

Planning Officer's Report – LDCA AUGUST 21 2025

APPLICATION	2025/51 – Installation of Perimeter Security Fence & Gates
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Full Permission
REGISTERED	1 st July 2025
APPLICANT	Programme Management Office, St Helena Government c/o Shelley Thomas
PARCEL	FP0230
LOCALITY	St Helena Secondary School, Francis Plain
ZONE	Green Heartland
CONSERVATION AREA	None
CURRENT USE	School
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sentinel Newspaper on 3rd July 2025▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	17 th July 2025
REPRESENTATIONS	One Received
DECISION ROUTE	Delegated / LDCA / EXCO

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

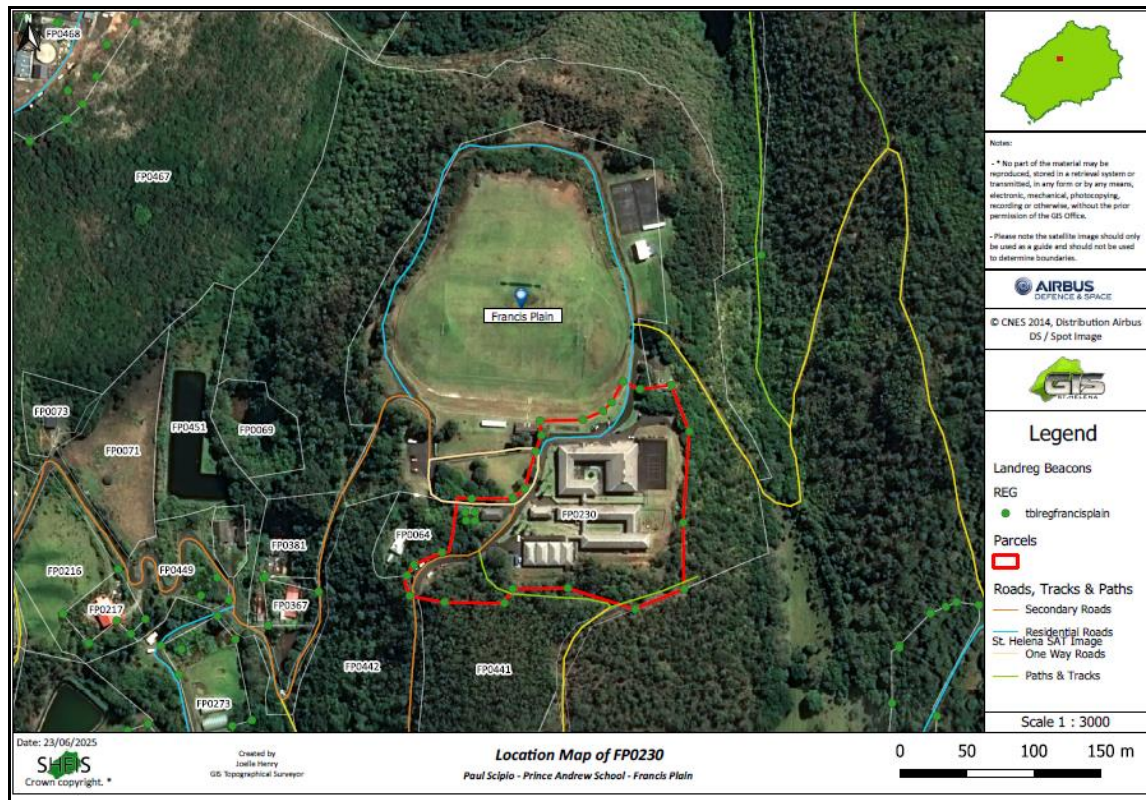
1. Sewage & Water Division	No Objection
2. Energy Division	No Response
3. Fire & Rescue	No Objection
4. Roads Section	No Objection
5. Property Division	No Objection
6. Environmental Management	No Objection
7. Public Health	No Response
8. Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
9. St Helena Police Services	No Response
10. Aerodrome Safe Guarding	No Response
11. Economic Development	No Objection
12. National Trust	No Response
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Objection - Comments
14. Heritage Society	No Response

B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

LOCALITY & ZONING

This development will be carried out at St Helena Secondary School, and is designated within the Green Heartland Zone but not in a conservation area.

