

Planning Officer's Report – LDCA JUNE 2024

APPLICATION	2024/17 – Amendments to Application 2020/41 Rupert's Container Handling Facilities
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Full Permission
REGISTERED	23 May 2024
APPLICANT	Programme Management Unit; EDIP, St Helena Government
LOCALITY	Lower Rupert's Valley
ZONE	Coastal Zone
CONSERVATION AREA	None
CURRENT USE	Port Facility under construction
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Independent Newspaper on 24 May 2024▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	7 th June 2024
REPRESENTATIONS	One Received
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

1. Sewage & Water Division	No Objection
2. Energy Division	No Response
3. Fire & Rescue	No Response
4. Roads Section	No Response
5. Property Division	No Response
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. Economic Development	No Objection
12. National Trust	No Response
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Comment
14. Heritage Society	No Response
15. Maritime	No Objection – The application is supported by Maritime Authority

B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

PLANNING HISTORY

Development permission (Ref. 2020/41) was granted by Executive Council in September 2020 for the proposed Container Handling Facilities incorporating office buildings, warehousing, secure compounds and car parking at Lower Rupert's Valley. It followed the production of a draft Rupert's Valley Development Plan. This would allow the transfer of cargo operations from Jamestown to Rupert's, and to enable the service providers to be accommodated on site on a temporary basis only. It was understood therefore that the services i.e. Customs, Bio-Security and Port Control would only need to be operating in Rupert's during cargo operations and would return to the Customs Building, Jamestown wharf once cargo operations were completed in Rupert's – therefore there was no need to construct buildings for permanent occupancy for these functions to deliver their services from. It was also intended for Immigration to have a presence in the Container Freight Station (CFS) building, but this would have been minimal and on a temporary basis.

Diagram 1: Location Plan



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Following the establishment of the Safety, Security and Home Affairs portfolio in 2021, additional staff was located into the Customs Building at Jamestown Wharf, which now includes the Director, Minister and Immigration Section. In December 2023, Ministers made the decision for all users of the current Customs Building, consisting of staff from Customs, Port Control, Immigration and Administrative function to be relocated from Jamestown to Rupert's.

As the Port Control (PCB) and Container Freight Station (CFS) buildings were not originally designed for permanent office accommodation, it has now become necessary for modifications to be carried out on both buildings to provide a functional space for the end users. As a result, there will be a change from the facility being operated approximately 14 days per month with a minimum 19 members of staff, to now a minimum 34 persons working between both buildings on a permanent basis, resulting in a staff increase of 56% at the facility in comparison to the previous approval (Ref. 2020/41).

Diagram 2: Approved Layout of the Container Freight Station (CFS) Building (2020/41)



Diagram 3: Proposed Ground Floor Layout of the Container Freight Station (CFS) Building

