

No: 2/2020

Memorandum for Executive Council

SUBJECT

Development Application - Proposed Coffee Picker Eco-Lodges, Water Storage Ponds, Container Storage Shelter & Pump House for Hunt's Vale Coffee Estate Development

Memorandum by the Chief Secretary

ADVICE SOUGHT

1. **Executive Council is asked to consider and advise whether Full Development Permission should be granted, with Conditions, for Coffee Picker Eco-Lodges, water storage ponds, container storage shelter & pump house for Hunt's Vale Coffee Estate Development as recommended by the Land Development Control Authority (LDCA).**

BACKGROUND & CONSIDERATIONS

2. At the Land Development Control Authority meeting held on 4 December 2019, it was recommended that FULL Development Permission be granted for Coffee Picker Eco-Lodges, water storage ponds, container storage shelter & pump house for Hunt's Vale Coffee Estate Development, subject to conditions as set out in Section E of the report in Annex A and the Decision Letter in Annex B.
3. In accordance with the directions issued by the Governor in Council to the Chief Planning Officer on 14 April 2014 under Section 23(1) of the Land Planning and Development Control (LPDC) Ordinance, 2013, the Chief Planning Officer is required to refer to the Governor-in-Council all applications for Development Permission which proposes the development of a site (or a group of two or more sites in the same vicinity) which exceed (or exceed in aggregate) five acres in area.
4. A copy of the directions is attached at Annex C for easy reference.
5. **Section 17 (a)** of the LPDC Ordinance reads:

A grant of Development Permission may be of either of the following types:–

- a) Outline Development Permission - the effect of which is to give **Approval in Principle** to the proposed development which is the subject of an application, but

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Full Development Permission - the effect of which is to permit the development, subject of the terms and conditions of the grant of Full Development Permission.

6. The following are the relevant Primary Policy clauses from the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP) against which the proposed development application is assessed:

a) The Green Heartland

- Natural ecology and tourism-related development... GH.2 (a & b)
- Form, scale, proportion and external materials follows traditional buildings and construction methods of the area, and no change to existing ground levels of 3m or more... GH.3 (a, b & c) Development related to commercial agriculture... GH.4 (a)
- Development concealed or blend into the landscape... GH.5
- Protecting and promoting established footpaths... GH.6

b) Agriculture and Forestry

- Expansion of agricultural production... AF.1

c) Employment Premises

- Business premises sufficient to meet the development needs of the Island... EP.1

d) Tourism

- Development to enable and encourage sustainable tourism sufficient to drive the economic development of the Island... T.1 & T.2

e) Water Supplies

- Construction of storage facilities... W.1 & W.2

f) Sewerage and Storm Drainage

- Septic tank construction... SD.4

7. RATIONALE BEHIND THE PROPOSAL

- a) The proposed development forms part of an eco-friendly Coffee Farm within the Green Heartland on the property known as Hunt's Vale. The proposal seeks to develop Hunt's Vale into a coffee estate with all the amenities needed for a successful business to help enhance St Helena's coffee and tourism industry. Special care and effort has been made to ensure that the whole development is as eco-friendly as possible and contributing towards a zero-carbon emission setup.
- b) The development will include two coffee picker Eco-Lodges one containerised processing and storage facility, two water storage ponds and a pump house. Building Footprint of the proposed development is as follows:

Eco Lodge 1	344m ²
Eco Lodge 2	276m ²
Pump House	10.7m ²
Container storage shelter	208m ²
TOTAL:	838.7m²
Plot Coverage	0.8% *

** This represent the built area of all the site subject of the development covered by this application*

- c) The Sustainable Economic Development Plan (SEDP) for St Helena sets out the strategic vision for the Island to 'achieve development which is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable by increasing standards of living and quality of life; not relying on aid payments from the UK in the longer term; whilst affording to maintain the Island's infrastructure; achieve more money coming into St Helena than going out and sustain and improve Helena's natural resources for this generation and the next.'
- d) To achieve this vision, the SEDP sets a goal to improve infrastructure by 'using tax revenue and other funding streams for investments to improve health, education, water, electricity, transport, risk management and other infrastructure'.
- e) The development and investment in the local economy is important to the economic prosperity of the Island and the development of coffee growing is an important sector. The coffee growing and related tourism development falls within the vision of the SEDP and 10-Year Plan and the ongoing programme for encouraging future investment in this sector will create employment opportunities and development of skills for the local people.

