

## Planning Officer's Report – LDCA October 2025

<b>APPLICATION</b>	<b>2025/67</b> – Solar string lights to Church Lane, Jamestown
<b>PERMISSION SOUGHT</b>	Full Permission
<b>REGISTERED</b>	28 July 2025
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Dianne Venning, Saint Helena Tourism, St Helena Government
<b>PARCEL</b>	JT050037
<b>LOCALITY</b>	Church Lane
<b>ZONE</b>	Intermediate
<b>CONSERVATION AREA</b>	Heritage Coast /Jamestown Historic
<b>CURRENT USE</b>	Historic Landmark (proposed to be attached to)
<b>PUBLICITY</b>	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The Sentinel Newspaper on 31 July 2025</li><li>▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.</li></ul>
<b>EXPIRY</b>	15 August 2025
<b>REPRESENTATIONS</b>	Two 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	No Response
3. Fire & Rescue	No Objection
4. Roads Section	No Objection
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	No Response
10. Aerodrome Safe Guarding	Not Applicable
11. Economic Development	No Objection
12. National Trust	No Response
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Response
14. Heritage Society	No Objection – Comment
15. Maritime	Not Applicable

## B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

### LOCALITY & ZONING

The proposal would be in part attached to St James Church – Grade I Listed, HM Prison (The Old Gaol) – Grade II and of Group Value and The Mantis Hotel – (Staff House) – Grade II and residential properties to the rear of The Mantis fronting onto Church Lane, Lower Jamestown. It is designated within Intermediate Zone as well as the Heritage Coast Conservation Area – St James Church, HMP Prison, The Archway/Church Road – and Jamestown Historic Conservation Area – The Mantis and Residential Properties to the south.

**Diagram 1: Location Plan**



### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Tourism Section of Saint Helena Government (SHG), The Applicant, is proposing to provide a string of lights between the church's southern wall and the wall to the south of Church Lane. The lights would be located behind the eastern arch (junction with Main Street) and extend to the Prison/junction with Narrabacks/Shy Road to the west. The lighting sting would be accompanied by small photovoltaic panels providing an independent electricity supply.

The applicants indicate that this would provide an "Instagram-able" feature for tourists to photograph as well as providing lighting to a dark alleyway used by tourists and Islanders to access residential properties on Church Land and the

restaurant/tourist accommodation at The Blue Lantern and also to open up a second access to Jacobs Ladder during dark hours, approximately 12 hours per day.

The string lighting would hang down from fixed points either side of Church Lane would be fitted at a height to enable vehicles to clear them so that they can continue to use Church Lane which is listed as a “Residential Road” by Roads Section.

