



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for the
Built Environment

B.Sc.(Hons) in Built Environment Studies

BEN3101 OCC. C – Design Workshop

Adaptive Reuse of Villa Guardamangia

Design Tutors:

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Sources: <https://www.tatler.com/article/villa-guardamangia-malta-home-queen-prince-philip-renovation>;
<https://timesofmalta.com/article/villa-guardamangia-still-shambles-restoration-take-least-five-years.1080519>

Intro

Adaptive reuse refers to the process of repurposing buildings for new uses while preserving their historical and architectural significance. This approach allows for conserving heritage structures, ensuring they remain relevant and functional in a contemporary context. Adaptive reuse involves carefully considering the building's original design, materials, and historical value while integrating modern requirements and technologies.

Guardamangia is a centrally positioned neighbourhood within Pietà. The area is historically significant, housing landmarks such as St. Luke's Hospital, Our Lady of Fatima Church, Villa Frere, Maltese Public Broadcasting Services (PBS), and others. However, the area has experienced significant changes, including rampant development, an ageing Maltese population, and the arrival of Maltese and non-Maltese newcomers. The lack of community activities and green spaces contrasts with the area's potential due to its central location and historical assets.

Villa Guardamangia is an 18th-century neoclassical townhouse that served as the residence of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip from 1949 to 1951. Its significance lies not only in its royal

connection but also in its architectural and historical value. The villa needs restoration, presenting challenges and opportunities for adaptive reuse.

Programme:

The Design Workshop consists of an 8-week programme within a studio environment, commencing on Wednesday, 25th September 2025. The VLE submission will be by the end of the day on Tuesday, 12th November, followed by reviews on Wednesday, 13th November 2024.

The Design Workshop blends individual and group tasks, held every Wednesday with activities guided by various tutors. In the third year, project development and design become more studio-focused, providing an opportunity for peer collaboration and creative growth. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the studio space and work there for most of the day.

The full-day workshops by Dr Nigel Walter, the visiting design tutor, are planned for Wednesday, 2nd and Saturday, 5th October.

The Design Workshop brief is the foundation for the entire workshop process, further developed and refined through the Design Studio sessions. These sessions systematically deliver the full scope of the brief, guiding students towards achieving the learning outcomes through structured weekly milestones. Additionally, they introduce the theoretical concepts and knowledge essential for the Design Workshop, which may not be covered in other study units.

Design Studio sessions are dynamic and interactive, combining lectures, class discussions, student presentations (pinups), and feedback sessions. Active participation in all aspects is crucial for developing students' design projects. Students need to engage with peer feedback throughout the sessions, recognising and integrating relevant insights into their design processes.

Students are expected to complete each weekly task diligently. Weekly presentations in the Design Studio are as crucial as the final presentation, providing a critical opportunity to showcase progress and receive constructive feedback. Therefore, attendance is mandatory throughout the Design Studio sessions. Poor attendance can significantly hinder a student's progress, negatively affecting their results and the quality of their final deliverables.

Task:

The task of the design workshop is to develop a proposal for an adaptive reuse of Villa Guardamangia, located in Pietà.

The Design Workshop aims to engage students in a comprehensive study of a historic building and propose a viable adaptive reuse strategy that respects its historical, cultural, and architectural significance while addressing contemporary needs.



Sources: <https://timesofmalta.com/article/glimpse-of-a-villas-glorious-past.811278>

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this design workshop, students will:

- a) Develop an understanding of adaptive reuse principles that balance heritage conservation with contemporary functionality.
- b) Demonstrate the ability to conduct contextual research and analysis that guides architectural thinking and informs design decisions.
- c) Demonstrate the ability to work effectively in a group to conduct research and context analysis.
- d) Demonstrate the ability to collaborate to propose and develop solutions.
- e) Demonstrate the ability to perform critical evaluations by understanding values, assessing significance, and identifying appropriate strategies for reusing historic buildings.
- f) Produce well-considered design proposals that integrate new interventions with existing structures respectfully and innovatively.
- g) Develop good quality presentations and be able to clearly and effectively communicate design ideas and processes through adequate mediums.



Source: Heritage Malta <https://timesofmalta.com/article/villa-guardamangia-can-now-be-toured-in-3d-without-leaving-home.814341>

Design Workshop Structure

The design proposal is organised into three **interconnected and overlapping** steps: Step 1 - context analysis and background research (whole cohort), Step 2 - design strategy (group work), and Step 3 - design proposal (individual work).