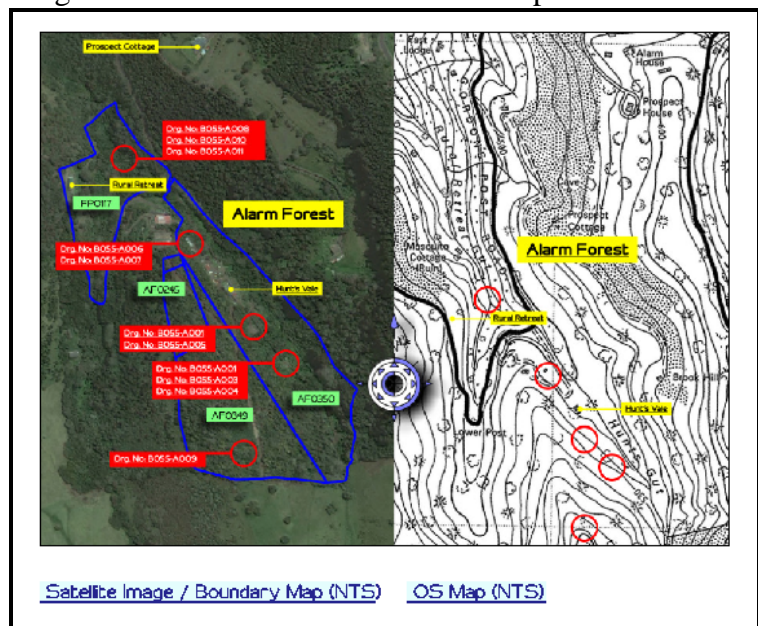
8. BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION AND REPORTS

Prior to the submission of the development application, there was discussion with the applicant in respect of the proposal seeking advice on the document required in support of the development. The applicant revised the details of the proposed scheme and submitted additional documents as requested to be able to assess the full impact of the proposed development.

9. DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

- a) The development application site is located in the Francis Plain and Alarm Forest area of the Island. It is within the property known as Hunt's Vale and Rural Retreat. The boundary which makes up the property at Hunt's Vale and Rural Retreat consists of four parcels, FP0117, AF0245, AF0349 and AF0350. In total, this equates to 26.84 acres (108,618m²). In respect of this application, 1.26 acres will be developable land, and 25.58 acres will be undevelopable with as much as possible used to grow coffee.

Diagram 1: Road Access into the Development



- b) **Zone Restrictions:** The proposed Hunt's Vale Coffee Estate is situated in the Green Heartland Zone with restrictions on built

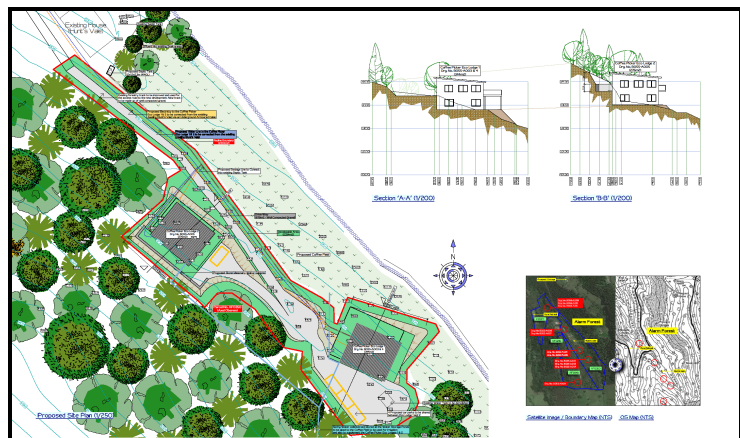
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development in general, controlled extensions to existing buildings and other forms of development which do not involve built structures which will be judged on individual merit with the aim of preserving the Green Heartland. Due to the nature of the proposal, the site will encompass commercial agriculture with water storage facilities, tourism related development and employment opportunities, and therefore much of the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP) Policies will apply.

