

INTERREG IVC - Project "AT FORT"
Partner 08: Paola Heritage Foundation
Situation Report, April 2012

1. Introduction to Paola

Paola is predominantly a residential town. It is served by two arterial roads which link central to South-Eastern Malta. Smaller towns and villages such as Tarxien and St. Lucija are located in close proximity to Paola. Paola was established during the administration of the Order of St. John by Grand Master De Paola.

Many people decided to move to Valletta when the capital city was built – this created a problem of overpopulation. The same had happened in the area surrounding Vittoriosa when this served as a capital city – in fact this resulted in the building of Cospicua and Senglea. However this time, for reasons of security to the fortifications, the Order of St. John did not want to issue any permits for settlements in front of Valletta's bastions. As a solution, G.M. De Paule ordered a new village to be built on the hill known as "Ta L-Gherien" (translated literally – "Of the Caves"). This hill was nearer to the harbour than Tarxien, which was already an established village. It was an ideal place for those people who lived in villages far from their place of work. The G.M. gave this order in 1626 - but his plan was not successful. The knights arrival to Malta resulted in the cities becoming more protected and so the only way to convince people to move was that their new place would be secured by fortifications. To encourage the people to migrate to Paola the Grand Master built a new church dedicated to St. Ubaldesca. The building of this church started on the 25th August, 1630 by G.M. de Paule himself. During the British colonization (1800- 1964) urban sprawl pushed development outside the established Fortification Lines into the Inner Harbour area. Paola developed into a township with local migration from the Three Cities to Paola. The migrating population was fundamentally connected to the development of the Dockyard and services connected to the Admiralty.

The Corradino Hill area was earmarked fundamentally for the development of a fortified town along the last line of defence; the Corradino Lines. However this project was shelved with the dominance of the Admiralty in the area. The Corradino fortified hill was transformed into a barrack area, naval detention barracks, parade ground and sports grounds (1865). Thus the British admiralty secured dominance on the Eastern part of the Grand Harbour.

2. Current and past land use

The land use plan for Paola and Corradino has been compiled as part of the Paola Local Plan in the South Local Plan and in the Grand Harbour Local Plan as approved in 2006 and these have undergone successive reviews in 2007 and in 2009.

The Grand Harbour Local Plan is one of five (65) Planning area in which the Maltese Islands are divided; North Harbours Local Plan (NHLP), Northwest Local Plan (NWLP), Grand Harbour Local Plan (GHLP), South Malta Local Plan (SMLP), Central Malta Local Plan (CMLP), Gozo and Comino Local Plan (GCLP).

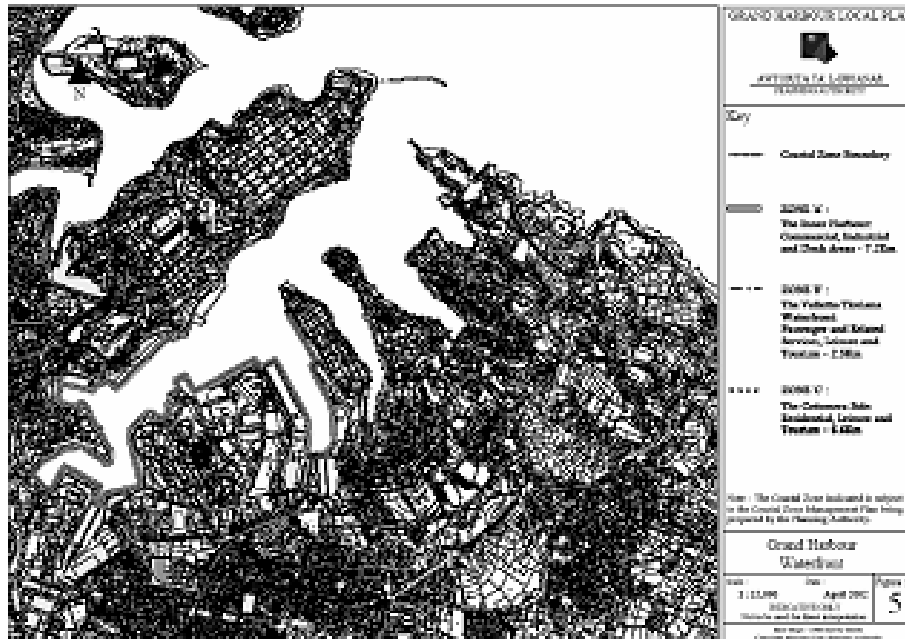
The Local Plan therefore identifies the area of the Grand Harbour with a general policy framework for an integrated system of spatial planning throughout the region. On a local /City Town level the Grand Harbour Local Plan has area policies. These area policies fall under the diverse localities. Each locality is subdivided further into area policies which target specific areas, quarters or neighbourhoods. Paola and Corradino are in separate local plans; Corradino being tackled mainly as an industrial site per se. Paola is included in the South Malta Local Plan.

