



Europa Nostra / EIB Institute
« The seven most endangered heritage sites »

The buffer zone of the historic centre of Nicosia,
Cyprus.

Technical report

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Luxembourg
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1. Summary

The area where the “Buffer zone” is located, in the heart of the walled city of Nicosia, was a thriving and active commercial and residential area and after the division of the city it is now derelict and abandoned.

The project’s objective is to advance the process of rescue and eventual rehabilitation of the zone with actions aimed at the immediate, the medium and the longer term.

The project complies well with the Europa Nostra’s concerns on endangered heritage sites.

The project proposed consists of:

- In the short term, securing 13 selected buildings in unstable condition and needing urgent attention to prevent further deterioration and to allow later rehabilitation.
- In the medium term, securing 49 significant buildings in bad condition to prevent further deterioration and to allow later rehabilitation. Also to secure two monuments to prevent further deterioration.
- In the medium term renovating groups of buildings in two project areas (Paphos Gate and the Markets area), restoring the facades and preventing further deterioration. Also rebuilding the roadways & associated utilities so that these areas can be used as crossing points linking the north to the south. Undertaking preliminary work on a third project area (Agios Kassianos Schools area) to help secure the main structures.
- Extending the project area renovation around the current sole crossing point (Ledra-Lokmaci street) as above and also refurbishing and bringing into use an office.
- Looking longer term, undertaking a joint area zoning study for eventual rehabilitation of the buffer zone.

The area developments would provide meaning to the renovation works by allowing them to be seen and used by the public thus helping to build confidence between the communities.

The estimated cost for the whole programme is estimated at about 5.5 M € with a main construction period of 2014 to 2016. These proposals are preliminary and will need refining over the coming months. Flexibility in phasing the works may be necessary.

A major point which totally controls progress is the approval by and active cooperation of both communities and the other parties involved including UNFICYP, the UN Peace Keeping Force.

Other potential concerns which need advancing are the Financing of the project components and the effective joint management of the project.

This report proposes an outline project and a list of actions and recommendations to act as a guide to assist the progress of the project.

This is a very worthwhile initiative which requires strong political support in a delicate and complex situation and has the potential to yield wider benefits to Cyprus as a whole.



2. Location and purpose

The location is the “buffer zone” in divided Nicosia, the abandoned strip between the two communities. It extends along an east - west axis from Flatro bastion to Paphos gate and is about 1500 m in length and some 100 m to 300 m across.

The project’s purpose is to create conditions in the “buffer zone” to allow and encourage its eventual rehabilitation and use, properly integrated into the developing urban structure. The components of the project are an essential, in some cases urgent, first step towards this purpose by preserving the most endangered buildings and so helping to retain much of the character of the zone.

3 Context

Nicosia has been the capital and cultural centre of Cyprus since the 10th century and has a rich architectural, cultural and historical heritage reflecting the island’s importance as a strategic and trading point in the eastern Mediterranean.

The central strip in the walled city (the location of the “buffer zone”) was originally a river but this was diverted by the Venetians and the strip in its central location became a key and dynamic part of the city with markets and trading houses as well as numerous fine monuments. Many, such as the Royal Palace, the Catholic and Orthodox Cathedrals, noblemen’s houses, churches and convents, were located along the river’s north bank.

Following the division of the island in 1974, Nicosia was also split along a “green line”, initially identified in 1964, which passed from east to west cutting the city in two. Associated with the green line was and still is a narrow “buffer zone” with access forbidden or highly restricted to either side. The zone was thus abandoned and became derelict. The condition of the houses and infrastructure is varied but after nearly 40 years of neglect many are in ruins.

The project attempts to redress this depressing situation and over the years much preparatory work has been undertaken to try and plan for an eventual integration of the city and in the meantime to proceed to conserve and protect buildings so they are not totally lost to posterity.

The zone is currently administered by the UNFICYP, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, and this force controls all activities and access to the zone. Through the UN, an office building called “The Home for Cooperation” has been set up in the buffer zone for bi-communal use.

Greater Nicosia has a population of about 300 000 split almost evenly between north and south. The walled city has a total population of about 11 000 also fairly evenly split.

