

## Planning Officer's Report - LDCA JULY 2023

<b>APPLICATION</b>	<b>2023/27</b> – Installation of an External Lift
<b>PERMISSION SOUGHT</b>	Full Permission
<b>REGISTERED</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2023
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Central Support Service, St Helena Government
<b>PARCEL</b>	JT030009
<b>LOCALITY</b>	Castle Courtyard, Jamestown
<b>ZONE</b>	Intermediate Zone
<b>CONSERVATION AREA</b>	Jamestown Historic Conservation Area
<b>PUBLICITY</b>	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sentinel Newspaper on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023</li><li>▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.</li></ul>
<b>EXPIRY</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
<b>REPRESENTATIONS</b>	One Received
<b>DECISION ROUTE</b>	<del>Delegated</del> / LDCA / <del>GiC</del>

### A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

1. Sewage & Water Division	No Response
2. Energy Division	No Response
3. Fire & Rescue	No Response
4. Roads Section	No Objection
5. Property Division	No Objection
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. Sustainable Development	No Response
12. National Trust	Objection - Comments
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Objection

14. Heritage Society
15. Maritime Authority

Objection – Comments  
Not Applicable

## B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

### LOCALITY & ZONING

The development will be carried out at the Castle, Jamestown where the plot is situated within the Intermediate Zone and Jamestown Historic Conservation Area.

**Diagram 1: Location Plan**



### PROPOSED

The request is to carry out some alterations to the Castle Building to allow the installation of an external lift. This will require alterations to be carried out to the façade of the building, which will involve blocking up the window in the Governor's office and window in the meeting room behind the reception area. Two new door openings will be created off-centred from the blocked up windows to allow access from the lift onto their respective floor levels. Internally there will be a stud partition to part the Governor's office with a door, which will then lead into waiting area outside the Council Chambers. The rationale behind the proposal is to cater for disabled users, elderly, pregnant women, parents with buggy's or people finding the steps difficult to manage. It could also potentially open up opportunities for wheelchair users to be completed at the Castle.

A number of options in terms of site selection were investigated to achieve the primary access aim being into the Council Chambers with considerations to other

floors to maximise the benefits of investment. Each high level options demonstrates the benefits of each option in terms of what they will bring, and the effects they will have relative to the structure and user functionality.

### **Option 1: Combine Lift**



Option 1 investigates a solution that maintains the existing function of the receipt area to record and manage building occupancy. Managing building occupancy retains building control for operational, security and fire safety purposes.

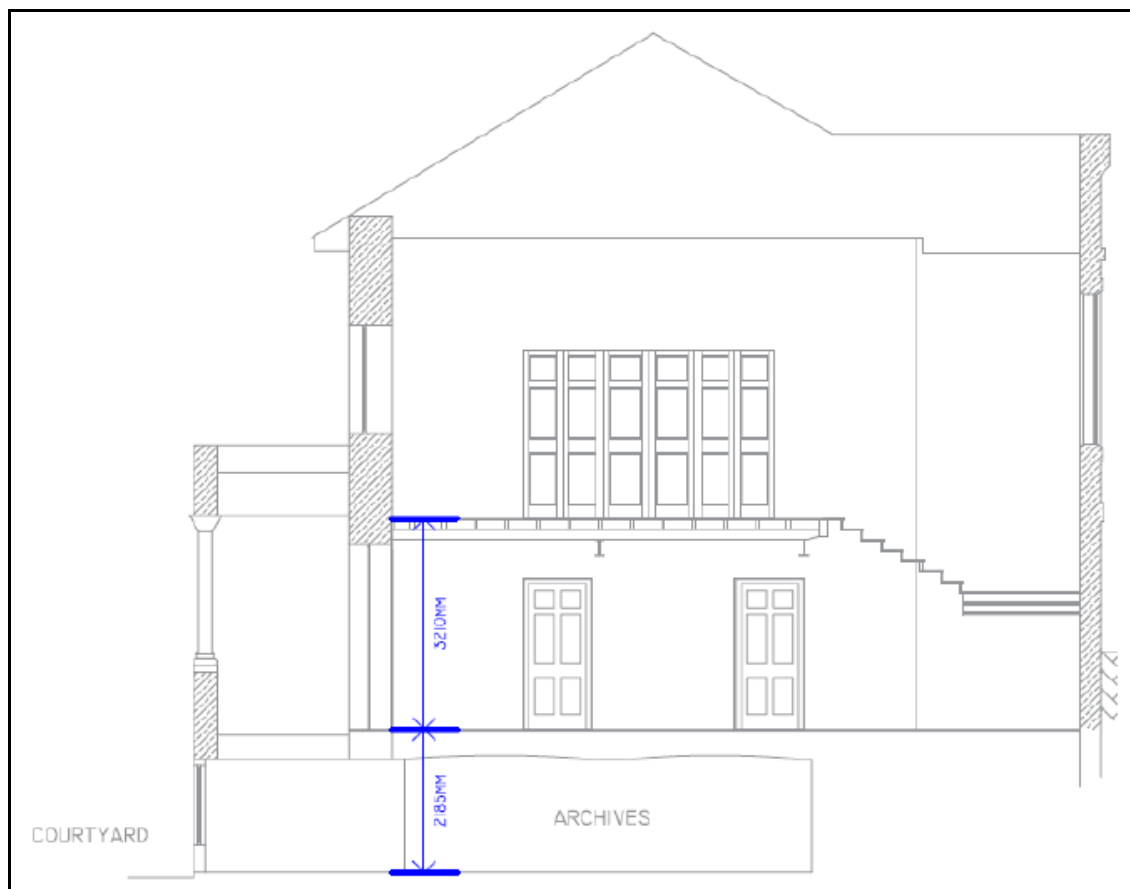
The proposal utilises an external and internal and vertical lift system to elevate the users to the reception area. In the diagram above shows the likely position of the external vertical low rise lift located on the backside of the main entrance steps. Advice given suggests a glass and steel lift system is commonly preferable as trying to match the existing building finish can often detract from its heritage value if not done correctly.