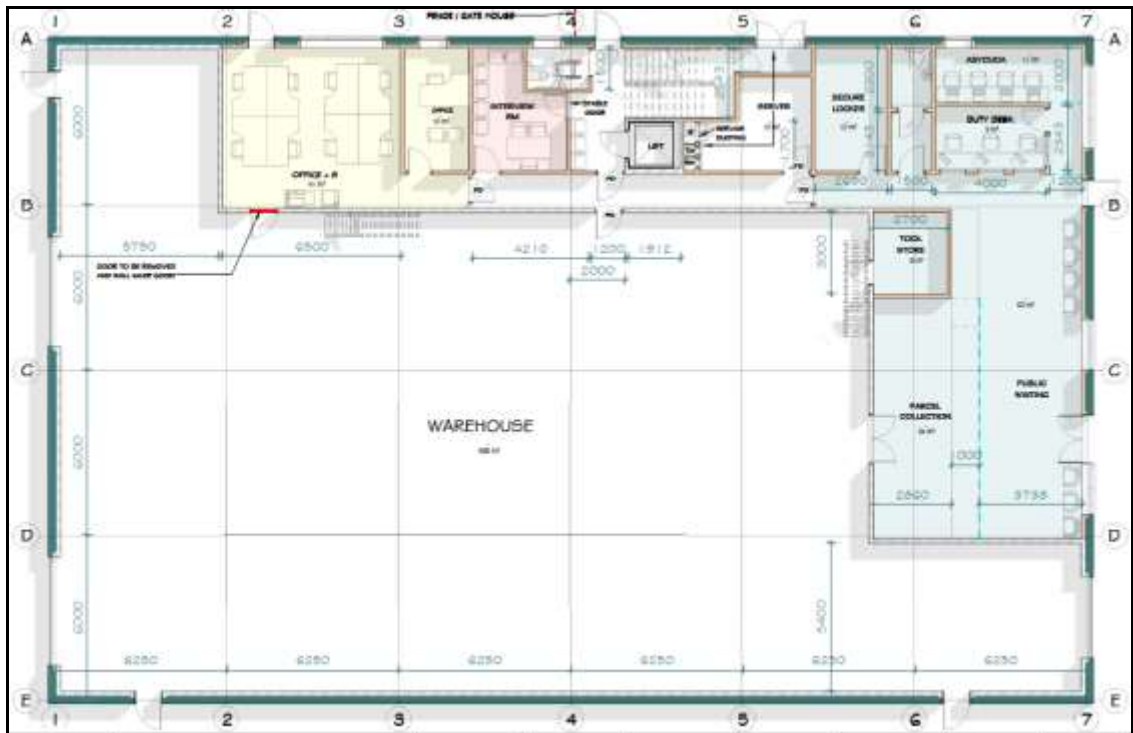
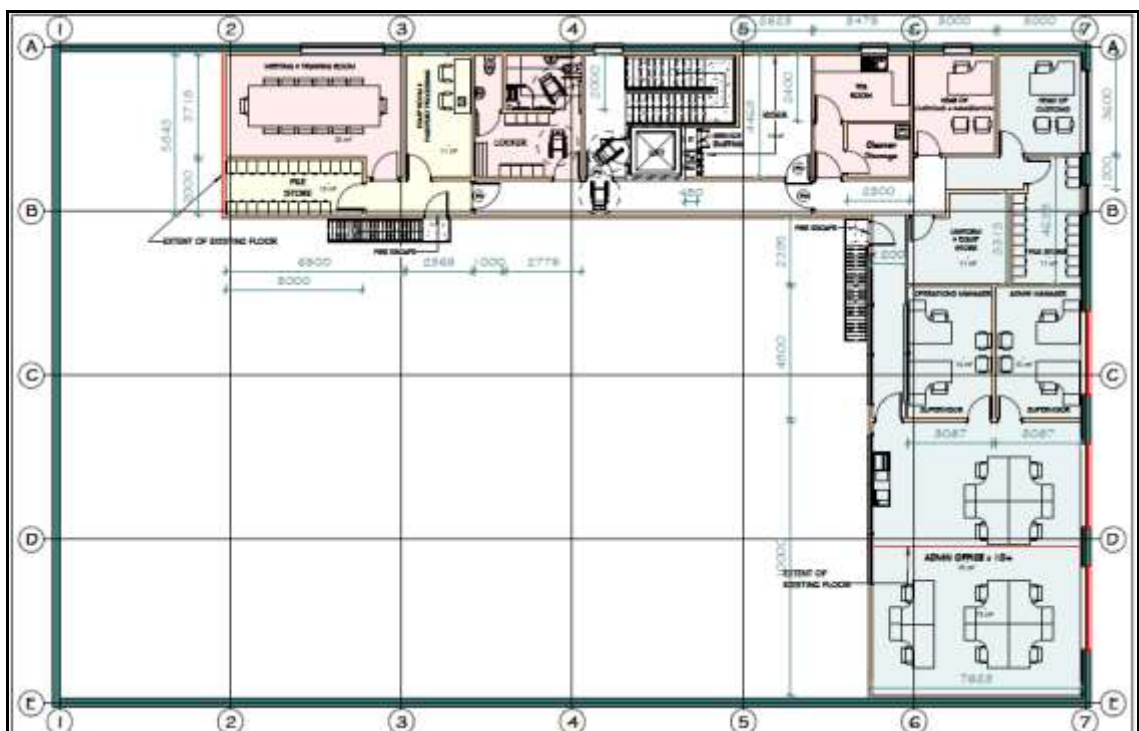