Note that the project has not only be selected by Europa Nostra as being one of the “Seven most endangered heritage schemes” but also the Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) received the EU prize for Cultural Heritage at the Europa Nostra Awards in 2011.



4 Description

The proposed project comprises three main types of component which address the short term (emergency support of façades), the medium term (significant buildings' support, area developments and crossing points) and the longer term (future planning).

The main project elements may be summarised as follows:

1.Study of the buffer zone area:

This study would complement previous strategic studies and be a more detailed area study specifically on the buffer zone. It would review the current status, identify characteristics and comparative advantages and then make detailed recommendations regarding heritage protection, urban planning and design and eventual usage as well as means to achieve these objectives. It is looking ahead to ensure coherent planning in the future.

2.Structural support and stabilisation of buildings:

- 1. Short term emergency action to structurally stabilise and partially restore 13 buildings in imminent danger of collapse.
- 2. Medium term action to structurally secure and restore facades on some 50 significant buildings
- 3. Medium term action to structurally secure two significant but small monuments.

3.Renovation of Project areas:

- Area 1. Paphos Gate. Renovate the pavement, roadway and urban utilities and selected facades to permit a new crossing point eventually either at Victoria Street or Tenzimat Street. Renovate and fully restore a building, the former “Spitfire “ café.
- Area 2. Ledra-Lokmaci Street with the sole existing walled city crossing point. Extend the present rehabilitation work on Lokmaci Street and include a section of Kykko Avenue. The works to comprise renovated pavement, roadway and urban utilities as well as renovation of the facades on adjacent buildings. Fully restore for office use a significant building on the junction of Lokmaci Street and Kykko Avenue, for eventual use by the NMP bi-communal team working on the buffer zone.
- Area 3. The “Markets area” connecting the two markets, with a future new crossing point. The rehabilitation works would extend along Goldsmith Street to Trikouppi Street and a part of Hermes and adjacent streets. The works to comprise renovated pavement, roadway and urban utilities as well as renovation of the facades on adjacent buildings.
- Area 4. Ayios Kassianos Schools area. The activity would be confined at this stage to investigating the buildings to reveal and record their condition and to carry out the essential support and securing work needed to avoid further deterioration.

Further work is needed to define the details of these actions, particularly in the project areas.



5 Technical aspects

The Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) has been developed over the period from 1979-85 by a multi-discipline group of Greek and Turkish Cypriots (eight professionals, four from each community) working together under UNDP auspices. The NMP covers the wider area of Nicosia and lays down common planning and development policies. It has identified the crucial role of the buffer zone in integrating the old city and in retaining its special character.

The NMP team has been active working on the buffer zone but this is not facilitated by the difficulties related to access and the need each time to get approval from both sides and the UNFICYP. Its current status may also restrict its activities, for example for contract awards.

Between March 2001 and June 2003, an important survey of the zone was undertaken, recording the buildings' architectural merits, their structural condition and then proposing essential actions to safeguard these works to try to halt the deterioration. The survey confirmed the very dilapidated state of the buildings and infrastructure in the zone. The output consisted of drawings of some 238 main buildings or groups inside the walls and some 27 outside the walls and also of records of the infrastructure. It identified the principal monuments and buildings in an unsafe condition.

This exercise, which was remarkable in view of the difficulties of access restrictions and the state of some buildings, was supported by USAID and UNDP, and provided a sound basis for future actions both technically and operationally. As an immediate output from the study, a number of emergency interventions to stabilise buildings has taken place. Several of these now need further attention.

In 2004/5 a major joint study the "New vision for the core of Nicosia" was undertaken. This study covered the central area of Nicosia and had a special section dealing with the buffer zone and its proposed development and forms the basis for further work including the present project.

In particular it stressed the vital importance of preserving and re-animating the buffer zone as a "gluing" factor in the functional integration of the old city and it highlighted its potential contribution to bi-communal cooperation and noted the "devastating" effect of inaction.

Its recommended actions, amongst many, included:

- To define the walled city as a unitary planning area, and put that into effect.
- To prepare a strategic land use plan for the walled city and the buffer zone.
- To prepare a suitable management structure for joint planning and implementation of projects.
- To define project packages around cultural landmarks and open up possibilities of mobilising the private sector.
- It also proposed the main components of the present project as priorities for implementation.



