

Planning Officer's Report – LDCA JANUARY 2025

APPLICATION	2024/57 – Proposed Installation of Draped Mesh Netting (R2 Project)
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Full Permission
REGISTERED	10 th October 2024
APPLICANT	Capital Programme Section c/o Mr Kyle Shoesmith
PARCEL	AF0387
LOCALITY	Side Path & Field Road Junction
ZONE	Coastal
CONSERVATION AREA	Jamestown Historic
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sentinel Newspaper on 14th November 2024▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	28 th November 2024
REPRESENTATIONS	One Received
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

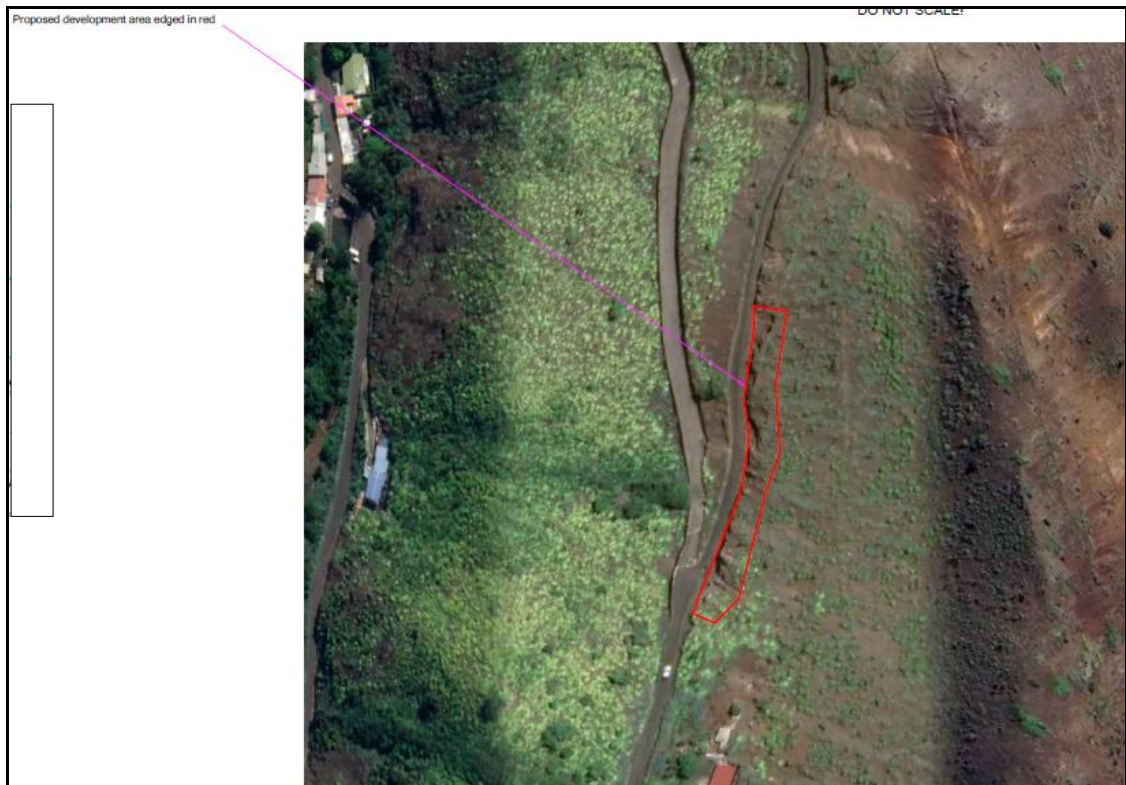
1. Sewage & Water Division	No Objection
2. Energy Division	No Objection
3. Fire & Rescue	No Response
4. Roads Section	No Objection
5. Property Division	No Response
6. Environmental Management	No Objection
7. Public Health	No Response
8. Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
9. St Helena Police Services	Not Consulted
10. Aerodrome Safe Guarding	No Response
11. Economic Development	No Response
12. National Trust	No Objection
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Objection
14. Heritage Society	No Objection
15. Maritime	Not Applicable

B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

LOCALITY & ZONING

The area of the proposal is within the Side Path and Field Road junction area along the embankment directly above Field Road. The site is designated within the Coastal Zone and Jamestown Historic Conservation Area.

Diagram 1: Location Plan



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is to install draped mesh netting over brown shade netting that will span approximately 110m from above the embankment on the Side Path and Field Road junction in a northerly direction along Field Road. The netting will vary from 10m to 14m maximum in height. Draped mesh netting is used to retain and control larger debris whereas the shade netting will retain and control the smaller debris/scree material of the existing hillside, which will be structurally supported by the draped mesh netting. The netting will mitigate hillside erosion and will control the accumulation of debris/scree to the bottom of the hillside to avoid sprawling onto the main road. This in turn will aid accessibility and alleviate health and safety risks to road users; notably during times of heavy wind and rain.

