



# KOTTONERA

STRATEGY



PLANNING AUTHORITY



MINISTRY FOR JUSTICE, CULTURE  
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



MINISTRY FOR TRANSPORT,  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL PROJECTS





**KOTTONERA**  
STRATEGY

# Foreword



**Dr Joseph Muscat**  
**Prime Minister**

The unprecedented results achieved in last years have placed Malta in a position to focus on what is best for the future of our country. The sustained and strong economic performance enables the Maltese Islands to now address the challenges not only of present, but also upcoming, generations.

Upgrading infrastructure, in its very wide sense, is a main pillar of Government's vision to improve the quality of life of our people today, and in the many years to come. Creating modern facilities, improving the natural environment and investing in communities is paramount for a nation which is advancing with a faster pace than any other European member state.

Following the conclusion of the Strategy for Valletta, Government is prioritizing Cottonera. While the urban environment in this region has improved significantly over the past years through a number of key projects, I believe it is time to take the next leap forward.






Meaningful regeneration is what we are after. The Three Cities and Kalkara are blessed with a rich, diverse cultural patrimony which provides a context for positive change. The first and foremost priority of the Cottonera Strategy is to strengthen the socio-economic development of its people. It provides a supportive, flexible and proactive framework, based on measures which seek to notch up standards.

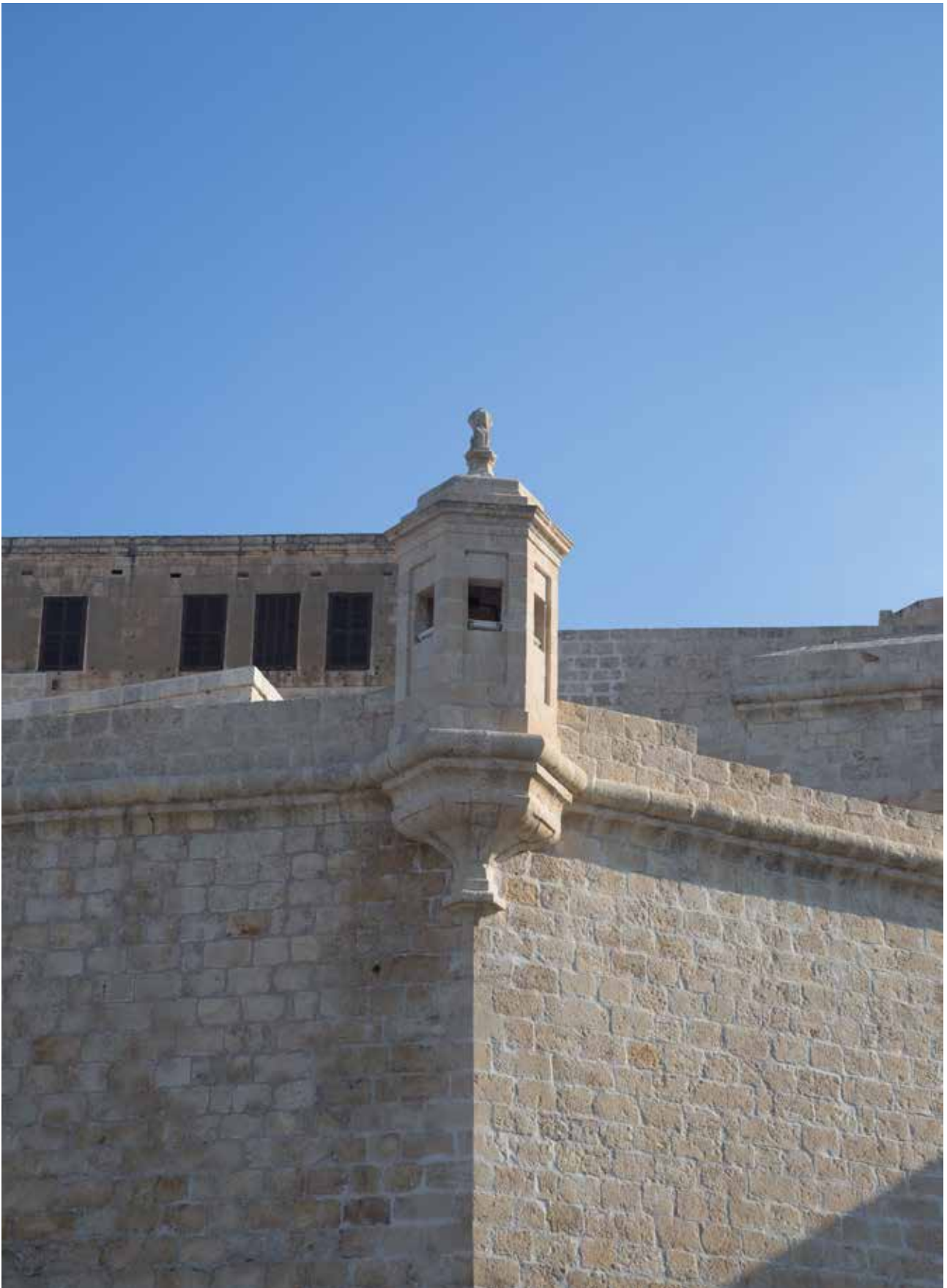
Better surroundings will make Cottonera more attractive for business, hence creating more career opportunities. Improved social infrastructure, such as upgraded health, education and recreation facilities, will encourage inclusion, support diversity and create sustainable communities. Refined heritage assets will result in more open spaces and attractions which do justice to the historical uniqueness of Cottonera.

The Strategy is a people-centered one, with residents and citizens genuinely involved. The approach to its formulation was based on listening and discussing with people of the area so as to understand the pertinent challenges, their nature and potential solutions.

Drawing up the Strategy is only a first step. To succeed, we need to work together. Local Councils, Government entities, the Church, numerous NGOs and the community as a whole. We need to instill a sense of pride and ownership which will enable us to implement the ambitious measures which challenge the status quo. Then, we will truly be able to say that Cottonera, and Malta, is changing for the better. Our commitment is there to guarantee a bright future to all families.

# Contents

	<b>Scope</b>	7
	Profile of Cottonera	9
	Spatial extents of the Strategy	9
	Environmental Profile	11
	Socio-economic Profile	27
	<b>Consultation</b>	29
	Public Attitude Survey	29
	<b>Strategy</b>	31
	Objective 1 - Improving Social Capital	36
	Objective 2 - Upgrading the Urban Environment	41
	Objective 3 - Increasing Business Attractiveness	47
	<b>Implementation Plan</b>	49
	Projects to be implemented in the short term	52
	Funding measures	54
	<b>Conclusion</b>	56





**Glenn Bedingfield MP**  
**Executive Coordinator**  
**Cottonera Rehabilitation**  
**Committee**

I feel privileged to have been tasked with drafting this strategy on behalf of the present administration. This is a strategy for the people, the main purpose of which is to improve quality of life for all those living in Cottonera. At the same time we are looking at ways to improve and safeguard an historic area and also to attract new business.

Cottonera has changed. Investment has poured into the Three Cities over the past five years. This and the area's traditional charm have stimulated the local property market, which in turn has led to further change. Older residential property is now being rescued and regenerated. Newcomers are discovering a distinctive environment they never thought existed, while the long-established families of Cottonera are again taking pride in the place they call home.

Today, Cottonera is a community in transition. The strategy outlined in the following pages intends to ensure that the transition is a successful one. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Three Cities of Cottonera were vibrant and prosperous. The Shipyard was the driving force and was at the very heart of Maltese technical expertise and craftsmanship. After the tragic damage of the Second World War Cottonera never recovered.

For many years, successive governments failed to appreciate the potential of Cottonera. This government has finally recognized what other governments have allowed to fall by the wayside.

Today we are looking ahead and hope that the proposals contained in this strategic plan pave the way to improving the social fabric and physical environment of the Three Cities, restoring them to their former glory as the centre of so much of Malta's economy and social activity.

# Scope

The Government announced in March 2018 that a Strategy for Cottonera is to be prepared with the overall objective to “seek to improve environmental and social standards in the inner harbour area, with both short- and long-term regeneration goals”. This Strategy is setting out a framework which forms part of the wider policy context created by various national and sectoral policies such as social, environmental, economic, transport, culture, heritage, tourism related and spatial plans and policies.

This drive is in view of the new challenges brought about by the recent initiatives geared towards the regeneration of the four localities within Cottonera - Birgu, Bormla, Isla and Kalkara. It is commendable that significant investment is being made towards the embellishment of the area, against a backdrop of social measures and increasing business potential.

The Strategy for Cottonera has been drafted with the principle of social inclusion as an overarching objective. To this end, a Steering Committee was set up to bring together a number of statutory entities in order to augment the information being gained from widespread dialogues with numerous stakeholders in a bottom-up manner.

Building upon these dialogues in order to interpret the overall objective set by Government, the Vision of the Strategy is based on three pillars:

- Improving Social Capital
- Upgrading the Urban Environment
- Increasing Business Attractiveness

The rationale behind these three pillars is based on the sustainable development approach fostered by the country.

The social capital dimension is in line with the people-centred approach of the Strategy and builds on the strengthening of the human capital to be able to take forward an upgrading of the urban environment and the increased attractiveness of business investment to this area.

To achieve a meaningful upgrade of the urban environment, it is not enough to carry out cosmetic changes. It is important to achieve regeneration which builds upon the social dimension; which is inclusive and seeks a holistic improvement to the area which is community based and fosters a strong sense of belonging and ownership.