The summary of the Planning Issues in the South Malta Local Plan which target the locality of Paola are based on a strategy which seeks to reverse Paola's population decrease over the past decades through the provision of a planning framework which encourages residents to stay within its environs on securing an improvement to the quality of its environment and an effective utilisation of its remaining land and vacant buildings.

- Upgrading of Ghaddafi Gardens
- Extension of Addolorata Cemetery
- Traffic management improvements linked to the redevelopment and semi-pedestrianisation of Paola square
- Relocation of the flea market from Triq il-Foss
- Redevelopment of the existing street market site
- Redevelopment of the Pace Grasso site
- Need for a residential home for the elderly and a day centre
- Protecting residential quarters in the historical core.
- Mitigating flooding problems around Triq il-Lampuka and part of Triq Sir Paul Boffa.

3. Social and economic background

On a National and regional level On a regional basis, the Island of Malta has 1,517 inhabitants per square kilometre, which is than three times as much as the Gozitan population density: 452 persons per square kilometre.



Population on the District Scale

Paola statistically forms part of the Southern Harbour District (81, 047) which includes another 14 Councils. These Councils which are nearly interconnected by Harbour Fortifications along the East Waterfront are the following; Birgu, Bormla, Fgura, Floriana, Isla, Kalkara, Luqa, Marsa, Santa Lucija, Tarxien, Valletta, Xgbajra, Zabbar. The Table C5 above extracted from the Census 2005 refers to a decrease in population in the area of the Southern Harbour District throughout the intercensal period (1995-2005). It also indicated the District as the second most populated area within the Inner Harbour conurbation. The Southern harbour District is the second most densely populated area in Malta.

Population on the Local Scale

Paola has an ageing and declining population, but no home for the elderly or a day centre where senior citizens can socialise. Between 1985 and 1995 the over 60 age group increased by 11.5%. The population growth of Paola has been relatively stable between 1957 and 1985 with only a 2.4% increase over this period. However between 1985 and 1995 the total population registered a decrease of 20% and a further 6% between 1995 and 2005. Paola is a decreasing population however within the district it still maintains its status as a highly populated township. Together with Tarxien, Santa Lucia and Fgura which are interlinked urban agglomerations through ribbon development form one of the largest populations in the District circa 29,000.

4. Significance of the township of Paola and Local Action Plan Area

The township of is significant and critical in heritage terms by virtue of its history and architecture and its function as the socio-economic and cultural and hub of East side of the Inner Harbour within the Maltese Islands:

1 - due to the character of its civic, religious and domestic architecture, it is a Baroque suburb in its planimetric design par excellence; in fact, this European style is here to be seen at its southern-most extension vis-a-vis the continent and the larger Mediterranean islands such as Sicily, and absorbed and transformed to suit Maltese craftsmanship and aesthetic taste.