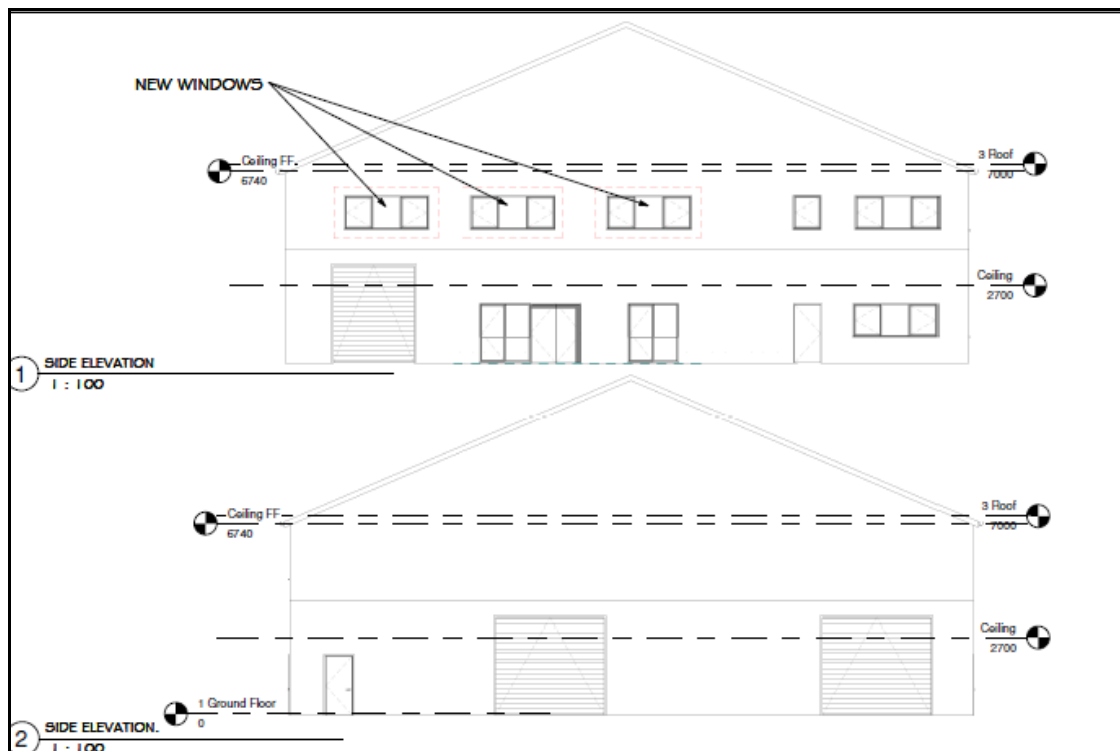
Diagram 4: Proposed First Floor Layout of the Container Freight Station (CFS) Building



CFS Building:

The CFS building is intended to be used as a warehouse and office building with access to members of the public. The first floor (mezzanine) is to be used for office purposes, where an extension to the first floor mezzanine is proposed to create some additional office space for Immigration and Customs Officers. This will result in extending the floor area by 41 square metres, and the addition of three windows on the southern elevation of the building. It has also been proposed to construct two sets of fire escape stairs leading from the first floor to the ground floor. The number of toilets has also been reduced from four to two. On the ground floor, the existing doorway from the office into the warehouse on the northern end of the building will be blocked up. This building can now accommodate up to 25 office staff in total in comparison to 9 previously.

Diagram 5: Proposed Southern Elevation of the Container Freight Station (CFS) Building



Port Control Building (PCB):

The PCB building is an inspection area and laboratory with offices on the first floor. A balcony is also provided to improve the Port Control's view of the Container Handling Facilities and harbour. Proposed changes to the ground floor will be carried out to accommodate wheelchair friendly toilet facilities and services. On the first floor, the internal design has been changed to accommodate additional persons, where originally 9 desk spaces was available and this will increase to a possible 11 desk spaces. With regards to allowing adequate ventilation and natural lighting, two

additional windows has been proposed on this building, one on the northern and the other on the southern elevation.