- c) **Site:** The layout of the entire proposal is largely dictated by the natural topography of the Hunt's Vale Estate. The proposed development has been designed to ensure that as few trees as possible would be removed or affected, existing scrub be cleared and the proposed development would be situated with considerable care for the land in order to conceal it within the setting and avoid visual intrusion from within the National Park and from the surrounding areas. This complies with LDCP Green Heartland policy. The elements of the development include:
- d) **Eco Lodges:** The position of the Coffee Picker Eco Lodges are situated to best utilise the existing slope of the land to minimise excavation and site works. The buildings will be two story, three bedroom accommodation units and measuring 16 x 14m and 13.5 x 11.5m including the deck and will be completed in phase two. The roofs will be of a mono-pitched design which will face northward to allow the roof mounted photovoltaic system to work most efficiently. The height of the building at the rear will be 3.6m and 5.8m in the front.

Diagram 2: Site Plan (ECO-Lodges 1 & 2)



- e) **Pump House & Water Storage Ponds 1 & 2:** The Pump House position on site is as close as possible to the water storage pond from which it will draw its water feed. The second water storage pond will be situated at the Southern side of Hunt's Vale Estate. The proposed pond locations on site creates the

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best position for harvesting and storing of the now wasted water. The proposed Pump House will be a small building, measuring 3.3 x 3.3m with a north facing mono-pitched roof. Height: 3.4m at the rear and 2.8m at the front. This building will provide protection for the water turbine (pump) which will be used to pump the stored water from the lower water storage pond to the upper pond. Power to the Pump House will come via an underground armoured cable, which will be connected to the electricity supply at Hunt's Vale.

Diagram 3: Site Plan (Pump House)

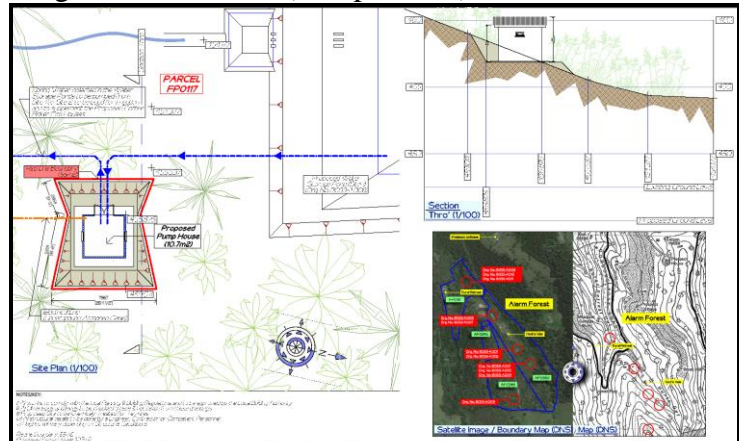


Diagram 4: Plan (Water storage pond 1)

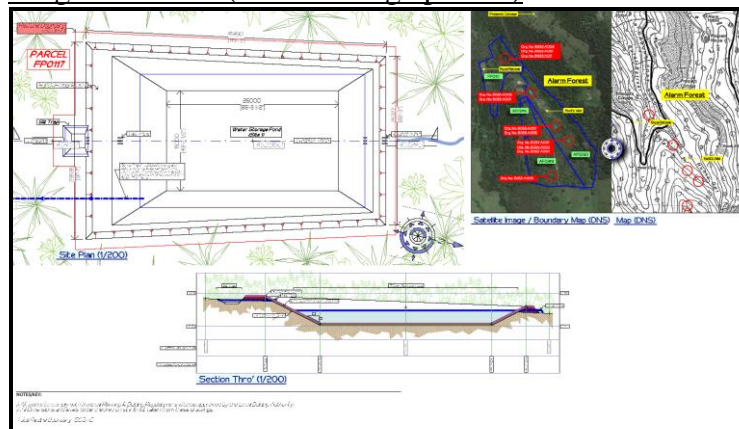
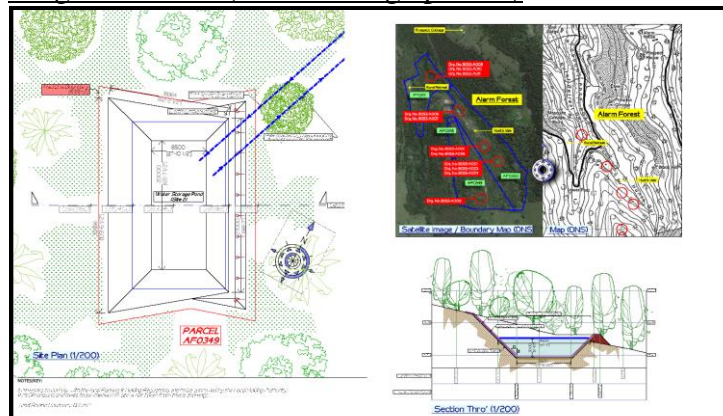