Brown coloured shade netting is proposed to blend into the existing hillside excavation as practicably possible. The proposal is similar to existing hillside drape netting used in areas such as Lower Jamestown, Rupert's and along the Haul Road.

Diagram 2: Site Layout

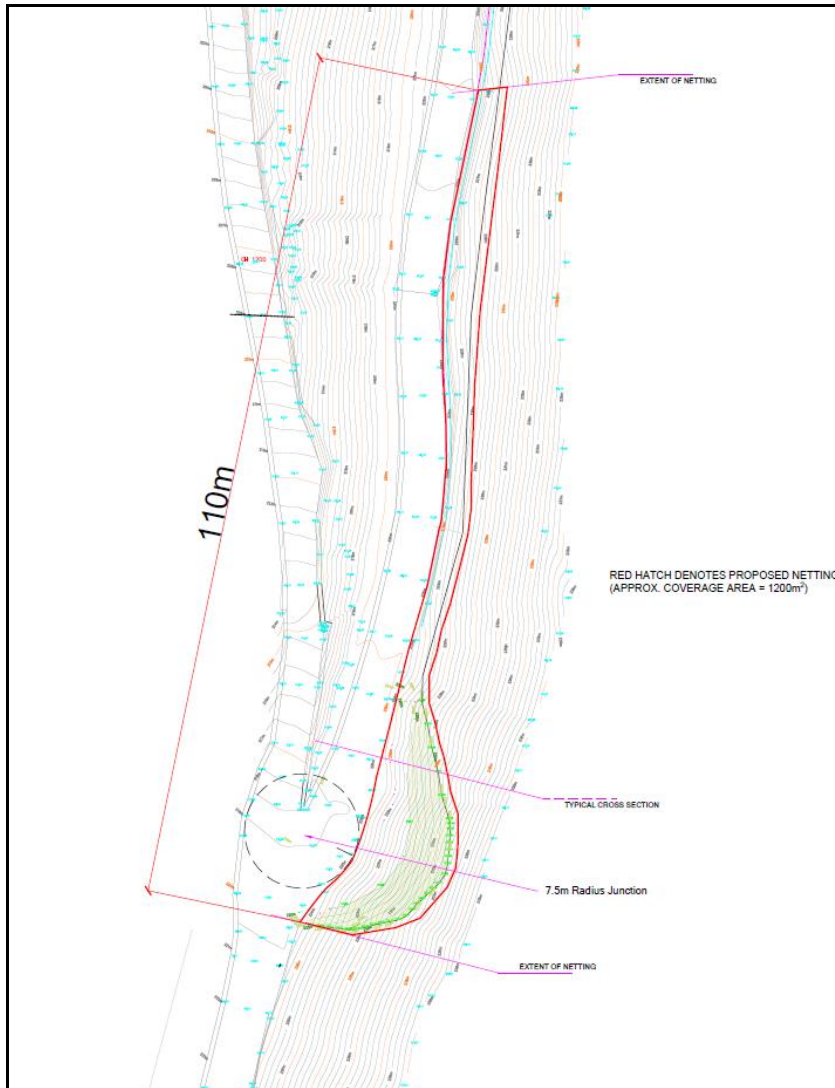


Diagram 3: Cross Section

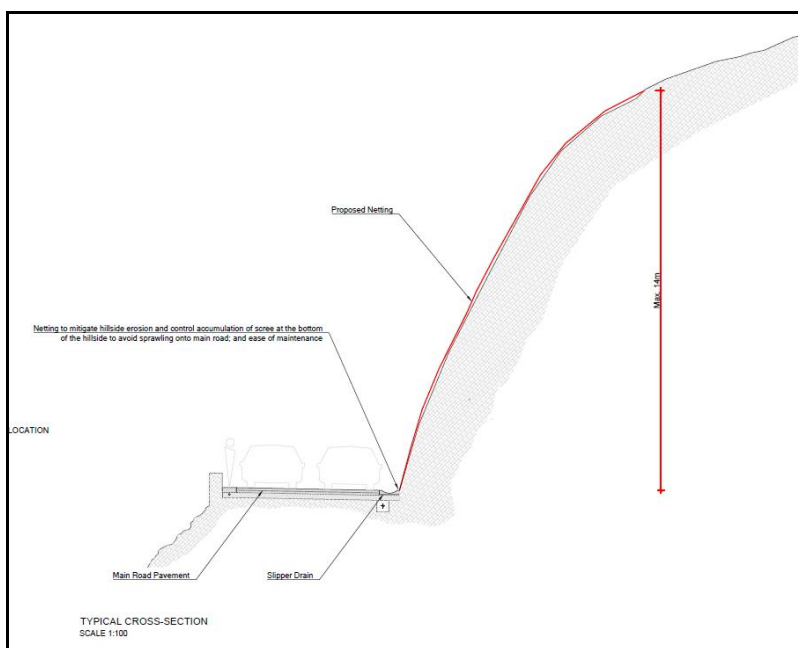
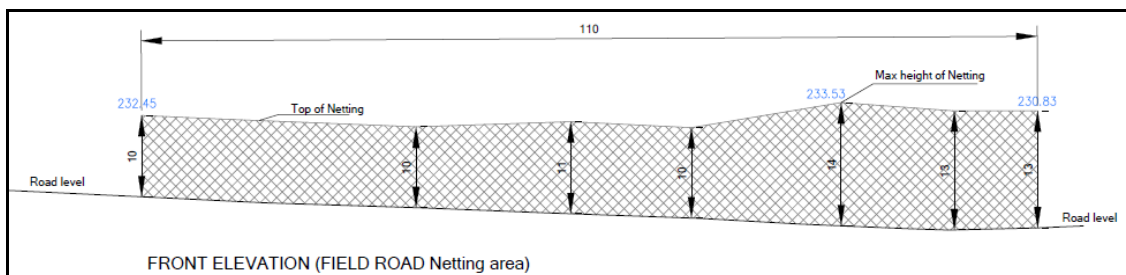


Diagram 4: Artistic Impression



Diagram 5: Front Elevation of Netting



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS

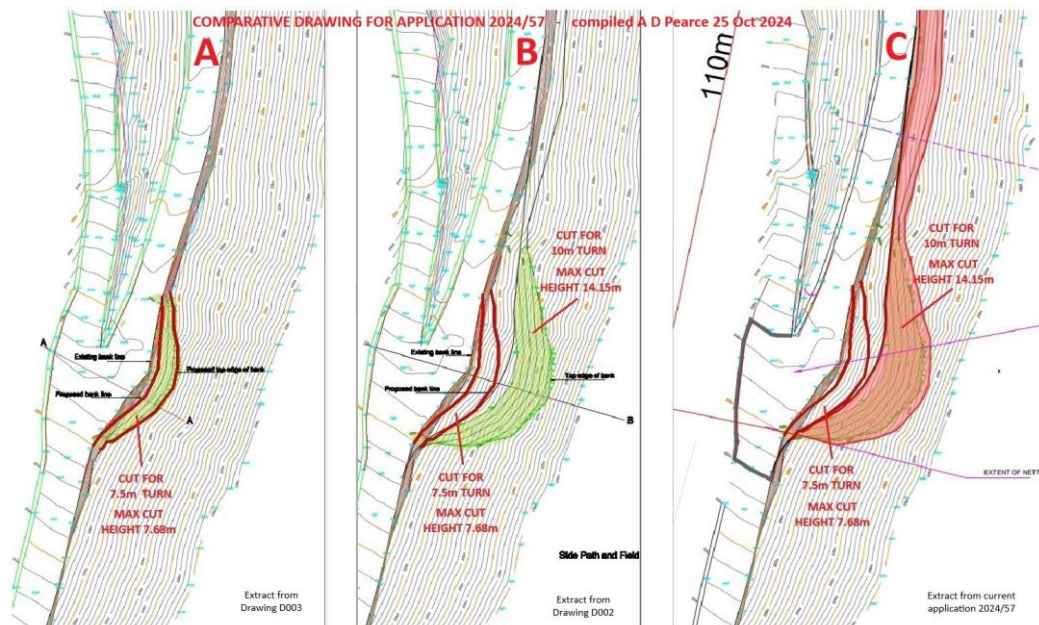
There were no representations or objections received from stakeholders, however one representation was received from a member of the public.

Representation –

Comments on the original submission:

The drawing supporting this application is widely inaccurate. This makes it impossible to assess its true effects upon the landscape of the Jamestown Historic Conservation Area as required by the LDCP.

I attach a comparative drawing showing the current application 2024/57 (see C) and the two alternative proposals in the original application 2022/87, as approved by Exco 12 Dec 2020. They are approved drawings D002 (see B) and D003 (see A).



The written statement in the current application describes the 7.5m turning as having been completed, and that this application is for netting on a maximum 14m high cutting.

The purpose of the 7.5m turn was to reduce the 14m cut height that would have been necessary with a 10m turning (see B) in order to reduce the impact on the landscape. The cutting for the 7.5m turn would only be about 7m high (see A).

The written statement says the that during excavation it was found possible to safely have a higher angle of repose, meaning the cut is now steeper than shown in the original application (see A). The geometrical logic of a steeper bank means the cutting height must be less than the 7m as originally proposed.

