



**THE CHURCH IN MALTA**

**COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE**  
Archdiocese of Malta

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## **MASTERPLAN NEEDED FOR MARSALA AND THE INNER GRAND HARBOUR AREA**

### **STATEMENT BY THE CHURCH ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION**

The Church Environment Commission (KA) would like to highlight the current opportunities and risks facing Marsala and the inner Grand Harbour area, and is recommending that an updated vision and a masterplan, based on a sound public consultation process, be drawn up for this important area to enable it to reach its full potential in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner in the best public interest.

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the area acquired a reputation as one of the most heavily polluted areas of the country. With the shrinking of activity around the dockyards, the closing down of the Marsala Shipbuilding Company, and most recently, the decommissioning of the old power station, new possibilities have been created for another great transformation of the region. This may take different shapes. Some of these possible future directions are more socially equitable, economically sound and sustainable, environmentally responsible, and enriching to the quality of life and wellbeing of future generations. Other possible future directions are rather less desirable, being driven by opportunistic ventures for short-term financial gain. Marsala is at an important crossroad, as is the entire inner Grand Harbour area!

The potential of the area for creative regeneration is difficult to overestimate. The vast stretches of land formerly occupied by the Marsala Power Station and by Marsala Shipbuilding each enjoy long water frontages, with already established aligned piers and mooring facilities, which are valuable and inalienable public assets. The decline in pollution that has resulted directly from the cessation of the activity of these two industrial plants has also created new hope for creating a cleaner environment.

However, some key decisions that have already been taken give cause for concern: at the outset, a masterplan for the area would have been very much in place, instead of the piecemeal nature of planning, which does not seem to be guided and driven by a clear vision for creating the best possible environment in the area. The demolition of the main turbine hall of Marsala Power Station B, when many were appealing for its preservation and sustainable reuse as an important element of industrial heritage, is one example. The site has been rased

to the ground, without any real public consultation or discussion on the future of the site. The introduction of a new heavy industry in the form of oil-rig maintenance has created new inconveniences for the residents of Senglea. The projected multilevel junction near the Addolorata Cemetery will not only have a severe aesthetic impact on this outstanding Neo-Gothic cemetery, but may also generate new forms of ghettoisation and stigmatised space.

The KA believes that development planning in Malta should really become an exercise in placing the common good as the primary consideration in devising public policy. It should not be relegated, as has sometimes occurred, to an exercise in accommodating specific interests while promoting it in a glitzy fashion as if it has the common good at its heart

It is the view of the KA, that the region is simply too important an asset and opportunity for the entire country, to be allowed to be kept back from achieving its full potential. Given the proximity of Marsa to Valletta, and the importance of the latter as the current European capital of culture, as well as the consequent high esteem that it will hopefully continue to enjoy, the right kind of development in the inner harbour area is a must in the circumstances. This is why a clear vision and plan are required, based on a genuine public consultation process, and driven by the public interest. There is the potential here, with the right vision, will, and policy, to transform the area from one of the least desirable and most problematic parts of the country, to one of its most vibrant and attractive nodes characterised by green lungs, waterfronts dedicated to public enjoyment, and mixed uses including sustainable and affordable housing.

In this respect, in the drawing up of the proposed Masterplan, one would do well to consult, amongst others, the commendable projects drawn up in 2016 by architecture and engineering students in the Faculty for the Built Environment at the University of Malta, featuring their vision for the area's future.<sup>1</sup>

The Environment Commission believes that, after suffering years of abuse as a result of unsustainable decisions that negatively impacted their quality of life, the residents of this area deserve a sound development which upgrades their quality of life, and which would in turn benefit the whole of the country. Moreover, such a development, being truly sustainable, would be more in line with the government's plans to regenerate the south.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tvn.com.mt/en/news/university-students-vision-of-marsa-in-2050>