to be inadequate. Particular attention is needed in the rural/urban fringe, since insensitive development here may have visual impacts across wide sections of the countryside.

6.11.9 Whilst the Structure Plan seeks to constrain urban growth, exceptions can currently be made under policy **SET12**; this places the onus on the applicant to demonstrate that the proposed use cannot be located in areas designated for development. This policy provides a controversial loophole in the Structure Plan's framework for rural conservation. The Structure Plan Review should evaluate the potential for restricting the scope of **SET12**, by:

- ensuring that all development types are adequately catered for within designated areas for development; and
- seeking mechanisms to restrict **SET12** to the least sensitive parts of the countryside, which are of lowest landscape value.

6.11.10 Policy regarding viable and acceptable forms of development in the countryside, particularly involving changes of use for abandoned farm buildings, requires clarification.

6.11.11 Policy relating to agricultural development requires further evaluation to ensure that there is sufficient control over the potential environmental impacts. In the current Structure Plan, agricultural development in the countryside is generally regarded as acceptable in principle. However, the

scale of agricultural development is gradually changing and some projects may be inappropriate in sensitive rural locations. Greenhouses and other forms of intensive cultivation can prove to be intrusive and require careful siting and design.

6.11.12 Policy for farmhouses is a particular source of concern. There is a fear that the farmhouse policy is little more than a loophole to secure new dwellings in the countryside. Is it still appropriate to relax the strong policies controlling residential development in the case of farmhouses?

6.11.13 Hardstone quarrying raises difficult issues, due to the environmental sensitivity of many of the sites involved:

- Can the approach of prioritising the needs of the quarrying and construction industries be sustained?
- How can demand be managed more effectively to reduce the inherent environmental conflicts faced by the quarrying industry?

6.11.14 Particular care is needed in the treatment of utility projects within the countryside. Because Government is the applicant, and these projects are generally acceptable in principle, there is a risk that the usual strict criteria governing development in rural areas will be relaxed. Policy **RCO5** may require reinforcement.

### **Managing rural recreation**

6.11.15 There is a growing level of provision for rural recreation in the countryside; the demand for such facilities is evident and the local plans are seeking to meet this requirement. However, more sophisticated strategic policy is now required to manage recreational uses in the countryside. There is a need to distinguish between uses according to their environmental impact, to identify capacities and to develop a locational strategy which will relieve congested areas. Firmer strategic policy on major impact sports (such as off-roading) is likely to be required, particularly where protected areas are affected.

6.11.16 The Structure Plan Review will be able to incorporate the findings of the planned *Yachting Development Subject Plan* and the recently completed *Golf Subject Study*.

## **6.12 Archaeology**

### **Strategy for scheduling of archaeological sites**

6.12.1 The strategy for scheduling of archaeological sites needs to be clarified. The priority sites identified in **ARC5** have not all been dealt with yet. Archaeological survey work has been driven primarily by the Local Plans programme; extensive survey work is in progress, but is this securing sufficiently rapid protection for all key sites?

6.12.2 There is also an increasing awareness of the requirement for areas of archaeological importance, in addition to more piecemeal protection for individual sites. Whilst the existing Structure Plan does make provision for this approach, the review may be able to reinforce the strategic use of area designations.

### **Responding to emergencies**

6.12.3 There are concerns that a number of archaeological finds are going unreported, once development is in progress. There is also uncertainty over the Planning Authority's ability to respond quickly in a crisis to protect sites threatened by development. Are existing Emergency Conservation Order procedures fast enough?

## **Visitor management at archaeological sites**

6.12.4 There has been considerable development of facilities for visitor management during the monitoring period and there is an awareness that further improvement is appropriate. This relates to the wider strategy of upgrading Malta's tourism product. The Structure Plan Review needs to address the issue of visitor management at archaeological sites.

## **6.13 Coastal and Marine Conservation**

### **Coordination with other agencies**

6.13.1 A number of authorities are dealing with coastal and marine management issues and effective coordination is lacking. A much higher level of policy integration is required.

### **Development of a coastal strategy**

6.13.2 A comprehensive policy framework for coastal protection is required. The Structure Plan could go further in establishing an appropriate strategic framework for planning in the coastal zone. This is unlikely to prejudice the requirement for a subsidiary Coastal Zone Subject Plan. Current coastal policies are diffuse and highly generalised; they fail to provide a clear and consistent framework for development control in coastal areas and for coastal conservation.