The benefits of this option is the external lift would provide maximum usability for a variety of users without restricting the existing stepped access. When entering through the Castle gate entrance, the exterior lift would be concealed behind the

porch area until it would be visible once within the courtyard. The internal lift will also offer the same flexibility of use.

The effects of this proposal is that it is relatively expensive with major enabling works with the need to maintain to independent systems, which will require significant rec-occurring costs. The proposal also requires alterations to the balcony wall, raised concrete floor works, and alterations to be internal floors. After a site inspection by the supplier's engineer, the internal lift option poses a problem to achieve as it requires a pit to be excavated in the base, structurally this would be unachievable due to the limited thickness of the floor above the Archives area.

## Option 2: Internal Lift



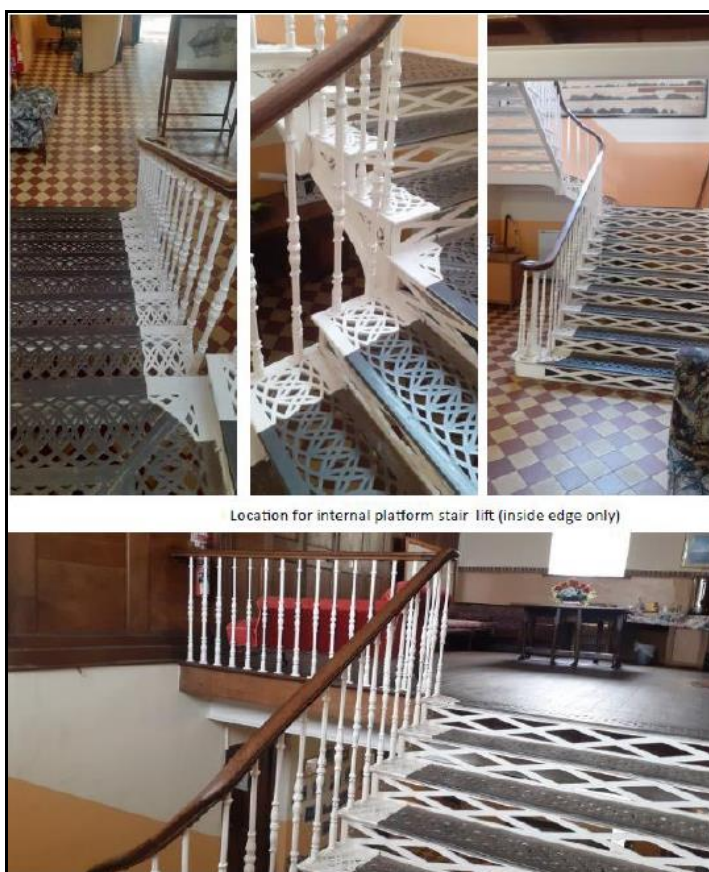
Option 2 is a single internal lift serving all three floors from the Archives, through reception and to the top floor. This is considered the most economical to purchase and provides less maintenance cost. This option provides an uncompromising access for a variety of users.

