

Planning Officer's Report - LDCA NOVEMBER 2023

APPLICATION	2023/43 – Proposed Construction of Staircase & Wheelchair Access Ramp
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Full Permission
REGISTERED	31 August 2023
APPLICANT	John & Betty Joshua
PARCEL	JT090022
LOCALITY	'Britannia' Market Street, Jamestown
ZONE	Intermediate
CONSERVATION AREA	Jamestown Historic
CURRENT USE	Existing House
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Independent Newspaper on 1st September 2023▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	15 th September 2023
REPRESENTATIONS	One received
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

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

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| 13. Sure SA Ltd | No Objection |
| 14. Heritage Society | No Response |
| 15. Maritime | Not Applicable |

B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

LOCALITY & ZONING

This plot is located within Market Street, Jamestown, where it is designated within the Intermediate Zone and Jamestown Historic Conservation area.

Diagram 1: Location Plan



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The development will be carried out within the curtilage of a building known as 'Britannia,' which is a single storey cottage and is Grade III Listed within the Crallan Report. The proposal is to demolish the existing steps at the main doorway, as well as two steps outside of the existing bedroom, and construct a timber ramp and staircase on the front elevation of the property on the concrete pavement behind the public footpath. The ramp will span a length of approximately 6m with a width 1.15m at a rate of 1 in 12. The platform level will measure approximately 1.8m x 1.5m and the stairs will have 7 steps approximately 900mm wide. The height of the handrails will be approximately 950mm.