Diagram 5: Plan (Water storage pond 2)



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- f) Container Storage Shelter: The position of the Container Storage Shelter on site best utilises the land that had already been excavated some years earlier by the previous owner. This site is enclosed by trees on three sides and thus creates an area of concealment. A suitable access already exists to this site and minimal site works are required. The scale of the buildings and the location in relation to the Coffee Farm are ideally suited. The proposed Containerized Storage and Processing Shelter will form Phase 1 of the development.
- g) This structure will consist of three 20 foot containers, and one 40 foot container. All containers will be Grey in colour, to comply with the Ordinance for containers on St. Helena on an industrial site. The containers will be protected by a steel framework shelter. The building will also have a mono-pitched roof and will contain a PhotoVoltaic setup to assist with the generating of energy for the Estate. The footprint of the building is 21.3 x 9.7m. The height will be 4.5m at the north east elevation and 3.1m on the south west elevation. The proposed roof covered workspace is imperative to the successful operation of the day to day coffee production under dry conditions.
- h) The shelter will be enclosed by trees on three sides and thus create an area of concealment for the containers and the steel structure. The containers are required to keep the produce and equipment air tight, free from vermin or contamination. The rest of the covered workspace is for every day production and work on farming and coffee appliances.

Diagram 6: Site Plan (Container storage shelter)

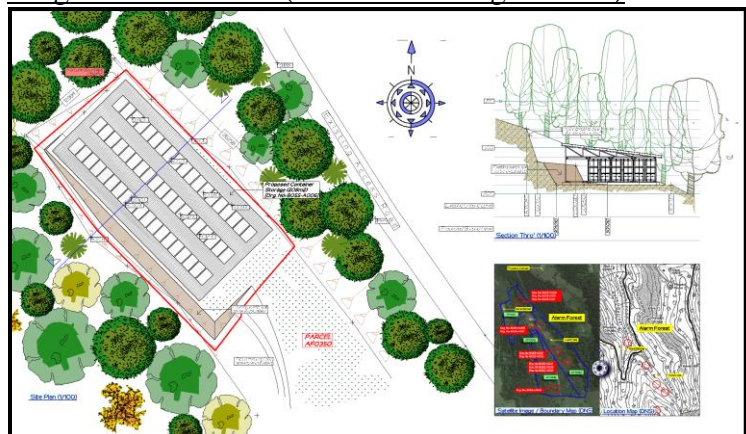
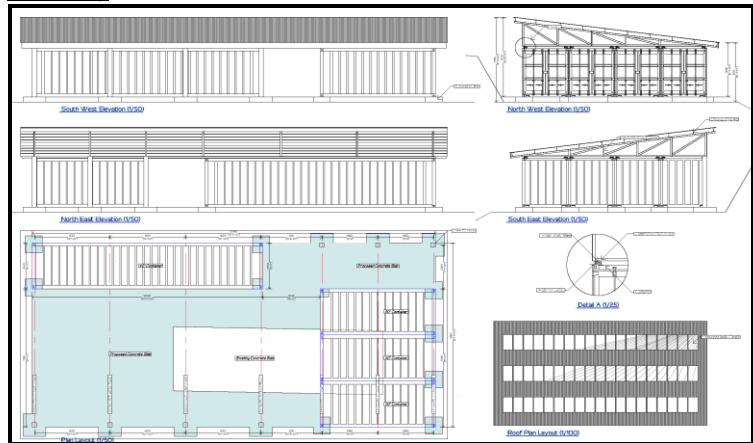


