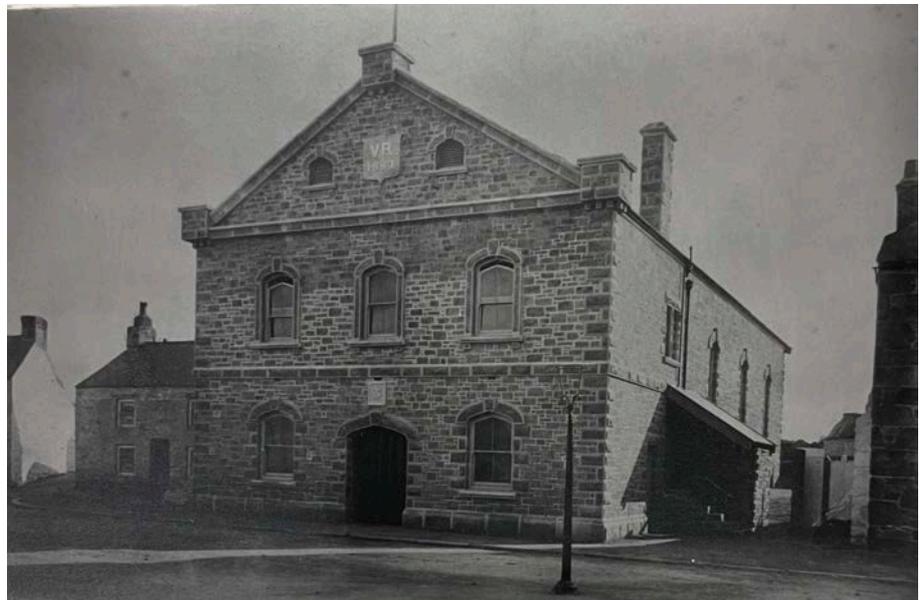


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# Town Hall, St Mary's Isles of Scilly

Heritage Impact Assessment



April 2022

PORTICO  
HERITAGE

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment has been commissioned by the Council of the Isles of Scilly to provide an understanding of the significance of the Grade II listed Town Hall, St Mary's in order to inform proposals for its use as the Cultural Centre for the Isles of Scilly.
- 1.2 The report identifies the historic evolution of the site and its setting and identifies its heritage significance. It then considers the proposals and their impact on that heritage significance and how they comply with legislation, policy and guidance.
- 1.3 It should be read in conjunction with the Design & Access Statement and plans prepared by Purcell.

### Author

- 1.4 The author of this report is Nick Collins BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC. Formerly a Director of Conservation at Alan Baxter & Associates, Nick spent nine years at Historic England as a Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas where he led a specialist team of historic building inspectors, architects, and archaeologists on a wide range of heritage projects in East & South London. Previously Conservation Officer at the London Borough of Bromley, Nick began his career at real estate consultancy Jones Lang LaSalle as a Chartered Surveyor.

## **2 The site and its context**

- 2.1 The following section provides a description of the existing site and its context. It also provides details of the site's history and the significance of the site and context.

### **The Site**

- 2.2 The Town Hall is located in the centre of Hugh Town overlooking the Parade Ground and backing onto Porthcressa Road adjacent to Porthcressa beach.
- 2.3 As well as being the Islands' Town Hall it also contains offices for the Council of the Isles of Scilly, and currently a temporary exhibition for the Isles of Scilly Museum.
- 2.4 The Council Chamber and Magistrates Court have not been used for their original function since 2002. The stage has not been used since 2017 and the hall since 2019.
- 2.5 The foyer and front entrance space has been the temporary home of the Museum since 2020.

### **History<sup>1</sup>**

- 2.6 Hugh Town is the main urban centre on St Mary's and the wider Isles of Scilly. It is located on a narrow isthmus which joins the Garrison (historically the Hugh) peninsula with the rest of St Mary's.
- 2.7 During medieval times nearby Old Town was the main centre of population. The key elements of the medieval landscape: Ennor Castle, St Mary's Church and the Old Quays, still form a coherent and visible group around Old Town Bay together with Old Town itself.
- 2.8 In 1570 Queen Elizabeth I granted the Godolphin family the lease of the Islands and for the next 215 years, except during the Civil War period, this Cornish family 'owned' Scilly. The Dukes of Leeds, heirs to the Godolphins, assumed the lease in 1785, reverting to the Crown in 1831.