Diagram 1: Location Plan



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

There is no existing fencing at St Helena's Secondary School (SHSS) and the proposal is to install fencing around the perimeter of the school buildings. The total length of fencing needed is approximately 314m, and will measure a height of 2m and will be finished in green (normally powder-coating). Five gates will be installed at various access points into the school buildings. Some gates will be automatically release during emergencies and with a timer setting to allow students access before school, break, lunch and after school. The fencing does not include the playing field, squash courts or gym/viewing areas nor the public road which runs though/near the school buildings.

The applicant in their submission indicates that the current lack of sufficient security infrastructure leaves the site vulnerable to unauthorised access and poses a risk to the safety and welfare of students, staff, and visitors. At present, individuals can enter and exit the school premises from multiple points around the site, creating an environment where it is difficult to monitor and control access effectively. This situation compromises the school's ability to ensure that only authorised persons are on the premises and presents a safeguarding concern, as it increases the risk of students leaving the site without permission and allows potential intruders to enter undetected.

The applicant therefore indicates that construction of a perimeter fence enclosing the entire school buildings site would significantly enhance security by restricting unauthorised access and ensuring that all movement onto and off the premises is directed through a single, controlled point. This will ensure all individuals whether students, staff, or visitors must enter and exit solely through the main school entrance. This system would prevent students from leaving the premises without permission and ensure that the site is fully secured during school hours.

The applicant indicates that one reason to implement these measures are that it is essential to align the school's safeguarding procedures with international standards, and meet the requirements set by the Council of British International Schools (COBIS) which the school is seeking to achieve. While SHSS is not an international school as it is a school on a British Overseas Territory (BOT), it is a recognised standard that can be equally applied on a BOT. The applicants indicate that COBIS places a strong emphasis on safeguarding and child protection, and securing the school site is a fundamental expectation for accredited institutions.

The applicants indicate that by enhancing security infrastructure through the construction of a perimeter fence, will create a safer, more secure environment that fosters confidence among parents, staff, and students, while demonstrating the school's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of safety and safeguarding.

