

Planning Officer's Report – LDCA DECEMBER 2020

APPLICATION	2020/75 – Installation of Safety to the Entrance Steps
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Permission in Full
REGISTERED	22 nd September 2020
APPLICANT	St Helena Government
PARCEL	JT030009
SIZE	N/A
LOCALITY	Entrance Steps to Reception, Castle Building
ZONE	Intermediate
CONSERVATION AREA	Jamestown Conservation Area
CURRENT USE	Civic Building
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Independent Newspaper on 25th September 2020▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	9 th October 2020
REPRESENTATIONS	Yes
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

1. Sewage & Water Division	No Objection
2. Energy Division	No Objection
3. Fire & Rescue	No Response
4. Roads Section	No Objection
5. Property Division	No Response
6. Environmental Management	No Objection
7. Public Health	No Response
8. Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
9. St Helena Police Services	Not Consulted
10. Aerodrome Safe Guarding	Not Consulted
11. Enterprise St Helena (ESH)	No Objection

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| 12. National Trust | No Response |
| 13. Sure SA Ltd | No Objection |
| 14. Heritage Society | Objection – Comment |

B. PLANNING OFFICER’S APPRAISAL

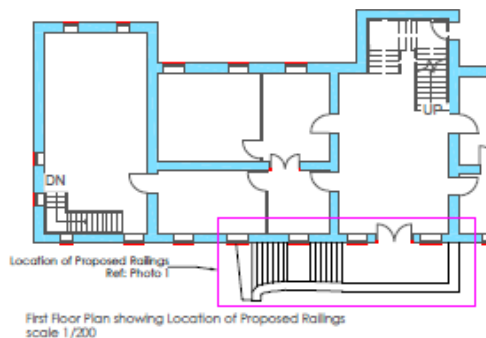
LOCALITY & ZONING

The application site is entrance steps to the Castle Building situated within the Castle Complex. The Castle Complex is within the Intermediate Zone and within the designed proposed Jamestown Conservation Area. This is a Grade I Listed building, although reconstructed in the 1860’s, however some of the building may date back to 1710.

Diagram 1 and 2: Location and Site Plans



Diagram 3 and 4: Location of Alteration and Current Appearance

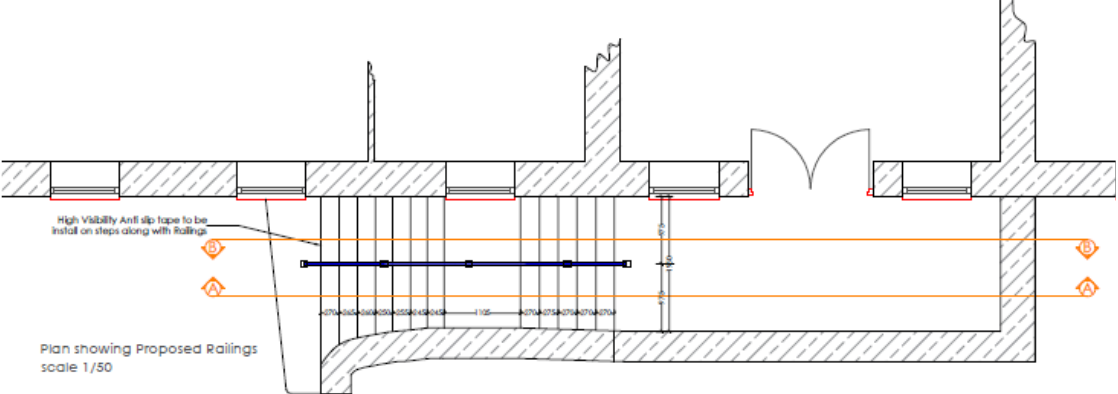


THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is to install a safety rail on the entrance steps to the main Castle Building. This is the Saint Helena’s Government’s main Civic Buildings providing reception area for all civic functions and offices. The entrance steps area is approximately 2m wide and consists of eight steps and a landing area then further six steps and landing area with the entrance door. The safety rail will be installed centrally giving a clearance width of approximately 0.975m on either side.

