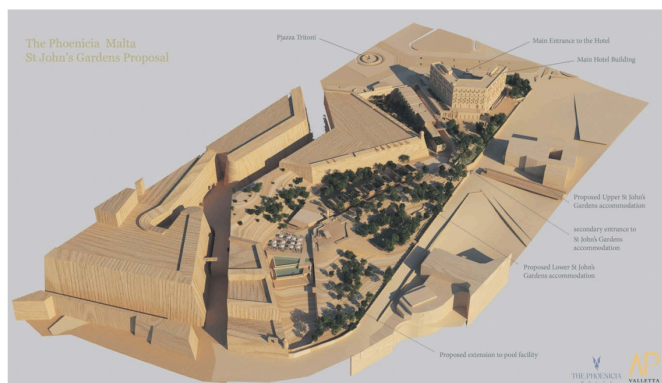


CLASSIFIED NEWS



The Phoenicia Malta St John's Gardens proposal. Right: An impression of the Upper St John's Gardens development. PHOTOS: AP VALLETTA

Plans submitted for €35m St John's Gardens Project

Phoenicia Malta Ltd submits conservation-focused plans to transform St John's Ditch

The owners and operators of The Phoenicia Malta are officially submitting plans to the Planning Authority for a transformative €35 million restoration project aimed at revitalising the disused land adjacent to the hotel.

The St John's Gardens project aims to rehabilitate the St John's Ditch into a landscaped extension of the hotel's grounds, featuring new accommodation and facilities that further enhance the renowned five-star hotel and the entrance into Valletta.

The ambitious project, led by Mark Shaw – owner of Phoenicia Malta Ltd, which owns and operates The Phoenicia Malta – intertwines historical preservation with the kind of luxury accommodation and service that the hotel has become synonymous with. It also puts conservation and sustainability firmly at the heart of this new phase for the property.

Existing permits for this project allow for more extensive development, but the new plans focus on sensitivity and have further improved various aspects of the restoration.

"The transformation of St John's Ditch has been a long time coming," said Shaw, who acquired the hotel in 2013 and has been investing in and steadily upgrading it ever since.

"We are thrilled to take the steps to finally bring it to life – not just as an extension of the existing Phoenicia Malta, but to further enhance the city's rich heritage and 'Product Malta' as a whole.

"The project also aligns perfectly with our commitment to enhance Valletta's cultural and



A render of the Lower St John's Gardens.

historical landscape while offering an unparalleled experience to our international and local guests."

The St John's Gardens application encompasses several key elements designed to respect the historical context of the site while introducing a plethora of new world-class, contemporary amenities. It will centre around the restoration of the Old Stables and Coach House – both currently in disrepair – to create 28 additional guest rooms and suites.

Additionally, the old laundry industrial building will be demolished and rebuilt to provide 23 new guest rooms and suites, while other significant restorative interventions to the various historical structures on The Phoenicia Malta site are also entailed in the project.

To complete the project, the Bastion Pool area and the hotel's landscaped gardens will be extended and improved.

David Felice, executive director of AP, the architectural firm behind the project, highlighted the meticulous planning involved.

"Our goal has been to develop a master plan that respects the heritage of the site while enhancing the functionality and beauty of the area," he said.

"We have worked to ensure our designs are sensitive to the historical significance of the site. The goal here is not just to conserve this forgotten part of the Valletta ditch, but to enhance it so that it becomes another jewel in the city's crown. The transformation of St John's Ditch into St John's Gardens is not just a restoration project; it's about creating a legacy for future generations to enjoy."

Going into further details about the project, Felice explained that the newly landscaped gardens will extend and enhance the existing grounds of The Phoenicia Malta, creating a lush, tranquil environment for guests.

"With improved pathways and the introduction of electric buggies, accessibility throughout the hotel grounds will be significantly improved, ensuring that all guests can enjoy the serene beauty of the new gardens," he said.

Environmental sustainability is a cornerstone of the St John's Gardens proposal. The project will protect existing trees and introduce new indigenous plants, following comprehensive environmental studies, while sustainable construction practices will be implemented throughout. Efforts to reduce energy and water consumption and minimise waste are integral to the design, reinforcing The Phoenicia Malta's existing commitment to eco-friendly operations.

The team has also carefully considered the project's impact on The Phoenicia Malta.

"The St John's Gardens project is designed to be carried out in carefully planned phases, ensuring

minimal disruption to current hotel operations," Felice said.

"Construction traffic will utilise separate access routes, preventing any increase in congestion around the hotel and ensuring a smooth continuation of guest experiences and hotel events."

Finally, Shaw emphasised the wider positive impact the project is expected to make.

"We take this next phase of The Phoenicia Malta's development very seriously and, as we unveil our vision, we believe it will not only enhance our hotel's offering but also contribute to the broader appeal of Valletta as a destination.

"As with the legacy of the existing property, we are privileged to play a part in preserving and enhancing Malta's cultural heritage. Should this proposal be given the green light, we trust it will become yet another aspect of The Phoenicia Malta that the local community can be proud of."