2 - from early after its foundation in 1626, Paola set the pace in urban sprawl and redevelopment throughout the country until the first half of this century;

3 - apart from a history of more than 400 years, Paola is unique among contemporary European cities owing to the survival up to the present day of the majority of monuments and buildings which give it its particular character and their concentration within the restricted limits set by its original enceinte of fortifications;

4 - the buildings of Paola afford innumerable examples of the use of the local globigerina limestone in the erection of buildings intended for civic, religious, cultural and social purposes; the basic techniques of ashlar masonry, vaulting, arches and corbelling are utilised and experimented with successfully to solve all constructional and architectural problems, and to find place and scope for architectural expression in the form of elaborate mouldings, relief work and sculpture;

5 - due to the medium durability of the stone of which it is built, Paola now finds itself assailed by problems which emanate from the chemical composition of the stone itself and from the action of rain and changes of temperature; modern transport fumes also add their share of deleterious action on stonework;

6 - Paola is almost synonymous with the hospitaller and military Order of St. John which founded the town in 1620s and developed and maintained it as a retreat for nearly two and a half centuries. The British colonial government re-established its importance in the mid-nineteenth century by instigating further development through the draining of the Marsa marshlands, as the New Town or Casal Nuovo and as an industrial town well connected to the Docklands and Shipyards.

Extract (18 October 2009) from Tentative List Description,
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/982/>

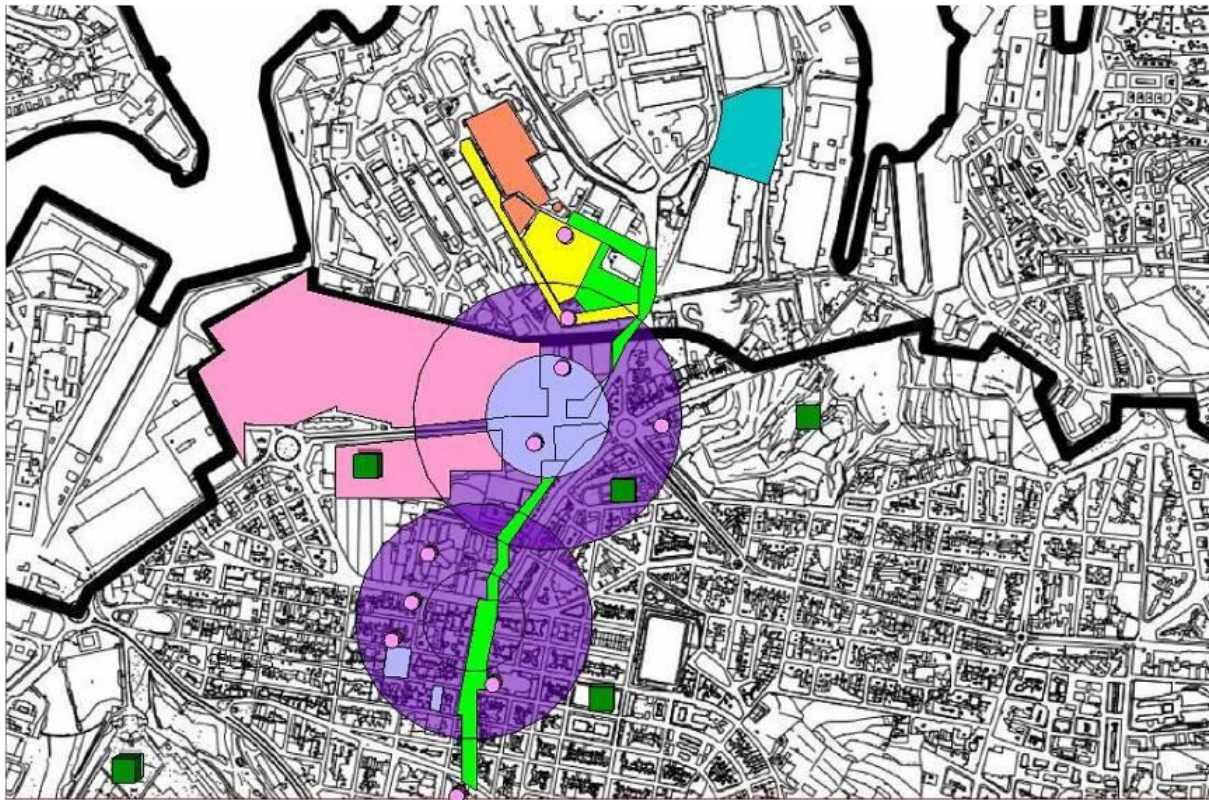
Statement of Significance – The Paola and Corradino Area and its’ Environs

The Paola area plays a significant role in the early history of the establishment of the Inner Harbour. As a result of this, the Statement of Significance for the Hypogeum at Hal Saflieni and the megalithic temple site of Kordin III and the tentative status of the Corradino Lines have contributed towards the Statement for the Corradino and Paola area and is based upon the UNESCO State Party example for World Heritage Sites. By converging these two statements together, the importance of these locations is further strengthened and united in importance.