Diagram 2: Existing Layout & Elevation

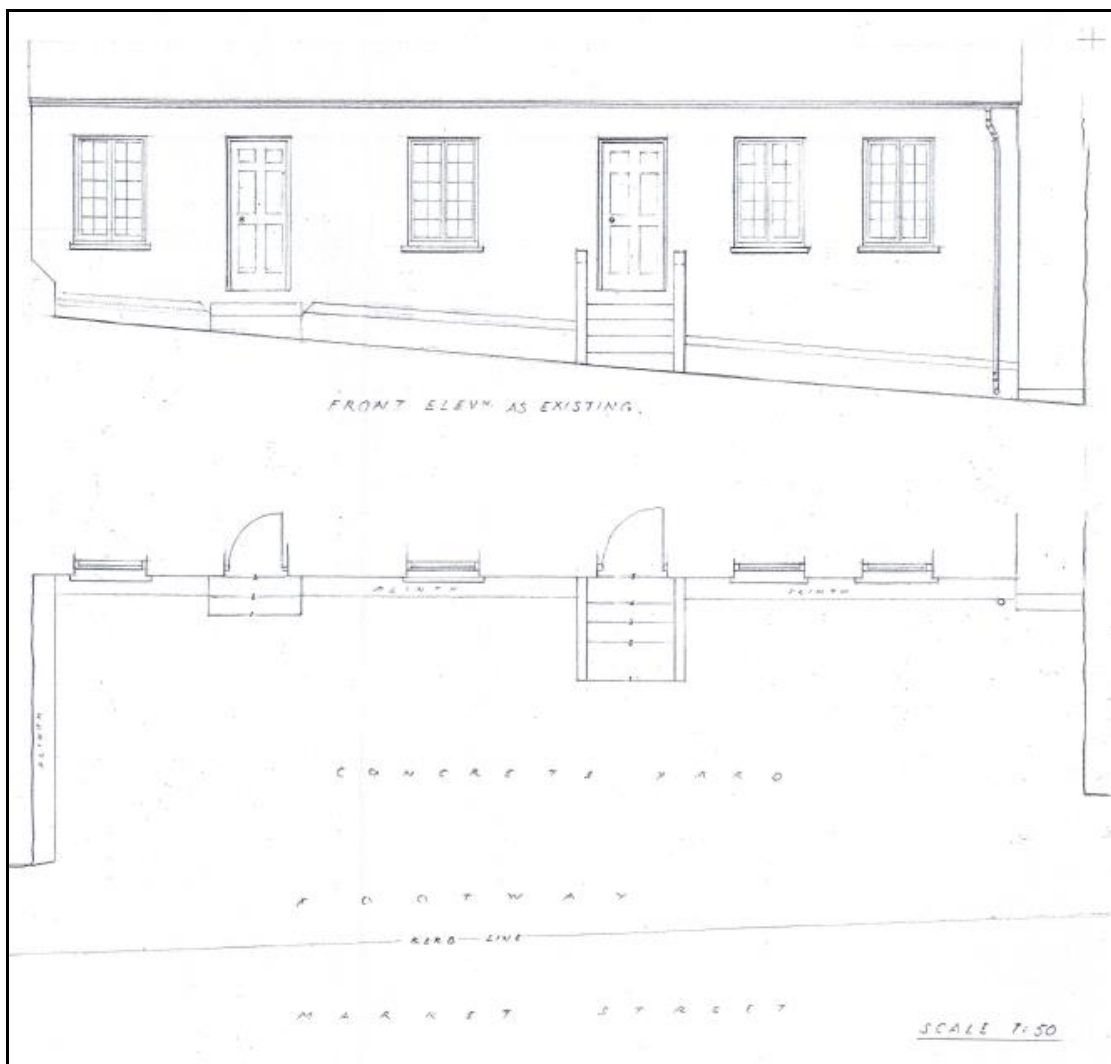