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<sup>1</sup> The history section of this report is drawn from a number of sources, including The Isles of Scilly Museum: Inside the Archipelago (2011); Laws, P (1980) The Buildings of Scilly; Madden, P (1996) Scilly's Building Heritage

- 2.9 The Godolphins and Star Castle (built in just 18 months during the 1590s to ward off a second Spanish Armada) transformed Scilly. Law and order came to the islands. So did an influx of new residents from Cornwall. Houses were put up against the Garrison walls and a quay was built in 1601 as Hugh Town grew in size and strategic importance. As the military defences increased, The Hugh became known as The Garrison.
- 2.10 A new 99-year lease was taken on by Hertfordshire squire Augustus Smith in 1834. Smith lived in Scilly until his death in 1872. Imbued with notions of self-help, he took over from a regime of absentee landlords and lacklustre land agents. He found declining trade and failing crops supporting an inflated population on holdings split between all a family's surviving sons.
- 2.11 As Lord proprietor and Chief Magistrate, Smith re-allocated tenancies. He insisted that only the eldest son could succeed to land. The dispossessed found work on Smith's new projects or left the islands.
- 2.12 Smith forbade marriage unless a couple had a house of their own and made parents pay a penny a week for sending children to school, tuppence if they stayed at home.
- 2.13 In 1838 he built his home next to the old Abbey on Tresco, planted trees as wind breaks, thus creating Tresco Gardens from species brought home by Scillionian sea captains, and helped to organise and finance a local shipbuilding industry.

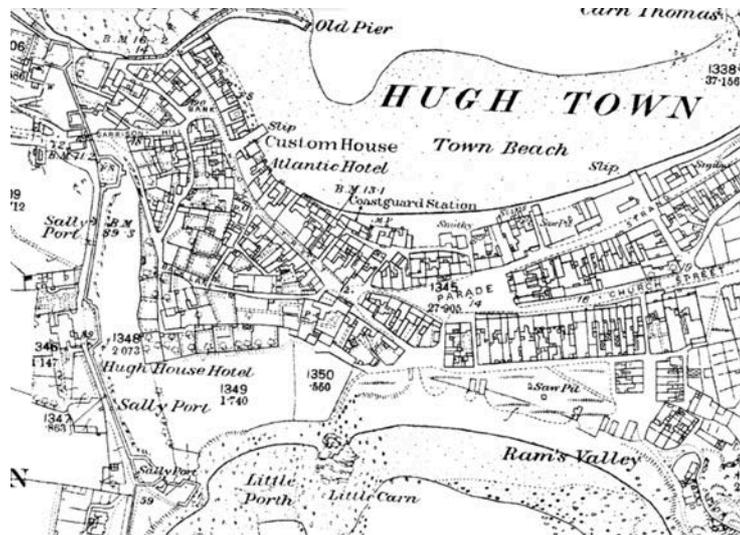


Figure 1: Ordnance Survey Map 1875, before the Town Hall was constructed.

- 2.14 After the death of Augustus Smith in 1872 the Islands were inherited by his nephew, Thomas 'Algernon' Smith-Dorrien-Smith.
- 2.15 The Ordnance Survey Map of 1875 (figure 1) and the historic photograph (figure 2) shows how Augustus Smith would have found Hugh Town when he first inherited the role of Lord Proprietor.



Figure 2: Undated photograph of The Parade before the Town Hall was built © Isles of Scilly Museum Archive

- 2.16 Hugh House, built as Officer's Mess in 1792 can be seen high on the Garrison Hill. It became the first residence of Augustus Smith before he moved across to Tresco Abbey<sup>2</sup> and now serves as the Duchy of Cornwall's Offices on the Islands.
- 2.17 The site of the Town Hall is directly in front of Hugh House and can be seen in the middle ground marked by the single storey gable end adjacent to what became the Spanish Ledge Guest House (now holiday apartments) to the right and Parade Cottage to the left. The Parade Gardens had not been laid out at this time.

### **Dorrien-Smith & Architecture**

- 2.18 Following the death of Augustus Smith, Algernon Dorrien-Smith continued the work started by his Uncle, including the construction of a number of new buildings across the Islands.
- 2.19 Dorrien-Smith appears to have had a curious architectural quirk – a delight in chunky stonework<sup>3</sup>. This is to be seen, for example, in the use of huge unwrought blocks of granite for porches of cottages near New Grimsby Quay, and in the house, Rowsefield, on Middle Down in Tresco, built about 1897. It is also very visible on the principal High Street façade of the Post Office, bearing his initials and the date 1897. There the chunky stones have been used with great effect to form the quoins and lintels of the windows.



Figures 3&4: Rowsefields & the Post Office 1897

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<sup>2</sup> Historic England List Description: 1141186

<sup>3</sup> Laws, P (1980) The Buildings of Scilly

## The Town Hall

- 2.20 Perhaps a forerunner to this architectural idiosyncrasy, the Town Hall was begun in 1887 and opened in 1889. A plaque inside records the name of the honorary architect as Mr J. Goodfellow.
- 2.21 The site of two structures were cleared to make way for the new structure, which can be seen in the 1875 OS Map (figure 1).
- 2.22 Originally a rectangular plan and two storeys in height, its classical style is reflected in its pedimented front, symmetrical window pattern, plinth and angle quoins. The windows and main entrance have keyed four-centre arches over timber sashes and a centrally positioned shield reads 'VR 1887' whilst over the front entrance is the cypher of Thomas Algernon Dorrien-Smith.
- 2.23 Materials used include squared and roughly coursed and snecked granite with hammer dressed details and stone copings to the gabled roof.