This application drawing contradicts that logic and so makes no sense at all. The drawing shows a 10m turn and a 14m high cut (C), not the 7m turn (A) that the applicant says was made.

It is therefore impossible to understand this application or to assess it for development permission. The public have been given 14 days to comment but how can the public comment if it cannot be understood. Therefore, this application should be either withdrawn or refused.

[Officer comment: Minor amendments have been made to correct the plans]

Comments on the submission (as revised):

'I object to this application (2024/57) for the following reasons, and I also suggest a solution.

Revised drawing FR 005/2

There is no explanation as to why this drawing has been revised. Why is it?

The principal difference in this revision is the location of the 'Typical Cross Section'. The two different 'Typical Cross Sections' show very different bank heights but both are claimed to be 14m. That does not make sense. Can you please explain.

The base of the netting adjacent to the road Junction has been altered in the revised drawing no 2. It states the 'Approx Coverage Area' of the netting is 1200sq m, which is double that of the previous drawing. It would appear unlikely that the revised netting base-line could explain the doubling of the netted area. The doubling of the netted area was not mentioned in the planning consultation as advertised on 14 November 2024. Can you please explain this.

While the area of the netting is stated to have been doubled, the elevational drawing remains unchanged. There is clearly a very large discrepancy which needs to be publicly accounted for.

Blot on the Landscape

Can you please explain what this application is trying to portray. There is already a large green blot on the landscape of the Conservation Area which seriously detracts from the setting of Jamestown, contrary to planning policies. This proposal is to increase the blot to create a hideous scar for ever. Why has there been no consideration to find a way to negate this?

Written Statement

This extract from the applicant's Written Statement below makes it clear that that the purpose of the proposed netting is to reduce the frequency for sweeping the road of 'additional debris/scree' until 'the hillside regains its natural rate of erosion.'

"Debris/scree will sprawl on the main road which can then be cleaned and removed by a mechanised road sweeping machine. However, the regularity of these maintenance intervals will be key to ensuring accessibility and health and safety to road users.

This Written Statement aims to support the application for development permission of installing draped mesh netting over brown 'shade' netting at the Side Path Road-Field Road Junction as a health and safety mitigation measure and to aide road maintenance."

Solution

The adverse environmental effects of this proposal on the Jamestown Historic Conservation Area are completely out of proportion to its intended purpose. To resolve this, the application should be withdrawn, or refused; a road maintenance scheme introduced and properly budgeted; and the existing rock coverings removed.'

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The relevant policies of the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP, 2012) that are applicable in the assessment of the proposed development are set out below:

- Coastal Zone Policy CZ1
- Roads and Transport RT1
- Built Heritage Policy BH1c) & BH5

OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT

Planning Background:

This proposed development relates to development approval 2020/87 - *Rehabilitation of Field Road and Side Path Road: Selective Widening by cutting into the Hillside, Improving the Field Road/Side Path Junction*, 3rd February 2021. Condition 3 of the approval required details relating to the radius of the Side Path/Field Road junction. Condition 3 was discharged in 12/09/2023 for the final design at the junction with a 7.5m turning radius including gabions at the base of the cut hillside at the junction.

However following the excavation of the junction it was evident that an alternative solution to gabions at the base of the hillside would need to be implemented to provide suitable rock-fall mitigation measures. A further discharge of Condition 3 was approved on 24/09/2024 removing the gabions as part of the junction design for the approved 7.5m turning radius.

The current proposal is to provide a large area of brown-coloured mesh 110m to a maximum height of 14m high with a coverage of approximately 1,200 sq.m in total. It would replace the smaller current (green) mesh which is temporarily in place as a safety measure at the junction.

The most significant impact from the proposed netting is the visual impact on the landscape which in this case also impacts on the character and appearance of the Jamestown Historic Conservation Area within which the mesh would be located. Due to its elevated position, the mesh will also be visible from other public viewpoints within Jamestown.

However, given that the colour will be brown to coincide with the exposed hillside's colouring, and that the type of netting is not dissimilar to those that already exist within Jamestown and Rupert's Valley, the development is not considered to result in a significantly adverse impact on the character or appearance of the Jamestown Historic Conservation area while at the same time providing safety to both vehicle and pedestrian safety on Field Road and Side Path at this busy and important junction.

Overall, the proposal will help to alleviate some of the erosion issues that are present along this section of road, and with the mitigation measure of having brown colour netting reduce the visual impact overall, this development is considered acceptable.

A condition is proposed to be attached to require that the new netting to be implemented within 6 months so that the temporary unauthorised mesh is removed within as short a period as possible but without increasing safety concerns at the junction.