

Planning Officer's Report – LDCA JUNE 2026

APPLICATION 2026/35 – Proposed Change of Use to Museum and Interpretation Centre with Restoration Works to include External Access Ramp, Security Fencing and Car Park Area

PERMISSION SOUGHT	Full Permission
REGISTERED	15 April 2026
APPLICANT	St Helena National Trust
PARCEL	RV0055
LOCALITY	Rupert's Valley
ZONE	Intermediate
CONSERVATION AREA	Heritage Coast
CURRENT USE	Vacant single-storey building
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>The Independent</i> Newspaper on 17 April 2026.▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	1 May 2026
REPRESENTATIONS	One
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

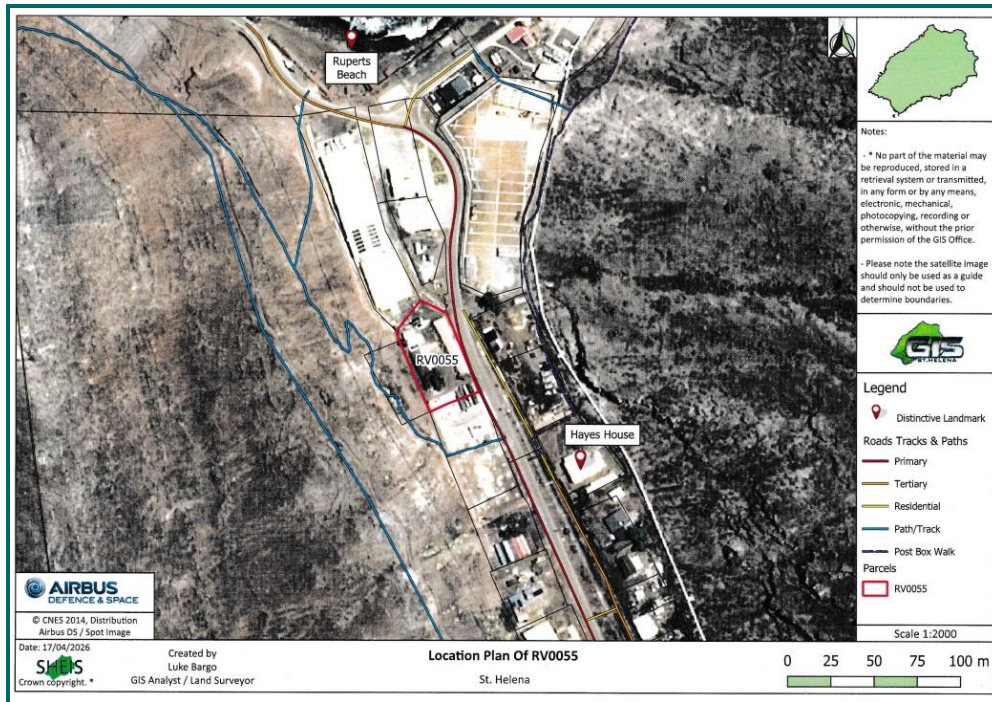
1. Sewage & Water Division	No Response
2. Energy Division	No Response
3. Fire & Rescue	No Objection (comments)
4. Roads Section	No Response
5. Property Division	No Response
6. Environmental Management	No Response
7. Environmental Health	No Response
8. Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
9. St Helena Police Services	No Response
10. Aerodrome Safe Guarding	No Response
11. Economic Development	No Objection
12. National Trust	[Applicant]
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Objection
14. Heritage Society	No Objection (comments)

B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

LOCALITY & ZONING

This proposed development is located within Rupert's Valley where the site is designated within the Coastal Zone. The No. 1 Building is a Grade III Listed Building.

Diagram 1: Location Plan



Background to the Historical Context

The application site is located within Rupert's Valley, adjacent to the operational port area.

The No.1 Building is the only surviving structure associated with the former Liberated African Establishment, originally constructed in approximately 1865 as accommodation for formerly enslaved Africans liberated from slave ships intercepted in the South Atlantic.

Historical records indicate that the building formed part of a wider complex including No. 2 Building, a dispensary, a Store and a cooking yard.

The accommodation block was capable of housing up to approximately 80 liberated Africans.

Following the closure of the Liberated African Department in 1885, a site map dated 1 April 1885 identified the No.1 Building as the only structure remaining in good condition.

