

Planning Officer's Report - LDCA NOVEMBER 2019

APPLICATION	2019/61 – Proposed Demolition of Ruins at the Rear of the Property and Construction of Nine Accommodation Units
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Permission in Full
REGISTERED	01 August 2019
APPLICANT	Johnny Isaac
PARCEL	JT120005
SIZE	0.181 acres (732m ²)
LOCALITY	Opposite Pilling School, Jamestown
LAND OWNER	Johnny Isaac
ZONE	Intermediate Zone/NCA
CONSERVATION AREA	Jamestown Conservation Area
BUILDING STATUS	Conversion, refurbish and development of the derelict grade 3 listed residential building into nine accommodation apartments
CURRENT USE	Residential
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Independent Newspaper on 2 August 2019▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	16 August 2019
REPRESENTATIONS	Three (3) Received: 1. Mr Andy Pearce on behalf of Heritage Society
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO
SITE VISIT	Preliminary with Applicant during earlier part of 2018 (prior to submission)

This report should be considered with the LDCA report for the meeting on 4 September and 2 October 2019.

A. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS SUMMARY

To Demolish the rear of the property and clear the site to erect a steel framed, two story building at the rear of the property with access stairs to first floor (six apartments: 4 x 2 & 2 x 1 bedroom) and to refurbish single story stone building at the front of the property adjacent to the street and conversion into a four bedroom apartment and add a steel framed constructed first floor to the refurbish stone building at the front of the property to create 2 x 2 bedroom apartments. The detail of the front building have been revised and with minor alteration to the rear building.

Diagram 1: Location of the site



C. Background and Site Visit

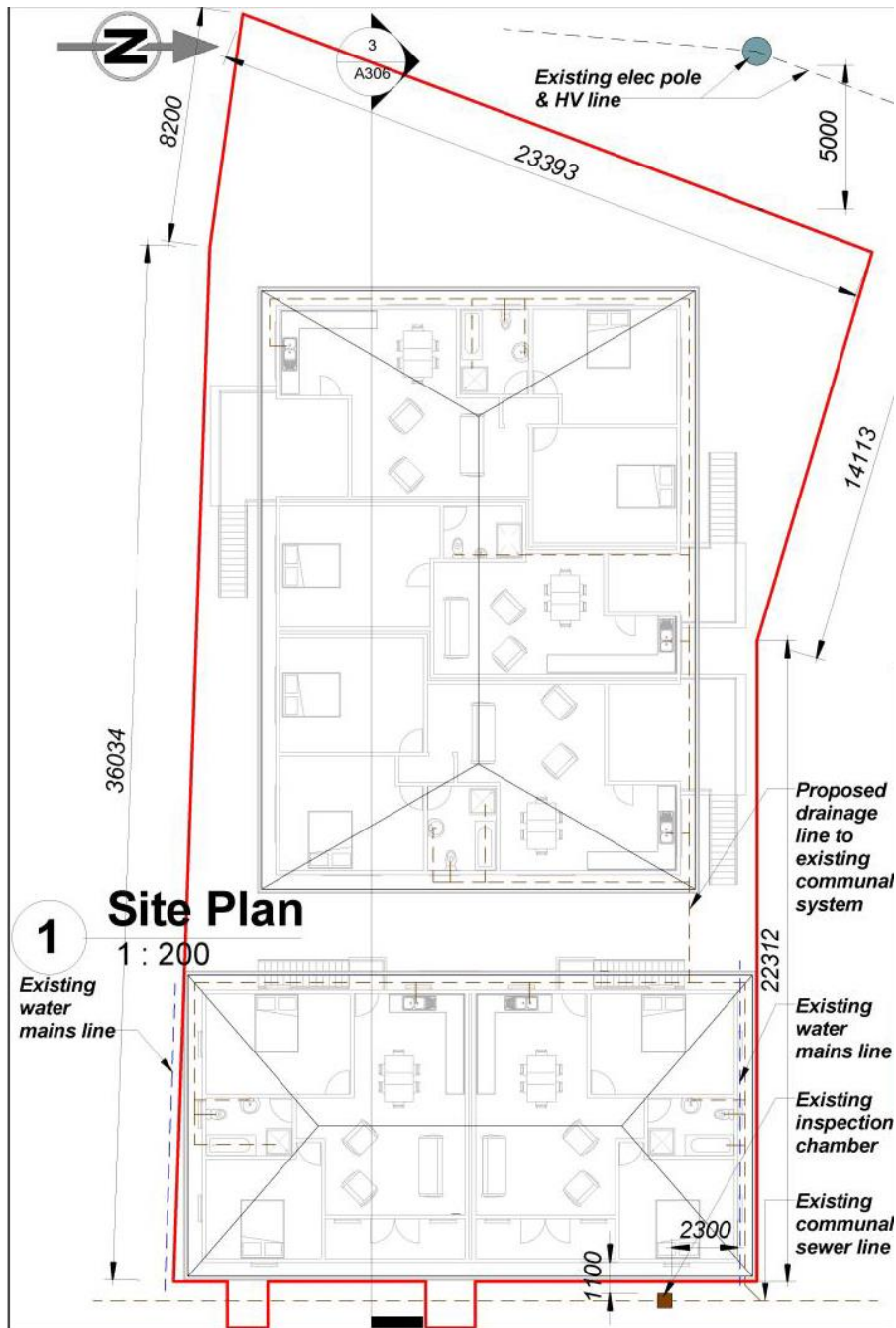
This development application has been previously discussed at the 4 September and 2 October 2019 meetings and the decision has been deferred. At 2 October meeting it was deferred for site visit to assess the impact of the proposed development on the streetscape in relation to adjoining buildings and visual impact. The site visit was undertaken on 14 October.