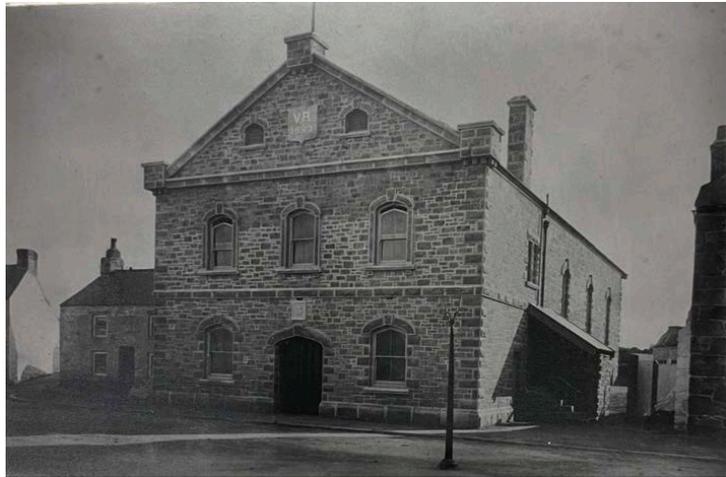


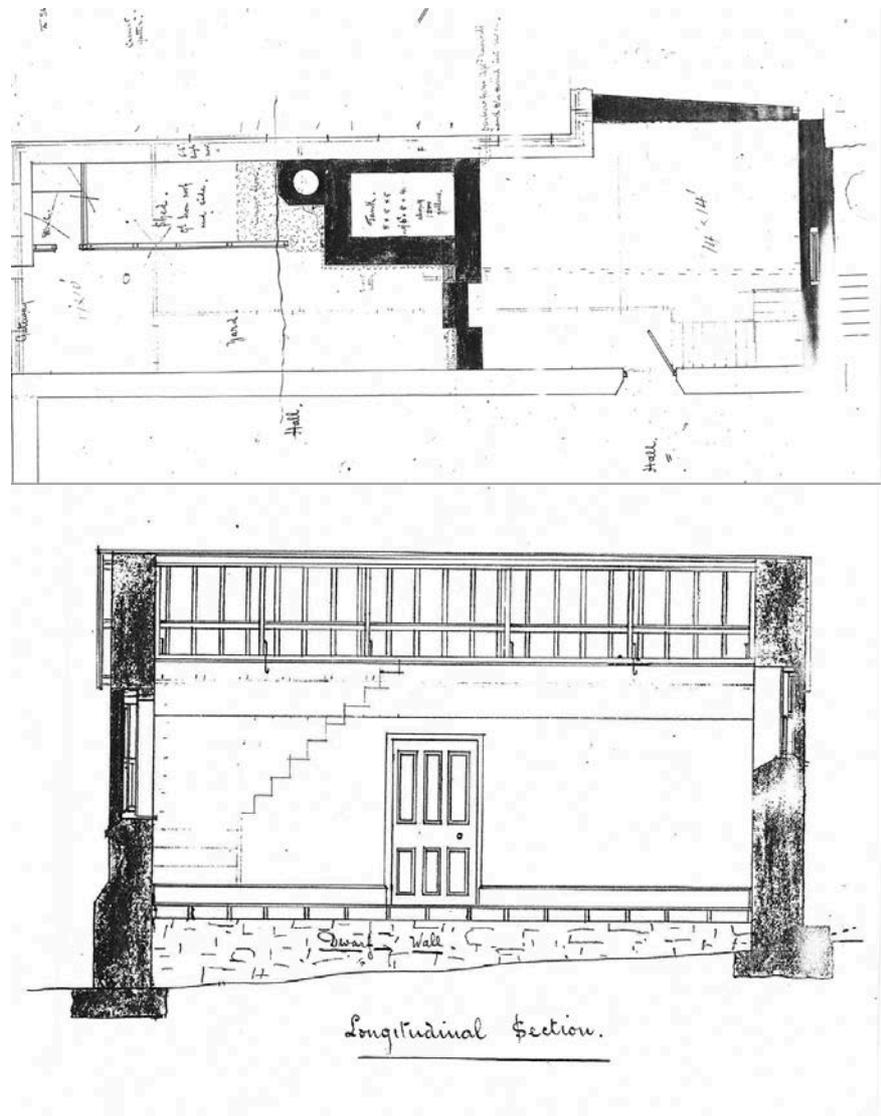
Figure 5: The Town Hall when newly completed © Isles of Scilly Museum Archive

- 2.24 The Town Hall was multi-functional – serving as a public hall and theatre, Council Chamber and Magistrates Court.
- 2.25 As can be seen in figure 5, the building was originally a simple rectangle with just a small lean-to covering steps to the side entrance. Large windows flanked the sides of the hall, providing natural light.