Diagram 6: Approved Layout of the Port Control (PCB) Building (2020/41)



Diagram 7: Proposed Ground Floor Layout (PCB) Building

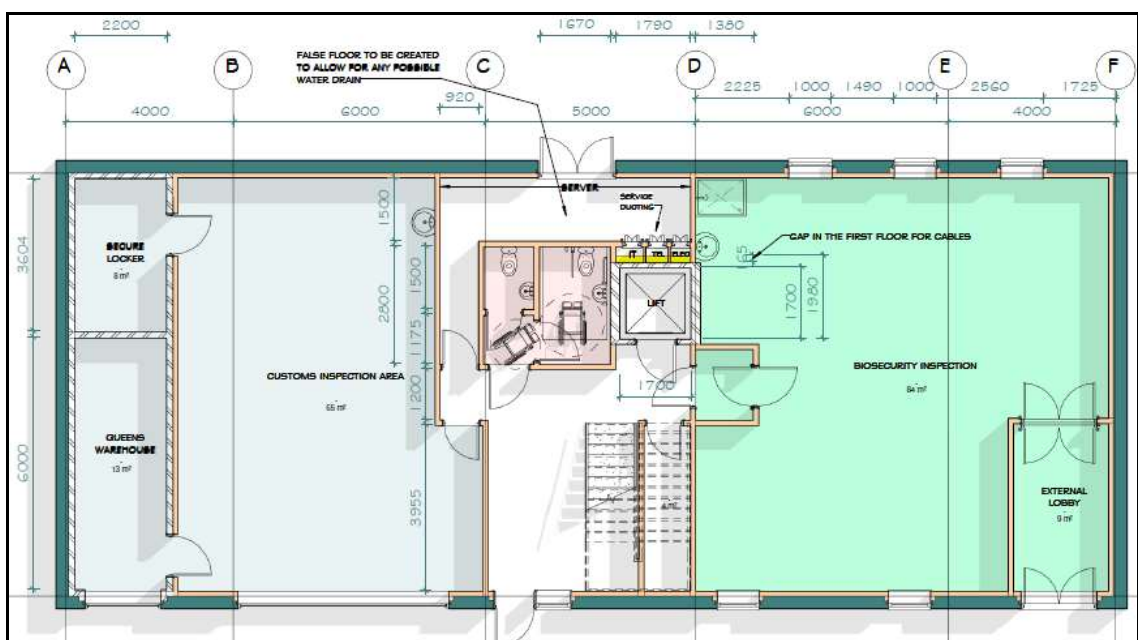


Diagram 8: Proposed First Floor Layout (PCB) Building

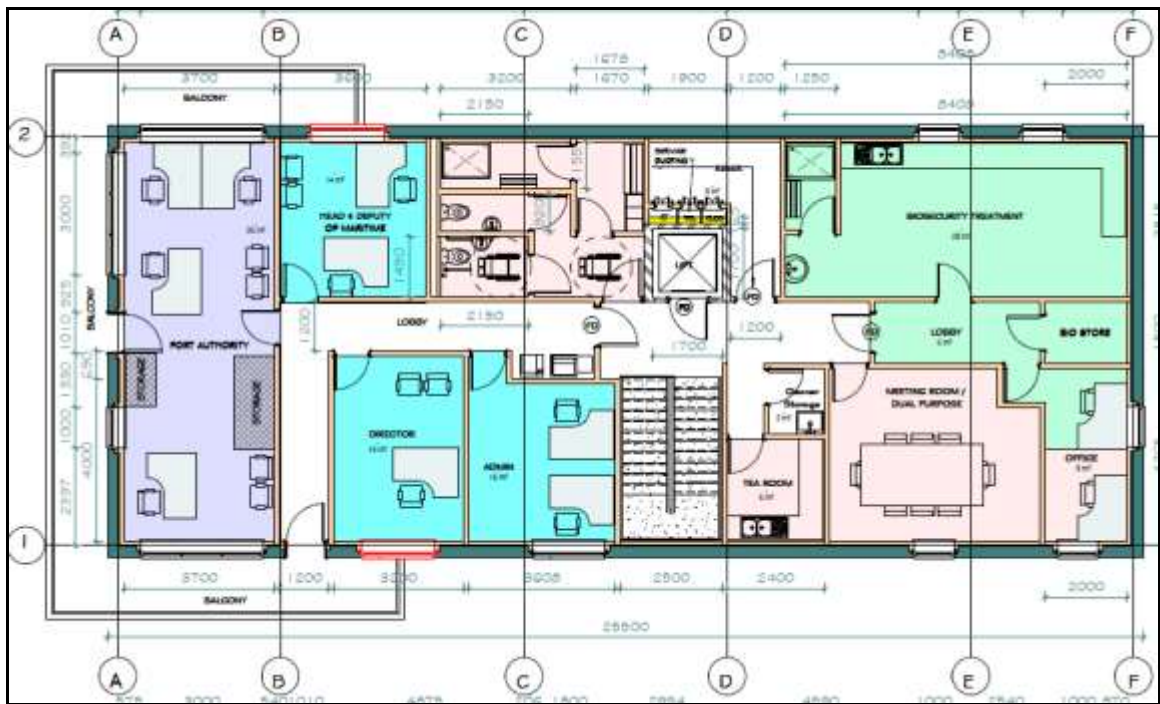
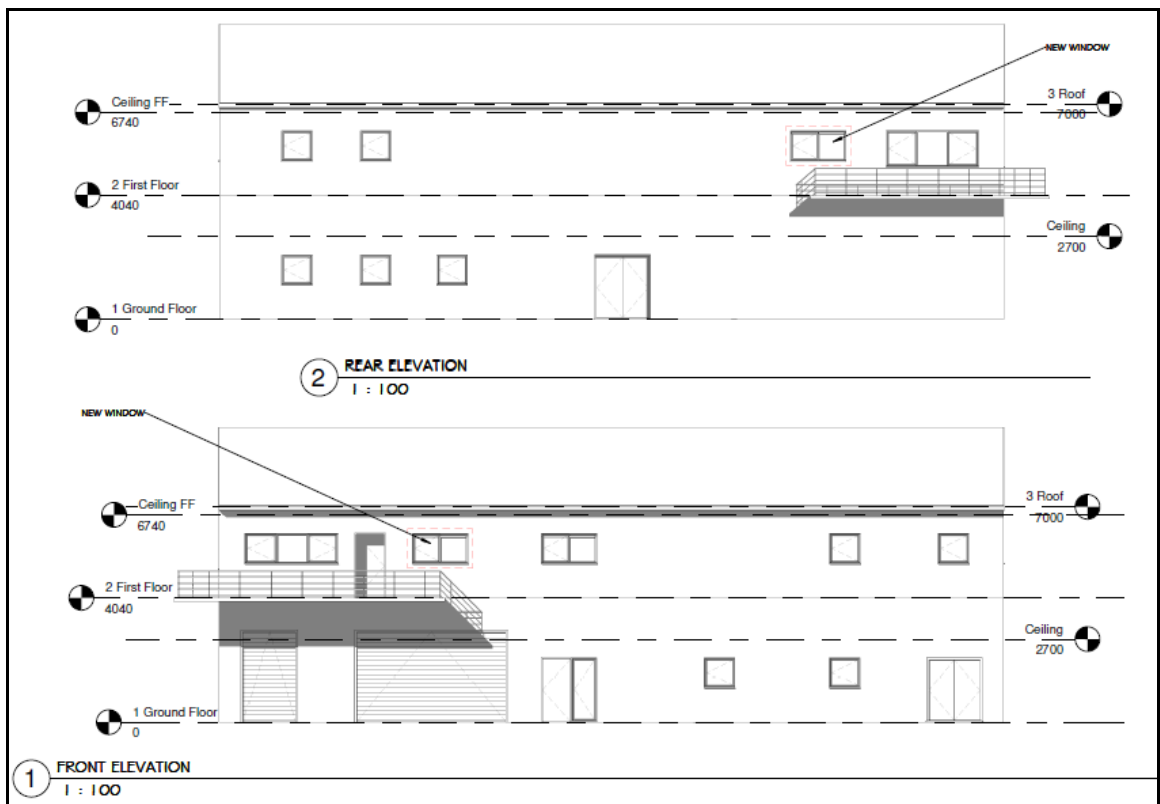


Diagram 9: Proposed North & South Elevations (PCB) Building



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS

There were no objections received from stakeholders, however one representation submitted by a member of the public.

Representation #1:

'According to the Supporting Statement there appears to be more to this application than just physical changes to the existing buildings. It states,

In December 2023 Ministers made a decision for all users of the current Customs Building which includes, Customs, Port Control, Immigration as well as the Administrative function to be relocated from Jamestown to Rupert's.