To install this solution in an area that serves both floors will require the Archives to be relocated elsewhere, this means access to the ground floor lift entrance will need to be far in the Archives area, which will not be easily identifiable and users friendly. As per the first option, a section of the timber floor will need to be removed from both floors, however the lift will need to be self-supporting at ground level, resulting in no additional loading on the existing timber flooring. An onsite review by the



suppliers engineer advised there was insufficient ceiling height in the Archives to install such a lift.

### Option 3: Platform Stair Lifts

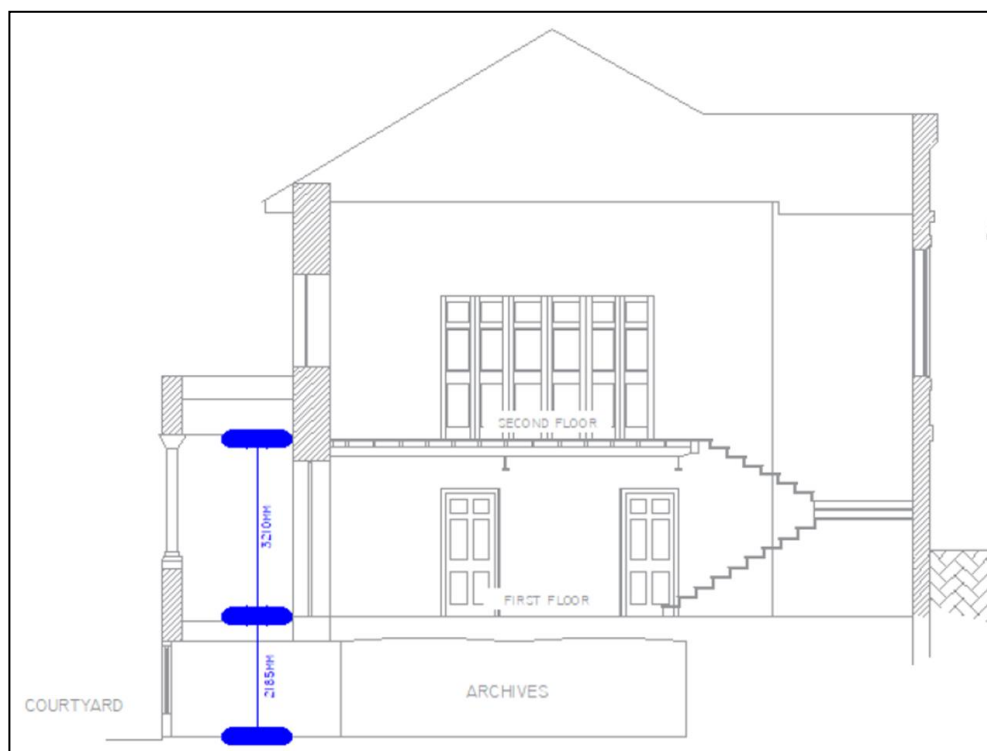


Option 3 is an alternative lifting system specifically designed for wheelchairs users. This option presents the addition of two folding platform stair lifts that will transverse the external steps and internal staircase. The likely location of the wheelchair platform stair lift and location of the rails to support the lift will be floor/wall mounted. Visually a wheelchair platform lift will be noticeable from the Castles entrance despite being available in range of colour, however it is not uncommon to find case studies in a heritage environment.

The external stair lift limits destructive impacts on the existing structure and requires little preparation works before installation, This option is modular and can be easily removed if required in the future without compromising the original aesthetics of the structure.

A platform wheelchair lift offers a solution to enable wheelchair users to access the building, however by nature of its design it is primarily intended for the wheelchair user only. This narrows the type of user, such as a person with the limited mobility to navigate stairs or a parent with a buggy. To install this system, the existing central railing on the steps leading to the reception area will need to be removed and mounted on the adjacent wall. This will limit ascending and descending users in both direction wanting to use a handrail, but this is considered a low impact. The same applies to the internal staircase platform lift, however mounting the platform lift to the internal staircase is not straightforward, where it would be difficult fix independent supports to the bespoke cast iron stair treads. The supplier informs installing mounting points will require alterations to the stair tread, which will be irreversible and possibly unachievable due to them being made of cast iron.