It is necessary to encourage investment that capitalises upon the assets of the area, whilst enhancing the strong cultural heritage dimension that characterises this area. The social dimension is intrinsically integrated since increasing business attractiveness provides opportunities for employment and triggers the upgrading of the urban environment.

The Vision underlying this Strategy requires the improvement of the quality of urban living in Cottonera with a wide mix of facilities and appropriate open spaces. This should be supported with more quality social and community services, amongst other amenities, such as schools, health services, centralised facilities for the elderly and family care.

Based on the distinctiveness of Cottonera, the concept of local identity is a function of the area’s topography, geomorphology and natural features, together with its built highly historic port environment, its open spaces, land use patterns and spatial organisations, visual relationships, and various other elements. Local identity also includes social and cultural practices and values, many of which may appear intangible and transient but are no less real, such as socio-cultural, tourism and religious events.





## Taking forward the Vision requires a Strategy which aims to

- Achieve further social renewal through measures targeted towards empowering the people of Cottonera;
- Improve the quality of the urban environment and ensure its maintenance;
- Underline the importance of cultural heritage and instigate more cultural infrastructure and activities to attract more visitors to Cottonera;
- Attract appropriate business uses to Cottonera, coupled by auxiliary services such as catering establishments and other facilities for employees, users, visitors and tourists;
- Identify ways through which to create better suitable attractions within Cottonera;
- Set up an enabling entity to ensure better coordination among all stakeholders for the effective implementation of this Strategy; this should be achieved by identifying the entity to oversee the Strategy and to coordinate the implementation of the various initiatives within it.

**Photo 1**

Detail from Fort St. Angelo

This approach is substantiated in this document by first considering the socio-economic and environmental profile of Cottonera in order to identify the area's key characteristics. The consultative element is then described as a precursor to the Vision of the Strategy; this then being translated into key actions forming the basis of an Implementation Plan.

# Profile of Cottonera

## Spatial extents of the Strategy

The four localities of Cottonera - Birgu, Bormla, Isla and Kalkara, are at the centre of Malta's Principal Urban Area and the Grand Harbour Area as defined in the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED, 2015)<sup>1</sup>. The Three Cities are composed of two peninsulas jutting out into the Grand Harbour, upon which Birgu and Isla are located; and the third city, Bormla which spatially connects the other two cities and is bounded by the Cottonera and Santa Margherita Lines of fortification. The fourth locality, Kalkara is the largest of the localities and is found to the north of the Three Cities. In fact, the northernmost peninsula of the Grand Harbour is home to Fort Ricasoli, a large fortified historical enclave within Kalkara. The localities were all heavily bombed during the Second World War and the urban fabric was extensively damaged during this ordeal, damage that is still present in certain parts of the fortifications to this present day.

Cottonera is bounded by other localities within the Principal Urban Area, across a Strategic Open Gap which generally runs along the area of the glacis of the fortification lines. These localities are namely Paola, Fgura, Zabbar and Xgħajra; and provide the main through routes to access Cottonera, crossing the fortification lines at a number of ornamental gates or breaches which were opened to facilitate access at a later date. Also within Cottonera is Smart City which is located in Kalkara on the boundary with Xgħajra. The limited spatial extent and small scale of the Grand Harbour Region becomes evident when one realises that parts of Cottonera are an arm's length away and can easily be seen from the far side of Marsamxett Harbour, across the Valletta peninsula easily accessed by ferry boat.



**Fig.1**

The spatial extents of the four localities within the Strategy

<sup>1</sup> SPED Policy UO1.1a Principal Urban Area (PUA) to accommodate major employment, social and residential development needs. SPED Policy UO1.2 Designating the Grand Harbour Area (GHA) as a strategic node for integrating regeneration.



### Birgu (Vittoriosa)

Birgu is comprised of the peninsula between Dockyard Creek and Kalkara Creek, with a hinterland extending between the Santa Margherita Lines and the Cottonera Lines, up to Zabbar Gate. The urban area is most dense at the peninsula, this area being composed of a series of streets in an organic layout and designated for residential purposes. The tip of the peninsula features the recently restored historic Fort St Angelo, accessed via the Birgu Waterfront; a project which has provided increased amenity through the re-use of such a significant and prestigious element of national heritage. Much of the hinterland at Birgu is open space characterised by the massive fortification lines, having the valley at Tal-Hawli at its core – a Site of Scientific Importance and Area of Ecological Importance, with a residential enclave and De La Salle and St Edward's Colleges above it.



### Bormla (Cospicua)

A city in the hinterland of the Isla peninsula to the west of Birgu, Bormla is mainly a dense residential area within the Santa Margherita Lines. The locality retains historic properties but features a significant number of post-war housing blocks of a similar typology to those found in other localities in Cottonera. The space between the two fortification lines provides for a number of large open tracts of land, some of which have been used to develop community facilities such as schools and the Cottonera Regional Sports Complex. At the heart of the locality, the Dock No. 1 development has seen the adaptive re-use of this formerly industrial area significantly increasing the visual and public space amenity within the locality and surroundings. Bormla also incorporates an extensive area designated as an Urban Park just outside the urban area.



### Isla (Senglea)

Laid out in a grid pattern along the length of the peninsula, Isla was the first city in Malta to be historically developed with a grid-iron layout. Though heavily hit during air raids of the Second World War, the street pattern was largely retained in the post-war reconstruction efforts, and the city can still be experienced as a series of parallel intersecting streets bounded by fortification walls. At the outer point is located Fort St Michael. Isla's urban area is designated entirely as a Residential Zone in the Grand Harbour Local Plan. The open spaces within this area are small, with larger public open spaces restricted mainly to the historic promenade on the waterfront. On the side of the peninsula abutting French Creek, significant tracts of land are used for maritime activities and port related uses including a ship/yacht repair yard.



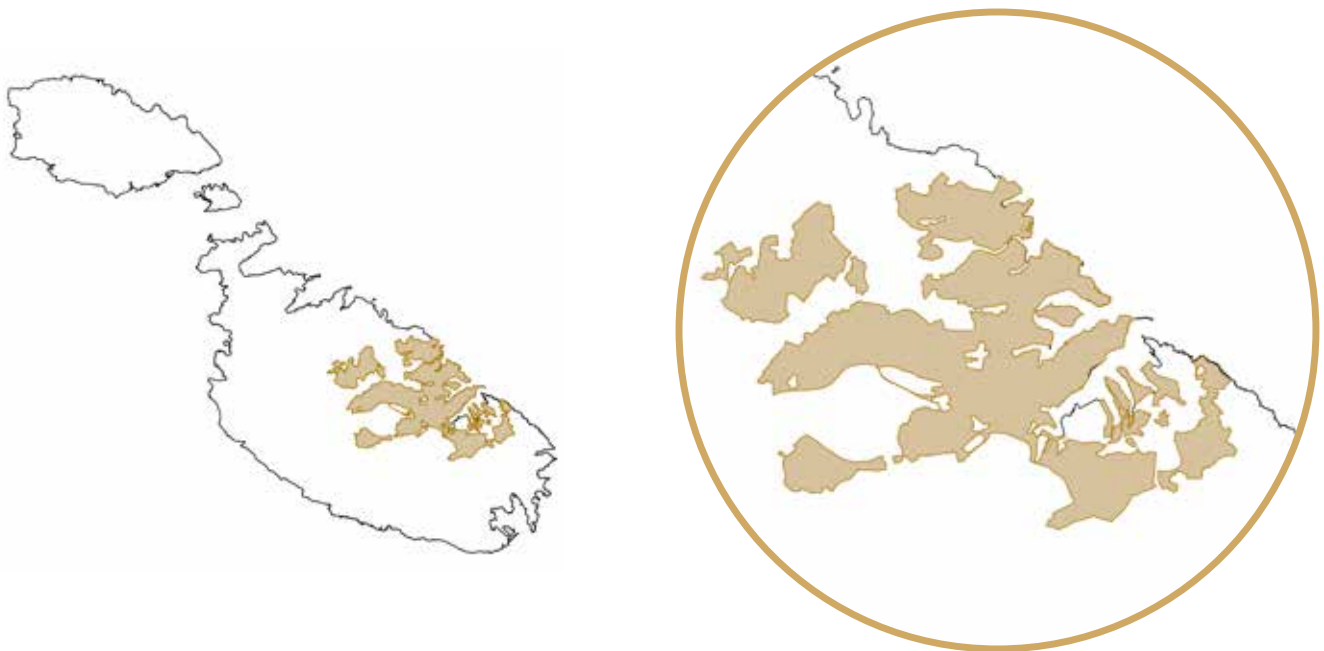
### Kalkara

Kalkara is the largest of the localities in Cottonera and is said to have been developed as a suburb to the Three Cities, just outside the Cottonera Lines. It comprises the entire area to the north of Birgu and spreads over two outcrops of land jutting into the Grand Harbour: the Bighi mostly urbanised promontory and the Fort Ricasoli peninsula, with Rinella Bay and Rinella Valley between them. The residential area of the locality developed linearly along the slopes parallel to the waterfront and along the valley leading to Kalkara Creek. A small residential enclave is found along Triq Santu Rokku; this area classified as a Rural Conservation Area and abutting the Smart City development. The locality also features Rinella Valley as a Site of Scientific Importance and Area of Ecological and Geological Importance and the Rinella Recreational Area around Fort Rinella to the north mostly consisting of the Malta Film Facilities site.