Diagram 7: Building Plan & Elevations (Container Storage Shelter)



- i) The proposed entire development will become part of an eco-friendly Coffee Farm, with an endeavour that all structures be part of a Zero Carbon Emission Energy Management Plan. Where possible, the development will focus on sustainable energy; mainly solar. Presently about 3,500 coffee seedlings have been cultured (*Applicant's Design and Access Statement*), 10,000 are proposed to be transplanted. This level of proposed agricultural development creates a viable and profitable business with a specialist export market and subsequently generates employment and increased revenue for St. Helena.

10. REPRESENTATION

An Objection to this proposed development was received from Andrew Pearce on 2nd August 2019, stating that the current proposal leaves many questions unanswered and should not be permitted as it stands.

The objector's concerns includes:

- Insufficient information, requests overall site plan showing entire development,
- The container storage shelter exceeds 50m² and the 2m height contrary to policies,
- The use of Eco-Lodges accommodation for coffee pickers and non-compliance with policy,
- How the development will be hidden from view and designed to fit in the landscape,
- Concerns over the visibility of the solar panels,
- Concerns over the Eco-Lodge designs.

11. OFFICER ASSESSMENT:

The response to the issues is as follows:

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- There are individual site plans for each element of the proposed development and referenced to the location plan and it is possible to visualise and assess the entire site with all its different developments.
- The container storage shelter sits below the 550m contour line and is thus in compliance with the policy.
- The Eco-Lodges will be used solely and continuously for tourist use and that additional accommodation will be sought for coffee pickers during the picking season.
- The details provided show that considerable effort has been made to position the different structures among the trees and make best use of the topography to ensure concealment.
- The proposed development makes the best use of the existing land with the minimum of excavation and to create the maximum roof surface for the solar panel system. The basic design and features for such building raises no design issues.

12. CONCLUSION

- a) The proposed development makes best use of the land and its topography to keep excavation to a minimum. The development also pays considerable care and attention to the location and individual sites to ensure there is minimal tree removal and to the use of existing trees and vegetation to conceal the development required for the operation of the coffee estate.
- b) Special care has been taken and effort made to ensure that the whole development is as Eco-Friendly as possible and the development “a Zero Carbon Emission”. The recycling of the spring water on site ensures that the Coffee Estate does not put additional load on St Helena’s domestic water resources for irrigation. With the use of photovoltaic panels, solar energy will drive the water pumps on site and other appliances used in the coffee processing plant. Excess stored energy will be converted into electricity, e.g. for lights at night or charging of electric vehicles and appliances, resulting in minimal use of the domestic electricity supply.
- c) With the economic and environment vision that the Island has and with the potential to develop and grow a sustainable economy, it is imperative that developments such as this be supported. Whilst this development involves built structures in the Green Heartland, the carefully balanced approach to the development has ensured that it meets with LDCP Policies as highlighted throughout this report.

d) Development of the Island is paramount if it is to meet its

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primary objective of becoming economically independent and therefore development proposals such as these can deliver significant benefits and contribute to the economic growth and prosperity that the wider Island community can also benefit from.