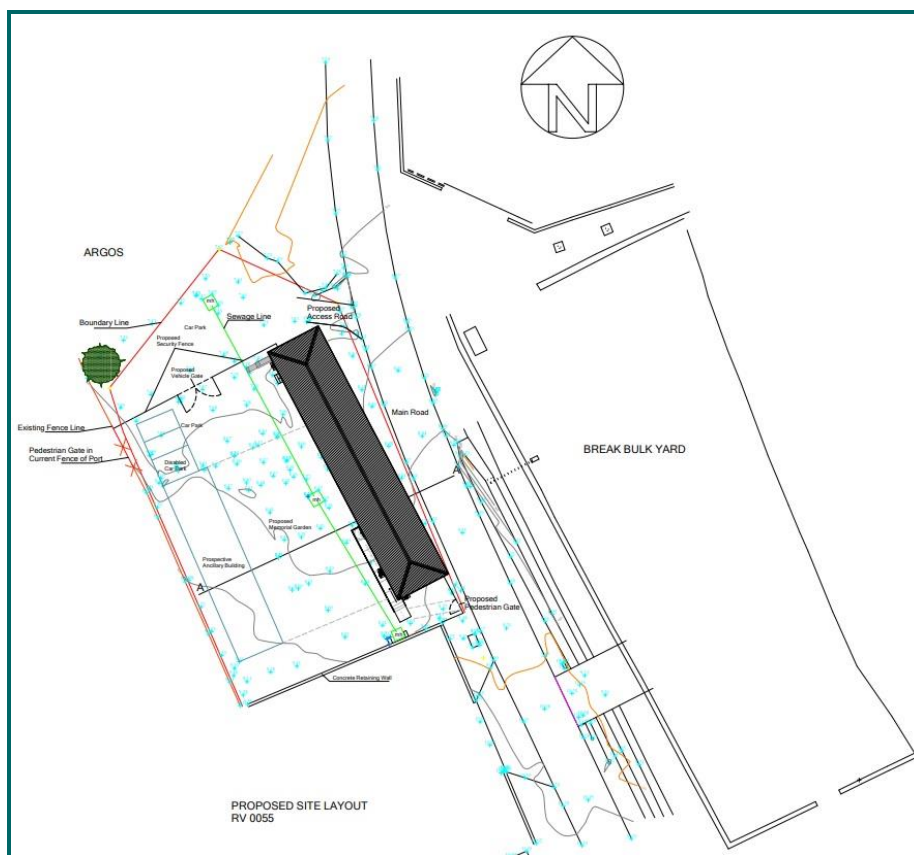
The site therefore holds profound historical significance in relation to the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the emancipation of enslaved Africans, and St Helena’s role within that history.

The Building remains substantially intact, although deterioration and weathering have occurred over time.

The building retains important original architectural and structural elements, including Original wall construction, Historic openings, Roof structure, Lime-based finishes and Historic spatial arrangement.

The structure is capable of restoration and adaptive reuse, subject to sensitive conservation-led interventions.

Diagram 2: Proposed Site Plan



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal comprises a change of use and restoration of the No.1 Building at Rupert’s Valley to form a Museum and Interpretation Centre.

The proposal includes restoration, conservation, adaptive reuse, accessibility improvements, associated infrastructure works, security fencing, and the formation of a car parking area to facilitate public access and long-term sustainable use of the site.

The No.1 Building is recognised as a structure of special historical and cultural significance and is identified as a Grade III listed building within the Crallan Report. Crallan, in 1974, describes the building as “Liberated African’s Depot” with exposed stone walls “to which other mid 20th century structures have been added to form a Concrete Block Making Yard” and that “It possesses no architectural merit but has some historic interest from its original purpose”.

The proposal has therefore been carefully developed to balance heritage conservation requirements with the practical interventions necessary to secure the building’s long-term preservation and public use.

Specifically, the Internal Works include: proposed toilets, kitchen, and store Proposed office and laboratory, reinstatement of historically appropriate flooring (clay pannels for the walkways with wooden floorboards for the display areas), involve the repair and conservation of lime-based wall finishes and retain and repair existing structural elements. These works are intended to support the operational requirements of the interpretation centre while preserving the building’s historic integrity.

With external Works comprising: re-pointing masonry walls using lime mortar, Reinstatement of timber window shutters based on historical evidence, Reinstatement of a double door on the west elevation to match existing openings, Installation of rainwater harvesting systems, retention and repair of the existing roof structure. These interventions are designed to preserve and reinforce the architectural authenticity and long-term durability of the building.

Accessibility Improvements

To improve accessibility, a new stainless (or galvanised) steel access ramp is proposed to the southern entrance.