### **Improved coastal protection within the development zone**

6.13.3 The Structure Plan fails to provide adequate additional protection for coastal areas within the development zone; pressure is intense and sites can be highly sensitive.

6.13.4 Large-scale coastal tourism projects, in particular, present a number of issues. A revised strategic policy framework may be required to ensure that sufficient weight is given to the protection of the coast for enjoyment by the public. The overall need for further large-scale tourism accommodation projects could become a criterion in the planning assessment. Also, the strategic approach to ancillary residential and commercial uses in sensitive coastal locations requires further development.

### **Coastal access**

6.13.5 Coastal access has emerged as a highly sensitive issue. There is frequent pressure to privatise and restrict access to the coastline, particularly from the tourist industry. The Structure Plan calls for extensive public land acquisition to secure public access around most of the coastline (**CZM3**). There is, in reality, little conviction that this approach is feasible. In addition, there is no legal provision for the establishment and protection of public rights of way; this gap is impeding progress both on country pathway projects and along the coast. A full review of this area of policy is required.

### **Protecting beaches**

6.13.6 The Structure Plan envisaged a very high level of protection for sandy beaches. This has not materialised, although scheduling of some sites is planned for 1996. Current policies to remove all permanent structures from sandy beaches, prevent vehicle access and prevent overnight camping have so far proved to be both unrealistic and unenforceable. Inconsistent approaches from a variety of regulatory agencies have been a major factor impeding effective enforcement. The Structure Plan Review will need to develop amended policies to deal with the intense levels of activity on sandy

beaches, with particular attention to the feasibility of implementation. The approach must be developed in close consultation with other government departments and agencies responsible for controlling beach activities, particularly the Police and the Local Councils.

6.13.7 Other coastal, rocky beaches are ignored in the Structure Plan, yet issues of access and additional protection may be relevant for some of these areas too. The Structure Plan Review will need to develop a broader protective framework for all coastal recreation areas, not just sandy beaches.

### **Coastal Erosion**

6.13.8 A more sophisticated set of policies is required to deal adequately with coastal erosion. The Planning Authority has received a number of applications requesting permits for: beach creation; beach replenishment; structures on beaches; construction of breakwaters; and construction of coastal structures ranging from reverse osmosis plants to water polo pitches. There is little detailed knowledge of coastal erosion dynamics in the Maltese Islands. Methods of preventing or coping with erosion of specific areas such as *rđum* and boulder scree, cliffs, sandy beaches, or terraced fields need further evaluation, leading to appropriate policy revisions.

## **6.14 Environmental Upgrading**

### **Resources for environmental upgrading**

6.14.1 Other than limited professional time from Planning Authority staff, and Local Council inputs, resources for proactive project work to upgrade the environment have been limited. The Planning Authority has now initiated an Urban Improvement Partnership Scheme. More such programmes may be required for other spheres of environmental upgrading such as: valley management; water catchment protection; soil conservation; quarry restoration and afteruse; and development of the footpath network. The strategic policy framework for these upgrading activities may need to be developed further.

6.14.2 The revised Structure Plan should incorporate formal recognition of the developing role of the Local Councils in Plan implementation, particularly with reference to environmental upgrading projects.

### **Obnoxious Industry**

6.14.3 Further policy development is required in connection with the need to establish a relocation programme for obnoxious industry.

## **6.15 Controlling the Impact of Development Projects**

### **Structure Plan Policy in Development Control**

6.15.1 The *Development Control File Audit* (1995) identified a number of areas of Structure Plan policy which are not being implemented consistently through the development control process. The Structure Plan itself may be partly at fault. Parking standards, for example, are buried in the Structure Plan Explanatory Memorandum and are both ambiguous and difficult to interpret. The revised Structure Plan must be a user-friendly tool for development control. All Structure Plan policy will require careful review from the point of view of both the development control officer and the Development Control Commission:

- is the policy clear, unambiguous and easily understood?

- is it practical, realistic and enforceable?

## **Policy and Design Guidance Notes**

6.15.2 The status of the series of *Policy and Design Guidance* documents has been subject to challenge, particularly at appeal. The Structure Plan review must include a comprehensive appraisal of the Policy and Design Guidance documents. Appropriate material, with strategic implications, should be incorporated within the statutory framework of Structure Plan policy.

## **The role of Environmental Impact Assessment**

6.15.3 Structure Plan references to the requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment will require updating in the light of subsequent regulations and the introduction of Environmental Planning Statements.