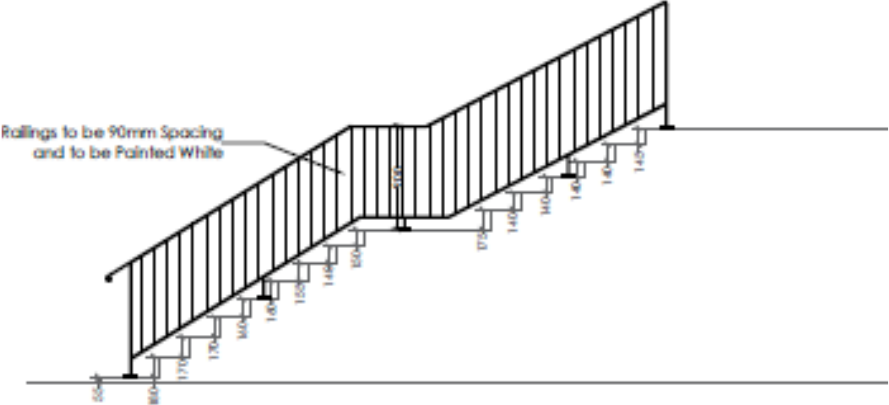
The purpose of installing the safety rail is to make the entrance step more accessible for all visitors as some require some support in negotiating the steps. Given the structure and design of the grand entrance step, the installation of the safety rail in the central position across the entrance steps and this is following pre-application consultation with the planning officer.

Diagram 5: Detailed Installation



The design of these galvanised railings are very simple with no decorative details or design feature and would be painted white. The reason behind this simple design is that there is no examples of traditional railings in with the Castle Courtyard to provide any influence for design.

Diagram 6: Cross Section and Railing Design



There are however, hand rails on the steps at two other entrance steps to buildings in this civic buildings complex and they are both of simple railing design proposed. These are probably more recent, probably mid-20th century In view of this it was considered appropriate that a simple design for the safety rails on this location would be appropriate.

Diagram 6: Other Handrails in the Castle Courtyard



Much of the stone dressing details on the buildings and the entrance steps is white in colour and therefore it also seem appropriate that the railing should be painted white to ensure that they do not stand out and will blend into the background.

POLICY CONSIDERATION

The proposed development is assessed against the LDCP Policies set out below:

- Built Heritage Policy: BH.1 and BH.2

Assessment of the proposed development against these policies raises no concern and it will not alter the quality or integrity of this important Grade I listed building and the design, material and colour are appropriate for the architecture of the building.

REPRESENTATION

Representation has been received from the Heritage Society objecting to the proposed development and the summary of the representation is set out below:

- staircase to this most important historic building in St Helena, protection as a Grade I listed building, provides grand entrance to the Castle and is designed as a sweeping staircase and is a simple and rare example of St Helena's eighteenth century baroque design;
- proposed railing will visually damage the free-flowing nature of the staircase, as does the use of coloured paint or tape to emphasis the steps and will detract from the grand staircase design and steps do not need to be emphasised as they are clearly seen from all positions;
- no evidence has been produced to justify the need for any handrail particularly in term of an accident record and frequent users are mainly employees, councillors or members of the public and few are likely to be unfamiliar with the;

- staircase has been in existence for over two hundred years and it is not known as an accident black spot and without a detailed accident record showing the causes of accident there can be no clarity as to whether the proposed central balustrade will reduce alleged accident frequency;
- no to requirement to upgrade existing buildings to modern standards in the new Building Regulations and there is also special dispensation so that new work on Listed Buildings do not need to comply with their stringent requirements;
- no requirement in the Building Regulations for wide staircases to be subdivided with central railings, there is such a requirement in British regulations but that would not apply to this staircase as it is narrower than 2m;
- windows shown on the drawings are in the wrong place.
- handrail to the Public Library is a similar example and a similar rail above each flight against the main wall may suffice if a handrail is deemed necessary.

OFFICER RESPONSE

The representation questions the need for the safety rails in this location and that historic building can be exempt from the requirement Building Regulation. Whilst there are no records of any accidents, however the purpose of this safety rail is that there no such incidents as this will enable support for the many older and less-abled users who visit the Civic buildings. The location of the safety rails in a more central position is to respect the design integrity of the grand civic building entrance as the design and details of the staircase structure (retaining wall) on one side and a window in the building elevation on the other that makes the installation of hand rails on both side difficult. It is considered, that it would not be in-keeping with character of the building, particularly as the retaining wall and stone coping would make installing handrail difficult. There is also the issue of the required height for handrail which would not be met. This stair entrance is very different from that of the library building, where the handrail on the works well.

OFFICER ASSESSMENT

It is considered the proposed design and details for the installation of the safety rail on the entrance steps to the Castle building is design with regards to ensuring that does not detract from original appearance and respects the heritage and architectural quality of the building. It is designed to make access into this civic building easy for all visitors.

In conclusion it is considered that it is in compliance with the Built Heritage policies of the Land Development Control Plan.