Diagram 2: Proposed Site Layout

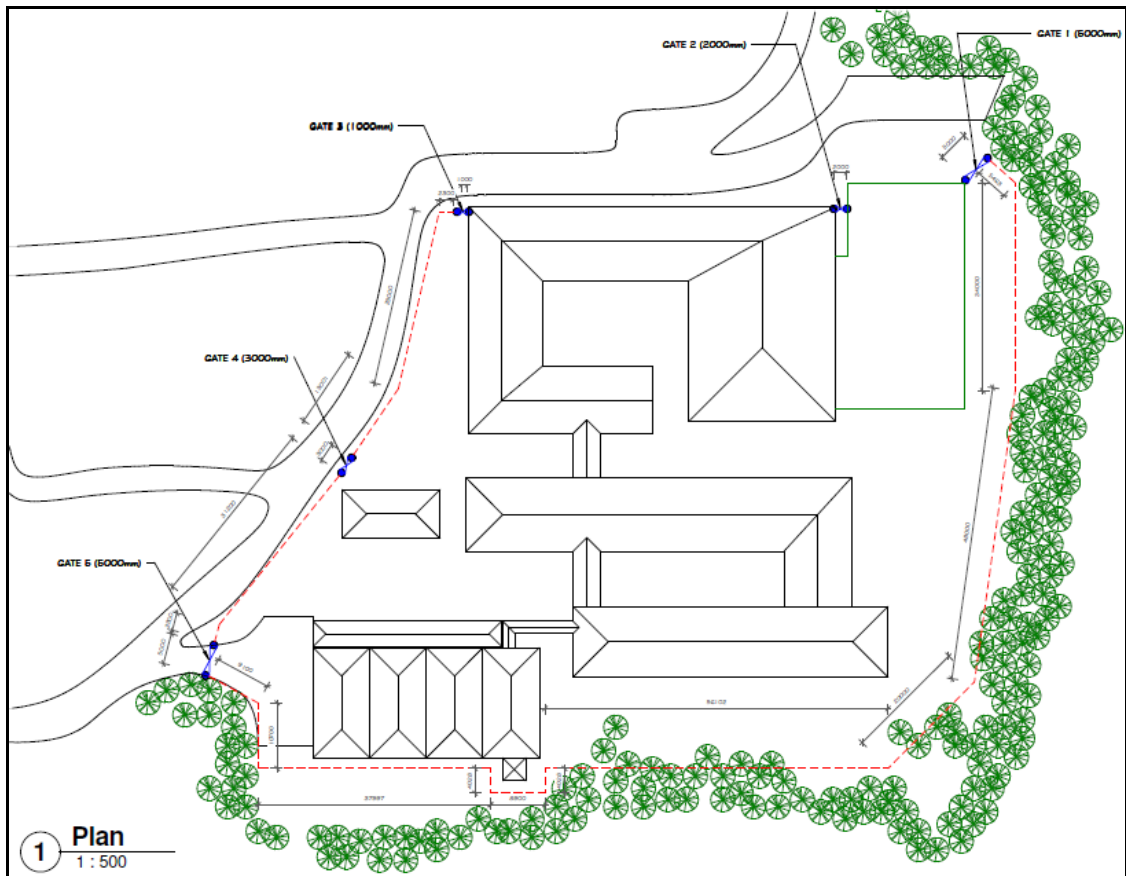


Diagram 3: Fencing Details

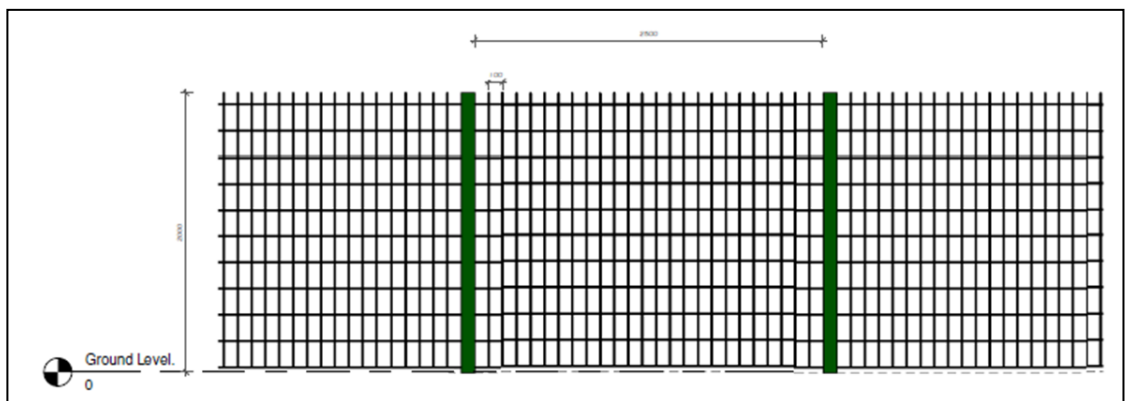


Diagram 4: Photographic Example of Fence Design



Diagram 5: Photographic Example of Gate Design



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS

One representation was submitted from a member of the public, and comments have been received from a Planning Stakeholder: Sure SA Ltd., as follows:

Sure SA Ltd: No Objection – ‘Please be aware of underground telecoms cable in the area between Gates 3 and 4. Please contact Sure South Atlantic Ltd. in advance of excavation works for fence the posts. Sure staff can trace and mark approximate location of the underground cable.’

Member of the Public: ‘I was somewhat alarmed to see the application and its gross “prison” type fencing. As a result, I have spent time looking at the issues that may result should planning and development be obtained in no particular order – aesthetics, fit for purpose, sustainability and unnecessary development within green heartland.

- Public safety

Remote control gates are not shown with crush areas opening and closing often because of the power/force required, the safety protection systems are overridden creating a public safety hazard. Imagine who would be responsible for a child picking up a ball and the gates crushing them? The planning officer, committee, head teacher or the remote person pressing the button?

- Emergency vehicle & persons access

Several things to consider here whilst I am sure the school has a valid fire evacuation policy. In the event of panic these may not go to plan and occupants may “herd” to locations where a fence confines them and smoke can blow & cause other life threatening issues.

Emergency vehicles may be denied access in the event of power failure leaving the teams to scale a 2m fence and emergency vehicles with lifesaving equipment 100m away.

- Aesthetics

After viewing the proposed fencing and security gates, they create without question a prison type effect, blocking light and with the barbed wire creating a potential injury hazard, which does not comply with any “British” safety standard – even temporary site fencing is not compliant with this in the UK.