It suggested that the walled city, with its unique characteristics, should focus on culture as a main theme, with emphasis on cultural tourism and education. This is important as it underpins the efforts to renovate the buffer zone and make it consistent with the other parts of the walled city which have been dramatically enhanced in recent years by the several renovation projects. The alternative of letting the buffer zone buildings fall down would almost inevitably end up with their replacement by blocks of modern buildings for commercial reasons; this would destroy the urban character in this key location, the heart of the city, and be in conflict with the rest of the city as it is now being redeveloped.

Also to be noted is the fact that house values have apparently increased in the walled city now that it is being restored and the buffer zone presents a valuable potential asset.

6 Implementation

Responsible authorities.

The entity preparing the current project is the NMP team. The status of this team is unusual as it has a recognised role in undertaking work and studies but, as it is not itself a legal entity, it cannot contract work. This has to be done in an indirect manner through the existing entities recognised by each community being the Nicosia Municipalities on the south and the north respectively. These have legal status in their own domain, e.g. to contract work, as they both date back to 1958. However the administrative authorities in the north of the island are not internationally recognised as representing an independent state, and this creates a complication, resolved in the past by the intervention of the UNDP acting as intermediary for contract award and administration. UNDP has also acted as advisers as appropriate.

It would be very desirable, as recommended in several independent reports, to set up a joint bi-communal legal entity to assist the efficient administration of the project (and all activities in Nicosia of joint interest). This would preferably be based on the NMP team but under a different legal status. If such a joint awarding entity cannot be set up in time then a solution of allocating contracts through each Municipality for their own administration should be used as in the past. Also recourse to the services of UNDP may be required again.

Engineers / technical supervisors.

Whilst the representatives of both communities are technically competent, much benefit would be obtained by working closer together as already noted above. This seems to be particularly relevant for contract preparation and administration where experience is varied.

Programme, timing

Some preparatory work, and especially obtaining agreement and approval for the different components, is necessary before activities can start on site. These approvals will dictate the programme and may differ by component due to the nature of the works and complexity of the approvals sought.



Assuming a reasonably optimistic approval process, a tentative working programme for the project could be as follows:

Component	Approval to start	Contract award	Completion
Study	January 2014	March 2014	June 2014
Emergency repairs	January 2014	March 2014	June 2014
Other building repairs	April 2014	June 2014	June 2015
Project area 1	January 2015	June 2015	March 2016
Project area 2	June 2014	January 2015	March 2016
Project area 3	January 2014	June 2014	June 2015
Project area 4	March 2015	June 2015	September 2015

Problems, ownership, access

The difficulties associated with the project are not so much technical as administrative. It is necessary that these are addressed early as they may be time consuming and require much attention and goodwill and close cooperation by all parties.

The approval for new crossing points is clearly political and depends on good cooperation and goodwill on all sides. It may be that only one new crossing point is permitted initially and in this case the project scope should be adapted. The highest priority would appear to be the Markets Area crossing (Area 3) as this would provide the greatest benefit to the population as well as providing a greater impetus for private sector development in the adjacent area.

The ownership of the buildings needs to be assessed and approval sought from owners as to the action proposed. The legal situation may be complex and again flexibility may be needed in the project definition and timing to adapt to the situation as it develops.

Access remains a continuing complication as approval from UNFICYP needs to be sought for any proposed actions and the actual activities in the zone.

The other crucial issue is the Financing. The project has intentionally been kept to a modest scale to ease the funding problem but adequate and appropriate funding needs to be put in place or secured in time to allow contracts to be awarded.

These concerns on Approval, Ownership and legal, Access and Funding are all on the critical path and close management of this whole process will be crucial to success. Proper arrangements to manage this process are therefore important.

7 Procurement

Authorities responsible

The issue of responsibility for implementing has been discussed above under § 6 and is an issue to be optimised and resolved in agreement with the parties.



Procedures

The EU directive on tendering or equivalent will be applied by contracts administered from and by both communities. This means that apart from some relatively simple works such as propping up walls, which will be carried out in effect by direct labour, contracts will be formally advertised depending on their scale and awards will be made in an open manner.

8 Environment, sustainability, social

A principal objective of the project is to improve the urban environment by keeping open the possibility of restoring the buffer zone to its former state, retaining its architectural and heritage character and by ensuring a better integration of the walled city.