Figure 6: Undated photograph shortly after construction of the Town Hall © Isles of Scilly Museum Archive

- 2.26 The undated photograph in figure 6 shows how the adjacent remaining cottage (Parade Cottage) had to be 'joined' to the new structure after it was severed from its former neighbour.
- 2.27 By 1900 there must have been a requirement for additional accommodation at the building as plans were drawn up for a single-storey extension.



Figures 7&8: Plans for the single storey extension on the western side of the Town Hall

- 2.28 The extension sits just behind the original stone steps that accessed the side entrance to the Hall and remains today, subsumed into the later 1970s three storey extension and behind the modern entrance porch.
- 2.29 The following photographs show the same position in 1962 (on a visit by HM The Queen Mother), before the construction of the modern porch, and today.



Figures 9&10: The side entrance to the Town Hall in 1962 and today (2021)

2.30 The following Ordnance Survey extract from 1905 shows the town hall with the single storey extension to the west.



Figure 11: Ordnance Survey 1905

2.31 In 1970 a substantial extension was added to the western side of the building to create additional office space for the Council of the Isles of Scilly. This consumed the 1900 extension and stretched the length of the western elevation of the building.

- 2.32 Whilst the front elevation of the extension was given a partial granite stone dressing the windows are modern casements and the third floor is contained within a tall mansard, clad in artificial slate, with two large velux windows overlooking The Parade (figure 12).
- 2.33 To the side and rear the extension was rendered which whilst at least differentiating it from the original Town Hall building, overall detracted from the architectural qualities of the host building (figure 13).
- 2.34 The extension also required the blocking of all the original side windows to the Hall.



Figures 12&13: The 1970s extension on the western side of the Town Hall

### Inside the Town Hall

- 2.35 As described earlier, from the outset the building was designed to be multi-functional serving as a public hall and theatre with a Council Chamber & magistrates court on the first floor at the front of the building.
- 2.36 It is perhaps because of this practical and functional requirement that the internal spaces in the building have seen so much alteration.
- 2.37 The ground floor entrance space had a market use and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was occupied by a butcher. This meant that the main access to the chamber/court and hall above and behind was to the side.
- 2.38 There are very few details or images of the interior of the town hall, however figures 14 & 15 show the building at various times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

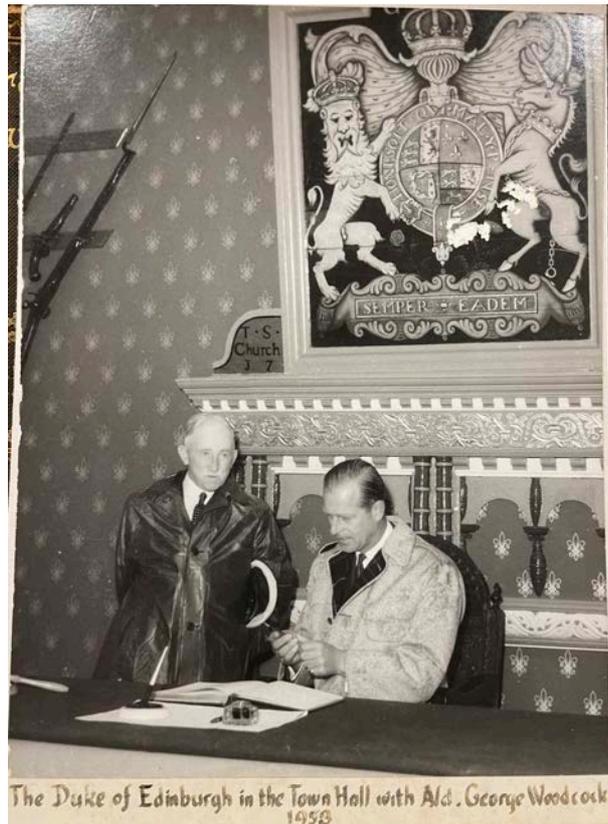


Figure 14: The Duke of Edinburgh in the Town Hall 1958 © Isles of Scilly Museum Archive

- 2.39 The photograph of The Duke of Edinburgh shows him sitting in front of a particularly ornate fireplace, possibly in the former Council Chamber, with the coat of arms of the Stuart family above. The Latin motto '*semper eadem*' translates as 'always the same'. It is probable that this chimney piece was salvaged from elsewhere - and is now gone.
- 2.40 Today, the Council Chamber has been stripped of any original fixtures and fittings and is entirely plain.