**Diagram 2: Site Plan Showing Position of Light Strings**

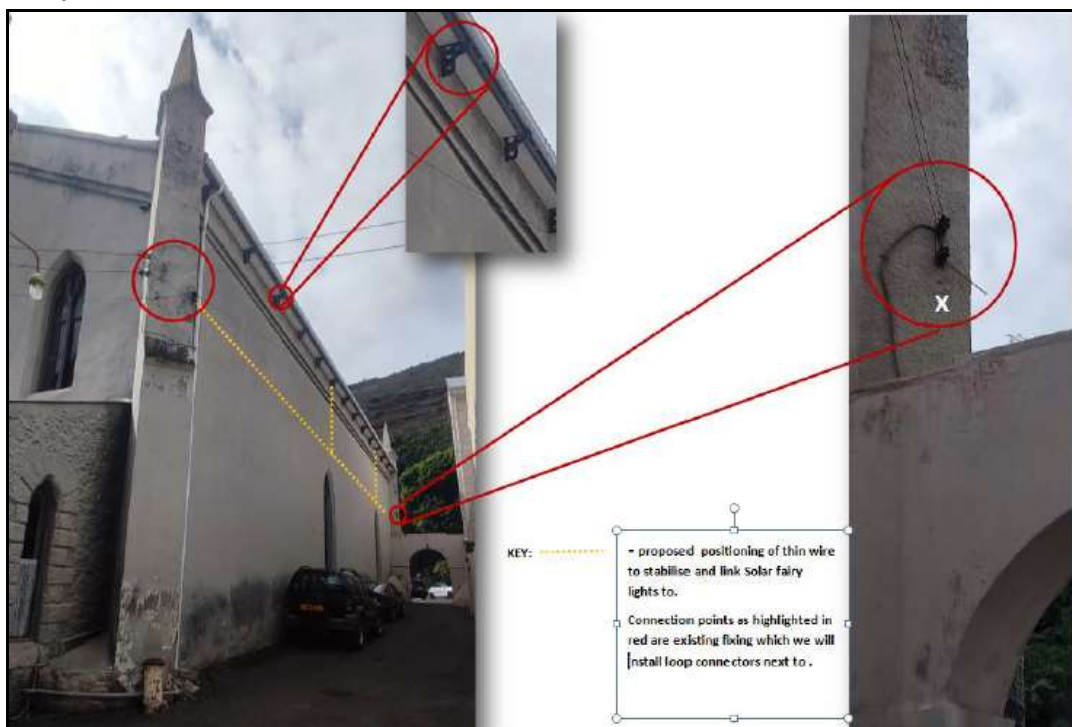


The applicants propose that the fixing options will be as follows:

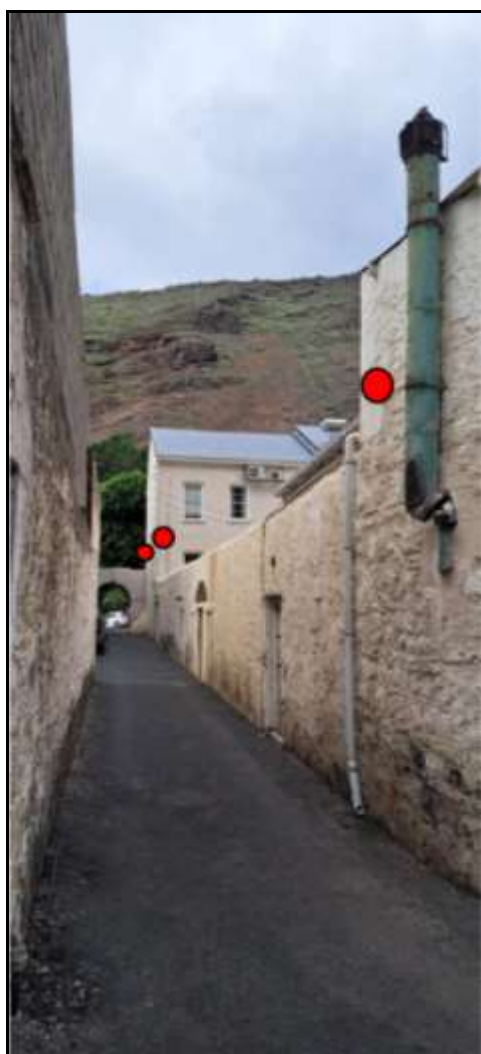
- Fix 1 x stainless steel loop into the West and East sides of the St James Church wall ( directly next to existing attachments used to link Connect and SURE cables)
- Fix 1 x stainless steel loop into the West and East sides of HM Prison wall.
- Running a thin wire line through loops, holding cable in place.
- Opposite parallel wall (Mantis), loops to be fixed from the West to East with a cable running through and central support using brackets fixed to the top of the wall.
- Mount small PV panel to Mantis wall and Prison wall.

No details have been provided for the proposed photovoltaics. The applicants have indicated them to be “very small”.

**Diagram 3: Annotated Photograph Showing Proposed Fixings to Church (Northern side)**



**Diagram 4: Position of Light Fixing on Southern side of Church Lane**



**Diagram 5: Sample Mock-Up of Light String (during dark hours)**



## **STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS**

A representation (one objection) was received from a member of the public, as detailed below. There were no objections received from stakeholders however, there were comments made by various stakeholders, also detailed below.

