

## Planning Officer's Report – LDCA MARCH 2021

<b>APPLICATION</b>	<b>2020/89</b> – Construction of a Double Storey, One Bedroom Dwelling
<b>PERMISSION SOUGHT</b>	Permission in <b>Full</b>
<b>REGISTERED</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2020
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Sylvia Voce
<b>PARCEL</b>	SCOT0631
<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>▪ Independent Newspaper on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020</li><li>▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.</li></ul>
<b>EXPIRY</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> November 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 proposed development is from a service road from the main road, Sapper Way that will run towards the vicinity of the development site and will be constructed to

serve this development and development previously approved on the plot to the north of this site. 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.

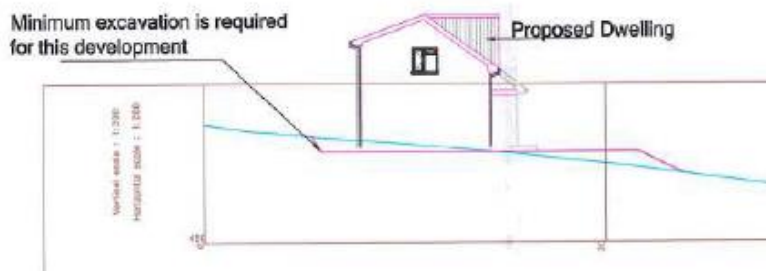
Once access has been established, the proposal is to cut access down onto the site, where a level platform will be created for the construction of the dwelling. The platform will measure approximately 22m by 20m at its widest points, resulting in a shallow embankment of less than 1m at the centre of the site.

The one-bedroom house will be constructed almost central to the site and just south of the centre to the site platform. There are car parking spaces to the west of the house and forms part of the landscaping on the front of the building.

**Diagram 2: Site Plan**

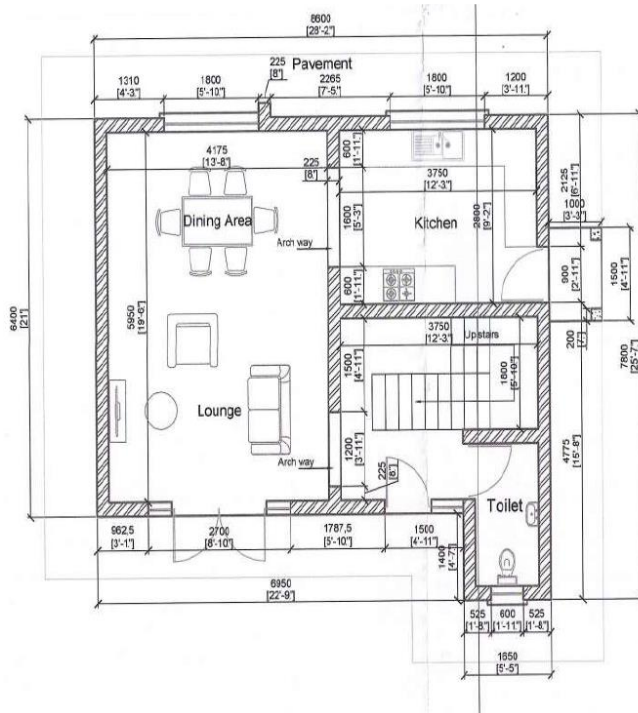


**Diagram 2: Section Through**

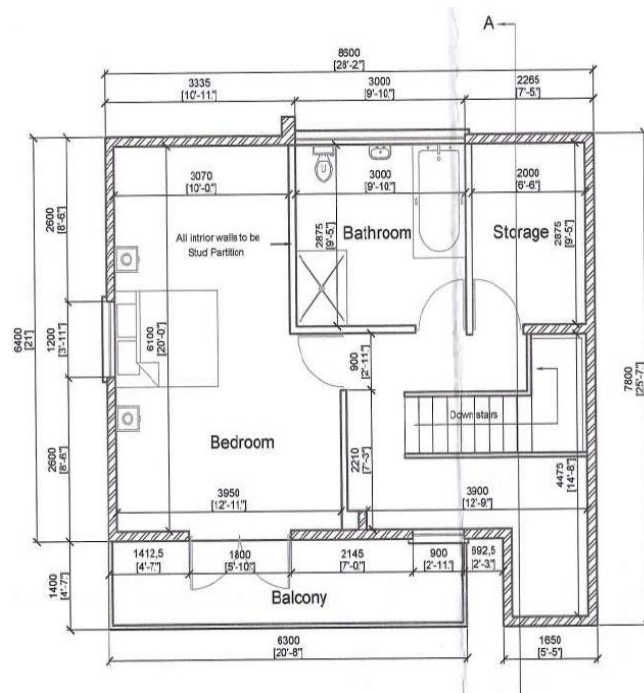


The development floor area is around 67sqm including the verandah area. The ground floor layout will comprise a kitchen and dining/lounge area and toilet and open verandah to the ground floor. First floor will consist of the bedroom, bathroom and storage room with a balcony on the front elevation from the bedroom. As this a one and half storey house with the front partially into the roof with dormer windows. The rear will appear as two storey building with a smaller roof area.