Step 1: Context Analysis & Background Research (Whole Cohort)

In the initial weeks, students will work collectively to conduct a detailed study of the Guardamangia area and Villa Guardamangia. Students should use various resources such as literature, previous research, on-site observations, and interviews with residents and local figures (local council members, parish priests, historians). The research should include:

- **History (Group 1)**

Investigate the history of Villa Guardamangia and the broader Pietà area, including critical historical buildings and their significance.

- **Cultural and Social Aspects (Group 2)**

Understand the area's demographic changes, social dynamics, and cultural shifts. Understand the relevance of Villa Guardamangia for the area and its community.

- **Connectivity and Accessibility (Group 3)**

Analyse the central position of Pietà, connectivity, and accessibility via different modes of transport.

- **Land Use (Group 4)**

Map the existing land uses. Identify community needs and gaps in services and facilities.

- **Base Material (Group 5)**

Prepare drawings and 3D digital models of Villa Guardamangia, indoor and outdoor areas, and its immediate surroundings. Conduct a photographic survey of the building and identify deterioration and structural damage areas.

Step 2: Design Strategy (Group Work)

After the cohort analysis, students will split into smaller groups, with three (3) to a maximum of four (4) students per group. Each group needs to develop adaptive reuse strategies for Villa Guardamangia. Each group will:

- Identify the villa's significance and values, including historical, social, technological, aesthetic, and commemorative values.
- Assess accessibility and the impact of its central location and Identify the villa's potential for contemporary use.
- Develop a master plan integrating the villa into its broader urban context.
- Based on your research and condition survey findings, propose adaptive reuse and develop a strategy for implementation and actualisation.
- Determine which characteristics of the villa should be protected and what requires intervention. Identify what types of interventions can enhance its heritage value.
- Decide on strategies for new interventions, including the material palette, structural approach, and induction of building services.

Step 3: Design Proposal (Individual Work)

Collaborating closely with their group members, each student prepares a set of diagrams, visuals, and drawings that articulate a specific aspect of the project proposal. The individual design proposals should be guided by the group strategy established in Phase 2, ensuring consistency in architectural gestures and design approaches agreed upon by the group. Ultimately, these individual contributions must integrate seamlessly, resulting in a cohesive and unified group proposal.



Source: Heritage Malta

Tentative Design Workshop Timeline

Monday 23rd September

- 4:30 pm Online BEN3101 Desing Workshops Launch

Task 01: Read

1. "New design for old buildings" by Hunt, R. and Boyd, I. (2017),
2. "Living Heritage" by Wijesuriya, G. (2018)
3. Review documents available on BEN3101 VLE, section Occ C: Adaptive Reuse of Villa Guardamangia

Week 1

Wednesday 25th September

- Introducing design tutors, the brief, design tasks, and design workshop timeline.
- Initial group discussions about the readings (task 1), adaptive reuse and design workshop's broader architectural principles.

- 12 pm Hall C: Presentation by Year 2 M.Arch students on Guardamangia (TBC).
- Phase 1: Context Analysis & Background Research groups set and tasks assigned.
- Phase 2: Design Strategy groups set (they need to be different to Phase 1 groups).

Task 02: Start Phase 1: Context Analysis & Background Research: Visit the Guardamangia area on different days and during different times,

4. Read "Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets" (2019)
5. Read "The narrative approach to living heritage" by Walter, N. (2020)

Week 2

Wednesday 2nd October: On-Site Workshop with Dr Nigel Walter

The day-long workshop will focus on developing design strategies through a combination of a site visit (weather permitting) and studio work. By the end of the day, students will have initiated their design concepts and created a set of basic diagrams outlining the master plan and the distribution of activities on the site. Please note that all times provided are tentative and will be confirmed on the day.

8 am – 10 am Site visit

11 am – 12:30 pm (1 hour of presentations + 30 mins discussion)

Each group will have 10 minutes to present their findings from the Context Analysis and Background Research. Presentations should include maps, diagrams, photographs, and other relevant tools. Students should engage critically, identifying research gaps and outlining the next steps. This session is meant to inform the students' design thinking and enhance the validity of their proposals. The focus is on student participation, not solely on feedback from design tutors.

Discussion on possible adaptive reuses, significance, and heritage values of the site.

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm Charrette (on-site or in the studio)

Using insights from the research, each group will propose an adaptive reuse concept and strategy, addressing key points outlined in the previous steps. Refer to resources such as

6. "Constructive Conservation in Practice" (2008).
7. "Constructive Conservation: Sustainable Growth for Historic Places" (2013).

2:30 pm – 4 pm Pinups (on-site or in the studio)

Each group presents a design strategy in a 10-min session. Students are expected to actively participate in the critique, offering and receiving feedback from peers and design tutors.