Heritage@Risk Assessment

The built fabric of the Paola and Corradino area and its context are in section, currently at ‘At Risk’ as a result of the current state of urban and industrial impact. Therefore there has been given a Risk Factor of Level 3. A full analysis using ICOMOS parameters or heritage risk assessment indicated that the area is affected mainly by Insufficient Conservation Standards, Maintenance Deficiency and significantly damaged through Risks from Social and

Collective Behaviour. The bomb damage and emergency restoration to the buildings over the decades has compromised the Heritage Values of the site.



5. The Corradino Fortifications and the Action Plan

The purpose of the REPAIR ACTION PLAN is to prepare an integrated approach for Sustainable Planning for Urban Regeneration SPUR for the township of Paola specifically aiming at the township area and Corradino and its environs which are interdependent both historically and geographically. Through improving and creating new physical and social regeneration projects, as well as through the local heritage, tourism and cultural industries, new opportunities for transportation links and revitalised living conditions will be targeted to promote regeneration in the area. The current large scale regeneration projects which have been projected within the Corradino precinct and adjacent to the area will assist to spearhead a regeneration process within the environment of Paola. This will occur along its main areas with a main spur at Corradino and another at the core of the township. However the economic drive and tourism development should also work in tandem with social regeneration.

A stream of initiatives and projects have been launched for the Paola core and the Corradino areas; the maritime techno-park, the redevelopment of the MCAST complex, the redevelopment of the Corradino Industrial park and the redesigning of Paola Square as part

of the new transport reform and terminal. There are other projects which are addressing regeneration namely; new forms of mobility, the restoration of the Fortifications and a number of initiatives launched by the Local Council, the various agencies and volunteer groups responsible for cultural and heritage aspects in the area.

The Corradino Lines and its ancillary systems i.e. the Royal Naval Prisons and the Corradino Married Quarters are a critical asset scheduled as part of the whole ensemble of Grand Harbour Fortifications inscribed in the UNESCO Tentative List as representative of the Victorian period.

These Fortification Lines have been targeted as pilot areas for Ateliers in connection to the REPAIR Action Plan for Paola. The Fortifications the Ditch and the Royal Naval Prisons together with Gardens and Parks will serve as sites for ESF 3.001 project which is targeting social inclusion through local jobs for local people and skill development.

The project is further supported by GREGS which are green skills development based on a LEONARDO initiative targeting school leavers and long term unemployed. The Courses will be directed at landscape gardening at a Level 1-3 MQC for the Ditch areas. On the other hand a series of masonry conservation at a Level 1-3 MQC for the fortification works is going to be based on a course development project initially launched by Heritage Enterprise with MCAST named CEPE. These projects are being developed in collaboration with the Corradino Correctional facility, MCAST and the University of Malta.

6. PHF's contribution to "AT FORT"

The project's contribution from the Paola Local Council is more geared at the development of management systems not only the quality and fabric. In the diverse fortifications around the harbour best practice examples may be utilised to develop other possibilities especially through the implementation of the REPAIR Action Plan objectives. Paola Heritage Foundation is seeking new management regimes through a green skill based economy and the establishment of the same to spur the regeneration of the fortifications as part of the tourism package of this densely urbanised zone.

7. PHF's experience in EU Projects

- REPAIR URBACT Development of Action Plan (2009-12) – In collaboration with the ULSG
- AT FORT Interreg 3 C - In collaboration with Paola Local Council (2012- 2015)
- ERDF Corradino Military Detention Barracks restoration (2012- 2013)



Breach



Part of Ditch and Escarpment



Well-Conserved Embankment leading
to Covered Ways