

Report on Case No CEP-21-2525

Investigation following a complaint against the Mosta Local Council regarding the lack of a proper access to a garage due to the change in the traffic direction at Triq San Silvestru, Mosta.

List of Abbreviations:

CEP: Commissioner for Environment and Planning

CMP: Complainant

MLC: Mosta Local Council

TM: Transport Malta

Case summary

The CMP complains that the MLC failed to reply and act regarding an issue concerning the access to a garage at Triq San Silvestru, Mosta that was originally two-way and changed to one-way during the roadworks that were being undertaken nearby.

The CMP complains that they cannot make full use of the garage that could easily house four cars when one manoeuvres from/to the widest part of the street since there is a kink in the street rightly opposite CMP's garage.

The CMP also stated that when TM was approached, they were directed to MLC as the authority responsible to change the street traffic directions.

In reply to CEP's query of 6 December 2021, MLC replied that the same roads in Mosta have changed in the way the traffic flows, which affected secondary roads as well, hence why Triq San Silvestru became one-way. MLC also replied that the Traffic Management Committee discussed this case and that the traffic directions were of a temporary nature during works being carried out in Main Street and that the Council is studying the implementation of a one-way system in this street and will thus consult with TM and speak with the concerned resident.

Following the completion of the works in Main Street, on 30 November 2022 MLC - with TM also in copy - was asked for comments regarding the complaint in question, particularly since the access in question has been compromised with the new traffic direction in question. No reply to this communication was received by the CEP.

Observations

The part of Triq San Silvestru in question is located between Vjal l-Indipendenza and Triq il-Mithna l-Qadima covering a stretch of about 130 metres. In half this stretch, towards Triq il-Mithna l-Qadima, buildings are rather old, the street is narrow and parking is not allowed, whereas in the other part that is more modern, the street is wider and parking is allowed on both sides. The garage in question is located in the narrow part where the street narrows further from a width of about 5 metres to a width of 3.3 metres.

This part of the road was originally two-way and with the installation of no-entry signs at Triq il-Mithna l-Qadima the direction is now from Vjal l-Indipendenza towards Triq il-Mithna l-Qadima. In the wider part of Triq San Silvestru, two-way traffic is still allowed so much so that there is a sign directing traffic exiting Triq San Silvestru onto Vjal l-Indipendenza.

The width of the street fronting about one third of the door to the garage in question (that is 3.7 metres wide) is only 3.3 metres whereas the rest is 5 metres wide. In order to safely manoeuvre four vehicles into this garage one can only reverse from the 5 metres side. To do this manoeuvre one has to drive in the opposite direction, that is from Triq il-Mithna l-Qadima towards Vjal l-Indipendenza. Therefore, one can easily conclude that the CMP's garage can now only house three cars instead of four with the omission of the original traffic direction through Triq San Silvestru from Triq il-Mithna l-Qadima towards Vjal l-Indipendenza.

Whilst one understands that there might be certain safety issues that can lead one to consider to change the traffic direction in a street to a one-way system, one shall also take into consideration that this change in traffic direction will not compromise private properties, or rather the access to the same, in the street, particularly when there is complete visibility in this part of the street that is rather straight. Furthermore, in similar situations, Local Councils must be more helpful in the way they treat complaints by residents and consider ways and means of acceding to their requests when complaints are raised for justified reasons following drastic changes carried out by the Council in the locality.

There are ways and means how similar complaints can be solved by changing the traffic direction to a two-way system and any safety concerns tackled through traffic calming measures and/or intelligence systems such as personalised traffic controls similar to the ones installed for the cul-de-sac in Triq it-Tigrija, Marsa.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The complaint against the MLC that the change in the traffic direction at Triq San Silvestru, Mosta negatively affected the access to a private garage is found to be justified.

It is being recommended that the MLC restores the traffic direction at this part of Triq San Silvestru to a two-way system whilst implementing additional safety measures.

TM is also being copied with this Final Opinion as the authority responsible for the required approvals.



Alan Saliba
Commissioner for Environment and Planning
Office of the Ombudsman

1 February 2023