The ramp has been specifically designed as a reversible intervention and includes the following features: Supported independently from the ground rather than the historic structure, Fixed using restraint straps located within mortar joints only, Minimal direct impact on historic fabric and the ability to be removed in future without permanent damage to the building.

The landing will oversail the existing steps, which will effectively become redundant, although retained beneath the structure.

The proposal ensures inclusive access for less able users while maintaining the integrity of the listed building.

Security Fencing and External Site Works

Due to the site's location within an active port facility operating to international security standards, a new perimeter security fence to match that of the other port secure areas is required. The proposed fencing will allow separated access to the building upto Level 2 of port operations. There will be pedestrian and vehicle access gates.

Two car parking area is also proposed to facilitate visitor access; with one marked disabled spaces within the secured fenced area.

Diagram 3: Plans

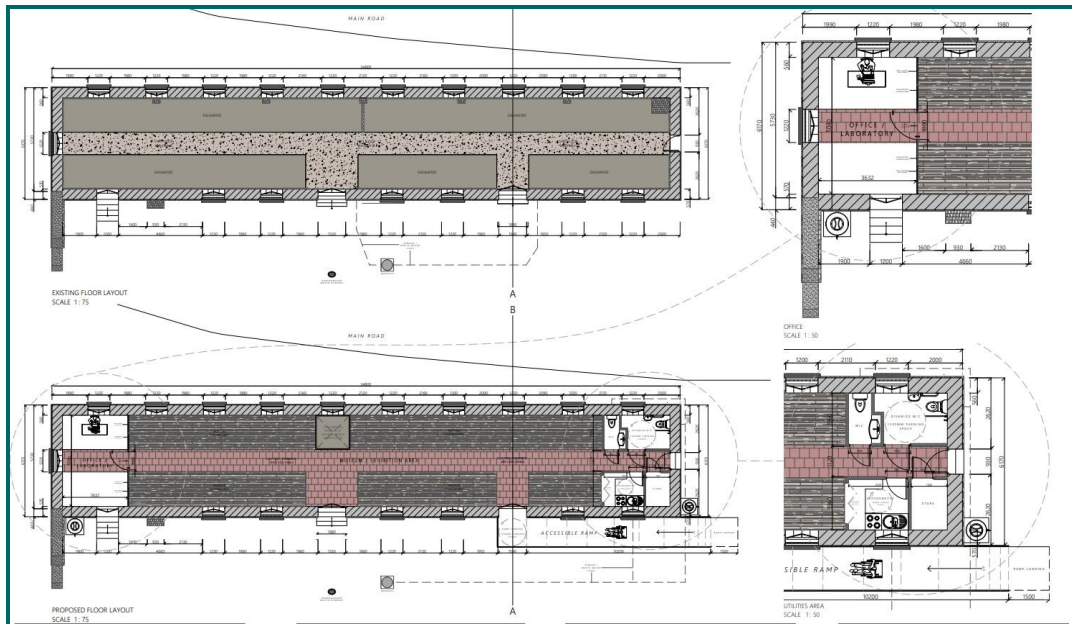
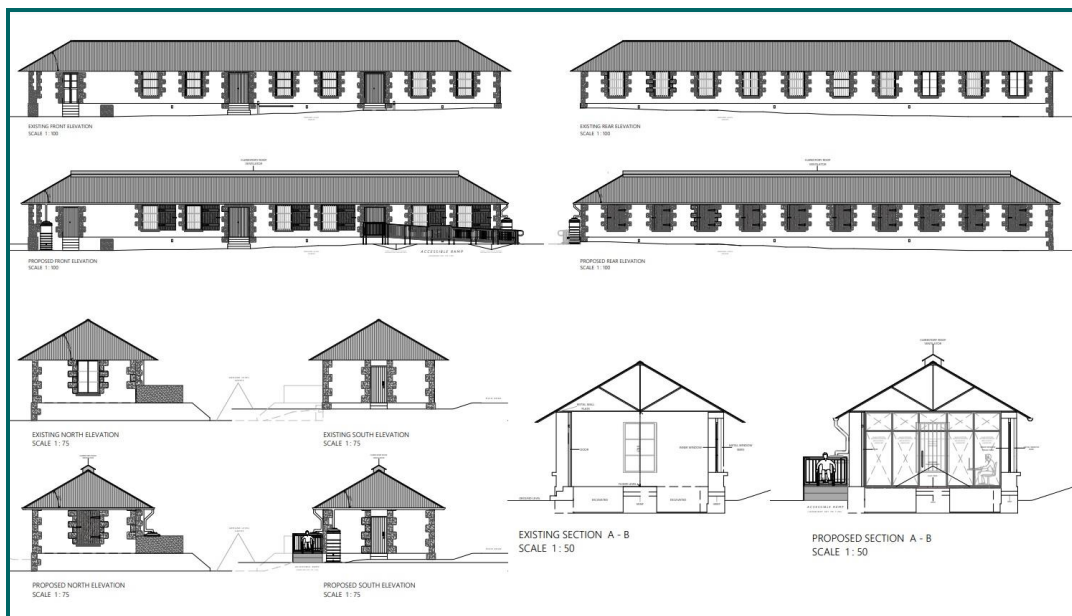