### **Representation 1**

*With regards to this proposal, Unfortunately, I am objecting. On Schedule 1, Form A, point 6 it states "not currently used by a lot of foot or vehicular traffic"*

*Church Lane is frequently used by pedestrians and vehicular traffic. If this request is approved, this would create an attraction, which will increase noise pollution.*

*Although I am rejecting, I am curious to know where the external walls and roof coverings were going to be as mentioned in point 13.*

*May I suggest that the Public Gardens be used instead.*

**[Officer comment:** there are no external walls/roof; alternative locations are not before the LDCA for a decision]



## Representation 2

*I object most strongly to this application 2025/67 for lights in Church Lane. The proposed lighting wires during the day will adversely affect the street scene and the setting of its buildings. Also, there is no element of conservation. Many years ago, the wires across the streets of Jamestown were systematically removed to tidy-up the town. This application is a retrograde step that does not follow the built heritage policies. Neither do the lights comply with normal planning conditions that they point downwards.*

*This, together with applications 2025/58 for lights in the Public Gardens, application 2025/44 for plaques and lights on the Terrace Wall and the Mundens 'Request for Proposals' on 21st July, represents a significant onslaught by a government department against the character of two Historic Conservation Areas that are protected by planning law and the policies of successive Governments, as long agreed by the people of St Helena.*

*Those principles of protection are set out in the LDCP as follows:*

*2.14 Built heritage is one of the key assets of the island and a cornerstone of tourism development potential. Its conservation is therefore critical.*

*25.1 Carefully balancing 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.*

*25.5 Conservation of the historic built environment is critical to the success of tourism growth on the Island, as well as being appropriate in conserving an internationally important resource.*

*Why did the applicant not seek pre-planning advice from the Chief Planning Officer when they are obliged to "formulate any project of public development in St Helena in accordance with the relevant objectives and policies of the Development Plan (LDCP)" under section 15 of the Ordinance?*

*That St Helena Tourism, a government department, is now seeking to alter the appearance and ambiance of Jamestown into a Tinsel Town to attract tourists, is now in conflict with established government policy as expressed in the LDCP. This change of government policy has occurred while the Legislative Council is dissolved. This means the public have no political recourse to their Councillors which is their right. It is also contrary to the pre-election convention known as purdah, meaning that the Public Service is engaged in potentially manipulating the debates in a general election, which the convention seeks to avoid.*

*I suggest applications 2025/67, 2025/58 and 2025/44 and the Mundens scheme should be set aside to allow the newly elected government to consider their own future policies in accordance with the will of the people.*

**[Officer comment:** This application is to be decided at LDCA level as it does not require to be referred to the Governor in Council/ExCo (or ECIP). Members of the LDCA make planning decisions on the proposal's own planning merits. There is no change to planning policy against which any Development Application will be assessed. There is no requirement to wait for newly appointed Ministers to be elected as they would not be making this decision; notwithstanding, if LDCA members do consider that Development Applications propose a change in planning

policy, then it is their prerogative to decide if they wish to refer any Development Application to the Governor in Council for a decision, when ECIP next meets. Decisions made by the LDCA in line with the Planning Ordinance during any “inter-regnum” are binding; nonetheless it is expected that by the time this application is considered, all Ministers/Councillors will be in their respective positions; the objector/any member of the public can contact any of them if they so wish to.

If the objector considers that the Tourism Officers have not formulated their project in accordance with the relevant objectives and policies of the Development Plan or that they have not raised any material planning considerations for a departure, then this could be in breach of the duty of Section 15 of the LDCP Ordinance; Planning Officers do not consider that the proposal results in a breach of the duty indicated, even if planning officers recommend refusal of the proposal and/or the LDCA refuse the proposal as it is for LDCA Members to make a decision, not public officers; notwithstanding this is not a legal opinion. Anyone not agreeing with whether public officers have met the indicated duty in formulating their project or how a planning decision is made can take legal action.