6.15.4 There has been some lack of clarity over the role of Environmental Impact Assessment; whether the approved environmental assessment is primarily a tool for deciding whether a development should be granted permission or a tool to identify mitigating measures for the environmental effects of projects which are broadly acceptable on policy grounds.

## **Landscaping**

6.15.5 The Planning Authority's emphasis on landscaping requirements is proving partially successful, but this has proved to be a difficult area of enforcement and implementation. Are sufficient policy safeguards yet in place to achieve our objectives in this area?

## **Utility ducting**

6.15.6 The introduction of underground ducting has so far failed at project level. Coordination is required with the utility agencies. An integrated policy approach is required amongst all the agencies involved.

# **6.16 Environmental Education and Research**

## **Strategy for Environmental Education**

6.16.1 The National Environmental Education Strategy has highlighted the importance of targeting specific groups of people for environmental education, who are either decision makers themselves or would be able to act as agents in disseminating information to other people. Structure Plan policy needs to accommodate and develop this national strategy, clearly establishing the contribution to be made by both the Environment Department and the Planning Authority.

## **Environmental Appraisal**

6.16.2 The current Structure Plan contains a rather limp reference to the need to conduct Environmental Impact Assessment on all Local Plans (**4.5, para. 10**). Firm and comprehensive guidance needs to be incorporated into the revised Structure Plan on the strategic environmental appraisal of planning policies at both Local and Structure Plan level.

## **Sustainability Research**

6.16.3 As part of its commitment to sustainability, the Planning Authority is committed to developing a role in applied research into technical and social solutions that would set the country more firmly onto a sustainability track (e.g. **RCO40, RCO41, RCO42**). This would include the development of national data-sets and other resources for sustainable planning and environmental management. Relevant projects include: the sustainability indicators

programme; the development of national digital mapping products; and plans for a national land cover model. The Structure Plan's coverage of these longer-term initiatives requires further development, with particular emphasis on data coordination and joint working with other agencies. The University, in particular, is a key player in this area.

## **6.17 Public Utilities**

### **Integration of planning activities**

6.17.1 There has been extensive investment in the upgrading of major utilities over the period 1990-95. However, whilst there has been substantial progress within individual agencies, coordination is lacking. An effective Interdepartmental Working Group is required, together with a full set of long-term strategic plans covering all sectors. A strategic approach to infrastructural investment is also required, incorporating policies and programmes for underground networks. Shared Geographic Information Systems would help to support this integrated approach to planning and implementation.

### **Waste disposal**

6.17.2 Waste disposal is a major area of weakness in Structure Plan implementation. This was highlighted as an urgent problem in 1990, yet little improvement has been achieved. A clear landfill strategy is necessary. The incinerator issue needs to be tackled and resolved. Resolution of the problems at Sant' Antnin is an urgent requirement. Recycling also needs to be moved forward; initiatives so far have failed to become established. Intensive effort is now required in this sector.

### **Long-term energy options**

6.17.3 Longer term energy options should also be addressed at a strategic level with particular attention to renewable sources and gas via the Mediterranean pipeline network.

### **Telecommunications**

6.17.4 Malta has become an enthusiastic consumer of recent developments in personal computing, information technology and telecommunications. The development of wide-area networks and growing utilisation of the Internet and E-Mail may have far-reaching implications for working patterns and for the appropriate distribution of homes and workplaces. The revised Structure Plan will need to address the potential impact of these trends on strategic planning requirements.



## **7. Future Monitoring Programme**

7.0.1 In future years, Structure Plan monitoring reports will be produced on an annual basis. These will deal with change over a single year, so will be much slimmer than this volume.

7.0.2 Wherever possible, all monitoring databases will be updated annually. This section discusses forthcoming enhancements to the monitoring methodology and identifies the range of additional data sources which will become available in future years.

### **7.1 Strategic Monitoring Activities**

7.1.1 A number of activities are being developed at a strategic level which will have a bearing on the scope and content of the Structure Plan monitoring programme.

#### **Development Planning and Guidance Notes**

7.1.2 The planning policy context is likely to be developed significantly within the next 12-18 months through the addition of new Local Plans, Subject Plans, Action Plans, Development Briefs and other planning policy documents. Monitoring of the legislative framework will also be necessary, since revisions to the Development Planning Act are being considered and a number of additional design and policy guidance notes are likely to be produced.

#### **In-house Liaison**

7.1.3 The Strategic Planning Unit will continue to gain feedback on the development of issues and approaches within both the Planning Directorate and the Planning Authority through a combination of workshops and the on-line Structure Plan Discussion Group.