## Environmental Profile

The Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED, 2015) is the Maltese Islands' primary planning instrument. Considerations related to social, economic and environmental aspects are set out in a strategic manner leading to an integrated strategy for sustainable spatial development through the regulation of land and sea resources. The National Spatial Framework defined in the SPED places emphasis on the adoption of a sequential approach to development planning<sup>2</sup>, thereby highlighting the importance of the efficient use of space in Malta's urban areas.

Cottonera, being at the heart of Malta's Principal Urban Area (PUA), is therefore crucial to the successful implementation of the National Spatial Framework. The area has the potential to accommodate new jobs and homes, to enhance the cultural and tourism products of the Islands and to provide a number of publicly accessible open spaces which will greatly increase the quality of life of the people frequenting the area. A related objective of the SPED is the provision of new social and community facilities within Cottonera in order to increase social capital and minimise social exclusion, with particular emphasis on the integrated provision of affordable housing and reliable public transport facilities. Within this framework, the SPED designates the Grand Harbour Area as a 'strategic node for integrated regeneration'.



**Fig.2**

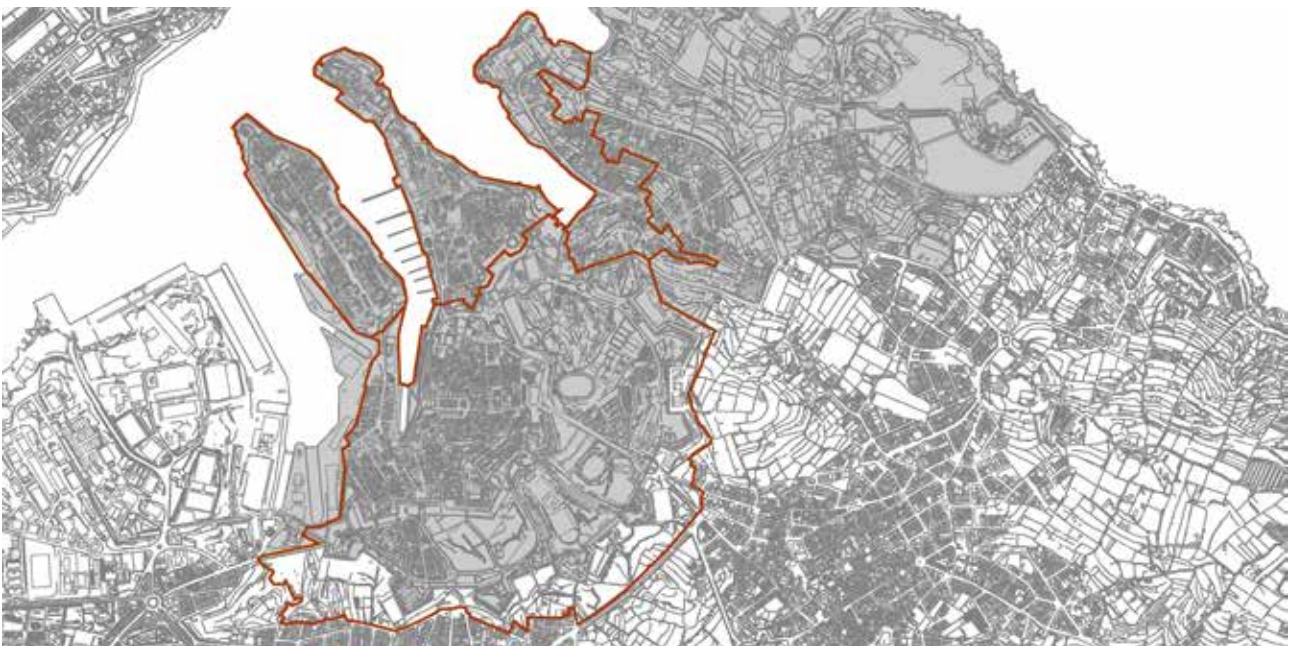
The PUA, as defined in the SPED

<sup>2</sup>SPED General Principles

Cottonera's four Urban Conservation Areas, pertaining to each of the four localities, also give rise to a number of opportunities for the provision of community facilities through the adaptive re-use of the many landmark buildings found in the area. These opportunities for the development of a strategic node echo the ethos of the Grand Harbour Local Plan (2002) and the South Malta Local Plan (2006). The District Park delineated along the Cottonera Lines is such a proposal, creating significant scope for the restoration of historic monuments and the provision of strategic open spaces in close proximity to a high density urban area.

Yet another key aim of the regeneration of the Grand Harbour Area is the rehabilitation of the urban coast and its numerous recreational and visually pleasant promenades. The long, continuous stretch of waterfront that is characteristic of Cottonera is an opportunity to provide a number of public maritime amenities, as outlined further in the Cottonera Waterfront Development Brief. The integrated approach to development planning is taken forward through the promotion of investment in redevelopment projects, the provision of maritime facilities, the better use of cultural heritage buildings and the creation of a sustainable mobility network.

The Strategy for Cottonera is thus being formulated within the above policy framework; taking particular note of the socio-economic challenges in the area within a context of a rich cultural and historical heritage, the investment opportunities inherent to the Grand Harbour area and availability of regeneration sites which can serve as attractors to public and private entities alike. The context-based approach of the SPED is particularly relevant in making the most of what Cottonera has to offer, and to ensure that both tangible and intangible capital is directly re-invested in the localities towards their ultimate benefit. It is these aspects of Cottonera upon which the upcoming Vision is based.

**Fig.3**

The four contiguous Urban Conservation Areas in Cottonera



## Historical background

The historical significance of Cottonera is closely tied to its strategic location abutting the Grand Harbour and the opportunities offered by the bays and creeks found along the length of the waterfront characterising the Three Cities and Kalkara. Since the earliest times, these assets have been made use of both to provide primarily a well-sheltered natural port environment with maritime amenities to a seafaring community and military infrastructure through fortifications and military logistical support facilities that were used to aid in the security of the Islands by strongly fortifying the peninsulas upon which the fortifications of Fort St Angelo, Fort St Michael and Fort Ricasoli are located.

**Photo 2**

Cottonera Fortifications









The cities that developed as residential, industrial, administrative and commercial centres within this strategic location are endowed with a multitude of cultural heritage monuments, structures and buildings, as well as, being significant also in their own right in terms of their urban development.

**Photo 3**

Fort St. Michael





**Photos 4, 5**  
Fort St. Angelo  
Fort Ricasoli

**Photos 6, 7**

Auberge De France

Auberge D'Angleterre

The coming of the Knights of St John heavily influenced the urban development of Cottonera. Already featuring Fort St. Angelo at the tip of the Birgu peninsula, this locality was chosen by the Knights as their first administrative and residential base in Malta, significantly expanding the existing urban enclave and also prompting the development of early maritime industries in the conveniently located creeks. The Auberges, the primary administrative buildings of the Knights, many of which are in effect palaces, such as those of France, England, Italy, and Castille and Portugal are a testament to this; together with the imposing buildings along the Birgu Waterfront that served as centres of administration and logistics for the Order.

**Photo 8**

Santa Margherita Lines

Across the creek, Isla was developed as the first city in Malta to be conceived upon a grid-iron layout by Grand Master La Sengle, who gave his name to this new locality. The next wave of development occurred across the Grand Harbour in the form of yet another city laid out in a grid-iron layout – Valletta. Following the Knights' decision to remain in Malta, especially in view of their successful defence of the Islands during the Great Siege of 1565, Cottonera was no longer the centre of operations but nevertheless retained an important role for the Knights.

This is evidenced by the untiring efforts of successive Grand Masters to fortify the growing cities by a double concentric line of fortifications known as the Santa Margherita Lines within which Bormla was developed, and the Cottonera Lines, spearheaded by Grand Master Lascaris and Grand Master Nicola Cottoner respectively. This heavily fortified enclave was further strengthened by the fortifications upon which Isla is built, featuring the iconic 'gardjola' (sentry watch post structure) at the tip of the peninsula; the upgrading of Fort St Angelo and the development of Fort Ricasoli in Kalkara - this latter locality then a small village just outside the Three Cities.



**Photo 9**

Notre Dame Gate

**Photo 10**

Isla

The seventeenth century saw a general increase in the prosperity of the Maltese Islands, as consequence of which was overcrowding of the Grand Harbour region. The area had by then attracted more than a third of Malta's population, offering the security of the fortifications and the employment prospects offered in the cities. This issue was further compounded by the development of residential zones at Floriana and Paola intensifying the population density within the area. Cottonera which nonetheless remained an important hub was successful in retaining a role central to the development of the Maltese Islands even during the British period and later, once Independence was gained in 1964.

Maritime activities were throughout this historical passage central to the identity of these localities. The industrial dockyards created centres of employment and skills and had spill-over effects such as the increase in population density as people continued to aspire to work and live in the area. This trend was reversed during the Second World War since Cottonera was a focus point for air-raid bombings and suffered widespread demolition that forced many people out of their homes and into localities on other outer parts of the Islands. Much of the demolished urban landscape in Cottonera was converted into social housing areas to make up for the shortfall in housing after the war, though not all those previously indigenous to the area made their return into the Cities.



Nevertheless, we are as yet able to appreciate Cottonera's historic landscape. The designation of a large extent of the four localities as an Urban Conservation Area was granted in recognition of this heritage. Today, a significant number of monuments are being adaptively re-used to house contemporary facilities, these having been protected through their listing in the Register of Scheduled Properties. Also listed are the above-mentioned fortifications, the value of which to the leisure amenity of Cottonera and developing tourism potential is in the process of being duly recognised and strengthened.