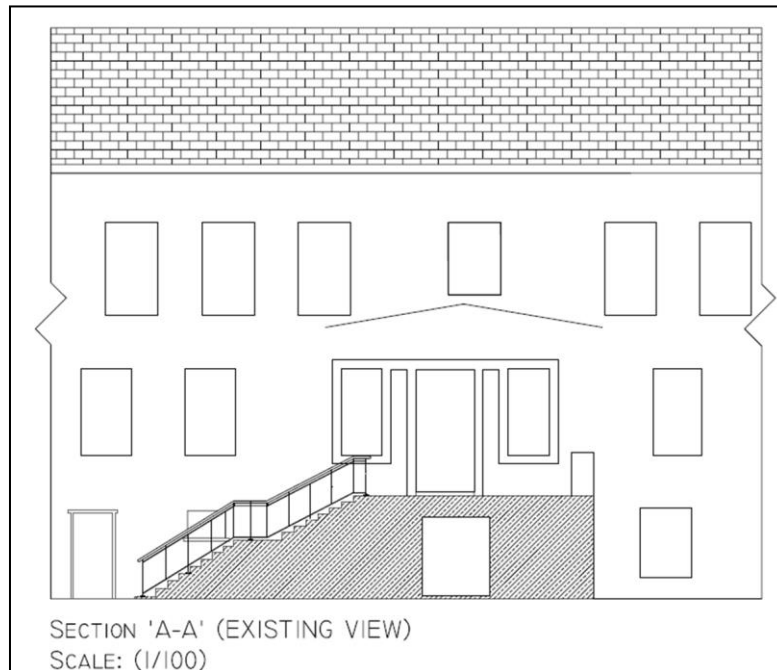
#### **Option 4: External Single Lift Shaft**



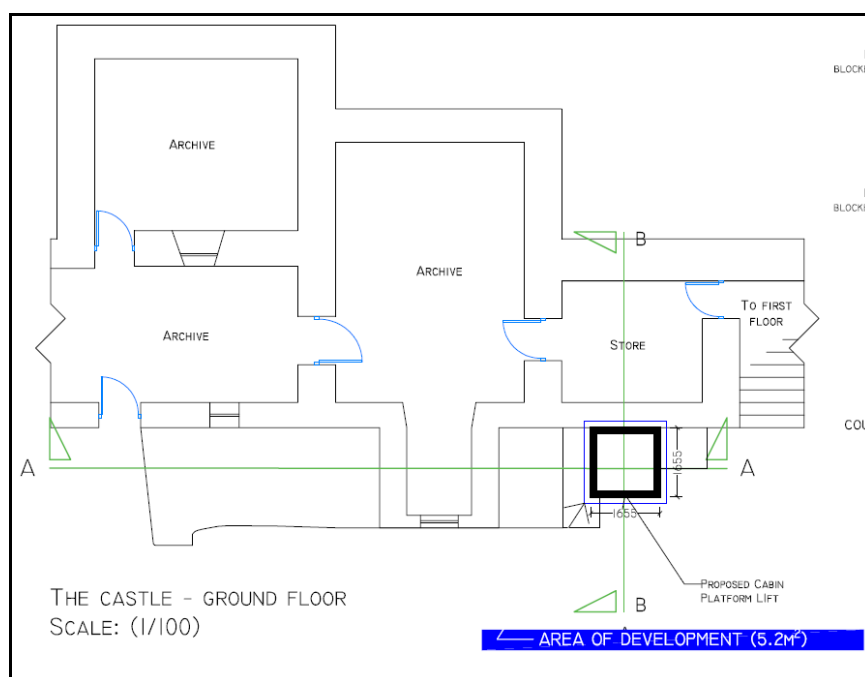
Option 4 which is a single vertical lift system is the most economical to purchase and provides less maintenance cost. This option provides an uncompromising access for a variety of users.

The single lift option will enable those with restricted mobility to easily access the first and second floors at the Castle, enabling customers to readily access the reception area to make enquiries, as well as being able to meet with staff if need be. It also offers the possibility of wheelchair users being completed by the public service in areas, which operates from the first floor of the building.

