

## Planning Officer's Report – LDCA NOVEMBER 2020

<b>APPLICATION</b>	<b>2020/53</b> – Construction of a Double Storey, Two Bedroom Dwelling
<b>PERMISSION SOUGHT</b>	Permission in <b>Full</b>
<b>REGISTERED</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2020
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Dianne & James Venning
<b>PARCEL</b>	SCOT0628, SCOT0629, SCOT0633
<b>LOCALITY</b>	Nr Coleman's Tower, Sapperway
<b>ZONE</b>	Intermediate
<b>CONSERVATION AREA</b>	None
<b>CURRENT USE</b>	Vacant
<b>PUBLICITY</b>	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sentinel Newspaper on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020</li><li>▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.</li></ul>
<b>EXPIRY</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
<b>REPRESENTATIONS</b>	One received
<b>DECISION ROUTE</b>	<del>Delegated</del> / <b>LDCA</b> / <del>EXCO</del>

### A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Sewage & Water Division | No Objection   |
| 2. Energy Division         | No Objection – Application required for electricity.   |
| 3. Fire & Rescue           | No Response  |
| 4. Roads Section           | No Objection   |
| 5. Property Division       | No Objection – We support this application, based on the fact the land was excised from National Forest Estate to Crown Estates Management for the disposal, this area was assessed as it is within the Intermediate Zone so therefore was deemed acceptable for |

	residential use.
6. Environmental Management	No Response
7. Public Health	No Response
8. Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
9. St Helena Police Services	Not Consulted
10. Aerodrome Safe Guarding	Not Consulted
11. Enterprise St Helena (ESH)	No Objection
12. National Trust	No Response
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Objection
14. Heritage Society	Objection - Comments

## B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

### LOCALITY & ZONING

The application site is located near Coleman's Tower, Sapperway. The plots are designated within the Intermediate Zone and has no Conservation area restrictions.

#### Diagram 1: Location Plan



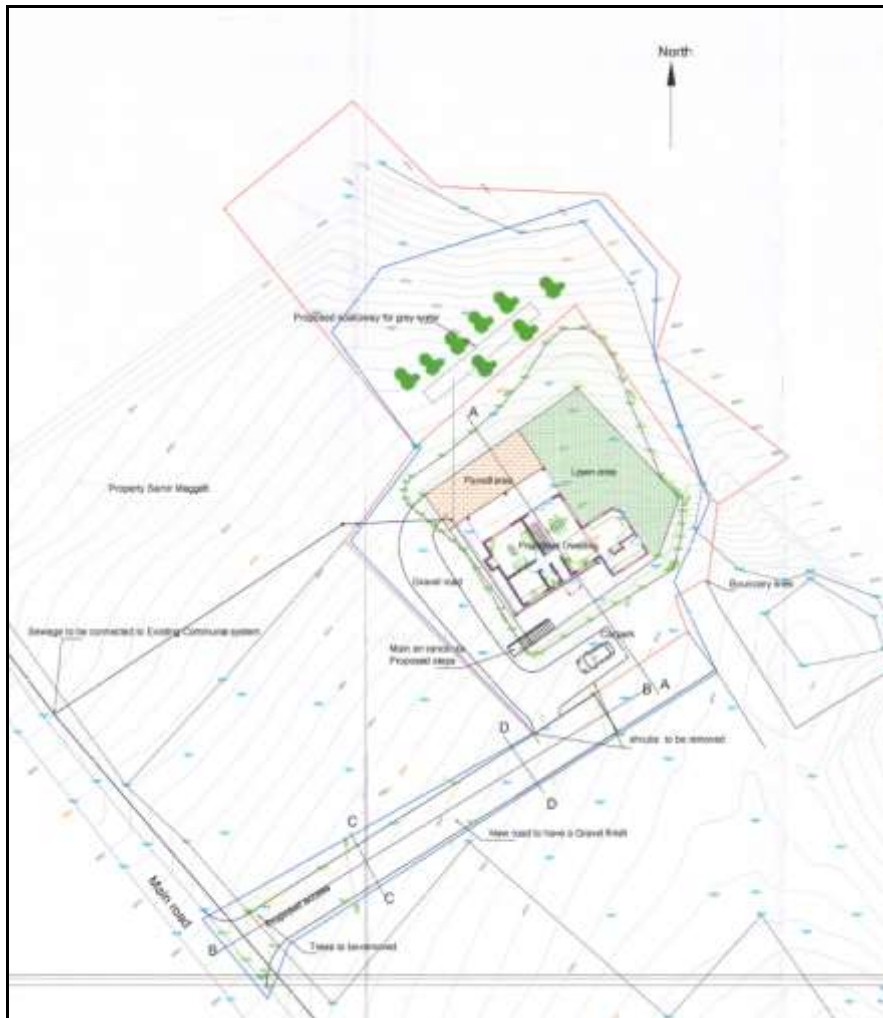
### THE PROPOSAL

The request is to form a service road from the main road from Sapper Way towards the vicinity of the development site, where it will be constructed to serve this development as well as the plot demarcated to the south. A footpath already exists