The project is part of a wider plan, the Nicosia Master Plan, which has been well studied and agreed by both communities. A further refining study “the new Vision” has confirmed the initiative and the importance of the buffer zone. Several components of the Master Plan have already been successfully implemented with evident benefit.

A second stage study into the details of area zoning was proposed but regrettably only carried out on the south side and not yet on the north side. While not essential for the relatively modest physical proposals of this project, the area zoning study should be extended to the north to allow a more complete area planning of the buffer zone itself and thus a better integration of the whole of Nicosia in due course.

In general there are no doubts that the project will have a very positive impact on the environment of the centre of Nicosia as the key buffer zone is currently deprived of any activity and barren and this negative impact also extends to the adjacent areas.

9 Use, demand

The project proposes the securing and renovation of buildings and the opening up of areas by repairing mainly facades and pavements. The next crucial stage is to allow some buildings to be used to bring life back into the area. This is a very sensitive issue in the buffer zone itself but should continue to be an ultimate aim. As a first stage some appropriate building(s) could be set up as offices for use for bi-communal activities. It is proposed that the office to be renovated and brought into use at the corner of the Kykkos, Ledra-Lokmaçi Street crossing should be used by the NMP bi-communal team, who would greatly benefit from such a location. Later other examples could follow such as the Chambers of Commerce of both communities of Nicosia, who already work together, and could meet conveniently in a building in the buffer zone.

The one crossing point in the walled city at Ledra Street copes with some 2000 persons transiting each day, both Cypriots and tourists. The Markets area crossing point is likely to be extensively used, particularly with the commercial traffic between the two markets.



It would be useful to set up a monitoring system to demonstrate direct and indirect benefits from the project (e.g. house condition, values & occupation, demographic data, crossing use) both in the zone and in the immediately adjacent areas. This would help comfort and encourage potential financiers and also help optimise future actions.

10 Investment cost and financing requirements

The project cost has been estimated to be as follows:

Component	Cost €	Totals €
1. Buffer zone area study	100 000	<u>100 000</u>
2.1 Short term emergency support	300 000	
2.2 Medium term renovation	670 000	
2.3 Monuments protected	<u>30 000</u>	
Total for Support and securing buildings		<u>1 000 000</u>
3.1 Project area 1 (Paphos Gate)	860 000	
3.2 Project area 2 (Ledra-Lokmaci Street)	1 900 000	
3.3 Project area 3 (Markets area)	1 450 000	
3.4 Project area 4 (Schools area, preliminary)	<u>100 000</u>	
Total Project Areas		<u>4 310 000</u>
TOTAL FINANCING requirement		5 410 000
		rounded to 5.5 M €

Note that these are preliminary estimates. They are based on previous experience of works carried out in the buffer zone. Often the cost of these works has been less than estimated due to the competitive situation in Nicosia. The estimates include the traditional price and technical contingencies, VAT and the contract preparation and management costs. The latter might be about 500 000 € and would be mainly NMP costs.

As already noted, the definition of the project still needs some refining and as the crucial approval processes for the various components may result in a re-definition it is considered at this stage that these estimates provide a good working hypothesis.

Making assumptions on the content and timing of the project as presented above, with the caveats expressed, the financing needs with time can be estimated as follows:

1000 €

Component	1st sem.14	2 nd sem. 14	1st sem.15	2 nd sem. 15	1 st sem. 16	Totals
Area study	95					95
Securing buildings	270	255	380			905
Project areas		550	1470	1210	680	3910
Management	110	110	160	80	40	500
Total	475	915	2010	1290	720	5410



11 Financing options

The project is a heritage project with no direct financial revenues and so unable to support any form of loan by itself. Grant financing is needed and this is in short supply.

The main sources of grants are from the EU which provides Structural funds for member states, such as the Republic of Cyprus, and has in the past provided funds for the Turkish Cypriot community. The situation is complicated by the project being located in an area (the buffer zone) not under any administrative authority but only that of the UN. Fortunately both Municipalities are recognised by all parties but the administrative authorities in the north of Cyprus are not recognised by the EU as an independent state.