**Photo 11**

Gate of Provence in Birgu

**Photo 12**

Gate of Provence in Birgu

The significance of Cottonera as a thriving series of localities set against a rich cultural heritage backdrop cannot be emphasised only through the preservation of a number of characterising monuments. It is a significance that transcends the 'monument' to provide value on an urban scale, both in the context of Cottonera's proximity to Valletta World Heritage Site as well as on the localities' own merits. Valuing the heritage of Cottonera demands its ownership by the communities of the four localities and achieving their empowerment through the sustainable appropriate use of such heritage assets.

## Analysis of building stock<sup>3</sup>

The majority of tenements in the Southern Harbour District are upper storey maisonettes and ground floor tenements, terraced houses and townhouses; most of the former having four or five rooms in total and the latter being slightly larger, with most tenements having five or six rooms in total. Flats, apartments and penthouses also feature strongly, these being smaller properties with four or five rooms in total. Less in evidence are semi-detached houses, fully-detached houses and semi- or fully-detached farmhouses, these being mostly larger properties with more than seven rooms. On a locality level, the majority of terraced houses and townhouses are located in Bormla, as are the majority of upper storey maisonettes and ground floor tenements, and flats, apartments and penthouses. This is a reflection of the overall size of the locality to the other Cities in the trio. Kalkara, having developed later, albeit, has the highest number of larger properties, these including semi- or fully-detached houses and farmhouses.

Considering the development profile of Cottonera, the majority of tenements in the Three Cities were built during the post-war reconstruction phase, these amounting to 2,200 tenements from a total of 4,153 tenements; and including social housing units still characterising significant tracts of the localities today. Older historic properties, dating prior to 1918 or to the inter-war phase between 1919 and 1939, constitute the second largest share with 1,358 tenements. This is evidence of the historic nature of these localities, functioning as the hub of the Islands, just across the harbour from the capital city Valletta. The consolidation of the urban environment in the post-war phase after 1945 is evident through the relatively slower development of new properties after 1971, these totalling only 595 new tenements.

Kalkara shows a different development profile, the strongest development surge being evidenced between 1971 and 1990, when the departure of the British Navy caused a decline in related port uses. The locality had nevertheless also gained a favourable reputation as an attractive suburb of the Three Cities, with properties being developed at a consistent rate both prior to the inter-war period, between 1919 and 1939 and after the Second World War. As with the Three Cities, the rate of development fell since the 1990s, even though it remained relatively high when compared to the Three Cities. It is notable that 239 occupied properties dating to this time were newly registered in Kalkara, as compared to 242 in aggregate for the Three Cities.

Cottonera also has a number of unoccupied dwellings, though they are less in evidence than in other localities within the Southern Harbour District. Disregarding Santa Luċija as an outlier, Kalkara has the lowest incidence of unoccupied dwellings in the District, the next in line being Birgu and Isla. Only Bormla has a slightly higher number of unoccupied dwellings, with 645 properties exceeding the rates for Marsa and Ħal Luqa. Of the dwellings which are occupied however, ownership rates are relatively low. The localities constituting the Three Cities are in the lower range when compared to other localities in the Southern Harbour District, whilst only Kalkara has ownership rates just within the higher range. Conversely, all localities within the Three Cities feature rental occupancy rates within the higher range of the District, with Bormla being the second highest with 1,334 properties, after Valletta with 1,777 properties. Kalkara is within the lower range of the District, indeed having the lowest rate compared to the other localities with 245 properties.

---

<sup>3</sup>Data provided by NSO





**Photo 13**  
Senglea Waterfront



## Permitted residential development

The data pertaining to the permitted residential development in the four localities of Cottonera was analysed over a 10 year period, from 2007 to 2017. A total of 182 permits<sup>4</sup> were granted during this time, this being only 1.2% of the total number of permits granted for residential development in the Maltese Islands. This may be viewed in the light of the lack of opportunities for comprehensive redevelopment sites in the continuous Urban Conservation Area (UCA) that pertains to much of the four localities. Another factor may be the high density character of the area; a theory supported by the fact that the highest concentration of permits for residential development, 96 permits, is in previously vacant sites in the urban area of Kalkara, both close to the waterfront and in the hamlet along Triq Santu Rokku surrounded by a rural conservation area.

Despite the lack of redevelopment being followed, the potential and opportunities for restoration of properties in these UCAs however abound. Since permits are required in such developments, it seems that there is a lack of initiative pertaining to such properties during the timeframe in consideration. Numerically, 38 permits pertain to Bormla, 30 permits pertain to Birgu and 18 permits pertain to Isla. The permitted residential developments in these localities are spread relatively evenly, taking into consideration the maritime industrial zones to the west of Bormla and the land between the Santa Margherita and Cottonera Lines, both in Bormla and in Birgu.

<sup>4</sup> This figure refers to residential development which constituted a change in the number of dwellings units.

## Permitted development related to offices, catering, retail and tourism permits

The number of permitted developments which are not residential amount to 217 permits<sup>5</sup>, this being only 2.2% of the total number of permits granted for non-residential development in the Maltese Islands. The highest concentration of permits is to be found in Birgu, in the urban area abutting the land-front. Other concentrations can also be found around the Dock No. 1 development in Bormla and around the centre of the Isla peninsula. Lesser concentrations are to be found in the outlying areas of Bormla and in Kalkara, a notable outlier being the Smart City development.

On assessment, permits pertaining to offices, catering and retail amount to 148 developments with a total net usable floorspace of 39,504m<sup>2</sup> constituting 3.3% of the total number of permits granted in the Maltese Islands. Those related to tourism amount to only 24 permits with a total net usable floorspace of 10,303m<sup>2</sup> constituting 3.6% of the total number of permits granted in the Maltese Islands. Half of this latter set of permits is in Birgu, seven are in Bormla and the rest are in Isla and Kalkara. Considering offices, catering and retail permits, these are characterised by a greater number of permits with a large footprint. These include large restoration projects such as that of Fort St Angelo, upgrading of maritime administration facilities and school facilities, and major office developments namely the Smart City development. Other permits within this category include those relating to environmental leisure, such as playing fields; with a few permits for industrial uses and warehousing.

---

<sup>5</sup> This figure refers to non-residential development whereby an increase in floorspace, change of use or redevelopment was registered.

## Socio-economic Profile

Over the last century, Cottonera has witnessed an overall decline in the population residing within it, with little influx of foreigners to the locality. These amount to a total of less than 3% of those living within the four localities being foreign<sup>6</sup>. The population of the four localities amounts to around 13,400, which is around 2.9% of the total population of the Maltese Islands. Bormla has the largest population with around 5,200 people, the other localities having similar populations, with Kalkara having 3,000 people, Isla 2,700 people and Birgu 2,500 people<sup>7</sup>. The Three Cities actually registered a slight decline both in population and in the number of households between 2010 and 2015, but Kalkara did in fact register a small increase during the same time period<sup>8</sup>. Considering the population by age group, Cottonera has an ageing population, with the highest number of people in the age bracket between forty and sixty years of age<sup>9</sup>.

The expenditure per capita on social benefits was greater than Eur2000 in Bormla and between Eur1630 - Eur1999 for Birgu and Isla<sup>10</sup>. 24.2% of households in Cottonera are materially deprived whilst 12.1% are severely materially deprived, with

the largest share of such persons being adults, with no significant statistical difference between males and females<sup>11</sup>.

There has however been a significant decrease in the number of people residing in Cottonera who claim social security benefits related to unemployment in the timeframe between 2013 and 2017. These include those on 'Social Assistance' benefit, 'Single Unmarried Parents' and those listed on the Unemployment Register<sup>12</sup>.

Census data shows that 40% of the population of Cottonera are employed whilst 60% of the population are either unemployed or inactive, these including pensioners<sup>13</sup>. In addition, the Southern Harbour District features in the lowest bracket with regards to gross annual basic salary and average household disposable income<sup>14</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> National Statistics Office, *Regional Statistics Malta - 2017 Edition (Malta: 2017)*

<sup>7</sup> Statistics as of 31 December 2016

<sup>8</sup> National Statistics Office, *op.cit.*

<sup>9</sup> National Census 2011

<sup>10</sup> National Statistics Office, *op.cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Data provided by NSO as per SILC2017

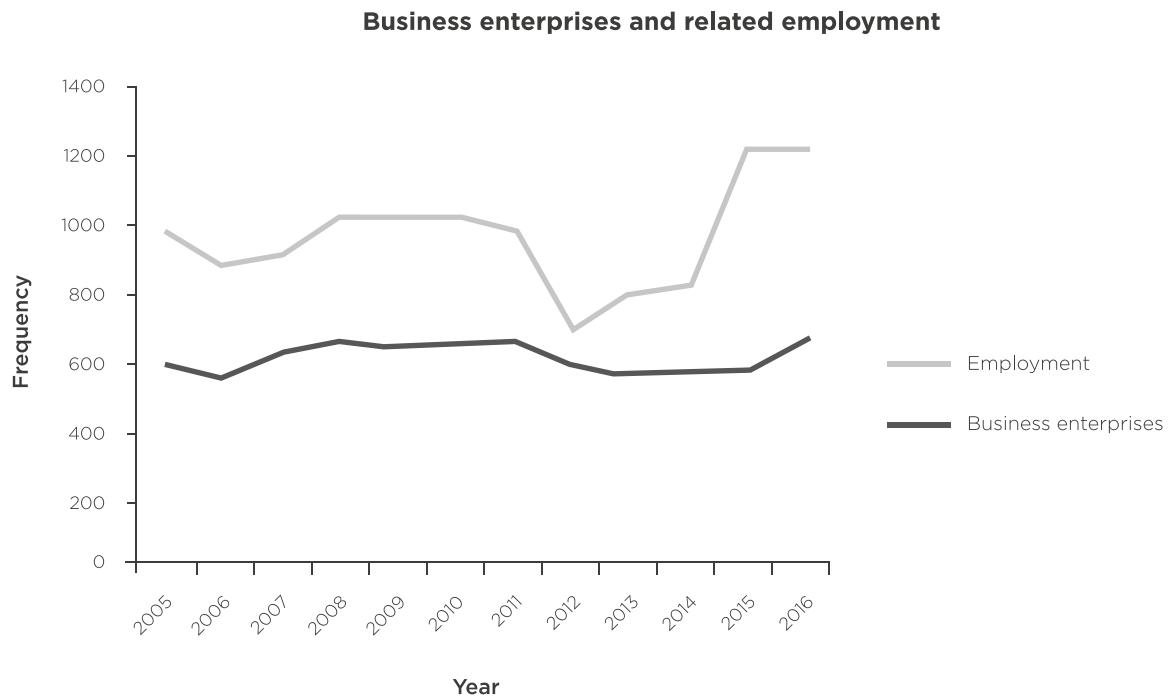
<sup>12</sup> Data provided by the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity as per 2016