**Diagram 3: Layout Ground Floor**

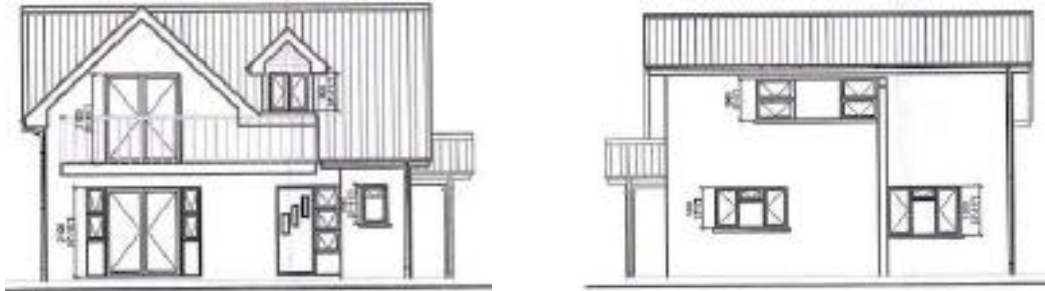


**Diagram 4: Layout First Floor**



The external walls will be of rendered blockwork and the roof coverings, IBR sheeting. The roof will be of a hip design with dormer windows and gabled on the side elevations. 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. The colour of the external finish (walls and roof) have not been indicated on the drawings, however this can be conditioned, should the proposed development be considered to be acceptable in this location.

#### Diagram 4 and 5: Front and Rear Elevations



#### Diagram 6 and 7: Side Elevations



### REPRESENTATION

Representation has been received from the Heritage Society in respect of this development application and the issues raised are similar to those raised in respect of the development application reference 2020/53 as the concerns are that:

- proposed development will adversely affect the setting of the Grade III Listed Monument of Coleman's Tower, and as such, according to policy BH6, neither application should be permitted;
- setting of the monument has not been agreed and until the character of the setting has been agreed neither application can be methodically assessed;
- officer report for the first application (2020/53) recognised that policy BH6 was relevant and also noted that "The potential impact of the proposed development on the Tower and its setting was one of the main planning concerns" and that, "The proposed development will have an impact on the setting of the Tower; both from afar and within its vicinity";
- both application likely to have same impact on the Monument's setting and both applications should have been dealt together as part of the "duty to promote orderly development of land" and unfortunately this has not happened and by

- separately approving the previous application, the LDCA seems to have in effect predetermined this application before the public consultation period ended; and
- LDCA appears to have changed the circumstances of this application while the consultation period was ongoing.

Issues raised in the previous representation included:

- Crown Estate should have taken advice before promoting the sale of these plots as housing land due to their close proximity to Coleman's Tower, a protected listed monument which has same protection as Rupert's Lines;
- sites impinges 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 site entrance on Sapper Way there is surviving section of the Chinese Drain that needs to be protected as this form part of a fresh water channel serving New Ground House and Kent Cottage that originated near Plantation Stables;
- 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;
- 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 to advise the applicant and a draft plans was submitted by the applicant. From the initial site visit there were concerns that if the lay out and position of the building is not sited away from ridge then there would be issues of impact on the historic structure and on the visual impact on the landscape that would make the parcels SCOT0628, SCOT0629 and SCOT0631 unsuitable 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 that may 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 were highlighted to the applicant at the site meeting by the Planning Officer. 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, however, this not been provided with the application to set out the applicant thoughts on how the proposed development fits in with constraint of the sites and its relationship with the heritage structure and the potential impact.

In the consideration of the report, the Authority Members will recall that a site visit was organised to consider the proposed development application reference 2020/53, and to review the impact of the proposed development and assess the relationship with the protected heritage structure. The application reference 2020/53 was granted development permission subject to number of conditions. The proposed development application was brought to the Authority's attention for future reference only.

#### **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 trees and vegetation. One or two of the trees are diseased and others are not considered to be of much amenity value. The proposed development has been sited to retain the healthy trees and greenery of value. In comparison to the surrounding plots, this plot has the least amount of vegetation and trees present.

Whilst there is path off Sapper Way to Coleman's Tower, however it is not very clear and obvious. With the construction of a access path that will be more obvious in the

street scene, the heritage feature of the area will be more accessible for the visitors to the area.

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



The concept design of the development with a dark grey coloured slate roof along with an external scheme similar to neighbouring property would reduce the visual impact in the landscape.

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 being to the rear of the tower would not be as visible as the property (ref: 2020/53), albeit a section of the roof due to its height (one and half storey design). The impact in the landscape would be considered to 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 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 by 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 position of the proposed development, it 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, for the development application 2020/53, 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. There is a need for the two applicants to work together in order to achieve this, particularly as the access to the each site is from a access path that will developed jointly. Similarly, both applicants will be required to undertake pre-construction assessment of the historic structure and to undertake restoration works to make good any damage through ground excavation works.

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. 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. 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 structure. 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 structure, 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.