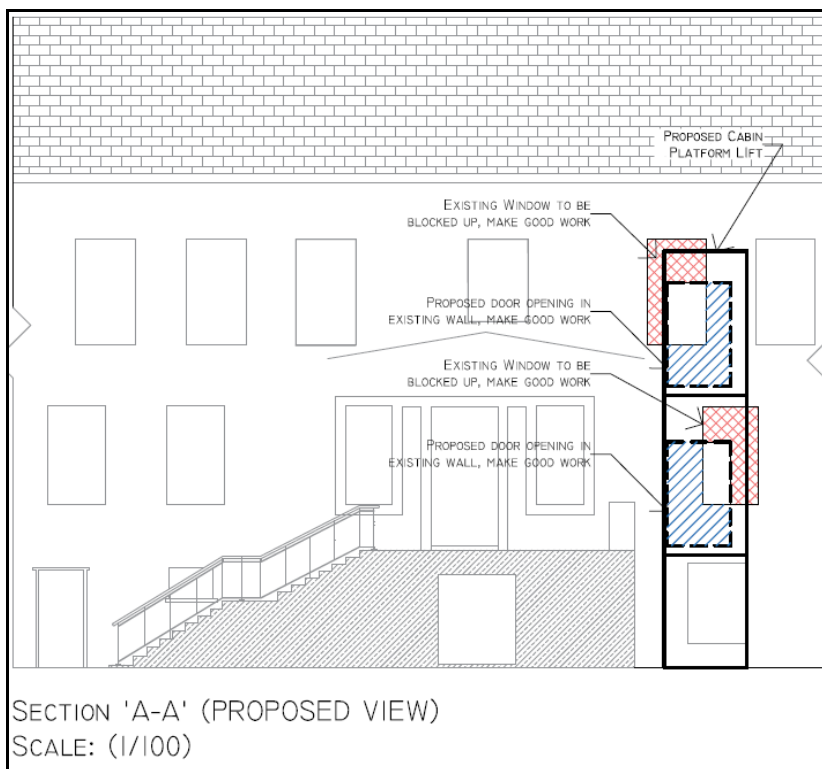
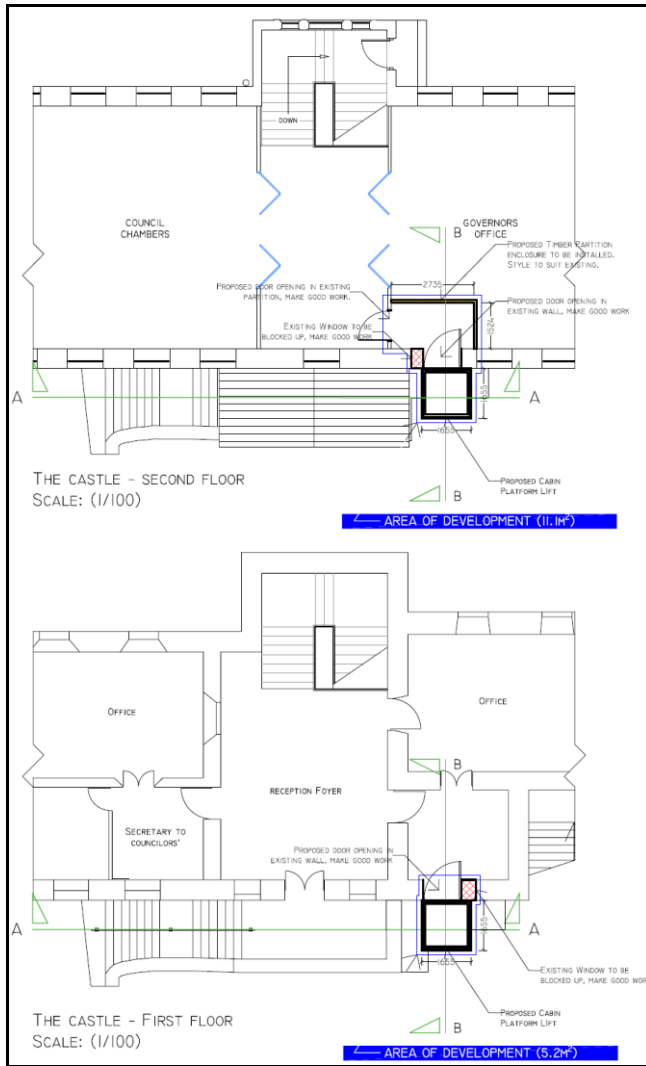
**Diagram: 2: Existing Elevation**