This change of use from occasional to permanent staffing at Rupert's raises many questions, for example:

Rupert's

Will such access to Immigration and Customs in Rupert's be hindered by the new security regime?

How will car parking intended for public use in Rupert's be affected?

How will this intensification of use affect the Old Hospital building in Rupert's which is proposed as a museum?

With permanent use of Rupert's, will the high lighting masts be on all the time?

Will the increased use of Rupert's encourage more development there?

EIA

Should these proposals be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment to assess all the above issues?'

Jamestown

What is the proposed use of the current customs building on the Wharf after all staff have left.

How will visiting yacht crew to Jamestown get access to Immigration and Customs?

Will the public be required to go to Rupert's to visit Immigration and Customs?

How will the resultant increase in road traffic between Jamestown and Rupert's affect the residents of Napoleon Street?

How will the reduction of staff affect local businesses in Jamestown?

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:

- Coastal Zone Policies
- Employment Premises Policies
- Water Supplies Policies
- Sewerage and Storm Drainage Policies
- Social Infrastructure Policies
- Road and Transport Policies

OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT

This development application has been requested due to the intensification of the development in comparison to the original approval (ref. 2020/41). The Port Facility at Rupert's is currently at an advanced construction point. However it was not previously considered to operate beyond fourteen days a month, which primarily consisted of days the ship was in port and for disseminating of cargo to merchants and the public.

The current submission is for the port facilities to include the relocation of a number of government departments such as Customs, Biosecurity, Port Control, Immigration and administration staff to both the PCB and CFS building on a permanent basis, therefore consideration needs to be given on the impact this will have on the area and existing development.

Impact on the character/amenities of the surrounding area/existing development:

The surrounding area is mainly a mix of commercial and residential development with commercial generally to the seaward side of Rupert's Valley (north).

The improvement in the layout will allow for the much needed office space and will also provide a benefit of an additional wheelchair accessible toilet facilities on the first floor of the PCB building.

Overall, the works proposed are mainly internal works to the approved buildings' outer shells although there would be additional windows. It is not considered that these would adversely affect the appearance of either the PCB or CFS buildings.

Assurance has been given by the developer that, at the time of writing this report, there is no intention for the facility to operate beyond the normal working hours that currently takes place, being daylight hours.

Albeit the intensification of use will result in operational changes, it is not foreseen that this will harm the amenity of existing development or the area, as all the services can be provided with the necessary supporting infrastructure.

Parking Provision:

One aspect raised is parking. The original scheme consisted of 18 public parking spaces at the southern end of the CFS building, and 17 car parking spaces to the north of Building No. 1. The original scheme (Ref 2020/41) was approved with a limited number of spaces which was below the level indicated in policy RT.7.

In relation to the current submission, the developer has advised that it is anticipated that between 8-10 parking spaces will be needed with other remaining staff transported via public transport.

Inevitably there will be an increase in traffic for a more prolonged period in comparison to the originally approved scheme, however it is not foreseen it will result in any significant adverse impact on the area, provided it is managed appropriately.

Economic Impact:

The increase in the number of personnel at Rupert's will bring some economic benefits for the two existing shops within Rupert's and can be seen as a positive.

Environmental Impact Assessment:

In respect of an EIA submission, the original scheme was screened for EIA and an EIA was not required to be submitted. From an EIA perspective, in consultation with the Chief Environment Officer, the intensification of this development at this level does not result in a need for further screening or an Environment Impact Assessment Report to be submitted.

Other concerns raised in the Representation:

The representation submitted by a member of the public raises a number of important questions, most of which are awaited as a submission under a discharge of condition under the originally approved scheme (Ref. 2020/41) which will address the concerns through an operational plan. In relation to the Customs Building in Jamestown, this lies outside the scope of consideration of the planning merits of this current proposal. Notwithstanding, the Customs Building in Jamestown will retain its lawful use as an office and can therefore be occupied for this use in planning terms.

Conclusion:

Overall, the works carried out will not adversely affect the appearance of both buildings, with minor changes being internal works and additional windows. The improvement in the layout will allow for the much needed office space, but will also provide a benefit of additional wheelchair accessible toilet facilities on the first floor of the PCB building. Albeit the intensification of use will result in operational changes, it is not foreseen that this will harm the amenity of existing development or the area, as all the services can be provided with the necessary supporting infrastructure.