The EU Structural funds and other sources will be available for the period 2014-2020. Depending on the negotiations and the priorities of the member state, grant funds could be available for heritage projects in Cyprus, for example through the regional fund ERDF.

Outside the EU, the main potential source of EU grants is the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), available to Turkey but a northern Cyprus allocation may not be easy.

Other EU special funds under the DG Culture or a special EP budget may also be available.

In the past, the UNDP has provided grant aid through an USAID facility, which has now been discontinued. It provided indispensable technical and operational assistance for projects for the Turkish Cypriot community breaking the deadlock on the dispersal of EU grants. This facility may be needed again.

Some grants from the EEA mechanism, mainly financed by Norway, have been available in the past but it is understood that these will not be available (if at all) before at the earliest 2015/6, and all depending on future negotiations. Direct grants from Norway may be possible, but again not available immediately, if at all.

Other sources of grants may exist such as the locally based A.G.Leventis foundation (Cyp), and also others such as the Prince Klaus fund (NL) and JAICA (Jp). It would seem sensible to accept grants above a certain level to avoid out of proportional efforts and costs to the NMP.

The Municipalities, with their recognised legal status, have in the past contributed significantly to the activities of NMP and this is essential in providing generally available and flexible funding, perhaps even for pre-funding awaiting contributions from elsewhere.

A summary of recent funding for works in or near the Project areas is interesting:

Paphos gate	Total 8.3 M € (Local funds 3.6 M €, USAID 4.7 M €).
Ledra - Lokmaci	Total 2.2 M € (EU Structural funds 0.7 M €, IPA 1.5 M €).
Markets	Total 8.0 M € (EU Structural funds).
Schools (Chrysaliniotissa)	Total 5.9 M € (USAID).
Total allocated	24.4 M € (Local 3.6 M €, EU 10.2 M €, USAID 10.6 M €).



Looking at the nature and timing of the needs, the financing can be grouped as follows:

- Early 2014 funds to develop the project by NMP (200 000 €) – Municipalities etc.,
- Early 2014 funds for urgent works (about 1 M €) - private sources (e.g. A.G.Leventis foundation), Municipalities etc.,
- From mid 2014 - 2016 funds for the main project (about 4 M €) - EU, Municipalities, EEA etc.,
-

Consideration should be given to the way the project and its components are grouped together and defined as this may impact on the amount of grant available e.g. from the EU where a 50% project cost limit for grants is usually required.

Discussions and efforts at all levels are now needed to refine this broad suggestion outlined above and to seek suitable sources of financing for the project.



12 Conclusions: Proposed action programme and recommendations

This Europa Nostra / EIB Institute initiative of “the 7 most endangered...” has highlighted the risk of inaction in allowing the decay and eventual destruction of an important architectural and historical heritage in the “buffer zone” of Nicosia. The context is very special and this complicates any and all actions but it also enhances the potential long term benefits, including at a high political level in bringing the communities together.

Several studies and previous work have laid a good foundation for the actions proposed. A positive basis for these actions is the dedicated and effective Nicosia Master Plan team, the key to further progress.

The following actions are proposed:

- Continue to develop the technical proposals in terms of scope, obstacles to implementation, programming and cost. It is suggested that components are defined in blocks so that their particular characteristics can be taken into account in the subsequent stages of approval and finance, giving flexibility to meet any constraints.
- Once an agreed definition of the components is obtained, the proposals should be put to the authorities, initially the two Municipalities, for approval to proceed. This might result in parts of the proposal only being accepted initially, with in effect phasing being required. The process needs firm managing and may take some time to conclude and would probably be an iterative exercise.
- In parallel and with the clearer definition of the project, the search for grant funding should be advanced. The main potential source seems to be the EU in its various guises and also some private foundations.
- As a result of feed-back from these two initiatives (approvals and funding), a realistic programme of works can be advanced, which should try to maximise the grant component. It is important that the emergency component is treated as soon as possible, perhaps separately, otherwise the loss of these facades could be terminal.
- In preparation for the actual works, action should be taken to set up a unique bi-communal entity with its own separate identity to allow expeditious and efficient management of the contracts and works operations, as recommended in the New Vision report. It could be broadly based on the current successful NMP arrangements.
- A desirable exercise would be to carry out the delayed North Nicosia area study to complement that recently undertaken in South Nicosia. This would feed in to the project’s buffer zone area study, improving its relevance.
- Set up a monitoring system to track potential benefits arising from the project.