- e) The development application report was considered by the LDCA at their meeting in December 2019 and it was agreed to recommend to the Governor in Council to grant Full development permission, subject to number of conditions. The report to LDCA is attached as Annex B to this Memorandum.
- f) In view of the process that has been followed to ensure the development proposal is considered in light of all the available information, the LDCA recommends to the Governor-in-Council to grant Full Development Permission with a number of conditions, as set out Section E of the LDCA report for 5 December 2019, attached as Annex C to this Memorandum. It should be noted that this development falls within the Green Heartland Zone and the development relates to agricultural and forestry activity development of tourism and can be supported in terms of siting, scale, layout, proportion, details and external materials and supports the delivery of a number of goals within the SEDP and can therefore be allowed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13. Executive Council acts as the Planning Authority in considering this Memorandum.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

- 14. Coffee expansion is key to increasing exports and generating income for St Helena. Currently St Helena coffee is of high regard, fetching relatively high prices and accounting for around one third of St Helena's goods exports. Demand outstrips supply for St Helena coffee and therefore all endeavors should be used to support the expansion of quality coffee production.
- 15. The delivery and implementation of the development will promote growth in the construction sector and will contribute towards economic growth and prosperity. The construction sector faced some downturn after the Airport Project came to a close, and therefore this will be a boost to the sector, improving employment and reducing those claiming Income Related Benefits.
- 16. The development will also stimulate collection of Government revenues to some extent through the sale of plots, stamp duty and import duties related to house building, as well as corporation tax income related to profits on the estate.

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**CONSISTENCY
WITH
INVESTMENT
POLICY
PRINCIPLES**

17. The development and delivery of the development is in compliance with the Investment Policy Principles. The implementation of the development will deliver create training and employment opportunities and has potential for further economic growth on the Island with the tourist and visitors.

The following Investment Policy principles apply:-

1. Make St Helena a desirable and competitive destination to do business by removing barriers to investment
2. Support an economy which is accessible to all potential investors and promote investments across the economy
3. Support the locally based private sector to compete in an open economy but, where possible, avoid being overly protective
4. Promote fair, consistent and transparent decision making.

**PUBLIC / SOCIAL
IMPACT**

18. The investment arising from this development will create training and employment opportunities in the coffee farming and tourism industry on the Island, particularly as this is an area of economic activity that is seen as having a considerable impact in the future. The development is also eco-friendly that will utilise the nature environment, therefore reducing levels of carbon emission. The comprehensive approach to development will also improve the quality of development and contribute to wider visual enhancement in the landscape.

**ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT**

19. The development is utilising an area of the Island that provides best conditions for coffee growing and is designed to have the environmental benefits and reduce adverse impact. The development will use the environmental conditions for development both in terms of energy need through the use of photovoltaic panels and creating resources for water collection to meet the needs of the coffee plantation. Whilst there is likely to be some adverse visual/landscape impact on the environment, this is not considered to be significant when balanced with the economic benefits arising from the development. The development will create a positive impact on the landscape in terms of how it is designed to make the best use of the area and the landscape terrain available for development and minimise any adverse impact.

PREVIOUS

20. The preparation of the Land Development Control Plan was

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**CONSULTATION /
COMMITTEE
INPUT**

subject to community and stakeholder consultation and the area of the Green Heartland was identified for development related to commercial agriculture and forestry and accommodation related to the tourism industry and visitors to the Island. In the preparation of the development application, the applicant undertook some consultation with the stakeholder (Enterprise Saint Helena, Connect) but there was no wider community consultation undertaken.

PUBLIC REACTION

21. The development application was subject to public consultations required by the Ordinance. There were no issues raised by the stakeholders, however there was one representation received from a member of the public and this has been assessed in Section 11 of this report.

PUBLICITY

22. The decision will be covered in the media briefing following the Executive Council Meeting.

**SUPPORT TO
STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVES**

23. This paper supports the *Altogether Wealthier* goal and Strategic Objective 3.1 *Ensure sustainable economic development*

**LINK TO
SUSTAINABLE
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN GOALS**

24. The approval will support goal 1 of the SEDP, to increase Exports. The development will also help to achieve goals 4, 7 and 8 of the SEDP. Goal 5 of the SEDP is to Improve Land Productivity, Goal 7 is to improve infrastructure and Goal 8 of the SEDP is to develop, maintain and attract a skilled workforce. Bringing forward land for development will stimulate the construction industry and make more productive use of grazing land.

**OPEN /CLOSED
AGENDA ITEM**

25. Recommended for the Open Agenda.

SOB

Corporate Support
Corporate Services

03rd January 2020

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