

= Parliament House ( Malta ) =

The Parliament House ( Maltese : Il @-@ Parlament il @-@ ?did , meaning " The New Parliament " ) is the meeting place of the Parliament of Malta located in Valletta , Malta . The building was constructed between 2011 and 2015 to designs by Renzo Piano as part of the City Gate Project , which also included building a new City Gate and converting the ruins of the Royal Opera House into an open @-@ air theatre . Construction of the Parliament House generated considerable controversy , mainly due to the modern design of the building and the cost of construction , which amounted to around ? 90 million .

From 1921 to 1976 , the meeting place of the Parliament of Malta had been the Tapestry Chamber of the Grandmaster 's Palace , also in Valletta . In 1976 , the former armoury of the same palace was converted into a new parliament , and meetings were held there until the opening of the purpose @-@ built Parliament House on 4 May 2015 .

= = Site = =

Parliament House is located in Republic Street near City Gate , the entrance to Valletta . The building is located adjacent to Saint James Cavalier and the ruins of the Royal Opera House , and opposite the City Gate Shopping Arcade and Palazzo Ferreria .

The site presently occupied by the Parliament House was originally built up with houses , and later the Valletta Station of the Malta Railway . The area was bombarded during World War II , and the station and surrounding buildings were demolished in the 1960s as part of a project to redevelop the entrance to Valletta . The area was converted into an open space known as Freedom Square ( Maltese : Misra? il @-@ ?elsien ) , which was surrounded by a shopping arcade . The square was rather plain , and was commonly used as a car park .

= = Design and construction = =

= = = Planning = = =

The building of the Parliament House was a part of the City Gate Project , which was meant to redevelop the entrance of Valletta . The project consisted of the demolition of the fourth City Gate and the Freedom Square Arcade and the construction of the fifth City Gate and the Parliament House . In addition , the ruins of the Royal Opera House were converted into an open @-@ air theatre known as Pjazza Teatru Rjal . The City Gate project was designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano , and the plans were revealed on 27 June 2009 . The Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation paid Piano ? 6 @.@ 6 million for his work on the project .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The building of the Parliament House , along with the rest of the City Gate project , was controversial . Critics considered it an unnecessary project , proposing to restore Fort Saint Elmo or one of the large dilapidated palaces in the city and converting it into a parliament building , for a fraction of the cost of constructing a new building . Some argued that the square should not have been built up as it was one of the few open spaces in Valletta . Others attacked the modern design of the structure itself , including the Labour MP Carmelo Abela , who called the Parliament House " an ugly building built on stilts " . The building 's design , precisely the system of cladding , was compared to a dovecote ( Maltese : Barumbara tal @-@ ?amiam ) and to a cheese grater by the general public . The ultramodern design that contrasts much with the rest of Valletta has went as far as the UNESCO questioning the city 's title as a World Heritage Site . In 2015 the building caught the attention of The Telegraph , among few other buildings and structures , and featured as potentially the best or worst building of that year .

### == Construction ==

The demolition of the arcades of Freedom Square began in October 2010 . Excavation works for the foundations of the Parliament House began soon after demolition was complete . In early 2011 , the original plan was modified with the relocation of a staircase , the extension of one of the blocks , and changes in the design of the louvers on the facade . Construction started later that year , and the steel frame of the structure was complete by early 2012 . At this point , it began to be covered in limestone which had been quarried in Gozo , and cut into specific shapes in Italy , before being sent back to Malta . Between 120 and 150 workers were on the construction site every day , and it cost more than ? 90 million to build .

The completion date of the project was originally given as November 2012 or early 2013 . The estimated completion date was extended to September 2013 , and later to September 2014 . Contractors failed to meet deadlines , and the building was still not complete by the end of 2014 . It was eventually completed in 2015 .

### == Inauguration ==

The Parliament House was officially inaugurated by President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca on 4 May 2015 . Members of Parliament and other guests gathered at the old chamber at the Grandmaster 's Palace , and walked to the new building accompanied by the police force band . Coleiro Preca called the inauguration of the Parliament House " a milestone in Malta 's parliamentary history " , since this is the first purpose @-@ built parliament building in Malta . The first sitting was held later the same day .

Most of the building is closed off for security reasons , but a permanent exhibition on the ground floor is open to the public .

On 1 August 2015 , Piano visited the Parliament House for the first time since its inauguration .

### == Structure ==

The Parliament House consists of two blocks connected together with bridges , one of which houses the chamber of parliament . The two blocks are separate so as not to obscure views of Saint James Cavalier from Republic Street . Each block has three floors . The structure consists of a steel frame clad in Gozitan limestone . The stone slabs are carved in such a way that they seem to have been eroded by nature .

Parliament House is a zero emission building since heat energy is recovered from or given off to the mass of rock below . This is used to heat and cool the building , avoiding any cooling towers or boilers .