While it is understood that Property Services have put out a public call for any interest in Mundens as a potential development opportunity, there is no current Development Application relating to Mundens and, as such, it cannot be “put aside”]

### **Heritage Society**

*No objection - Please note that in order to deal with the existential damp penetration of the church wall, the Church has been recommended that it will be necessary to strip the cement render and also replace the roof gutter to re-grade it to more than one downpipe position. This should be taken into account in deciding where to fix the proposed lighting system supports.*

### **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 Policy IZ1, IZ.4, IZ.6
- Energy: Policy E.7, E.8
- Built Heritage: BH1 a), b), c), BH2, BH5
- Tourism: T1, T.3
- Roads and Transport: RT1 a) and d)

### **OFFICER’S ASSESSMENT**

The main considerations are the impact of the proposed string lighting on the adjacent historic assets (listed Buildings) and on the character and appearance of the

Historic Coast and Jamestown Historic Conservation Areas; and whether the provision of lighting would provide a safe pedestrian and tourist route from Main Street, Jamestown along Church Road to Shy Road, Narrabacks (Blue Lantern accommodation/restaurant) and Jacobs Ladder in Jamestown.

The Tourism Office have been working towards increasing lighting in Jamestown in part to increase Tourist enjoyment but also to make darker areas in the Capital City safer for all (tourist and Saints alike). Church Lane after dark has limited lighting.

The Tourism Office indicates that these lighting strings would be solar-powered and, as such will only last for as long as the solar receptors are in sunlight during the day.

It is recognised that the proposed string lighting would not be downwards only and that there would be some light spill above them, however the standard planning condition is that lighting should be below eaves level and downward; if this requirement were to be applied here lighting could be attached significantly higher on the Church wall and higher on the Prison and residential walls behind the Mantis. Dark Skies Legislation has yet to be enacted on St Helena and the proposal would be located in Jamestown, the Capital City of the Island where most tourist bed spaces are located in hotel accommodation. The level of light which might escape from the narrow access that is Church Lane would be limited by the surrounding buildings which would act to contain it. It is considered, given that the lighting proposed is in an enclosed alley way (albeit wide enough for vehicles) that light spill would be contained and not extend outwards from the alley to a significant degree that this would be acceptable.

An objector has indicated that more people/cars may use the public road if it is well lit. It is recognised that more people may choose to access the side/rear of the Church and behind the prison if lighting is provided and that that may result in some increase in noise/disturbance. Notwithstanding, this is a public road where noise can be expected and it is not therefore considered that any noise arising would be so significant an increase in noise levels and disturbance as to result in harm to residential amenities (in particular as the walls are both high/thick to courtyard areas beyond) such that it is not considered on this ground alone that development consent should be refused. Notwithstanding, any significant harm – such as high decibel noise levels beyond normal pedestrian/car use of a public highway - should be controlled through Environmental or Health Legislation rather than through the planning system (where there is no such legislation, it is not the role of the Planning Ordinance to take over that authority).

In considering the proposal, this is for a simple string of lights which would be fixed over an alleyway to an external wall of the Church and another historic wall. The fixings would be limited and removable such that the overall impact on the fabric and special architectural/historic interest for the Listed Building and on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be limited, albeit that the lighting would be more prominent during dark hours but mainly along the access only with wider public views being limited by the set-back position from the junctions, the arch and the limiting of the lighting to the west so that it does not extend beyond the buildings. It is recognised that the lighting will be visible beyond Church Lane itself, including from elevated positions above Jamestown, including Shy Road, Ladder Hill



Road, Jacobs Ladder and Side Path although such views may be partially blocked, in particular by the surrounding buildings.

It is therefore considered that the string lighting will not appear visually intrusive within the landscape, nor will the design dominate or result in any significant adverse effect on the integrity of the listed building/s or Conservation Area to a harmful degree.

No details have been provided for the proposed small photovoltaics. As they may be affixed to Listed Buildings, such details should be provided prior to implementation of the proposed string lighting. A suitable condition can be attached to require details to be submitted for approval.

The proposed string lighting will improve lighting for both Saints and tourists wishing to visit/return to The Blue Lantern/Jacobs Ladder during darkness while also providing a “photo opportunity” which would help with tourism efforts to widen interest in visiting St Helena. This would improve public safety in line with Policy RT1 d) and T1.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in accordance with the Built Heritage, Energy, Road and Traffic, Tourism and Intermediate Zone planning policies.