**Diagram 3: Proposed Ground Floor Layout**

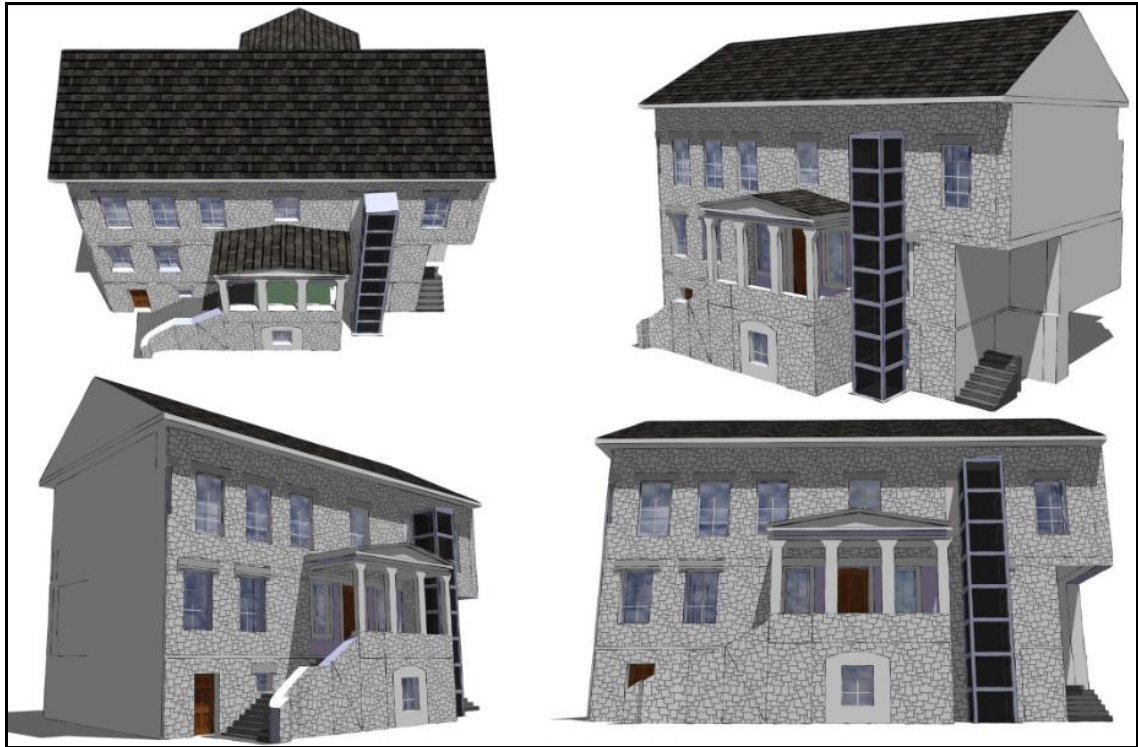


**Diagram 4: Proposed First Floor, Second Floor Layout & Elevations**





**Diagram 5: 3D Concept**



### **STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS**

One representation was received from a member of the public, and comments were received from stakeholders.

**St Helena National Trust:** Objection - 'As per the last application to install a lift at the Castle, the Trust again raises an objection.

Firstly, the Trust would like to inform the Authority that it supports equality and inclusion of all people. However, this is a difficult application as it seeks to alter the face of a historic building, a building that is an iconic feature for St Helena's built heritage.

Majority of St Helena's records, illustrations and photographs have indicated that "the Castle is the most important of the public buildings" (Crallan 1974). It is a grade listed I building, originally built in the 1700s and despite renovations have retained its original features.

The LDCP, April 2012, 25.1 has stated that we need to carefully balance the need to conserve our rich heritage and the need for our economy to grow; the historic built environment is critical to the success of tourism growth.

The proposed design contradicts the BH1 Primary Policy and ensuing Implementation Policies.

The design requires the existing windows to be closed off, and parts of the walls to be dismantled to make way for doors. The Design Access Statement does not

propose how this works will be carried out, considering the walls being in place since the 1700-1800s.

The Trust during its investigation into this application, has discovered that Applicant did not carry out an impact assessment with stakeholders (such as the Trust and Heritage Society), current users of the rooms/offices affected and/or other interested parties.