<sup>13</sup> National Census 2011

<sup>14</sup> National Statistics Office, *op.cit.*



Countering these trends, there has recently been an increase in the number of business enterprises in Cottonera, with the corresponding increase in jobs provided through this sector, as shown in below:



**Fig. 4**  
Graph showing increase in business enterprises and employment in Cottonera

Most children at pre-primary and primary level attend schools within their locality whilst secondary school students attend schools within the same district i.e. the Southern Harbour District. Since there is limited post-secondary provision within the Southern Harbour District, students attended such facilities in other districts at this educational level<sup>15</sup>. The number of people residing in Cottonera who have successfully completed attendance in post-secondary and tertiary institutions is low when compared nationally; these totalling 1,060 people of the total cohort of 68,787 people with post-secondary and tertiary education<sup>16</sup>. Despite this, students are attracted to vocational courses, for which the attendance by students from the Southern Harbour District is 20% of the student cohort – a relatively significant turnout<sup>17</sup>. The literacy rate for Cottonera is 89%, this being an average of the four localities, which however falls below the national average literacy rate<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> *National Census 2011*

<sup>17</sup> *National Statistics Office, op.cit.*

<sup>18</sup> *National Census 2011*

# Consultation

The Strategy for Cottonera is based on a number of in-depth discussions held to understand the concerns and aspirations of stakeholders of the area and thenceforth to set out the priority areas and key actions of the plan. Central to the consultation drive were the Local Councils of the four localities, a number of active NGOs and Catholic Church representatives as well as relevant statutory agencies under the aegis of various Ministries.

In addition, a Steering Committee was set up to draft the Strategy in a collaborative manner; this being chaired by the Executive Coordinator of the Cottonera Rehabilitation Committee and including representatives of the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, Transport Malta, the Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation, Heritage Malta and the Planning Authority. Ad hoc consultees were invited to participate in the meetings of the Steering Committee to advise on specific issues. These consultees included LEAP and JobsPlus, with a practical and realistic way forward being discussed on issues of poverty, social exclusion and unemployment.

## Public Attitude Survey

A public attitude survey was undertaken so as to gain information on the requirements of Cottonera in terms of resident aspirations. The scope of this exercise was to understand the perceptions of the residents of their quality of life with regards to available social measures and towards the environment within which they live.

### Methodology

The survey was carried out between the 11th May and the 26th May 2018 through telephone interviews. A sample of 577 individuals aged 16 years and over, and resident in Cottonera was generated. The sample was stratified based on age, gender and place of residence. The survey has a 95 % level of confidence with a confidence interval of  $\pm 4.0\%$ .



**Photo 15**

Birgu

## Findings

Around 61% of all the residents would not change anything in their locality.

Birgu residents said that ‘the clean environment’ (18.2%) and ‘historical places’ (18.2%) were two of the most positive aspects of their locality. The majority of Bormla residents said that ‘the waterfront’ (27.9%) was the most positive aspect while those residing in Isla referred to ‘the clean environment’ (14.7%), ‘historical places’ (14.7%) and ‘quiet locality’ (13.7%). The majority of Kalkara residents said that ‘it’s a quiet locality’ (45.0%) and referred to ‘the clean environment’ (19.9%) as positive aspects.

45.0% of Birgu residents do not dislike anything in their locality; while 17.1% find ‘parking’ an issue. Only 18.8% of Bormla residents do not dislike anything in their locality, while 34.1% dislike the ‘dirty roads’. 30.4% of Isla residents said they do not dislike anything, while 20.6% claimed that they dislike the ‘dirty roads’. 41.1% of Kalkara residents do not dislike anything, while 10.6% referred to the ‘dirty roads’ as negative aspects.

Around 60.9% of all the residents of Cottonera would not change anything in their locality, while 9.9% are uncertain. 4.5% of Birgu residents would make space for more parking, 10.1% of Bormla residents would improve the enforcement of the locality, 7.0% of Isla residents replied similarly to Birgu residents (referring to parking), while Kalkara residents did not mention anything which was predominant.

Residents of Bormla were the most positive about different services and facilities within the locality. This may be attributed to the fact that they are the only locality that is furnished with most facilities and services within their own locality, when compared to the other localities.

More promotion needs to be carried out within the four localities on different services and facilities that exist within these localities. From the telephone interviews, it was very clear that a large cohort of respondents had little knowledge about different services and facilities being provided by the Central and Local Government.

## Conclusion

- Night centres, day-care centres, health centres and old people’s homes are all different services and facilities that citizens would like to have. Most of the respondents noted that they have to attend other localities for such services;
- Cottonera residents were very critical about parking facilities within their localities;
- Residents would like to have more open spaces, sports facilities and playing fields.

# Strategy

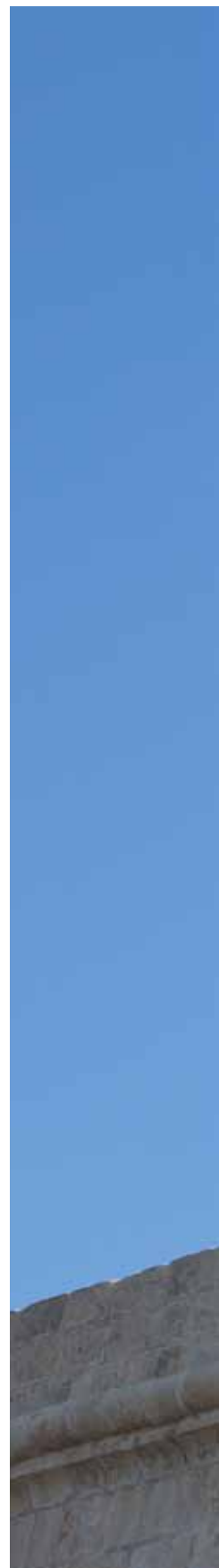
A number of overarching objectives have been identified to meet the mandate set by Government for this Strategy. Set within the wider scope of improving the quality of life of the people of Cottonera, a balanced approach to dealing with the challenges identified was sought. The objectives forming the basis of this plan are as follows:

- Improving the social capital
- Upgrading the urban environment
- Increasing business attractiveness

Capitalising on the assets inherent to Cottonera, there is significant potential in the human resources, cultural heritage, maritime context and open spaces characteristic to this area. The strengthening of the community through the fostering of a sense of belonging and identity, leading to stronger community engagement is the mainstay of this Strategy. It is felt that these societal objectives will ensure the longevity of the plan and the success of the environmental measures proposed below.

The urban environment has improved significantly in recent years and has still much to offer in terms of potential for the inclusion of further amenity. The Strategy identifies key sites of opportunity from a social facilities, employment, leisure, infrastructure and sustainable mobility point of view. Any development has to however be supported by a strong element of operational management to ensure the long term use and maintenance of these sites. These projects will come to fruition against a backdrop of Cottonera's cultural heritage and maritime assets which play an important role in defining their remit.