During site visit, the Members were able to view the condition of the existing buildings and assess the impact of the proposed development in context of the site and the wider streetscape

At the previous meetings, the representatives from the Heritage Society addressed the Members with their concern in respect of the proposed development. Since the last meeting representation has been received from Saint Helena National Trust (SHNT). SHNT had not previously made any response to the consultation. Members are advised to note whilst the consultation period has closed and the development application has already been reported and discussed in detail at the last two meeting and there are no amendments to these proposals since the discussion at the October

meeting. However, any new issues raised in this representation are set out later in the report with the officer comments.

Proposed Layout of the Development



Assessment of the Proposed Development on the Street-view

Member's concern during the discussion at the last meeting was the impact of the addition of the first floor over the main building and the likely street-view down the road toward Jamestown. As previously pointed out, there are number single and two storey building south of the application site. Some of these buildings are right-up to the road like the application site, whilst other are set-back. The impact of the various

buildings in the street-view looking towards the church tower varies considerably depending on the position along Market Street and across the street. It is inevitable that the closer one is to the application site, the view towards the church tower will be impeded. Whilst the view of the church tower may be considered to be important, and the proposed two storey building will impact this view, however the view is not totally impeded as it can still be viewed and appreciated from the right-hand side of the street looking toward the north.



Representation

After the last meeting of the authority on 2 October, representation has been received from SHNT in respect of the proposed development. SHNT had not previously made representation in respect of the application, however as decision has not be made on the application the issues raise are set out for the consideration of the Member.

- Proposal to demolition of a Grade III listed, single-storey, nineteenth-century building also designated for its Group Value within the Jamestown Historic Conservation Area, with replacement by a two-storey building will serve to detract from other listed buildings in the direct vicinity, most significantly the Grade I Baptist Chapel, and the wider visual amenity of Market Street.
- Proposed development is directly opposite the site, the EIC Regimental Officer Quarters built c. 1778, which is a major part of the visual and historical integrity of eighteenth-century Jamestown.
- Concerned by the apparent disregard by the LCDA of the conservation principles and legal protection afforded to the Jamestown Historic Conservation Area and listed buildings within the HCA.
- Designations carry weight as material considerations within the planning process, codified in law (Ordinance) and policy (LDCP),
- Has wider implications beyond the current application – setting precedent for the erosion of the iconic and internationally significant historic core of

Jamestown, as recognised by placement on the Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage Status in 2012.

- Property is immediately adjacent to similar nineteenth-century, single-storey building with Grade III and Group Value listing and which is immediately adjacent to the Baptist Chapel, the demolition and/or raising of a second storey to this further building – if drawing on any precedent set by approval of the current planning application – would have an amplified, detrimental effect on the Grade I Baptist Chapel and Market Street more widely.
- Could open up similar development opportunities up and down Jamestown, effectively undermining or destroying any remaining control in the LDCP.
- Presumption in favour of development and the economic imperative of the developer, which has the effect of privileging short-term investment for private gain over longer-term, sustainable development for wider community benefit.

For clarification, the proposal is to retain the ground floor of the original building and to erect a first floor over to provide additional residential accommodation. The demolition is mainly of the more dilapidated buildings in the rear.

Properties to the south of the application site are four modern semi-detached buildings which of two storey height. Whilst they are set back from the road, they are still very dominant in the street scene, in both directions of street view, and detract from the aesthetic of the historic area. The condition and low rise of the building on the application site further distract from the aesthetic of area with these building being prominent in the street scene. A more prominent building that reflects a sympathetic design and details would be an acceptable solution. Also given the forward position of the application site, with a slightly kink in the road, a two storey building could reduce the dominance of these building. Whilst this two storey make become more dominant in the northward street view, however the church tower that peers over the roof of the two storey build will still be a feature and will become dominant beyond the application site.

