

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET  
BY THE HON. MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING

Building development at Zurrieq Road, Safi

The remains of a Roman wall along Zurrieq Road, Safi, which the Antiquities Committee wish to preserve, have been holding up building development amounting to about £17,000, by the owners of the land along the road.

2. The previous Administration had decided that:-

- (a) Building in the area should be allowed but owing to the provisions of the Antiquities (Protection) Act, a condition was to be inserted in the Building Control Board licence to the effect that the Roman wall (to be incorporated in the front gardens) should be preserved and not be demolished or altered in any manner;
- (b) The removal of the rubble wall on top of the Roman wall should be effected under the supervision of the Antiquities Committee.

3. However, no action to implement this decision has so far been taken, because the wall stands some five feet above the ground and access to the buildings which it is proposed to erect would be impossible.

4. The Hon. Minister of Works and Housing reports that there are now two alternatives remaining:

Either (a) the wall be removed, in spite of the Antiquities Committee's objections, and rebuilt a few yards' away, near an old windmill which is being restored by the Tourist Board, thus allowing the original building line to be followed;

Or (b) the wall be by-passed, at a cost to Government of £2,175, of which £950 would be recoverable by contribution, which would be payable whichever alternative is selected.

5. The Hon. Minister of Works and Housing favours the removal and re-erection of the wall, but if this is unacceptable to Government, he recommends that the alternative be adopted.

6. The arguments in favour of the wall staying where it is are:-

- (a) It is the most complete Roman wall in the Island, consisting of 33 large blocks;

/(b) ....

(b) The remains are mentioned in the literary works of eminent historians, such as Jean Houel's "Voyage Pittoresque" published in 1785 and Dr Thomas Ashby's "Roman Malta" published in 1915;

(c) Dismantling and re-erection would cause the wall to lose its importance.

7. On the other hand:-

(a) The wall has been overlaid and the background is unattractive;

(b) Preservation would involve the expropriation of land, the removal of soil, levelling, asphaltting and legal expenses, costing in all about £2,175 of which £950 would be recoverable;

(c) The wall itself is not much of an attraction to visitors.

8. Hon. Ministers are kindly asked to say which of the alternatives they favour.