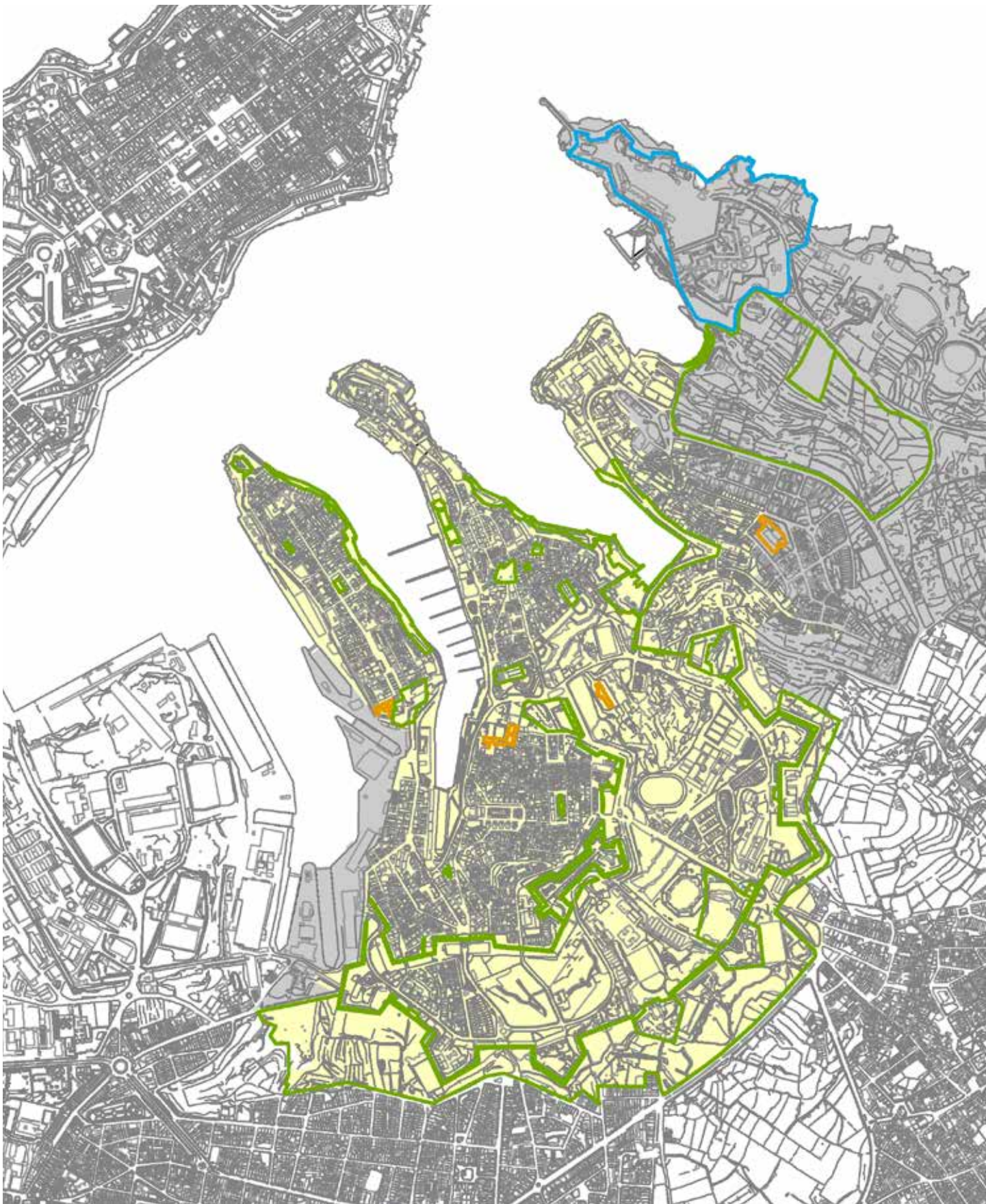
In fact, Cottonera may be described as a historic niche bounded by water on the maritime edge and a line of fortifications on the land-side. It also falls within the context of the Grand Harbour area and is in close proximity to Valletta World Heritage Site both spatially and visually. The significant heritage which has prompted the designation of Urban Conservation Areas that cover a large extent of Cottonera can be considered as an asset. This underpins opportunities within the area and which has the potential of significantly increasing the business attractiveness of these localities.
















The economic growth of Cottonera area when compared to the rest of the island is currently somewhat stymied. This may be the result of a number of factors that have given rise to a stigma that needs to be eliminated. It is a trend that is already being reversed through the increased provision of tourism facilities, the opening of diverse catering outlets and numerous restoration projects on both residences and public buildings. These initiatives, coupled with the adaptive reuse of major cultural heritage sites have aided in fostering of a sense of community essential to the area.

The organisation of the Strategy is based on the three objectives listed above. Each of the three objectives has been taken forward through a list of measures. The identification of the actions was built upon the discussions with the Local Councils and within the Steering Committee coupled with the feedback from meetings held with a number of organisations and the results of the Public Attitude Survey.

Figure 5 below identifies the key initiatives to be taken within Cottonera, stratified by the respective Objective under which they are proposed.



-  **Social Capital**
-  **Urban Environment**
-  **Business Attractiveness**
-  **Urban Conservation Area**
-  **Spatial Extents of Strategy**

**Fig. 5**

General map of the spatial extents of measures proposed through the Objectives of the Strategy





**Fig. 6** Delineation of the measures proposed within the 'Urban Environment' objective



**Fig. 7** Delineation of the measures proposed within the 'Social Capital' objective



**Fig. 8** Delineation of the key measure proposed within the 'Business Attractiveness' objective

# Objective 1

## Improving Social Capital

### Implementers:

- Local Councils
- Aġenzija Appoġġ
- Active Ageing
- Breakfast Club
- Commissioner for Children
- Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations
- Commission for Domestic Violence (CDV)
- Employee Support Programme
- Employment and Training Corporation
- Elderly and Community Care
- Foundation for Educational Services
- Heritage Malta
- LEAP!
- Lifelong Learning
- MCAST
- Malta Council for Culture and the Arts
- Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST)
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE)
- Aġenzija Sedqa
- Department for Social Welfare Standards
- Department of Social Security
- Employment and Training Corporation Youth (YEP)
- Aġenzija Żgħażaġh

## Targeting increased employment opportunities

Employers within Cottonera and the relative vicinity are to be targeted to aid in the provision of new employment opportunities to people living in the four localities, as part of an ongoing effort to ameliorate their circumstances through meaningful employment and integration in the workforce. Targeted employers can include those within one bus ride of Cottonera (e.g. Valletta, Paola, and Fgura) and it is recommended that such employers are supported through incentives to provide part-time and full-time opportunities with a flexible set-up to enable workers to meet familial obligations. This should be supported by a similarly flexible approach to the current benefits system that incentivises people to take up part-time employment to supplement their earnings.

Targeted training for semi-skilled employment such as for childcare assistants, chambermaids and security personnel amongst others is also essential to match the skills required by employers. The training is to be tailor-made considering time and location constraints. In this regard, skill-matching is required in order for training to be provided in line with the employment opportunities available. This could be taken forward through the setup of cooperatives which could provide the adequate organisational structure within which job opportunities within Cottonera could be tapped.

In tandem with the provision of targeted employment opportunities and training courses, an additional measure is to improve supporting social infrastructure as required, with the possibility of being managed by the above-mentioned cooperative. It has been noted that there is no 'Klabb 3-16' facility within Cottonera and there is an acute shortage of childcare facilities in the vicinity of residential centres within Cottonera. This needs to be addressed and complemented by subsidised transport to and from places of work; identifying locations for training in Cottonera; and making better and full use of existing social and community facilities. These include heritage sites and museums, which have the infrastructure and human resources necessary to provide such amenity.

These initiatives should be coupled with an increased flexibility in the provision of supporting facilities. This implies wider operating hours (including public holidays) for child care facilities and the provision of day and night centres for the elderly. Schools and child care facilities need to be complemented by professionals at each school to provide basic healthcare which is outside the remit of school teachers and which does not require the immediate intervention of the parents.

## Proactive and targeted social support

Social support is to be provided in a drive to reduce absenteeism. A qualitative appraisal of factors leading to absenteeism is recommended in order to identify pro-active measures that should be adopted to tackle this challenge. Early school leavers are also to be proactively targeted by providing follow-up meetings and vocational training in line with available employment as outlined above. The creation of apprenticeship positions with governmental entities and private companies for youths within Cottonera and the immediate vicinity will aid in the implementation of these measures. In addition, social support measures are to provide life-skill courses in relation to home management, budgeting, behaviour and other basic skills. This can be augmented by providing facilities for literacy classes for youths and adults and by promoting reading clubs for young children. Potentially, this measure can be linked to the setting up of childcare centres in Cottonera in order to create tailored initiatives that emphasise literacy. These measures are aimed also at attracting more students from Cottonera to tertiary education. Tertiary education institutions such as MCAST and University can hold road-shows within Cottonera to increase awareness of opportunities and courses.

Community support for people of all ages is to be reviewed in order to assess where a more targeted, proactive approach to the support of children, youths, adults and elderly is required. In particular, necessary services include home-help for the elderly who live independently. Also important is ensuring the necessary infrastructure for the mobility impaired to make use of community facilities without any impediments. An inclusive stance towards community support can be achieved through active ageing. This involves creating opportunities for a symbiotic relationship between elderly and youths; for example involving the elderly in child support and youths in housekeeping tasks.

**Photo 17**

Villa Bighi - home of Malta Council for Science and Technology in Kalkara



## Better use of existing social and community facilities

The use of redundant and/or underutilised properties such as existing school buildings to provide facilities for elderly, children, youths and the disadvantaged is strongly recommended as a central element of this Strategy. An assessment of the current usage of public institutions within Cottonera is required in order to carry out a rationalisation exercise to provide space for facilities such as child-care and facilities for the elderly. The development of a Community Centre incorporating these facilities with educational facilities would greatly aid the generation of social capital in the area. A site-selection exercise is to identify appropriate sites for the provision of community facilities to meet the shortfall in space. For example, it is recommended that vacant space in primary schools is utilised to provide day and night centres for the elderly.

## Identifying opportunities for affordable housing with an emphasis on an integration within the urban fabric and attracting young homeowners to Cottonera

It is recommended that major developments within Cottonera contribute to the provision of affordable housing units across the localities. In addition, vacant housing is to be used in this regard by providing measures to incentivise the use of such currently redundant assets as affordable housing units. Schemes and incentives for 1st time and 2nd time buyers to invest in property in Cottonera will spearhead the regeneration of areas currently suffering from a lack of investment. A land-ownership survey will aid in the identification of vacant properties in order to kick-start the investment process in a targeted manner.