#### **Integrated Monitoring**

7.1.4 One key message emerging from the monitoring programme is that improved integration with other public sector organisations is required. Joint monitoring work will be promoted wherever possible. The Strategic Planning Unit will continue to develop a network of contacts amongst relevant agencies and researchers.

#### **Sustainability Indicators**

7.1.5 The objective of the sustainability indicators programme is to identify a broad range of environmental factors which are likely to be affected by Structure Plan implementation. Existing and potential Structure Plan policies can then be evaluated in terms of their implications for each of these indicators. This will provide the basis for an environmental appraisal matrix to be applied throughout Structure Plan monitoring and review.

7.1.6 The sustainability indicators programme extends the scope of Structure Plan monitoring, providing a stimulus for the development of additional, related data sets. This will serve as a check on the scope of the Structure Plan, helping to identify whether the Plan continues to target key issues relating to sustainable development in the Maltese Islands.

## 7.2 Core Monitoring Systems

7.2.1 A number of enhancements are anticipated in the core monitoring systems used to evaluate demographic and development trends in the Maltese Islands.

### Demographic Trends

7.2.2 The recent Census will provide accurate population data at enumeration area level, effectively updating the baseline for all population forecasting work to 1995. This will provide the basis for improved population estimates and forecasts covering the Structure Plan Review period (to 2015).

7.2.3 The Planning Authority has acquired data from the Water Services Corporation which provides scope for a comprehensive annual analysis of internal migration. A small-area population forecasting model is to be developed which will take account of patterns of land availability for housing, as well as historical trends in internal migration. Annual updates of the Water Services Corporation data will be valuable in tracking local population movements for tailored areas, such as Urban Conservation Areas.

7.2.4 A number of weaknesses have been identified in the Water Services Corporation data source. In particular, a number of artificial population movements have been identified, due to inconsistent recording of the same address. These initial difficulties are currently being addressed in close consultation with the Water Services Corporation.

7.2.5 Growth in household numbers is not currently forecast by the Central Office of Statistics. Development work has been undertaken in this area by the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Central Office of Statistics, for this initial monitoring report. Further work is planned to evaluate the impacts of continuing social and cultural change on household growth rates. Comparative analysis of the 1985 and 1995 Census data will enable the rate of change in *headship rates*<sup>15</sup> within the Maltese Islands to be studied for the first time.

### Development Monitoring

7.2.6 The *Strategic Projects Monitoring Database* will continue in its present form throughout 1997. However, a system is to be developed for tracking development starts and completions within the Planning Authority's corporate database systems. Development of this procedure will eventually remove the requirement for further annual updates of the Strategic Projects Monitoring Database.

7.2.7 A comprehensive update of the Land Availability Database will not be possible until 1998, since a new series of orthogonal aerial photographs is required to achieve this. The next series of aerial photography is currently planned for 1997. Partial updates of the Land Availability data will be possible through site visits to examine the development of sections of frontage which were vacant in 1994. This will provide a basis for updating information on rates of development on a sample basis.

### Constraints Mapping

7.2.8 The Planning Authority is producing a digital mapping series presenting a comprehensive profile of constraints on the development of land. This provides a snapshot of outstanding infrastructural and public sector projects, protected wayleaves and other safeguarded land.

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<sup>15</sup> The probability that a person of a given age and sex will form a household.

## 7.3 Sectoral Monitoring

7.3.1 This section provides commentary on additional monitoring requirements within each Structure Plan sector. Subject Studies are currently under way in three key sectors: housing; tourism and recreation; and commerce and industry. These will provide a wealth of additional information, through extensive survey and consultation programmes, related to these sectors.

### Housing

7.3.2 The enhanced data on population and households will prepare the ground for more sophisticated modeling of housing demand. In addition to a national estimate of total dwelling units required, demand estimates will be provided by region (defined as Local Plan areas). It will also be possible to provide some guidance on requirements by household size. Demand for single person dwelling units, in particular, requires specific analysis. Analysis of requirements for special needs housing (for the elderly and disabled) and affordable housing is also necessary, although this extends beyond demographic analysis to incorporate planned housing policy initiatives.

7.3.3 More immediate feedback is required on housing supply. The critical requirement is for accurate data on housing starts and completions.