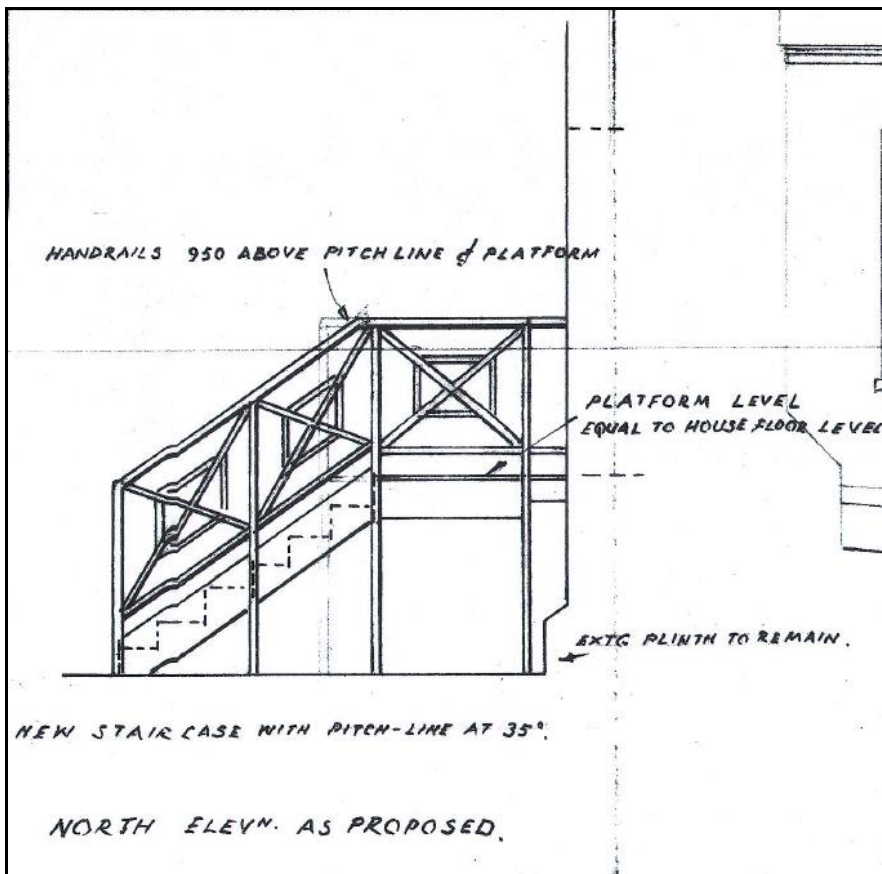
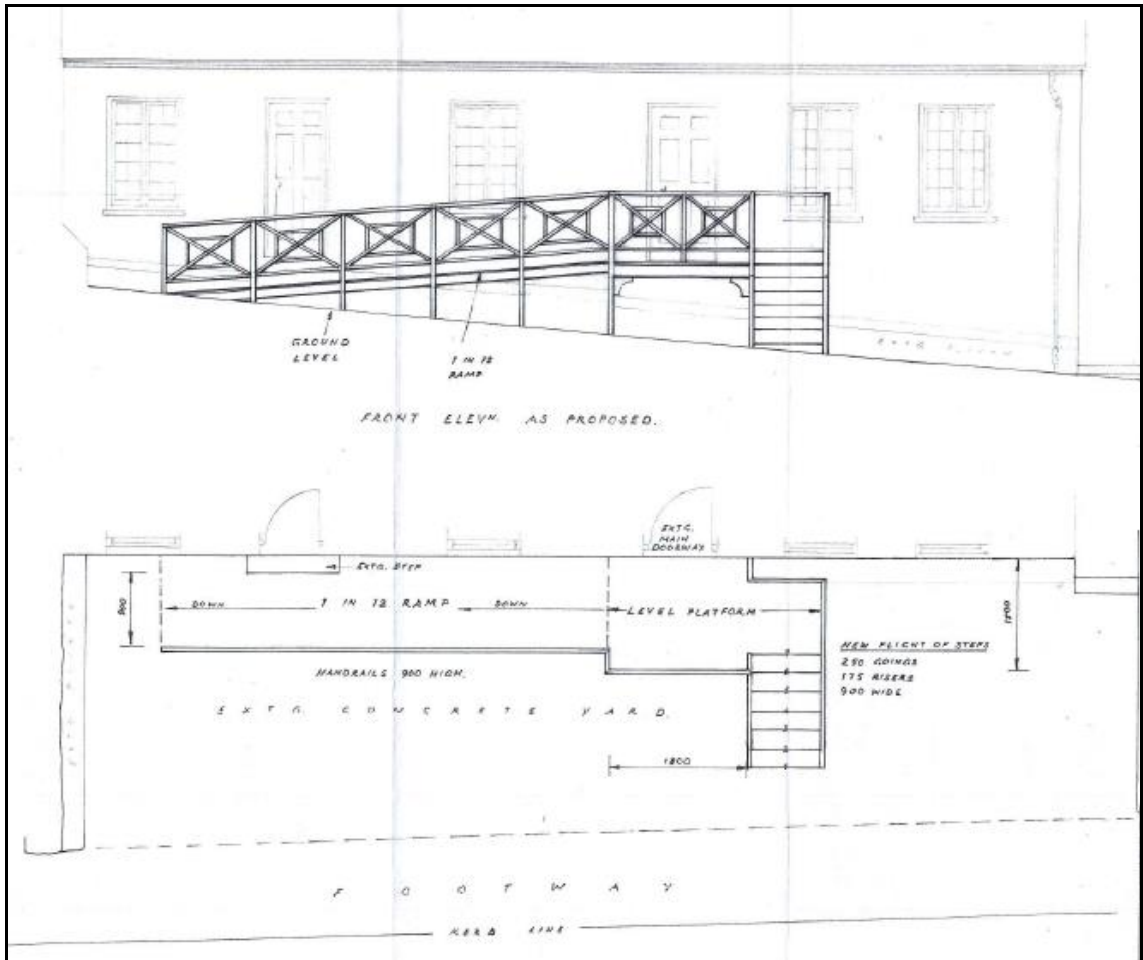