## Empowerment of NGOs

A centralised facility for NGOs in Cottonera is required in order to agglomerate resources and encourage NGOs to coordinate and collaborate in the provision of services to people from Cottonera. This facility is to be endowed with the necessary equipment and IT infrastructure required for the NGOs to operate adequately.



**Photo 18**

Bormla

## Objective 2

### Upgrading the Urban Environment

#### Implementers:

- Local Councils
- Cleansing and Services Directorate
- Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools
- Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation (GHRC)
- Heritage Malta
- Housing Authority
- Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b'Dizabilità
- Kunsill Malti għall-Isport
- Lands Authority
- Restoration Directorate
- Superintendence of Cultural Heritage
- Transport Malta

#### Identify Opportunity Sites and related uses

Cottonera has a limited number of potential sites which can act as nodes for the provision of socio-economic services. These sites include Fort Ricasoli in Kalkara as well as the disused sites falling within the Cottonera Waterfront Area along the Bormla/Birgu waterfront. These sites should be appraised for the potential uses that can be assigned to them and funds committed to their restoration in line with their assigned re-use. Local Councils are to be empowered to play a more proactive role in the regeneration of the locality by allocating skills and targeted expertise to enable tapping of EU related initiatives such as URBACT. To this effect, Cottonera should be considered as a sub-region.

## Appreciation of Heritage sites

It is recommended that the appreciation of cultural heritage sites is promoted in a manner which emphasises both the material and non-material aspects of culture, by intensifying the use of heritage sites as inclusive foci for socio-economic development. In particular, the restoration of landmark sites such as Fort Ricasoli should be used to catalyse local level development by providing employment opportunities, income and access in order to contribute to the socio-economic revitalisation of their context whilst strengthening social capital. Incompatible uses such as the tank cleaning facility which could potentially undermine the rehabilitation of Fort Ricasoli are to be mitigated, if not relocated.

Other recommended projects include the restoration and opening of new accesses for locals and tourists to the Cottonera Lines and the Santa Margherita Lines, and the restoration of chapels, windmills, statues and niches. The periodic maintenance following the completion of the restoration projects is also to be taken into account when drawing up funding and operational management agreements. Also to be considered is the potential to increase local appreciation of cultural heritage by identifying initiatives to proactively involve the community in participating in their restoration, re-use and enjoyment.

Conservation Area Action Plans for each locality are to be formulated based upon a holistic and capacity based approach which capitalises upon the assets of the historic cores. These are to identify opportunities which complement and foster an integrated approach to the identity and distinctiveness of these areas. The Conservation Area Action Plans are to integrate new uses and activities within the historic cores to act as a catalyst for regeneration. In line with this measure, Local Councils have recommended the following projects:



### Birgu

- Restoration of facades of the Auberge de France including the installation of a lift
- Restoration of facades of the Auberge d'Angleterre (Hub for the Elderly) including the installation of a lift

### Isla

- Restoration of St Michael's Bastion and entrance gate
- Restoration of Arlogg tat-Torri
- Restoration of 'arzella' at Villa Davies

### Bormla

- Restoration of St Helen's Gate

**Photo 19**

Inquisitor's Palace Birgu

## Public open spaces

The efficient use and embellishment of existing open spaces is to be promoted. Cottonera has a substantial number of open spaces, both on a large and small scale. The former are concentrated along Cottonera and Santa Margherita Lines, and the waterfront while smaller scale public open spaces are found within the urban cores of the localities. These spaces are to be embellished in line with the requirements of the locality and their use integrated with existing programmes for schools and NGOs, as well as to provide for informal sports and activities within them. It is noted particularly that their management and ongoing maintenance is essential to ensuring their long term enjoyment.

The identification of further open spaces within Cottonera that require embellishment is encouraged; for example the development of the District Park identified in the Grand Harbour Local Plan (2002) and taken forward by Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organisations. Cottonera also includes a substantial number of informal recreational areas which require very little intervention but which may include incompatible uses. Furthermore, areas such as the scrap-yard in Kalkara and various dumping sites within and just outside the Cottonera Lines should be rehabilitated. Local Councils have recommended the following projects related to the embellishment of open spaces in Cottonera:

### Bormla

---

- Embellishment of Pjazza Santa Margherita to incorporate a play area, a kiosk and a cultural centre
- Rehabilitation of open spaces within the bastions
- Urban renewal projects at Triq Sofia and Suq Bonnici

### Isla

---

- Maintenance of open spaces at 'In-Nizla tal-Ponta'
- Embellishment of Pjazza l-4 ta' Settembru and Pjazza Dun Mauro Inguanez
- Upgrading of Ġnien il-Gardjola

### Birgu

---

- Rehabilitation of open spaces within the bastions.
- Re-paving and pedestrianisation of Pjazza Vittorja
- Implementation of project at 'Tal-Glazziz' at Triq San Dwardu

### Kalkara

---

- Re-paving and reorganisation of Misrah l-Arcisqof Gonzi
- Upgrading of the waterfront promenade and the Xewkija area
- Identification of new open spaces





## Improvement and addition of affordable housing

The provision of integrated affordable housing and the attraction of young homeowners to Cottonera are to be linked to Social Capital measures above. The structural safety of the dwelling units and common areas is to be ensured whilst upgrading them to meet contemporary requirements such as accessibility is achieved in line with Access for All Guidelines. The upgrading of substandard housing is urgently required since this is considered to have a negative multiplier effect on the community. There is an opportunity for members of the community to learn skills so as to be able to be involved in the maintenance and upgrading of their dwellings. This will confer a sense of ownership, belonging and self-fulfilment. Considering their urban environment, the upkeep of common areas in social housing estates is an opportunity to encourage the ownership of the zone and promote community use. Greening of pedestrian areas of social housing zones is encouraged as a means of fostering community participation.

## Upgrading Infrastructure

A number of objectives related to transport infrastructure in Cottonera have been identified through a Regional Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) carried out for the South-Eastern region; this including the four localities of Cottonera.

**Photo 20**

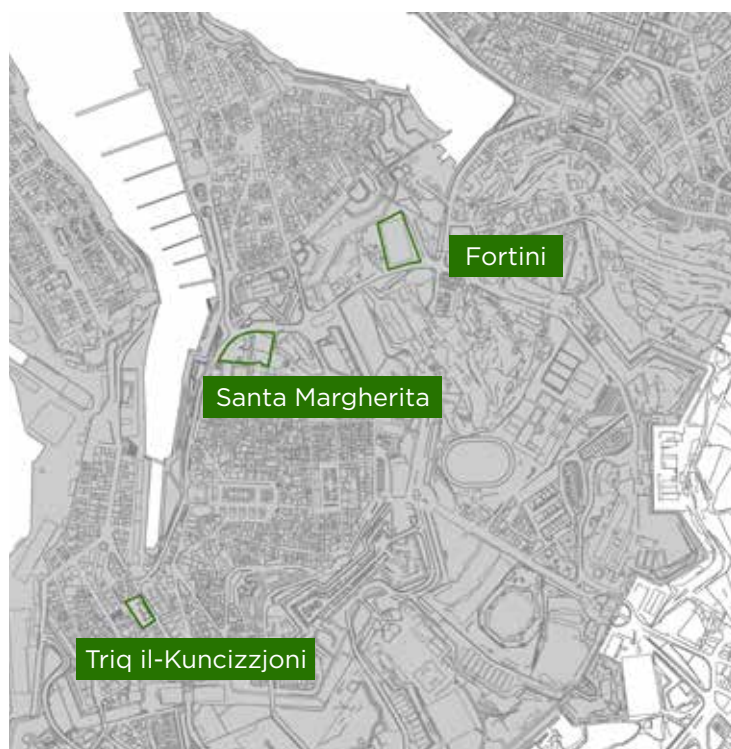
Birgu



## The objectives are to:

- i. Encourage modal shift towards more environmentally friendly modes of transport, ensuring that supporting infrastructure is in place and that school-children and the elderly are adequately provided for;
- ii. Improve the organisational maintenance of the localities through better management of services such as waste collection and goods delivery; and
- iii. Facilitate the use of both land-based and maritime public transport through the provision of facilities such as 'Park and Ride', transport-on-demand, and coordinated schedules for arrival and departure.

The above schemes are to take into account the wider context of Cottonera and are therefore to be extended also to the adjoining localities in order to aid in their effectiveness. A preliminary appraisal has identified a number of sites which should be studied further to assess their potential use as car parks.



**Fig. 9**

Potential locations for parking facilities at Fortini (top), Santa Margherita (centre) and Triq il-Kuncizzjoni (bottom)

## Other infrastructural recommendations include upgrading of the street environment to:

1. Install adequate and appropriate lighting and street furniture;
2. Re-paving areas which are to be pedestrianised;
3. Re-laying of pavements where necessary;
4. Resurfacing of roads; and
5. De-cluttering streets of overhead utility and communications cables.

---

### Enabling Operational Management

Ongoing day to day maintenance of public areas such as street, pavements, open spaces and squares is required to ensure that these common areas are kept in a good state. The servicing of commercial outlets in public areas including waste management and cleaning of outdoor public spaces needs to be managed to ensure that it is carried out adequately, timely and does not inhibit public use.

### Making full use of the maritime potential

Cottonera has a strong asset in the provision of maritime amenity which is somewhat underutilised. The uses which characterise the coast and wider context of the Grand Harbour need to be managed and enhanced in an integrated manner which ensures capitalisation of these assets. This requires operational management of the catering outlets and their activities on the waterfront, and the upkeep of areas for informal recreation and boating activities.

