



## PLANNING STATEMENT

### PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE FROM TOWN HALL TO MIXED USE OF TOWN HALL AND MUSEUM INCLUDING SMALL GIFT SHOP

#### 1.0 Introduction & Proposed Use

1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of the Council of the Isles of Scilly's application to change the use of the Town Hall (Hugh Town, St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly, TR21 0LW) from a *Town Hall* to *Mixed Use of Town Hall and Museum including small gift shop*.

1.2 The Town Hall is an important historic building within Hugh Town and is currently used by the Council as office space for its employees. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Main Hall itself was used for community events.

1.3 The Council is applying to allow the mixed use of the building and proposes to zone it into:

- Offices for the Council of the Isles of Scilly;
- Offices for the shared use of the Council of the Isles of Scilly and the Isles of Scilly Museum;
- Offices and display space for the Isles of Scilly Museum, including the use of the Stage in the Main Hall for object storage;
- The shared use of the Main Hall and associated facilities (Kitchen, WCs) by the Council of the Isles of Scilly and the Isles of Scilly Museum; and
- A small Gift Shop and display space for the Isles of Scilly Museum.

*For further details, including the location and size of these zones, please see the accompanying existing and proposed plans.*

1.4 The application is not proposing any interior or exterior work to the building, which is Grade II listed and in a prominent location in the Isles of Scilly Conservation Area.

1.5 The application is being made on several grounds, including the cultural and institutional importance of the Isles of Scilly Museum to our community and the visitor economy.

1.6 Until June 2019, the Isles of Scilly Museum was located in the Museum building on Church Street. The Council closed the building following a structural survey that showed it posed a significant risk to staff and visitors.

1.7 This proposed change of use would allow the Isles of Scilly Museum to reopen to the public once again, securing both its physical presence in the heart of Hugh Town and the continued use of a valuable community and heritage asset in the form of the Town Hall.

1.8 The plans for a new Museum and Cultural Centre are moving forward, but in the meantime, this application should be viewed as a permanent change of use.

1.9 The Council is in a position to offer the Museum the shared use of the Town Hall as a result of its ongoing review into office accommodation and modern ways of working following the pandemic.

## **2.0 Location, Access & Times of Operation**

2.1 The Town Hall is located centrally within Hugh Town, St. Mary's. The principal façade is the north elevation which faces The Parade, with the rear (south) elevation facing Silver Street.

2.2 The main entrance is through a modern extension that was constructed in 2009. The entrance door in this location is powered and is of sufficient width to enable wheelchair access.

2.3 A smaller entrance at the rear of the building, onto Silver Street, provides direct access to the Main Hall. This entrance is only used when an event is being held in the Main Hall.

2.4 The accompanying Location and Block Plan shows the location of the Town Hall in relation to its surroundings.

2.5 The Council intends to continue operating in the building between the hours of 08:30 to 17:00 on weekdays.

2.6 The Museum is proposing to operate in the building between the hours of 09:00 to 21:00 on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and between the hours of 09:00 to 17:00 on Sunday.

2.7 This 12-hour window will allow the Museum the flexibility to extend its usual opening hours, set to be 10:00 to 16:00 on weekdays and 10:00 to 12:00 on Saturday, if for example the weather is bad. It will also afford them the opportunity to hold events, such as talks, in the evening.

2.8 Given the well-established use of the Town Hall entrance, for both Council employees and the public on a daily basis, the applicant doesn't believe the change of use will have an adverse impact, either via increased noise or footfall, on the neighbouring properties.

2.9 It is important to note that the drop-in customer service desk for residents, currently located in the reception area of the Town Hall, will not be lost as a result of this application. Instead, it will be part of the service offered at the Library on Porthcressa.

2.10 The Council and Museum will work together to ensure the security of the building, including from a data protection point of view, is maintained.

## **3.0 Maintaining our Heritage & Supporting the Tourism Economy**

3.1 The Town Hall is an iconic, Grade II listed building within the centre of Hugh Town.

3.2 That heritage value, and the link to the past, is why the Town Hall is deemed to be a fitting location for the Isles of Scilly Museum to take up residence and showcase the history of the islands to residents and tourists alike.

3.3 In that spirit, the application is believed to be in line with policy WC5 of the Draft Local Plan (2015 – 2030), given the Museum would make a positive contribution to the visitor economy, in an accessible and appropriate location, that supports the promotion and interpretation of the islands' heritage.

**Nicola Stinson, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021.**