Diagram 3: Proposed (Front) East & North Elevation



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS

There was one representation received from a member of the public.

Representation #1 – ‘I have no objection to the installation of a ramp, but I am concerned about this particular design, and its visual impact, both on the house and the character of the street.

My concern stems from an ambiguity as to whether the ramp is permanent or temporary. The applicant’s allusion to its ability to be easily dismantled conflicts with its nature as a permanent addition to the street scene. As the development application is for permanence, the design and the application must be considered as a permanent addition to the street scene in the conservation area.

In terms of permanence, the ramp is likely to improve access to the house permanently. However its appearance does not relate to the character of the street or to the other stair and ramp protrusions in front of houses elsewhere in the town. Traditionally all such protrusions are built of solid walling with a straight and simple staircase or ramp to one side or the other.

This proposal does not follow that simple rule and because of its complicated appearance threatens to overwhelm the front of the house and the street scene. In my opinion this is caused by three things:

1. The open and exposed timber substructure appears complicated and out of character with the simple solid walls that are fundamental to the character of the town.

Could the base be of solid walling?

2. Diagonal wooden balustrades are out of character with the simple metal railings common along street frontages in town. (Diagonal wooden balustrading is more common at the rear of houses in town.)

Could the balustrading be of simpler metal work?

3. The replacement staircase appears awkwardly attached to the ramp.

Could the staircase be turned to line with the house, like others, giving it a simpler appearance?

Is it possible to reconsider this design so as not to detract from the aims of the conservation area?

This is another example of the problems caused by the continued absence of a Jamestown Historic Conservation Area Management Plan with its associated design guide, awaited since 2012 to support the LDCP.’

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The relevant policies of the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP 2012 - 2022) that are applicable in the assessment of the proposed development are set out below:

- Intermediate Zone
- Built Heritage

OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT

The proposal is being considered as a permanent structure, it has been highlighted by the developer that constructing the ramp out of timber would permit its removal if required without significantly impacting the building, minimising the structural and visual impact of work on the building being the key objective. A masonry structure in their opinion would have a greater adverse impact. This would however require development permission to request its removal.

Reference is made in the representation to the complicated appearance of the structure, particularly with the diagonal wooden balustrades being out of character with street frontages and protrusions in town. This is correct in terms of access ramps and steps as there are masonry structures that serves most properties on the street front. There are however examples of diagonal (criss cross) balustrades on street frontages in town, albeit primarily on verandah's. Question was also made as to whether the staircase could be turned parallel with the house to give it a simpler appearance. The rationale from the developer for the staircase orientation is to minimise direct view by visitors at close quarters into the bedroom windows, as well as to maintain the practical and visual relevance of the front door. The ramp does not have a solid base walling, because the applicant would like to provide space for bins, as they are currently stored in front of their property along with the neighbours. The structure will provide some visual screening of these bins in comparison to the current arrangement.

With regards to the siting of the ramp, alternatives have been explored, including taking the ramp down from the bedroom doorway instead of the main doorway, but the horizontal length cannot be accommodated. Even turning the ramp through 90° to follow the southern boundary, does not work because of the need to make the turn itself horizontal plus 1.2m (recommended) before and after it. That arrangement would also bring the foot of the ramp, at whatever gradient, directly to the public footway and facing the carriageway, with potential hazard to footpath users and those using the ramp.

In assessing the proposed development against the Built Heritage policies, the design of the ramp and stairs in terms of its siting has been dictated by the layout of the building and level at which it sits. Site constraints evidently presented a challenge and this particular layout of the ramp is considered the most appropriate option. In

terms of the appearance of the structure, as highlighted in the representation, the majority of street protrusions are of masonry construction, this proposal being of timber will of course be an anomaly within the current streetscape if the intention is to conserve what has been carried out previously. Nevertheless the balustrading being of a diagonal cross design is coherent within itself and emulates that of the associated bridge with the Customs building, and other residential developments within Jamestown. Even though masonry structures could be argued as more in keeping with the protrusions in town, it is not necessarily the most aesthetically pleasing structures depending on the design and can be just as visually prominent within the streetscape. It is envisaged that this proposal will not be visually intrusive due to the buildings unique position of being recessed in comparison to the properties to the south and across the street, but will in fact contribute to the character of the building by taking design inspiration of what can be seen in the Jamestown Historic Conservation area, as well as across the island.