---

## Recommended projects include

- The provision of pedestrian friendly measures on the stretch of coast from Birgu It-Toqba to the Kalkara Xewkija area, including the reconstruction of the road and the Regatta Club, and the implementation of a 'Sensory Garden';
- Public access to a continuous waterfront trail from Kalkara to Isla; and
- Upgrading of the Rinella Bay facilities and the management of the Rinella Valley area.

## Objective 3

### Increasing Business Attractiveness

#### Implementers:

- Local Councils
- Business First
- Malta Enterprise
- Malta Tourism Authority



#### Use urban attractiveness as a tool to create business opportunities

A number of key sites along the waterfront as identified in the Cottonera Waterfront Development Brief are as yet undeveloped. These are large sites in prime locations, in some cases having intrinsic and unutilised heritage value, some falling into severe disrepair and preventing the fruition of the full potential of the waterfront. It is proposed that the impediments to the rehabilitation and re-use of these sites are resolved as soon as possible to catalyse the next wave of regeneration in the area.

Business opportunities arising from cultural heritage assets within the Conservation Areas are to be identified in acknowledgment of the intrinsic value embedded within such properties. In this regard, the tourism product of the area can target domestic and foreign markets for

- Food and drink
- Accommodation; and
- Tourism attractions

A branding exercise targeting Cottonera as a destination based on local distinctiveness characteristics within the rich cultural heritage context is recommended; considering both tangible and intangible heritage such as local traditions, feasts and other events.

**Photo 21**  
Dock 1 Bormla

## Provide amenities for local crafts and arts

Currently underutilised public assets such as spaces within the bastions of the Cottonera Lines are to be assigned a sustainable re-use. Facilities are to be provided whilst simultaneously making use of newly restored historic spaces, capitalising on the creation of employment opportunities within Cottonera. For example, compatible activities could include traditional crafts directly linked to Cottonera and currently practiced by local people.

---

## Promote a Business Community approach within Cottonera by supporting local businesses

A stronger concerted approach to business activities within the area is required with the aim of improving the quality of facilities. Certain areas of Cottonera have a potential of enhancing the business provision in area by mobilising economies of scale. In this regard, increased collaboration between business owners towards the formation of Business Communities, and communication with Local Councils and community organisations can ensure a more coordinated and targeted approach whereby mutual benefits are derived, contributing to a stronger community in the area.

---

## Attract major investors to tapping the potential of opportunity sites

Business opportunities arise from opportunity sites; these being venues with the potential to attract large scale investment in line with the Urban Environment measures. In addition, Smart City is identified as a key Business Hub within Cottonera which has the potential to assume the role of an economic lynchpin for the area. It is an opportunity site in Cottonera which should be capitalised and facilitated as a major investment focal point. The scale and location are to be made the most of in order to provide high-end office facilities which can generate a multiplier effect on Cottonera through:

- Creating scope for locating supporting business activity;
  - Attracting young families to the area taking up vacant housing in the process;
  - Providing job opportunities in the vicinity of residential zones; and
  - Improving strategic infrastructure and accessibility to the area.
- 

Incentives and other supporting measures should be provided so that the area may benefit from the strong economic growth the rest of Malta is currently enjoying.



# Implementation Plan

---

The successful implementation of the actions identified above necessitates a coordinated effort amongst stakeholders, both statutory and otherwise, in order to achieve the overall objectives related to Social Capital, the Urban Environment and Business Attractiveness. It is recommended that an entity dealing with the implementation goals set out hereunder is set up to ensure collaboration between stakeholders towards the management, monitoring and review of this Strategy.

In order to ensure the success of the Strategy it is recommended that an entity - Fondazzjoni Kottonera, is set up with the specific scope of implementing, monitoring and reviewing this Strategy. This will serve as a one-stop-shop which will assume the identity of the Strategy and act as a focal point to plan, lead, organize and control all the implementation phases of the Strategy.

---

- Creating scope for locating supporting business activity;
- Attracting young families to the area taking up vacant housing in the process;
- Providing job opportunities in the vicinity of residential zones; and
- Improving strategic infrastructure and accessibility to the area.



**Photo 22**

Fort St Angelo, Birgu

## Specifically the entity will

- I.** Foster an inclusive community focused approach to implementing the Vision of the Strategy towards the sustainable development of Cottonera;
- II.** Promote social renewal by capitalizing on the culture heritage assets of Cottonera;
- III.** Propose measures that seek to improve the social capital of the community living in Cottonera;
- IV.** Coordinate the organization of cultural activities which enhance the distinctiveness of Cottonera;
- V.** Play an active role in the branding of Cottonera as a cultural hub;
- VI.** Facilitate collaboration between businesses with the scope of rendering Cottonera as an attractive live-work location;
- VII.** Liaise with the relevant Ministries, government authorities and agencies, local councils, NGOs and the Cottonera community;
- VIII.** Coordinate and ensure effective implementation of all the measures in line with reasonable and timely targets;
- IX.** Monitor and review the implementation of each and every measure as well as take corrective action as and when necessary;
- X.** Establish a streamlined one-stop-shop approach for liaison with Ministries;
- XI.** Ensure that a budget plan encapsulating all the initiatives of the Strategy is drawn up and that funds are available;
- XII.** Identify and tap any possible sources of funding (including EU funding) for all the projects; and
- XIII.** Assess ongoing plan and policy development to ensure that these take into consideration and consolidate the raison d'être of the Strategy.

Fondazzjoni Kottonera is to incorporate the existing Cottonera Rehabilitation Committee in an advisory capacity and the Rehabilitation Projects Office as its implementation arm. This rationalisation of entities is a first step towards a concerted effort to achieving meaningful coordination in an efficient manner that minimises the redundancy of resources. Furthermore, it is recommended that the actions proposed in the Strategy are taken forward for prioritisation, costing and commitment of funds to ensure the feasibility of the short, medium and long term approach to the actions highlighted above.

It is also suggested that Fondazzjoni Kottonera continues upon the work carried out towards the drafting of this Strategy in terms of liaison with key statutory stakeholders. It is proposed that in view of the wide remit associated with the regeneration of Cottonera, the statutory stakeholders are to include representative Parliamentary Secretariats and Agencies from the:

- Office of the Prime Minister;
- Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses;
- Ministry for Education and Employment;
- Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change;
- Ministry for European Affairs and Equality;
- Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity;
- Ministry for Finance;
- Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security;
- Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government;
- Ministry for Tourism; and
- Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects.



**Photo 23**

Birgu

## Projects to be implemented in the short term

### Fondazzjoni Kottonera shall oversee the implementation of the following projects

#### Cottonera

---

A heritage trail spanning the cultural heritage assets of the built, natural and coastal environments. This will create a link across Cottonera, fostering a stronger awareness of the identity of the area. The identification of the heritage trail will require an assessment of the route and subsequent infrastructural improvements required for its implementation.

#### Birgu

---

The reconstruction of the road at it-Toqba tal-Birgu, including the reconstruction of the Regatta Club, the development of the 'Sensory Garden' and the implementation of pedestrian friendly measures;

#### Bormla

---

The development of the Santa Margherita green corridor incorporating a series of gardens, a play area, a kiosk and a cultural centre;

#### Isla

---

The restoration of St Michael's bastion including the restoration of the clock tower and the upgrading of Pjazzetta Gorg Mitrovich, the improvement of the existing architectural and street lighting system at Gnien Gardjola and the Isla Waterfront;

#### Kalkara

---

The upgrading of the Kalkara waterfront promenade from Triq Marina to ix-Xewkija including Misrah l-Arcisqof Gonzi.



**Fig. 10**

The projects to be implemented in Cottonera in the short term

## Funding measures

EU Funding is to be targeted specifically for Cottonera based upon the characteristics, challenges and opportunities within the localities. In view of this, Cottonera has been identified by Government as an area that requires a regeneration strategy based on a strong socio-economic renewal process.

Potential networking and collaboration with international and EU wide partners should be actively sought to create opportunities to improve knowledge, promote project development and foster funding opportunities.

This renewal needs to be backed by measures to enhance competitiveness and fostering an environment which is conducive to economic growth and job creation, whilst providing the necessary educational and training opportunities. Furthermore, these interventions are envisaged to contribute towards maximising the competitive edge of the Islands through investment in the environment particularly in the cultural heritage sphere. The Strategy for Cottonera has outlined a number of measures which seek to improve the social capital, upgrade the urban environment and increase business attractiveness.



**Photo 24**

Saint Lawrence Church in Birgu

**Photo 25**

Dockyard Creek





# Conclusion

For the successful implementation of the Objectives set out by Government, that to “seek to improve environmental and social standards in the inner harbour area, with both short- and long-term regeneration goals”, two essential steps are required. The drive towards intergenerational equity that underlines the concept of sustainable development will provide Cottonera with an inheritance that will work towards the long term ownership by the communities of the localities.

Firstly, the operational management of the recommended measures requires the creation of an entity tasked with coordinating the Ministries which are tasked with implementing and taking forward the measures outlined above. The measures are the direct result of the ‘snap-shot’ taken of Cottonera during the drafting phase of this Strategy. Therefore, this entity also has the role of monitoring the progress of the action and reviewing the Strategy in view of new circumstances that may arise over time.

Secondly, the role of Local Councils is also crucial to the success of the Strategy and it is recommended that they are represented within the entity to ensure that the bottom-up approach that characterised the drafting of the Strategy is also maintained in its implementation. Regeneration projects provide an opportunity for the community to assume a sense of civic duty towards their localities through the fostering of appreciation, use and safeguarding of the projects ensuing from the Strategy.