Figure 15: The former chamber/magistrates court with modern ceiling tiles, strip lighting and modern fire surround (2021)

- 2.41 The former Chamber/Magistrates Court now has modern ceiling tiles, strip lighting and modern fire surround.
- 2.42 Due to the impossibility of creating appropriate access to the upper floor both the Council and the Magistrates Court have ceased to use the Chamber.
- 2.43 The main hall has similarly seen considerable alteration although still retains its main volume.



Figure 16: Toy Fair 1971 © Isles of Scilly Museum Archive

- 2.44 Figure 16 shows the hall in use in 1971, looking towards the rear from the stage. A badminton court is painted onto the floor referencing its multi-functional use.
- 2.45 The western (right hand) windows have already been filled in.
- 2.46 The following images show the hall today. A large, incongruous heating vent (the top part of which would have been hidden behind a suspended ceiling) is visible. This now connects to the modern boiler room located on the eastern elevation of the hall.
- 2.47 The stage, a later addition, is situated at the southern end of the hall and is no longer used.





Figures 17 & 18: The main hall in 2021

- 2.48 Toilet facilities are accessed off the western side of the hall in the side extension. There is now only one remaining window providing natural light to the hall on the eastern side.

#### **Parade Cottage and Former Spanish Ledge Guest House**

- 2.49 Parade Cottage to the east and the former Guest House to the west are also Grade II listed and sits immediately adjacent to the Town Hall.



Figure 19: Parade Cottage (to the right) in the 1960s/70s © Isles of Scilly Museum Archive

- 2.50 Parade Cottage comprises a small vernacular cottage that dates back to the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.51 It is constructed of coursed granite rubble which is colourwashed, with some square stone to the front. It has a gabled slate roof with rendered left end chimney stack.
- 2.52 Internally it has a 2-room plan with central entry and staircase with a 20<sup>th</sup> century outshot to the rear.
- 2.53 The cottage has an exceptionally complete 19<sup>th</sup> century Scillionian interior including panelled doors, joists and plant and muntin partitions flanking the central stair<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.54 Whilst the cottage is now physically attached to the side of the Town Hall, the image in figure 6 (and compared to figure 2) illustrates that clearly there was an element of reconstruction at the time the Town Hall was built and its more historic neighbour was demolished.
- 2.55 To the rear is a small single storey structure that is likely to be contemporaneous with the cottage and also appears on the 1875 Ordnance Survey Map. It is listed Grade II in its own right.
- 2.56 The building is also of coursed granite rubble, with a gabled pantile roof and brick end stack. The original double entry is on the western elevation and the north gable has an inserted doorway. There is a fireplace to the south gable<sup>6</sup>.
- 2.57 The setting of Parade Cottage relates primarily to The Parade to the front, however, with the single storey shed to the rear, both also have a relationship with Porthcressa Road and Ingram's Opening. The significance of their setting relates more their contribution to the domestic townscape of Hugh Town than their relationship with the Town Hall – to which they have no specific connection other than physical.

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<sup>4</sup> Historic England List Description: 1141192

<sup>5</sup> Historic England List Description: 1141192

<sup>6</sup> Historic England List Description: 1291695



Figure 20: The rear of Parade Cottage and the Town Hall.

- 2.58 To the immediate west of the Town Hall are two early 19<sup>th</sup> century houses (now holiday lets, formerly the Spanish Ledge Guest House) which are of a grander scale and more formal architecture – symmetrically designed, 3 bays wide with central door and hipped half-dormers above.



Figure 21: Listed buildings immediately to the west of the Town Hall

- 2.59 Both buildings are of roughly coursed granite rubble. In contrast to Parade Cottage to the east, these houses reflect a higher status of both architecture and therefore original occupant.
- 2.60 Similar to Parade Cottage, the setting of the listed buildings relates more to the overall town centre – rather

than their physical relationship with the Town Hall – being representative of the other buildings in Hugh Town.

#### Wider Setting

- 2.61 As described earlier, the Town Hall sits at the western end of the former Parade Ground – now gardens - bounded by Lower Strand to the north and Church Street to the south.
- 2.62 The original open space can be seen in figures 2 & 6. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the 1905 Ordnance Survey Map shows that it had been converted to gardens. (figure 11).
- 2.63 Surrounding the Parade Ground Gardens are terraces of individual houses, mostly two storeys many have attic floors and dormer windows facing the Gardens. As well as Parade Cottage, many of the houses are listed.
- 2.64 The Town Hall, at the western end, and the Scillionian Club at the north eastern are the exceptions to this scale, making them landmarks.
- 2.65 The houses are mostly constructed of coursed granite rubble/partially cut granite, with slate roofs. Some are now rendered.