In schools in inner cities in the UK where there are issues with gang and knife crime one may use this type of approach or in America with gun and drug crime this maybe an issue, but on our beautiful island this is not the case. Consideration has not been given to the psychological issues of “outside” visitors coming to the school from primary or overseas, it would be like looking into a fortress.

Likewise, those pupils and teachers being part confined to looking out at security surrounding their environment 8 hours a day 5 days a week.

- Green heartland

On a wider picture consideration has to be given to the environment. The school is in one of the most privileged areas of green heartland in the world and can be viewed from the top road from HTH and S bend access road, from the fort above a listed monument and is also viewed from many residential properties. The result is devastating.

In addition, it does not cover the school's sports fields where if planning were granted for this, it sets an established use agreement of fencing the whole site which would then resemble exercise yards within prisons.

- Fit for purpose

This type of fencing is not built to the standard required to cope with the environment of St Helena. We are all too familiar with the corrosion to metal parts and the powder coating would deteriorate within weeks ultimately causing major issues with maintenance.

- Sustainability

Deterioration of security, long term maintenance renewal and looking "shabby" within years and resultant replacement and carbon footprint and sustainability – a complete disaster.

- Unnecessary development within green heartland

Whilst all of the above will contribute to this and this project maybe part of the schools education report, I feel due consideration has not been given to the heritage and culture of the island that makes it so special. This application goes against your culture.

- Constructive approach

Whilst it maybe a requirement to have some form of protection from vehicles, the public and if security is a threat.

I would be grateful if you consider a parkland fencing similar to that at Plantation House but would have to be galvanised and thickness to withstand climbing & for longevity. This creates a barrier without the other issues.

A few examples of this are attached which may assist in not spoiling our only secondary school.

In addition to being more aesthetically pleasing, to have manually opening vehicle and pedestrian gates that could be locked in holidays (not electronic in case they fail and for safety/no crushing).

I hope this is received constructively by the committee and applicant and is written on information provided by the applicant.

I would be grateful if the committee would consider how their grandchildren would turn out if they were subjected to this environment for 6 years of their lives and unanimously reject this application.

There might be better value in investing in, for example. Hik Vision CCTV which allows secure remote monitoring and a substantial investment in improving the sports field grass and playing surface.'

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:

- Green Heartland Zone: GH1, GH.5, GH.6
- Social Infrastructure Policy SI1

OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT

This proposal seeks to address the lack of sufficient security infrastructure at St Helena's Secondary School (SHSS), which leaves the site vulnerable to unauthorised access and poses a risk to the safety and welfare of students, staff, and visitors. At present, individuals can enter and exit the school premises from multiple points around the site, creating an environment where it is difficult to monitor and control access effectively. This situation compromises the school's ability to ensure that only authorised persons are on the premises and presents a safeguarding concern, as it increases the risk of students leaving the site without permission and allows potential intruders to enter undetected.

Based upon planning policies, justification of the proposal is one that can be supported as it will create a secure environment for students, staff and visitors through appropriate social infrastructure in accordance with LDCP Policy SD1. Whilst the comments made within the representation raises concerns on a number of aspects including aesthetics, it is not considered out of context for the school to have a fence around its perimeter, as the current primary schools have fencing of some kind. COBIS requires any perimeter fencing to be installed at a height of 2m or more, in this case, the proposed fencing complies with the minimum height requirement.

There is no barbed wiring is part of the design. The fence will not be dissimilar to that seen around schools in the UK or with fencing heights to the Primary Schools on St Helena (albeit that the fence here would be stronger and less permeable). The suggestion of parkland fencing would not comply with COBIS requirements.

While the suggestion of CCTV is something worth considering for the applicant, that does not form part of this consideration/nor part of this application; it would also not provide direct control but passive surveillance.

Considering the possible visual impact, there inevitably be some harm on the landscape, however this is considered minimal from vantage points such as those as High Knoll due to the distance and the semi-transparent nature of the fence. Whilst the fence and gates does not comply with retaining the undeveloped nature of the Green Heartland, the fencing would surround existing, taller buildings which have a local urbanising effect but not the more visible playing field which remains generally open/undeveloped. It is considered that harm associated with the open fencing and gates in a green colour would be minimal on the immediate landscape, albeit within the Green Heartland.

There would also be a social benefit to provide a safe learning environment and it is considered overall, the social benefit of the development outweighs the limited impact on the landscape, and the proposed fencing can therefore be recommended for approval.