The significance of the Grade 1 church building and heritage importance of the area is not being eroded with this development. Given the dilapidated condition of the building the proposed refurbishment of this building and bring it back into viable use and would ensure enhancement and conservation of the area. By granting development permission would not undermine any of the LDCP policies and any future development proposal would also be considered on their merit as this would not be setting any precedence.

Granting development permission would not be a short-term economic solution that undermines environmental benefit, but on the contrary, dilapidated building and vacant building can often be cycle of down ward spiral for further dereliction. A way to

reverse this cycle of decline is to encourage owners to invest into the built assets through repair, refurbishment and restoration to bring vacant buildings back into viable use. The poor state of this building does not provide a positive image for the historic area and proposed development and refurbishment would benefit the area considerably.

D. Officer Assessment

In view of the lengthy discussions at the last two meetings and assessment of the proposed development on site visit, the proposed development would have some impact on the built historic of the conservation area and within the street scene it will also impact the view of the church tower. Whilst the church building is a Grade 1 listed and it has historical significance within the conservation area and a building of interest in the street scene, however, it is difficult to refer to it as landmark building within the conservation area or the street scene. In the context of the street scene, effort should be made to ensure the view of the church tower not impeded by developments in the vicinity of the listed building in both directions or the building is dwarfed by new development, the proposed development of the application site by a second floor on the original building has some impact on the view, however it is considered to minimal and the merit of the tower church can still be enjoyed and appreciated.

The details of the frontage as a two storey building provides features and details that are modest in design and whilst being modern they are also traditional for the local area and warm climate. As members experienced the single storey building would be dwarfed by the taller building in the rear and would be visible over the shorter building at the front. With the agreement by members that two storey building at the rear is acceptable in principle, then a two storey at the front would make a positive visually impact in the street scene and provide a better design solution when assessed looking directly at the front elevation.

In line with the future objectives to seek developer contribution from the developers in accordance with Section 25 of the Ordinance that would contribute towards the delivery/implementation of the future infrastructure requirement for the Island, this has been discussed with the applicant and he has agreed in principle that he would be willing to enter into an agreement with the Government in respect of this development and make contribution as per future policy direction.

Should the Members of the Board be minded to approve this development application and recommend to the Governor in Council to Grant Development permission, then the details of the Developer Contribution can be discussed in the Close Section of the Agenda. The reason for this is that at present this is a voluntary agreement whilst the full policy and details on the level of contribution per residential unit are still being prepared and agreed.

In view of the lengthy deliberations at the previous meetings and the site visit by the Member, the development proposal is assessed against Policy BH 4 of the LDCP and this is considered to be the important point for discussion. The critical question is whether refurbishment and/or redevelopment of these buildings, and in particular given that the Grade 111 listed building on the main frontage is in being retained and refurbished, although with an additional floor on top, the financially viable is a material consideration and the volume of development that is required to enable the site developed in order to provide suitable living accommodation and provide a level of return on the cost for the developer.

As previously discussed that it is regrettable that given the physical and structural state of the buildings and their layout, it is would be difficult to retain and refurbish them and bring them back into suitable living accommodation that would also be financially and economically viable. Whilst the issues raised on behalf the Heritage Society and now also by Saint Helena National Trust are relevant, however, the reality is that from time to time buildings and structures in the historic environment will become difficult to repair, refurbish and preserve because they are not usable in the present time and that they become derelict and obsolete and difficult to maintain. In view if this, difficult decisions need to be made. Such buildings and structures of heritage interest and value have to remain in active use and to be viable. Demolition of the buildings at the rear and partial demolition of the rear part of the main frontage building to provide redevelopment of this site is considered to be acceptable.

In the absence of a conservation area management and any design guidance, the proposed layout, design, scale, mass and height of the new development in the context of the area and material availability on the Island and its remote location, the proposal is in keeping with the historic character of the Jamestown Conservation Area.

The proposed development is currently linked to the existing sewage system, however the future development will increase level of sewage discharge from the development that will impact current sewage capacity in the area. As regards to the comments from Connect, the applicant will be required to provide details as to the impact of the proposed development and the future capacity of occupiers to ensure that will not have adverse impact on the sewage capacity in the area. The development permission will also include an advisory restricting the occupation of all the residential units if it is found that the future sewage increase arising from the development impact the sewage capacity and Connect do give tits consent.