Figures 21-24: buildings surrounding Parade Gardens, including the Town Hall and Scillonian Club

2.66 These buildings are all of significance in their own right – especially those that have been listed – as good examples of the domestic architecture of Isles of Scilly at different

points in its history. The contribution that setting makes to their significance is primarily as part of the overall urban context of Hugh Town, surrounding the former Parade Ground, now gardens. They form a characterful backdrop to this space and help to ensure the prominence and significance of the Town Hall in this context.

### **3 The heritage significance of the site and its context**

3.1 The Town Hall is listed Grade II and lies within the Isles of Scilly Conservation Area.

3.2 The Town Hall was listed in December 1992. The list description reads:

*Town Hall. 1889, by J. Goodfellow. Squared and roughly coursed and snecked granite with hammer-dressed dressings; stone-coped gabled slate roof. Rectangular plan with gable to street. Classical style. Plinth, angle quoins and plat band to pedimented front of 2 storeys with symmetrical 3-window range. Keyed 4-centred arches over horned 2/2-pane sashes flanking similar tripartite sash to centre on ground floor; similar first-floor sashes set in raised architraves with similar arches and blocks to cills; similar arches over centre-hung 4-pane casements flanking shield with relief lettering reading VR/1887 to tympanum of pediment, which has dentil brackets to antefixae. West end has one arch-headed window. Altered interior. Included for group value.*

3.3 There are a number of heritage assets in the vicinity and wider area, including Parade Cottage and its outbuilding, immediately adjacent to the east and the 'Spanish Ledge Guest House and house attached at west' which immediately abuts the Town Hall extension to the west – all of which are listed Grade II.

3.4 A number of other buildings around The Parade are also listed -all Grade II. These are highlighted on the map below – indicated by the blue triangles and can be seen in the photographs in figures 21-24.



- 3.8 'Significance' is defined in the NPPF as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic'. The Historic England 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' puts it slightly differently – as 'the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest'.
- 3.9 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment' (English Heritage/Historic England, April 2008) describes a number of 'heritage values' that may be present in a 'significant place'. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.
- 3.10 The site, the listed and unlisted buildings nearby, and their relationship to one another and the conservation areas collectively illustrate the development of the Isles of Scilly.

#### Isles of Scilly Conservation Area

- 3.11 The significance, character and appearance of the Isles of Scilly Conservation Area is embodied in the integration of the buildings and landscapes in Scilly and how its inhabitants have shaped the land over a long period.
- 3.12 The 'historic interest' to be found on the Isles of Scilly is well documented and the islands contain a remarkable abundance and variety of archaeological remains and thus 'evidential value' from over 4000 years of human activity.
- 3.13 The remote physical setting of the islands has lent a distinctive character to those remains, producing many unusual features important for the broad understanding of the social development of early communities.
- 3.14 The islands' archaeological remains demonstrate clearly the gradually expanding size and range of contacts of their communities.
- 3.15 By the post-medieval period (from 1540), the islands occupied a nationally strategic location, resulting in an important concentration of defensive works reflecting the development of fortification methods and technology from the mid 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- 3.16 It was the construction of the defences at The Garrison (as well as other locations across the Islands) that directly and indirectly led to the growth of Hugh Town as the main urban and administrative centre of St Mary's and the Isles of Scilly. Similarly the encouragement of farming, flower growing and shipbuilding led to a growing of the economy and society.
- 3.17 Within this context the Town Hall makes an important positive contribution to the conservation area as a prominent landmark in the town centre, overlooking The Parade – the key historic open space (now gardens) in Hugh Town.
- 3.18 Its architectural presence signals its civic role and is an important element of the town and the Islands as a whole as envisaged and supported by the Dorrien-Smith family in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as they sought to bring law, order and good governance to the Islands.
- 3.19 The contribution the Town Hall makes to the conservation area is lessened by the unsympathetic 1970s addition to its west and similarly the modern porch – although both are functionally important.
- 3.20 Parade Cottage, its outbuilding and the other listed and unlisted buildings that surround the historic Parade Ground are important in their contribution to the evolution of Hugh Town and its townscape.
- 3.21 Their domestic scale is important in giving further prominence to the Town Hall while the variety in architectural styles also reflects the status of Hugh Town as the commercial centre of a small population – combining houses of slightly grander aspiration, architectural proportion and detailing with others of a more humble and 'cottagey' scale.
- 3.22 The relationship between the Town Hall and these buildings is an important element of the character of the conservation area.

## The Town Hall

### *Historical & Communal Significance*

- 3.23 In terms of English Heritage<sup>7</sup>'s 'Conservation Principles' the buildings and conservation area provide us with 'evidence about past human activity' and, by means of their fabric, design and appearance, communicate information about its past.
- 3.24 The historical and communal significance of the Town Hall is an important element of the civic evolution of the Islands as the Dorrien-Smith family sought to 'improve' the Islands.
- 3.25 The different uses within the building are also important from a historical - and communal – perspective. The building was not only the setting for democracy to be played out in the Council Chamber, but also law and order, as the Magistrates Court, as well as entertainment in the main hall and market/butcher to the front. This multi-functionality meant the building will have played a part, at some point, in the lives of most islanders and perhaps many visitors.