through this section of land, where it used primarily by GIS surveyors and the public, albeit being quite overgrown. This road will measure approximately 44m in length with a width of 4.2m, where it will be of a gravel finish. There will inevitably be some loss of trees as a result of forming the road.

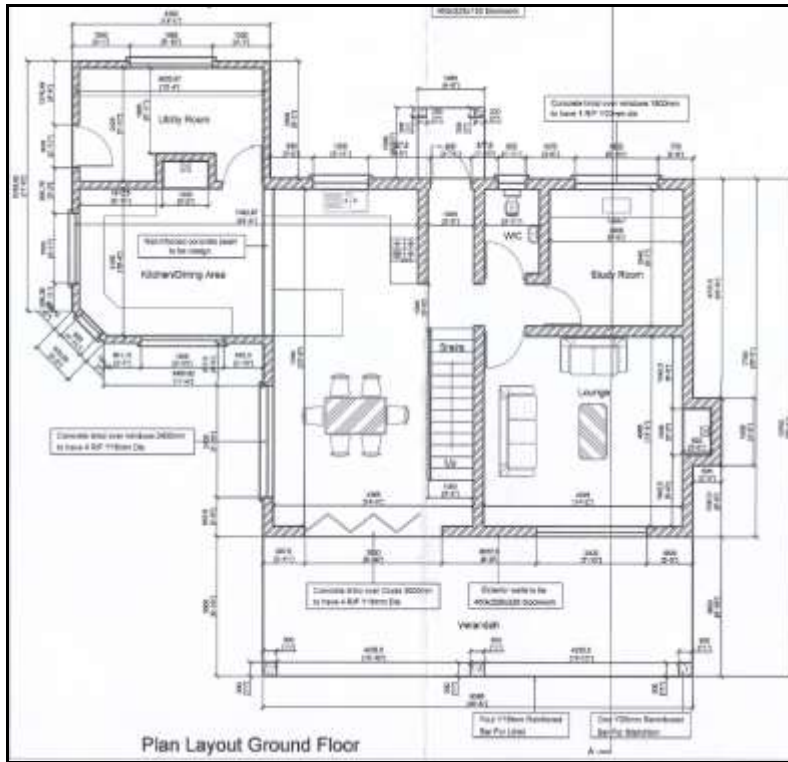
Once access has been established, the proposal is to cut access down onto the site, where a level platform is to be created for the dwelling. The platform will measure approximately 20m x 18m at its widest point, resulting in an embankment created of 3.5m at the centre of the site. The steepest section of the embankment will measure 4 – 4.5m on the south eastern corner, due to the natural slope on this side of the plot. The house will be constructed on the western side of the site platform.

**Diagram 2: Site Plan**

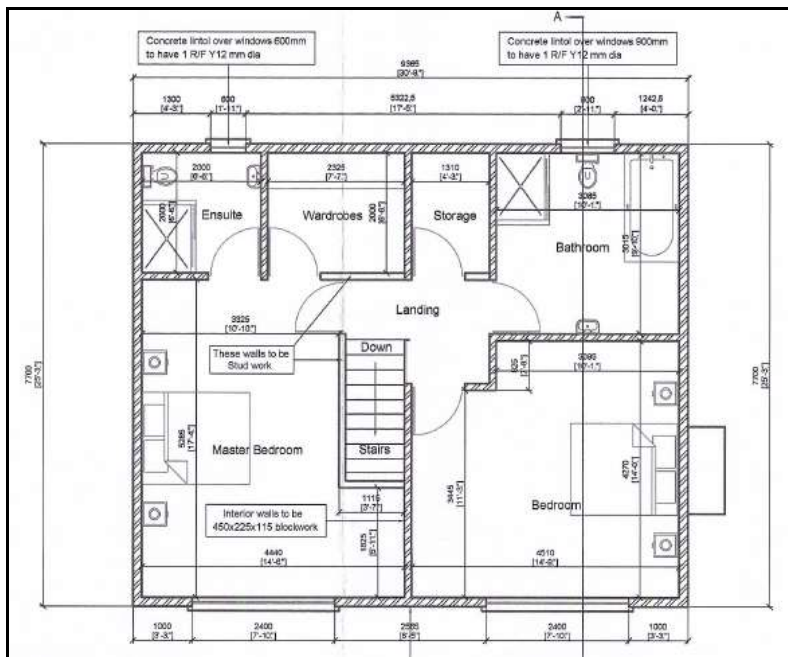


The floor layout will comprise a kitchen and dining area, utility room, study room, lounge, water closet and open verandah on the ground floor. First floor will consist of a shared bathroom, storage room, closet, bedroom and master bedroom with en-suite.