7.3.4 The Strategic Planning Unit initiated an in-depth house price monitor in late 1995. This database uses advertised prices to track changes in asking prices for residential property, by dwelling type and locality, on a monthly basis. This will provide the basis for future monitoring of house price trends.

7.3.5 A *Housing Subject Study* is currently in progress. This will provide a wide range of additional source material for the development of housing issues in the 1997 monitoring report. It will also include an urban regeneration strategy.

### Social and Community Facilities

7.3.6 There is a requirement for closer working relationships with the relevant Government departments in order to improve monitoring of the provision of social and community facilities. Given the growing importance of population aging as a planning issue, close liaison with the Secretariat for the Care of the Elderly will be particularly important.

7.3.7 Educational facilities are also developing rapidly, particularly within the private sector and through the upgrading of public sector facilities. The Ministry of Education are in the process of enhancing their planning function and stronger formal and informal liaison with the Planning Authority is now required.

### Commerce and Industry

7.3.8 A *Commerce and Industry Subject Study* is currently in progress. This will provide a wide range of additional source material for the 1997 monitoring report. Draft policy will be available for both the Grand Harbour and the North Harbours. Also, closer working relationships will be established with a number of the key players in the commerce and industry sector, through their involvement in the Subject Study.

7.3.9 Development of the obnoxious industries database is planned as part of the Subject Study. This will be an important monitoring tool for future years.

### Agriculture, Horticulture and Fisheries

7.3.10 A national survey of agricultural land is currently being planned, which may provide usable results for the 1997 monitoring report. The proposed

Land Cover database will also produce regular monitoring information in this context, but this will not be available for 1997. The Planning Authority's Geographic Information System (GIS) database of agricultural projects will also be available for future monitoring work.

## **Minerals**

7.3.11 The *Mineral Resources Assessment* is now complete and has been incorporated into the current monitoring exercise. Analysis of this very substantial bank of data and research on the minerals sector will continue.

7.3.12 A *Minerals Subject Plan* will be under way by the time of the next monitoring report; hopefully, improved data will be available by this time. A register of quarries, both used and disused, is currently in progress and this should be complete for the 1997 report.

## **Tourism**

7.3.13 Data sources dealing with the tourism sector are relatively copious and reliable. The current *Tourism and Recreation Subject Study* will add to this stock of knowledge. Also, the *Tourism Master Plan* is likely to be updated.

## **Transport**

7.3.14 Reworking of the transport model is an important initiative in the transport sector. The constraints mapping initiative is also particularly relevant to the transport sector, providing a composite view of safeguarded land for road network upgrading projects.

## **Conservation**

### ***Urban***

7.3.15 The documentation of Malta's heritage will continue to improve, as survey work continues both for scheduling purposes and to assist in the designation of conservation areas. Improved tracking of spending on rehabilitation projects, both public and private sector, is required. Traffic issues in the Urban Conservation Areas, particularly Valletta and Floriana, may be better understood once the transport model becomes operational.

### ***Rural***

7.3.16 The monitoring of countryside planning initiatives will become increasingly complex, as the array of projects in progress continues to grow. However, as more areas are formally scheduled and logged into the Planning Authority's GIS, the ability to monitor and analyse the effects of development projects on areas of conservation value will improve.

## **Marine**

7.3.17 A *Coastal Zone Subject Plan* is currently being planned. This will be the catalyst for the compilation of a series of new data sets on marine resources, particularly in connection with the designation of Marine Conservation Areas.

7.3.18 Update of the MSU's Beach Survey will continue. The Planning Authority intends to enhance this database to cover a wider range of coastal systems.

## **Public Utilities**

7.3.19 The constraints mapping initiative will be particularly valuable as a source of monitoring information on planned public utility projects. Initiatives for the development of Geographic Information Systems within the individual utilities provide the scope for more sophisticated, integrated monitoring of developments in the utility networks.

## List of Abbreviations

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COS	Central Office of Statistics
DCC	Development Control Commission
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMU	Environmental Management Unit
EPD	Department for the Protection of the Environment
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
HCEB	Hotel and Catering Establishments Board
GIS	Geographic Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAC	Heritage Advisory Committee
IDPC	Interdepartmental Planning Committee
MDC	Malta Development Corporation
MSU	Management Systems Unit
NPI	National Protective Inventory
RO	Reverse Osmosis
SASTP	Sant' Antnin Sewage Treatment Plant
SSCN	Society for the Study of Conservation and of Nature
TIS	Traffic Impact Statement
TSE	Treated Sewage Effluent
UCA	Urban Conservation Area

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