Figure 20: Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Postcard © Isles of Scilly Museum Archive

- 3.26 The postcard in figure 20 is an example of the use of the Town Hall. The words on the front read:

<sup>7</sup> Now Historic England

*We were here [the Town Hall] to a social Wednesday evening I performed on my fiddle! Fancy! I can assure you it was not my fault...*

- 3.27 The Town Hall often featured as a focal point for visits, such as those of the Duke of Edinburgh and The Queen Mother illustrated earlier, and the visit of Edward VII in 1902, below.



Figure 21: King Edward VII addressing a crowd outside the Town Hall in 1902 © Isles of Scilly Museum Archive

- 3.28 The civic function of the building was further expanded with the building of the Council Offices on the side of the Hall in 1970.
- 3.29 Unfortunately, the historical and communal value that can be attributed to the building has been considerably eroded in more recent years with the moving of the Council to the Wesleyan Chapel and the building no longer being used as the Magistrates Court.
- 3.30 The closing of the hall for theatre use has also further eroded the public use of the building.
- 3.31 Only the use of the offices by Council Officers and currently the temporary use of the ground floor front part of the building as the 'Museum on the Move' now connects the building to the Islanders and visitors it was built to serve.

#### *Architectural & Aesthetic Significance*

- 3.32 As well as the significance identified above, the Town Hall also possesses an element of architectural value – most

notably externally in its granite front elevation with its symmetrical plan, pedimented gable, and granite detailing celebrating both Queen Victoria with its date stone and also Thomas 'Algernon' Dorrien-Smith.

- 3.33 The architectural treatment gives the building its presence and prominence in the centre of Hugh Town overlooking the Parade.
- 3.34 Unfortunately, this is largely where the architectural 'special' interest of the building ends. The western side of the building has been compromised by the three storey 1970s extension, which runs from front to back along its flank, and the porch – which effectively hides the single storey side extension of 1900 with its granite carved window surround.



Figure 22: Rear of the Town Hall 2021

- 3.35 The rear of the Town Hall still reveals its simple original form, in granite blocks with rusticated quoins at the corners (figure 22) and there is a small porch that serves the back of the hall. However, the building has been compromised architecturally by the addition of the offices to the west and the boiler room to the east. Its setting is further compromised by the 'back of house' functions, recycling and parking – despite its prominent location overlooking Porthcressa Beach.

### Internal Space

- 3.36 Internally, whilst most of the original spaces retain their plan form and volume, they have either lost all historic features and detailing, or have been heavily altered.
- 3.37 Nothing historic or 'of special interest' remains in the former Council Chamber/Magistrates Court (figure 15); adjoining office; ground floor market space (including its use during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as a butchers).
- 3.38 The main hall has lost all of its natural light except for a single glazed window at the south east corner. A large heating duct has been inserted, presumably at a point when a suspended ceiling was inserted. Whilst the subsequent removal of the suspended ceiling has revealed the original zig-zag tongue and groove ceiling, it has also revealed the heating system and also detrimentally altered the acoustics of the hall for practical use (figures 17&18).
- 3.39 The stage is no longer used.
- 3.40 The modern side extension has no architectural special interest at all being entirely functional.



Figures 23&24: Internal space in the side extension

- 3.41 Overall, the significance of the Town Hall lies primarily in its historic civic and communal role within the Isles of Scilly – providing a home to not just administrative, democratic and magistrate functions, but culture and entertainment. This was further bolstered with the

addition of the Council Offices in the 1970s. However in more recent years this role and function has gradually reduced – lessening its relevance to both Islanders and visitors.

- 3.42 Architecturally, its significance lies in its external 'presence' in the centre of the town – which is particularly emphasised by its form, the architectural quality of the front elevation and its prominence in The Parade.
- 3.43 This presence is let down by the quality of the 1970s addition and the porch as well as the building's setting to the rear, overlooking Porthcressa, although the 1970s extension does, nevertheless, still highlight the building's civic function in comparison to the surrounding domestic uses and scale.
- 3.44 Internally the building is much altered and there is very little of 'special interest' remaining other than a sense of the original plan form and some of the key volumes.

#### Setting of Town Hall

- 3.45 The setting of the Town Hall is of particular relevance to its significance because of its communal and symbolic role within Hugh Town and the wider Islands.
- 3.46 In this case, it is not just physical visibility that contributes to its setting, but also its civic 'presence'. Whilst the Town Hall extension is not of architectural quality, it does form part of this presence in the centre of Hugh Town.
- 3.47 Its immediate setting has been discussed above in relation to its prominent position and formal architectural presence on The Parade.
- 3.48 It is visible from across the Gardens, with the lower scale and massing of the surrounding buildings giving it further prominence.