**Diagram 3: Layout Ground Floor**



**Diagram 4: Layout First Floor**



The external walls will be of rendered blockwork and the roof coverings, IBR sheeting. The roof will be of a hip design on second storey, mono-pitched on the utility room and pitched for the porch. Sewage will be connected into the existing communal system and grey water to a proposed soakaway. Electricity and water infrastructure exists in the area and can be connected to.

#### Diagram 4: Elevations



#### REPRESENTATION

One representation was received from the Heritage Society for this application and the issues raised are summarised below:

- concerned that the applicant has been encouraged to pursue this development and that before the Crown Estate advertised this and the adjacent plots for sale as housing land it should have taken advice as the site is in close proximity to Coleman's Tower which is a legally protected listed monument and this tower has the same legal protection as Rupert's Lines;
- sites are in close proximity to the tower and that they impinge upon the setting of the monument and are certain to adversely affect it and proposal will dominate or at least vie with Coleman's Tower from any of the extensive distant viewpoints and in view of this it should be refused by virtue of LDCP Built Heritage policies, in particular policy BH6;
- on either side of the tower, stone walls exist on the cliff face which are described in the Draft Historic Environment Record as associated pathways to the tower and these form part of the context of Coleman's Tower and therefore its setting;
- tower's position on the cliff face and the open land behind are also part of the setting of this prominent hilltop monument;
- Coleman's Tower is part of a defence system that included High Knoll although it is considerably older than the main surrounding wall;
- very little is known of this site as its historical importance has not been fully explored;
- at the to be protection as this form part of a fresh water channel serving New Ground House and Kent Cottage that originated near Plantation Stables;
- this site is part of a larger development and the other plot will also have a damaging effect on the tower and in the Intermediate Zone this is the only place on the whole island that is next to a listed monument;
- drawings indicate an excavation of 4.5m which conflicts with the 3m limit in LDCP Intermediate Zone policy IZ1(f);
- Crown Estate should find another suitable plot for this applicant and abandon housing development on these sites and that Crown Estate should actively

preserve this monument in its setting in accordance with the St Helena Island Ten Year Plan under Altogether Greener.'

### **BACKGROUND & PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE**

Parcels SCOT0627, SCOT0628, SCOT0629 and SCOT0631 have been excised from National Forest Estate back to Crown Estates for residential purposes by Executive Council. Prior to submission of this application, a site visit was carried out by the Planning Officers as a result of draft plans being submitted by the developer. From the site visit, it was concluded that parcels SCOT0628, SCOT0629 and SCOT0631 may not be suitable for housing development for the following reasons:

- proximity of the development to Coleman's Tower, which might adversely impact the setting of the Tower.
- number of trees to be lost as a result of the proposed development
- ribbon Development - Development would interfere with continuity of single development on this particular side of the main road; more than two dwelling on the eastern side of the road.

These was addressed to the developer on a second site visit by the Planning Officers. As the applicant still wanted to proceed with the submission of the application, some changes to the design and additional information requested. A design and access statement was recommended to accompany the application as a result of the concerns raised and how they would be addressed.

### **POLICY CONSIDERATION**

The proposed development is assessed against the LDCP Policies set out below:

- Intermediate Zone: Policies IZ1 (a, b, f, g and h)
- Housing: Policy H9
- Water: Policy W2
- Sewage, storm and Drainage: Policies SD1 (b, c), SD3, SD.4 and SD7
- Road and Transport: Policies RT1 (c and d), RT3 and RT7
- Built Heritage: Policies BH1 a, b, BH6

### **OFFICERS ASSESSMENT**

Taking into consideration the existing site condition, the land is currently vacant forested land, which is owned by Crown Estates. The area consists of mature trees and vegetation, where there is an existing footpath leading to Coleman's Tower. This plot in particular consists of vegetation with one or two diseased trees. In comparison to the surrounding plots, this plot has the least amount of vegetation and trees present.

