

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE MINISTER OF WORKS
AND HOUSING

MASTER PLAN FOR MALTA & GOZO

In the economic progress of a country, land plays a very important part. To this end, land use planning must be efficient and it must co-ordinate the various aspects, such as housing, industries, tourism and roads.

In Malta, where land is scarce and population presses, land use planning should be given the most careful consideration and study and should not be left to chance or carried out piecemeal. Once land has been developed for a particular use, it tends to remain permanently in that use. A wrong decision now, may therefore greatly increase the cost of, or entirely prevent, some desirable or essential use later on.

To achieve rational planning to the best degree possible, goals must be determined which are in line with budgetary resources, priorities must be agreed, and the planning proposals must then be incorporated in a realistic development plan. When planning has been agreed upon by the various interests concerned (public works, housing, tourism, sanitation and finance), it tends to keep down public spending on development to a realistic figure and to the best advantage.

Unfortunately, planning in Malta has almost never been given all the above considerations. It was taken to be primarily the setting out of roads for certain areas and the erection of any kind of building along these roads. It was carried out piecemeal, as the demand for building permits dictated with the result that there was no co-relation between one plan and another, and key plans had to be continually changed, in whole or in part. With the present rate of well over 3,000 applications for building per year and Government's plans for industrial and tourist development, the situation has become confusing and even alarming.

The need for rational and economic planning has been much felt lately and the previous Administration was hard pressed by the Director of Public Works, who so far is responsible for planning, to tackle the problem in earnest and from a scientific angle. Two experts, Mr Wirdyer Morris and Professor J.F.Q. Switzer were brought over to Malta, the latter on contract. Prof. Switzer came over in August, 1960, for one year as Planning Consultant to the Malta Government and he submitted his report to the Governor in July, 1961. As a result of his work, Ordinance XV of 1962 (amending Chapter 13 of the Code of Police Laws) came into effect on February 16th.

The amendment and the notices issued by the Government have one very important effect on town planning in general: the whole of Malta and Gozo has been declared a planning area, and, as a result, all key plans or schemes then existing are no longer legal instruments. This was done to permit the drawing

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up of a master plan for these islands, without the planning authority being bound or limited by old and existing key plans. The period set for the preparation of such a plan is three years from the date of the enactment of the said Ordinance.

During this same period, steps should be taken to introduce proper town planning legislation.

A firm of specialists in town planning should be engaged to draw up a master plan, providing for development for the next 25 years or so. It is not possible to have the plan prepared by the Public Works Department because the department is not equipped to do this within a reasonably short time and also because it is a specialised job of very important and complex nature requiring expert handling. The Public Works Department would of course work in close liason with the expatriate specialist, as also the same would be required of the other interested departments concerned.

It is estimated that the consultants would be able to prepare the plan inside two years. The impellent need for speed is one of the major reasons why it is considered that the preparation of the master plan should be entrusted to a firm of specialist consultants, who should also be of inestimable value in helping with the drafting of proper town planning legislation.

Hon. Ministers are asked to agree that a reputable firm of town planning consultants should be engaged for the drawing up of a master plan for Malta and Gozo.

15th January, 1963.

(M.W.H.65/62)
(Sec.1674/61)