The strategy presented above is to try and maintain if possible the coherence of the “project” as defined in this report. Realistically the complexity of the context and the financing may well require adopting a flexible piecemeal approach, which would mean phasing and a longer implementation project.

Whatever details are agreed, firm management of the whole process is essential and the NMP team or its successor needs to have maximum support in its endeavours.



Appendix 1

References and documents used

- Nomination form to Europa Nostra “7 most endangered...” March 2013
- EIB Institute questionnaire
- Response to pre mission questionnaire
- Revitalising Nicosia UNDP-UNOPS pff brochure
- Nicosia The unknown heritage along the Buffer zone NMP 2008
- New vision report
- Central Nicosia Area Scheme SKM Colin Buchanan 2013
- Various NMP documents on scheme details October/November 2013

Mission details 14 - 15 October 2013

Europa Nostra: Sneska Quaadvlieg-Mihailovic Secretary general
John Sell executive vice president
Costa Carras vice president
Gianni Perbellini president EN scientific council

EIB Institute: Peter Bond consultant

14/10/13. Meeting with representatives of European Commission (Commissioner A.Vassiliou), Norway and EEA (Ambassador S.Larsen), UNDP (C.Louise, Mrs T.Zennaro), Mayors of Nicosia (Messrs. K.Fellahoglu, C.Yiorkadjis), Nicosia Master Plan, AHDR, PRIO, H4C, National Focal Point.

14-15/10/13 Technical meetings (NMP, UNDP), with visit to the buffer zone.

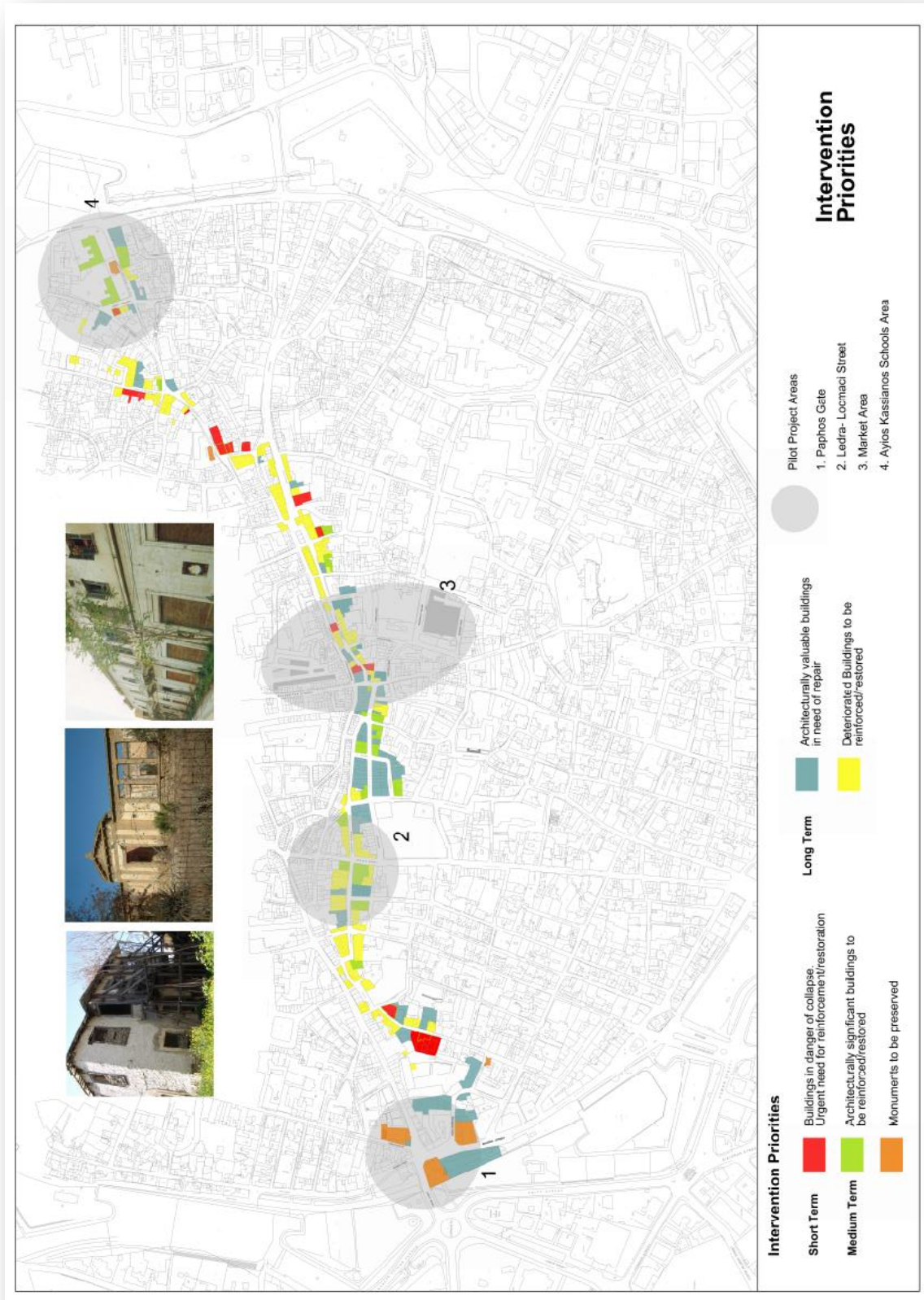
Principal contacts:

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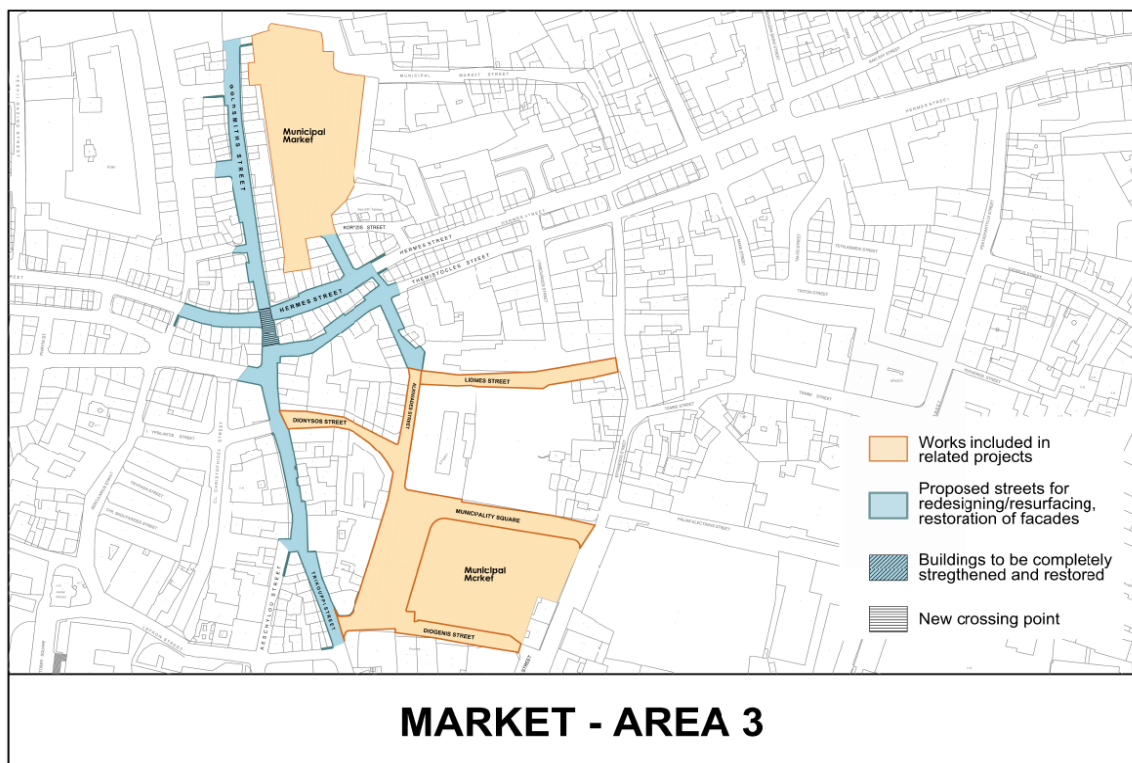
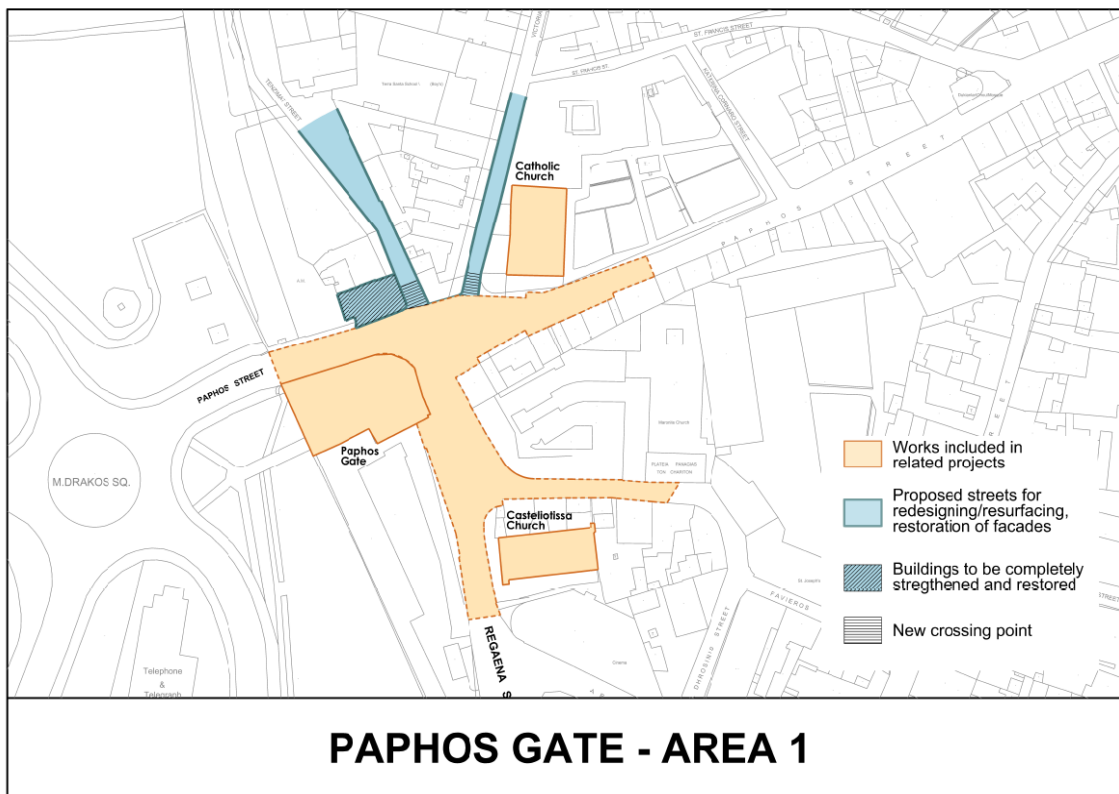


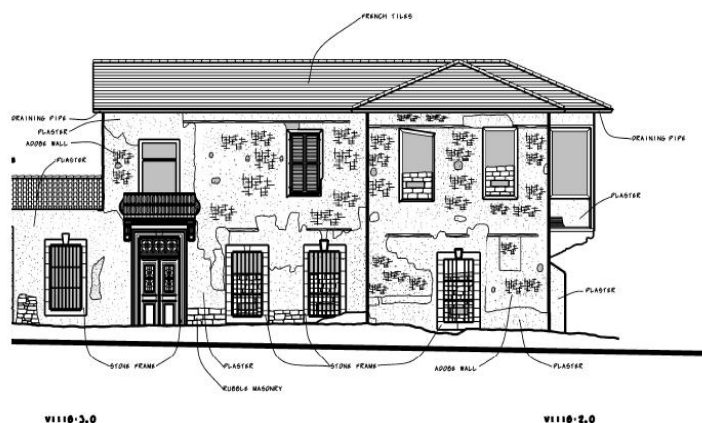
Appendix 2/1





Appendix 2/2





Short Term Intervention Priorities - Building No 117



Short Term Intervention Priorities - Buildings 102,103,104