**Diagram 5: Coleman’s Tower – North of Development Site**



The concept design of the development includes dark grey coloured slate roof along with an external scheme similar to neighbouring property being of stone cladding. The applicant has indicated within the design access statement that this is intended to reduce the overall visual impact of the building from key vantage points, such as High Knoll Fort.

The development when viewed from White Wall could be argued to be more prominent than from High Knoll. However the external scheme softens the impact in relation to the existing development along the ridge. Although the neighbouring property to the south is further away, due to its external finish it is much more conspicuous, when compared to the proposal. With some soft landscaping scheme, this could be further mitigated.

From New Ground Point, this is one of the closest viewpoints of Coleman’s Tower. The Tower is propped on the curvature of the skyline. The development would be visible, albeit a section of the second floor due to its two storey design. The impact would be minimal.

***Built Heritage Policy BH1 a)*** ‘Development which encourages, supports and includes conservation of historic structures and their setting, including listed buildings, monuments and fortifications and related artifacts, will be permitted with appropriate requirements, including planning gain, to secure such conservation.’

**Built Heritage Policy BH.6** *'Historic monuments and other identified nationally important archaeological resources shall be preserved in situ, and within an appropriate setting. Developments which have an adverse effect on historic monuments or the integrity of their setting will not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances and appropriate mitigation measures put in place ...'*

The design and access statement demonstrates the applicants understanding towards the significance and historical value towards conserving the structure and its immediate surroundings. The intention is to retain the existing hillside, which currently forms part of the cliff face towards the Tower, which as stated by the representation forms part of the original footpath alongside the Tower, where it will form of weather protection for the property. In terms of viewing the property from High Knoll Fort it is envisaged that by leaving the hillside untouched, this will minimise the visual impact of the development. Nevertheless it was requested that a concept should be submitted to provide to show how the development would be viewed from High Knoll, White Wall and New Ground Point.

The issue to consider is whether this development adversely affect the historic monument or the integrity of its setting.

Coleman's Tower as shown in Diagram 5 is a Grade III Listed Monument, stipulated in the Crallen Report. The potential impact of the proposed development on the Tower and its setting was one of the main planning concerns. When considering the setting of any heritage asset, one must consider how it is experienced the visitors as well as the elements, which contributes to its setting. The extent of the setting is not designated and can change as the surroundings evolve.

It is clear from the concept drawings submitted that the proposed development will have an impact on the setting of the Tower; both from afar and within its vicinity. Currently, the Tower is hidden in Sapper Way, where trees and vegetation shield the structure from the main road. The applicant's vision is to create a tunnel effect from the main road, with an uninterrupted view onto the Tower. Planting of shrubs along the service road has also been proposed.

Having undertaken a site visit, it is clear without prior knowledge, one might not realise how to access the area or even the existence of the Tower. It mentions within the LDCP that the historic built environment is critical to the success of tourism growth and there is a potential for Coleman's Tower to become an attraction due to its prominent position and outlook over Half Tree Hollow. However there does not seem to be anything in place notifying the public of this structure. The applicant has proposed to encourage tourists and local community of the Tower by erecting an information/interpretation board at the foot of the access road. Furthermore it will



allow for better access for maintenance and repair works for the Tower in future. It is considered that there will not be a drastic change to the setting to the monument, with the appropriate mitigation measures mentioned above and with a potential gain for the local community and tourist with improved visible access arising from the development.

In terms of the siting of the proposal, this development will coincide with existing street pattern of the area; facing north and of a similar building footprint. The majority of the development with exception to one development on this side of the street, consists of cut and fill operation to achieve the site platform. The embankment will generally measure between 3 – 3.5m with exception to the eastern corner, which will be at 4 – 4.5m in height. This is due to the existing topography of the land on this side of the site. There are no sites that are fixed at one level, and most the sites will vary in steepness in a particular corner. The only merit to the cut and filling of the land is the lowered level the dwelling will have, therefore making the building less conspicuous. Nevertheless this is being flexible with the IZ1 f) policy. With regards to the scale and details of the proposal, the building shares similar characteristics to properties to the south, such as features, roof design and materials to be used.

Overall the development of the area will change the street scene and setting of a listed monument. This is a sensitive development within close proximity to the listed tower, whereby members need to consider if the gain of allowing development will benefit the monument, and whether the appropriate mitigation are considered to be sufficient to overcome the potential detrimental impact on the setting of the listed monument. It is considered that these measures may be acceptable with further details to be submitted as part of the conditions before development can proceed.