Appendix 9:

Policy on the Colour of Roof Materials

1. One of the goals of the development control system is to achieve visually coherent development. That is relatively easy when dealing with comprehensive development – for example a new settlement or a new estate of houses – because design parameters can be included that give visual unity, to create a sense of place rather than chaos. It is harder when dealing with numerous individual proposals. It is the reason for adopting a policy which can be referred to as the starting point for planning decisions, to still achieve visual coherence.

2. Another of the goals of the development control system is to blend buildings into the natural landscape that surrounds them. This is especially important in rural areas where the aim is to protect the un-developed character and allow the natural features to dominate and the built features to be secondary.

3. Roofs of buildings in St Helena are a critical element in the appearance of development, partly because most recent buildings are of low eaves height and of deep span so that there is "a lot of roof" in relation to the volume of the building; and partly because the steepness of gradients on the island means that almost everywhere one looks down on buildings.

4. Traditionally, roofs on the island were either thatch or imported slate and, from the mid nineteenth century, corrugated iron. (Corrugated iron was developed in Britain in the mid eighteenth century but does not seem to have arrived here until a century later.) Corrugated asbestos arrived in the 1950s and continued to be used for 40 years until the health scares associated with handling it brought it to an end.

5. Corrugated iron was initially just galvanised but needed to be painted to arrest rusting in a marine climate. Galvanised metal will only accept certain types of paint and from that stems the widespread use of red oxide that has given St Helena so many red roofs. (It is no doubt the maritime connections that resulted in the use of red oxide paint rather than black bituminous paint which became, and has remained, the standard finish for corrugated iron in Britain.)

6. Today almost all new roofing is in profiled steel sheeting, the modern equivalent of corrugated iron (which is still one of the profiles available). The metal is galvanised and "painted" in the factory (in fact powder coating or vinyl laminating processes) and is available in a wide range of colours from vermillion to canary yellow and from black to white. The sophistication of the coating process means that the colour can resist weathering for many years, which is desirable for protection of the metal and undesirable for failing to mellow and blend into the landscape.

7. There are examples on the island of new buildings whose roofs blend well with their setting and conversely there are examples of strong colours, especially blues and greens, and also white, which are highly visible in the rural landscape and highly contrasting in the built up areas. It is from these good and bad examples that appropriate policy can be developed. The aim should not be drab uniformity but reasonable consistency and, in the rural landscape, roofs that almost disappear into

their setting. Particularly for the latter, dark colours that do not have a strong hue are to be preferred and this naturally leads to grey. It is the case that all of the "good" examples in the rural landscape are dark grey. Grey is more successful than green because man-made greens invariably fight with the natural greens and as a result are more prominent.

8. The policy should apply to all new buildings and to re-roofing of existing buildings and repainting of existing roofs. For extensions, it is reasonable for the extension roof to match that of the building being extended unless the extension roof will become the dominant roof.

9. Natural materials such as slate and terracotta (unglazed clay) should not need to be controlled as to colour, unless the roof will be seen in immediate proximity to another, because these natural materials weather and mellow. Distinction needs to be drawn between natural materials and man-made replicas such as dyed or coated concrete tiles which do not mellow and can be shiny. Except in exceptional cases such as in conservation areas, nothing in the policy should restrict the use of products made from natural island materials, such as tiles from flax, again because they can be expected to weather and mellow.

10. Arguments that light colours reflect heat better than dark colours (which undoubtedly they do) should be given lower priority than appearance in the landscape, partly because of the prominence of roofs described in paragraph 3 and partly because there are design solutions to reducing heat-gain.

POLICY

1. DEVELOPMENT PERMISSION FOR NEW BUILDINGS AND FOR RE-ROOFING OF EXISTING BUILDINGS WILL BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS TO CONTROL THE COLOUR OF THE ROOF AS FOLLOWS WHERE THE ROOF IS TO BE COVERED IN METAL SHEETING:

A. WHERE THE BUILDING IS SURROUNDED BY EXISTING BUILDINGS WITH ROOFS THAT ARE PREDOMINATELY RED, THE ROOF SHALL BE RED NO BRIGHTER THAN THE SURROUNDING REDS, OR GREY.

B. WHERE THE BUILDING IS SURROUNDED BY EXISTING BUILDINGS WITH COMPLETE INCONSISTENCY OF ROOF COLOURS, THE ROOF SHALL BE DARK SLATE GREY.

C. WHERE THERE ARE NO, OR FEW, SURROUNDING BUILDINGS AND THE ROOF WILL BE SEEN AGAINST NATURAL SURROUNDINGS, THE ROOF SHALL BE DARK SLATE GREY.

D. WHERE THE DEVELOPMENT CONSISTS OF AN EXTENSION TO AN EXISTING BUILDING ITS ROOF SHALL MATCH THAT OF THE BUILDING BEING EXTENDED SAVE THAT IF THE EXTENSION ROOF WILL APPEAR AS THE DOMINANT ROOF THE COLOUR SHALL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPHS A TO C ABOVE.

2. **WHERE THE ROOF IS TO BE COVERED WITH A MAN-MADE MATERIAL SUCH AS CONCRETE TILES OR ARTIFICIAL SLATES, ITS COLOUR SHALL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPHS 1** A **TO** D **ABOVE.**

3. **NOTHING IN THIS POLICY SHALL CONTROL THE COLOUR OF A ROOF THAT IS TO BE COVERED WITH A NATURAL MATERIAL SUCH AS SLATE OR TERRACOTTA EXCEPT WHEN THE ROOF WILL BE SEEN IN IMMEDIATE PROXIMITY TO AN EXISTING ROOF.**

4. **EXCEPT WHEN THE SITE OF THE BUILDING IS WITHIN A HISTORIC CONSERVATION AREA NOTHING IN THIS POLICY SHALL CONTROL THE COLOUR OF A ROOF THAT IS TO BE COVERED WITH MATERIAL MADE FROM NATURAL MATERIALS PREDOMINANTLY SOURCED ON ST. HELENA.**

Adopted by the Land Planning and Development Control Board January 2010
(minor rewording to reflect adoption of the new Land Development Control Plan, April 2013)