Diagram 4: Elevations



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS

There were no representations or objections received from stakeholders or any members of the public. Some comments were received as follows:

Heritage Society: The proposed development is sound both in principle and in detail; a great deal of care has been taken to ensure that the impact of the alterations on the building is minimised and in fact it will be enhanced. The proposal is therefore thoroughly recommended by the Heritage Society.

Fire & Rescue: The St Helena Fire & Rescue Service will need to have sign of a plan for the installation of passive & active fire fighting media.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The relevant policies of the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP, 2012) that are applicable in the assessment of the proposed development are set out below:

The application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Land Development Control Plan 2012 (LDCP), including policies relating to:

Built Heritage Policies: BH1

Coastal Zone Policies: CZ1, CZ.3

Tourism Policies: T1, T.2, T.3

Water: W1, W.2, W.3

Social Infrastructure: SI1, SI.7

Sewage and Storm Drainage: SD1, SD.4, SD.7

Roads and Transport: RT1, RT.7

OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT

Principle of development

The proposal is to convert the building for use within Use Class D1 (Non-residential institutions). There is no specific Social Infrastructure policy for the proposed museum use, however, built heritage policies BH1 seeks to conserve historic structures in their setting and it is historically appropriate that the No.1 Building is used as a museum in connection with its former use as the Liberate African's Depot. Policies for the Coastal Zone and Tourism also support the use of buildings to provide background to the historic use of the area and Island as a whole.

The proposed interpretation centre will deliver substantial public benefits:

- Providing a dedicated space for education, interpretation, and reflection
- Support awareness of the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

- Memorialise the experiences of liberated Africans connected to Rupert's Valley
- Enhance heritage tourism within St Helena
- Support research, education, and cultural engagement
- Contribute to community participation and skills development
- Secure the long-term sustainable management of an important heritage asset

The proposal reinforces Rupert's Valley as a site of international historical significance.

It is therefore considered that this use is supported by Policies for the Built Environment, Coastal Zone and Tourism.

Detailed Impact assessment:

Although located within the Coastal Zone, the proposal involves restoration and reuse of an existing structure with limited additional physical development. Externally, the proposal includes new access ramp and shuttering. No significant adverse impacts on the coastal environment are anticipated.

In relation to Built Heritage policies, the proposal adopts a conservation-led approach to preserve significant historic fabric, maintain the architectural character of the listed structure, ensures reversibility where possible and secures the long-term future of the building through viable reuse.

The proposed restoration and adaptive reuse scheme represents a carefully balanced conservation-led approach.

The majority of proposed interventions are assessed as low to medium heritage impact which positively contribute to the architectural authenticity, historical legibility and Long-term structural preservation

Others are of higher impact including the introduction of foul water drainage (connected to the existing system), the introduction of water supply infrastructure (connected to the existing supply feed) and associated service installations. However, these works are considered necessary to secure the viable long-term use of the building as a functioning interpretation centre and have been designed to minimise impacts on historic fabric.

Overall, the proposal is considered to preserve and enhance the significance of the building and is therefore considered compliant with built heritage objectives.

Conclusion

The proposal represents a highly significant heritage conservation and cultural interpretation project. While some interventions introduce modern infrastructure and accessibility improvements, these works are considered necessary to secure the sustainable future of the building and have been carefully designed to minimise impacts.

The project will secure the long-term conservation of the No.1 Building and significantly enhance public understanding of Rupert's Valley and the history of liberated Africans on St Helena.

In planning terms the proposal:

- Preserves and enhances a historically significant listed structure
- Supports heritage conservation objectives
- Delivers substantial educational, cultural, and tourism benefits
- Incorporates sensitive and reversible interventions
- Complies with the relevant provisions of the Land Development Control Plan 2012

Although certain works introduce moderate levels of intervention, it is considered that these are justified by the substantial long-term public and heritage benefits delivered by the scheme and that the proposal is therefore acceptable in accordance with LDCP Policies.