Task 03: Continue Step 1; Continue Step 2.

Thursday 3rd October

4:30 pm Hall C – Public Lecture by Dr Nigel Walter

Saturday 5th October Workshop with Dr Nigel Walter

8:30 am – 12 pm Pinup of the adaptive reuse concepts and strategies, including sketches of the master plan and the building. Students should actively participate in critique sessions and receive feedback from peers and design tutors.

Afternoon: Additional tutorials

Task 04:

- Continue Step 1 & Step 2.
- Build a model
- 7. Read "Improving Access to Historic Buildings: Some English Experience" by Walter, N. (2022).

Week 3: Wednesday 9th October

Presentation of new information from Step 1.

Discussions between individual groups with design tutors.

Continue group strategy (Step 2), ensuring it is backed up by relevant background research and context analysis.

Complete the model.

Week 4: Wednesday 16th October

Pinup - Conclude the overall group strategy (Step 2).

Decide on the nature and area of interventions for individual work, Step 3: Design Proposal.

Week 5: Wednesday 23rd October

Site visit (TBC)

Discussions between individual students and design tutors.

Formulate the main design aspects to be addressed in the design process.

Sketch and create initial diagrams to illustrate design ideas.

Week 6: Wednesday 30th October

Pinup of all individual proposals.

Focus on the presentation and deliverables.

Week 7: Wednesday 6th November

Final Pinup – presentation mockup

Week 8: Wednesday 13th November

Reviews

Deliverables

The deliverables for this Design Workshop include **weekly tasks and final reviews**, with the primary goal of demonstrating students' understanding of the workshop's scope and their achievement of its learning outcomes. The focus is on presenting a well-developed proposal that integrates multiple contextual parameters and exhibits a strong grasp of the notion of adaptive reuse.

For the final submission, each group must compile and present a comprehensive report, slide presentation, and physical models (both working and final models) that illustrate how the proposed adaptive reuse strategy preserves and enhances the historical and cultural values of Villa Guardamangia. It should communicate the architectural thinking and the design process in an adequate medium chosen by the students (e.g., sketches, models, digital presentations).

The report should be well-organised, concise, and visually clear, emphasising quality and clarity in its visuals. It should also include background research, a design brief with master plan, and individual proposals.

- The background research summarises the cohort's research and analysis. It focuses solely on the aspects that directly informed the formulation of the adaptive reuse strategy and guided the development of the individual design proposals.

- The design brief concisely outlines the adaptive reuse strategy and its rationale. It should also contain a comprehensive master plan that shows how Villa Guardamangia and its surroundings work within the broader context of the Guardamangia area.
- Individual proposals should seamlessly integrate into a cohesive group proposal. Their detailed design should demonstrate how applying the adaptive reuse strategy protects and enhances the heritage values of Villa Guardamangia.

Assessment Criteria

Design Strategy (group work) 40%

- Effectively incorporates contextual research, ensuring relevance and appropriateness for Villa Guardamangia's heritage. **10%**
- Demonstrates sensitivity to the villa's heritage value and respects and enhances its historical, architectural, and cultural significance. **15%**
- Proposes adaptive reuse that aligns with the villa's heritage, pursues creativity and innovation, and introduces suitable and appropriate new uses relevant to contemporary needs. **15%**

Design Proposal (individual work) 60%

- Its design concept is well-communicated and effectively presented. **20%**
- Respects and responds to the existing site conditions, the group strategy, and other design proposals to form a cohesive and unified project proposal for the villa. **15%**
- Showcases originality and thoughtful design interventions. **10%**
- Presented clearly using diagrams, sketches, models, and drawings. **15%**



Source: <https://timesofmalta.com/article/villa-guardamangia-still-shambles-restoration-take-least-five-years.1080519>

Readings

1. Hunt, R. and Boyd, I. (2017) *New design for old buildings*. Newcastle upon Tyne, RIBA Publishing.
2. Wijesuriya, G. (2018) *Living Heritage*. In: Heritage, A. and Copithorne, J. eds. *Sharing Conservation Decisions*. Rome, ICCROM, pp. 43–56.
3. Historic England (2019) *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets*. London, Historic England.
4. Walter, N. (2020) *The narrative approach to living heritage*. *Protection of cultural heritage*, 10, pp. 126–138.
5. Historic England (2008) *Constructive Conservation in Practice*. London, Historic England.
6. Historic England (2013) *Constructive Conservation: Sustainable Growth for Historic Places*. London, Historic England.
7. Walter, N. (2022) *Improving Access to Historic Buildings: Some English Experience*. *Protection of Cultural Heritage*, (14), pp. 7–22.