

Planning Officer's Report – LDCA DECEMBER 2024

APPLICATION	2024/48 – Proposed Construction of Water Storage Tank
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Full Permission
REGISTERED	24 th September 2024
APPLICANT	Connect St Helena Ltd
LOCALITY	Adjacent to Cason's Car Park, Blue Hill
ZONE	Green Heartland
CONSERVATION AREA	None
CURRENT USE	Pasture Land
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sentinel Newspaper on 26th September 2024▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	10 th October 2024
REPRESENTATIONS	One Received
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

1. Sewage & Water Division	Applicant
2. Energy Division	No Response
3. Fire & Rescue	No Response
4. Roads Section	No Response
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 Response
12. National Trust	No Response
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Objection
14. Heritage Society	No Objection
15. Maritime	Not Applicable

B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

LOCALITY & ZONING

The application site is adjacent to Cason's car park, Blue Hill and sits within the existing pasture land west of the car park. The site is designated within the Green Heartland is not in any conservation area.

Diagram 1: Location Plan



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is to construct and assemble a glass fibre water storage tank, which will replace the existing 35 year old Gold Mind tank that has exceeded its operational life. With a water tank at Cason's. The proposed tank will measure approximately 4m x 3.3m with a height of approximately 3m with a capacity of approximately 35000 litres. Ground will be excavated to 1.2m below existing ground level. The finish of the tank will be grey in colour. This particular location has been selected at this higher position to allow for gravitational supply to also support the Frenches Gut system, when there are issues with the Blue Hill supply. Justification for locating the development within the pasture land adjacent to the car park was to allow for easier access should the transportation of water be necessary during problematic periods i.e. droughts and also to enable easier access to water for Fire Trucks. The tank will predominately continue to support consumers in Blueman's Field, and those feeding off the Macintosh network that is currently supported by the Gold Mine tank.