Altering a significant, historical building such as the Castle, requires careful attention and any design approved, should not be impacted by money but what is best to retain the integrity of St Helena's built heritage.'

**Heritage Society:** Objection – 'The St Helena Heritage Society understands the need to meet the requirements of a modern workplace, which includes accessibility to all persons entering the Castle, however, the Heritage Society, would like to object to a lift being installed at the castle.

1. The building is a Grade 1 listed 17th Century structure.
2. Having been originally built in 1660, (but reconstructed in 1708) the building is viewed as the most valuable of public buildings, holding significant historical and architectural importance.
3. The proposal is materially damaging the external appearance of the building, by proposing wall modifications that will undoubtedly hinder the architectural symmetry of the building that has existed for over 300 years.
4. The design and access statement fail to include conservation as one of its listed aims.
5. By proposing to form partition walls to take a corner of the Governor's office, the proposal destroys the symmetry and proportions of that architecturally important room.
6. It is disappointing that Part 11 and 12 in the application shows the lack of consultation with public and relevant organisations, such as the Heritage Society.

Whilst the Heritage Society would like to maintain a position of supporting development whilst being able to conserve our heritage, we unfortunately do not agree with this planning decision.'

**Public Representation** – 'Please see below my Objection to Application 2023/27 - Installation of External Lift at the Castle

Although the proposed lift is intended to provide improved public access to the Council Chamber, it does not improve access for administrative staff and employment opportunities in the rest of the Castle.

The applicant claims it will also improve access to the Castle Reception on the first floor. Surely this can be remedied with a reception at the lower Courtyard level.

Since October 2021, the new Ministerial System of Government has resulted in a reduction of open public meetings in the Council Chamber from over 60 a year to only 10 or 12. Is this proposal really justified in terms of cost effectiveness?

The applicant has listed the options considered in determining the final application which can only be praised. However, the options are not set against any proper assessment of the historic value of the Castle. The LPDC (planning) Ordinance allows for the CPO to require an Historic Building Assessment akin to an Environmental Impact Assessment. Such documents were required for the 1, 2 and 3 Main Street hotel application (about 2014/15).

This application cannot be properly considered without that background information.

Parts 11 and 12 of the application form indicate that no attempt has been made by the applicant to consult public bodies such as the Heritage Society or the National Trust which are funded by the government to advise on matters to protect the historic environment. The public in general have not been consulted.

The above indicates that due process relating to proposals for historic buildings has not been followed.

The proposal does not appear to comply with LDCP policy BH1C that proposals should enhance the Conservation Area.

The proposal defaces the façade of the historic Castle and Courtyard.

Based on the above, the application should be withdrawn or refused. I therefore object to this application.

There is in addition no evidence of any consultation being sort by the applicant from the Disabled Society or the Equality and Human Rights Commission in order to achieve optimum access and design.'

## **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:

- Intermediate Zone Policies
- Built Heritage Policies

## **OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT**

The developer has provided a rationale for the proposal and a number of considerations made in relation to site selection. The preferred option, which is being considered as part of this development application is option four.

Two objections were received from stakeholders, St Helena National Trust and Heritage Society, along with a representation from a member of the public, which is included above. The main sentiments of the objections are the lack of pre-application discussion with these stakeholders as well as the Disabled Society, Equality and Human Rights Commission and general public. Secondly, the impact the proposed development will have on the building and conservation area.

In assessing the proposed development, the objective to achieve disabled access is a material consideration, where this would be encouraged given the lack of suitable access into the building for disabled users. However a balance approach is needed to ensure any measures do not harm the building. The Castle is a Grade I Listed building, which should be afforded the highest level of protection when it comes to its architectural and historical value, implying that it ought to be preserved in terms of its external form and appearance. This however does not mean any changes to the external façade cannot be made, but more about appropriately managing any intended change that preserves and enhances the building.

The proposed works to demolish to form openings will have an adverse impact on the façade of the building. Some thought however has been put into the design to retain the current lintels, nevertheless will involve the removal of two windows and alterations to be carried out internally. The mass of lift system in its appearance is quite overpowering and will dominate the façade when viewed from within the courtyard.

Members need to consider if the material consideration of providing disabled access within a section the Castle, primarily to the Council Chambers and Governors Office outweighs the need to preserve the listed building.