Diagram 2: Revised Site Layout

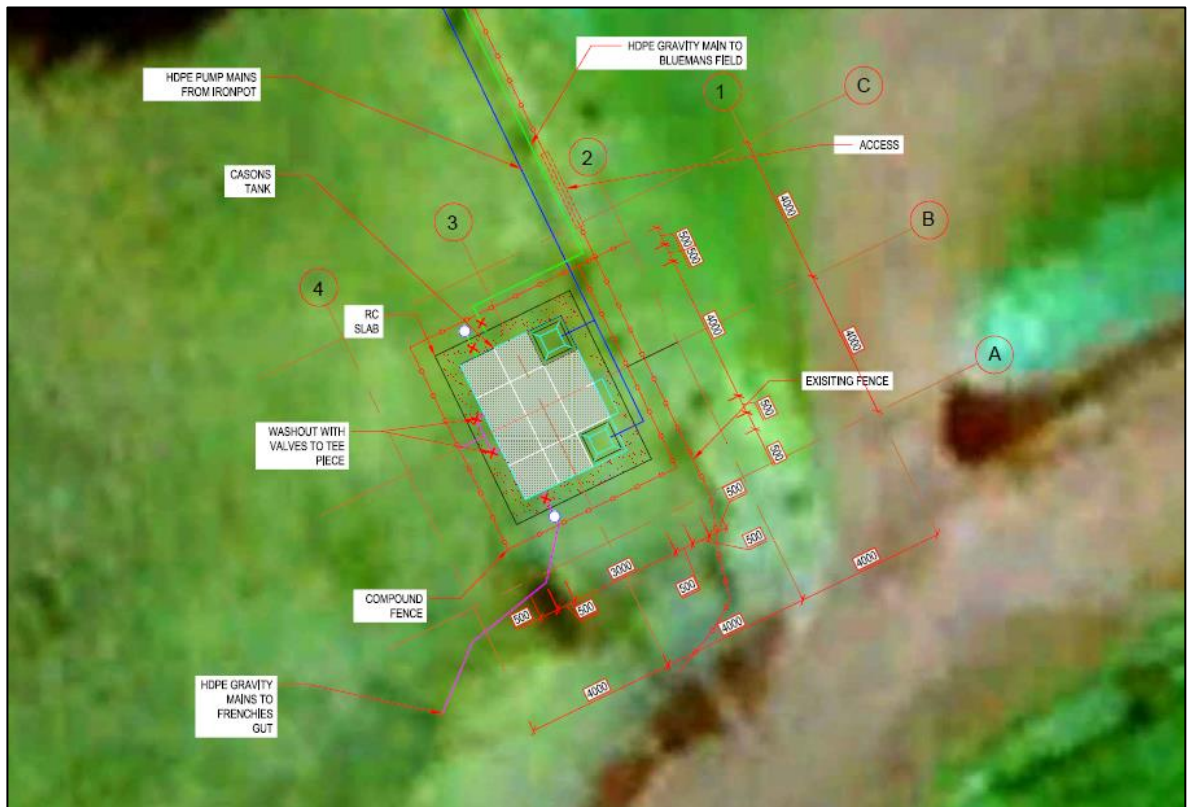


Diagram 3: Site Sections

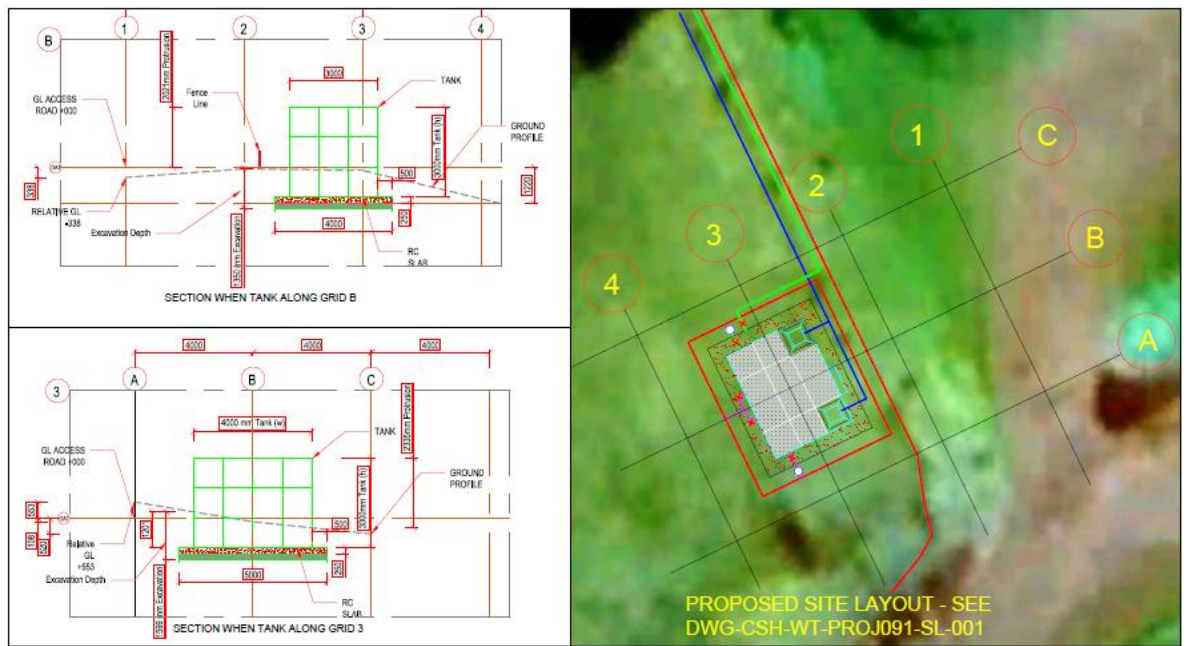


Diagram 4: Visual Concept of Revised Scheme



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS

There were no objections received from stakeholders, however a representation was received from a member of the public in relation to the original submitted proposal.

Representation – ... ‘I write to express my concern about the effects of the proposed water tank (application 2024/48) upon the landscape in the vicinity of Casons and Fairyland. Although improvements to water security is welcome it should not be at the detriment of a valued landscape that is protected by planning law. It is regrettable the applicant had not sought advice from the planning office before embarking upon this project. I attach two sketches using Google and the applicant’s drawings to show the potential adverse effects upon the rural landscape of this much-loved part of the island. LDCP Green Heartland policies make it clear this is not an acceptable location for this tank and another less prominent place should be found.

I therefore object to the application.’

Objector’s Concept – showing their interpretation of potential visual impact



Officer comments on representation received: Having reviewed the original proposal as well as the representation submitted, officers carried out a site visit to determine the visual impact. Following this, advice was given to the applicant during a joint visit, to consider an

alternative proposal.

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:

- Green Heartland Policies GH1, GH.5 & GH.6
- Water Supplies Policies W1 a)
- Emergency and Public Services ES1

OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT

In assessing the proposed development, the LDCP Water Supplies policy W1a) states permission will be granted for the construction of facilities that support the storage and distribution of potable and irrigation water supplies to service the development needs of the island. This development will replace infrastructure that has now exceeded its operational lifespan, which has served the Mackintosh tank and main feed to Blueman's Field for a number of years, and will now be constructed at the proposed site adjacent to Casons car park.

Following the original proposal and concerns raised, consideration was given to alternative locations nearby (and on the existing pipework) such as within the National Forest Estate to the north, where the tank could be situated beneath the slope of the car park, however in consultation with the Forestry Officer, the applicant was advised due to current issues with the presence of plant pathogen phytophthora within the soil of the site, the implications of siting the tank in terms of laying 25 square metre slab, earth moving, increased footfall during and after construction, it would be inadvisable to allow this development at this location.

The applicant has therefore considered re-positioning the tank to the south of the initial submission by approximately 4-5m and offset back from the existing fence by approximately 2m within the pasture land, where they intend utilise the natural embankment to the east of the site that adjoins the car park, along with carrying out some excavation works to sit the development lower within the landscape. Excavation has now been proposed of approximately 1.2m in depth to create a level platform. A gate will be installed within the existing fencing with compound fencing also erected around the perimeter of the site.

The new location will not only support the current supply to Blueman's Field and Mackintosh Tank, but can now, due to its higher position, provide gravitational supply to the Frenches Gut system when there are issues with the Blue Hill Supply. The added benefit of this location is that it can also provide the Fire & Rescue Services, who currently in the event of an emergency at Blue Hill, replenish their water supply for their vehicles at Red Hill, St Paul's, a closer supply in the event an emergency occurs within the Blue Hill district.

The site is within the Green Heartland, where there is a presumption in favour of retaining the undeveloped nature of the Green Heartland. Inevitably there will be

disturbance to the land with excavation and siting of the tank. The most intrusive impact of this development is the visual impact on the landscape. Policy GH 5 requires that a site is landscaped to conceal or blend development in to the landscape. The revised scheme has reduced the impact as much as possible by undertaking excavation and re-positioning that will sink the tank partially into the ground and using a dark grey colour for the external materials, reducing the visual impact on the landscape, particularly when viewed from the main road. It is recognized that there will be some harm to visual amenities in the locality but that landscaping on this otherwise more open site would not be appropriate. The water tank together with its mitigation measures is not considered to result in so significant harm as to refuse the proposal when balanced against the need for the water facility.

Overall, the development is considered acceptable given it is key infrastructure and complies with these relevant policies.