Figure 25: The Town Hall across the Parade Gardens

- 3.49 Views of the rear of the building are of much less importance. Whilst the scale, massing and form of the building is still legible, it does not display its civic role in the same way and the quality and level of detailing is much less. This has been further eroded by the alterations made and also the quality of the public realm around Porthcressa Road.
- 3.50 Due to its civic relevance, views of the building from further afield are also of some (lesser) importance. This includes from Hugh House on the edge of The Garrison and also from Buzza Hill.





Figures 26&27: The Town Hall from in front of Hugh House and from The Garrison

- 3.51 The photographs show that whilst the Town Hall and extension are discernible (with the extension roof more prominent in views from the west) the complex largely merges in to the roofscape of the town. The church is far more prominent at the eastern end of Hugh Town.



Figure 28: View from Buzza Hill

- 3.52 Similarly from Buzza Hill, whilst it is the Town Hall roof that is more discernible, the building still forms part of the overall town and roofscape of Hugh Town rather than being especially prominent in its own right.

- 3.53 Thus, whilst views of the Town Hall, and an appreciation of its presence, are important elements of its setting, views into Hugh Town from east and west are of less importance due to the building largely being seen as part of the overall urban form and roofscape of the town.

#### The Parade

- 3.54 As described earlier, there are a number of listed (and unlisted) buildings in the vicinity of the Town Hall that are significant in their own right and also contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area as well as the setting of the Town Hall.
- 3.55 Of particular relevance is Parade Cottage and its associated outbuilding, to the east of the Town Hall, which are an important remnant of the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century expansion of Hugh Town. The simple buildings typify the vernacular style of cottage and outbuildings on the Islands and retains some important historic and architectural features internally.
- 3.56 The historic photographs show that the cottage underwent some alterations at the time the Town Hall was constructed, but this has not lessened its interest.
- 3.57 The outbuilding, located just to the south on Ingram's Opening also retains much of its outward character.
- 3.58 To the front, the cottage retains its town setting – created at the time the Town Hall was constructed - and sits as part of the wider townscape of The Parade.
- 3.59 The rear of the cottage has been altered with a 20<sup>th</sup> century outshut and the setting of the cottage and outbuilding from behind has been much altered by the construction of the boiler room and creation of parking/recycling space behind the Town Hall and on Silver Street.
- 3.60 To the west of the Town Hall, the two early 19<sup>th</sup> century houses (now holiday lets) are of a grander scale and more formal architecture – symmetrically designed, 3 bays wide with central door and hipped dormers above. They contribute to the town-centre character of The Parade,

conservation area and Town Hall, along with the other nearby buildings.

- 3.61 The other listed and unlisted buildings around The Parade and on Porthcressa Road further reflect the urban, but small scale, character of Hugh Town.

## **4 The proposed scheme and its effect**

- 4.1 This section of the report briefly describes the proposed scheme and its effect on the heritage significance described earlier. This section should be read in conjunction with the architect's drawings and Design & Access Statement which provide a comprehensive description and rationale for the proposals.

### The proposed scheme

- 4.2 The application seeks permission for the creation of a new home for the Museum with the addition of a performance space and supporting facilities that create a combined heritage and cultural centre for the Isles of Scilly and to serve both the Island's resident communities and visitors. The third key element of the proposals is provision of Café/Bar with associated facilities.
- 4.3 The proposals necessarily require the comprehensive reconfiguration of the building to create appropriate access, facilities and accommodation.
- 4.4 This unavoidably requires the loss of some original fabric and the loss of a number of original features and staircases. It will also change the external appearance of the existing 70s extension.
- 4.5 The proposals have been drawn up with a detailed understanding of the building's significance, both architecturally and historically. This analysis has clearly identified that whilst its historic/communal value is of special interest, much of the physical fixtures and fittings internally are either functional, modern or 'standard' – rather than 'special'. To achieve a sustainable and optimum viable use for the future this distinction has been an important factor in the design process.
- 4.6 The proposals have sought to ensure that the key volumes and hierarchy of the spaces are retained and that where fabric is affected it is of less significance.

## Internal Alterations

### *The Town Hall*

- 4.7 It is proposed that the existing main hall will retain its volume and status as the new performance hall whilst the magistrates/council chamber will be converted to exhibition space.
- 4.8 The location of the existing entrance will remain broadly similar, and the entrance area will be opened up to gain a full appreciation (and access) to the space. A new staircase will lead up to a top-lit gallery which could spectacularly display the Klondyke gig in front of the full-height display of birds.
- 4.9 This 'new' space will be created from the back of the old stage and thus not impact on the volume of the existing main hall.
- 4.10 The main hall will be given back its original purpose with modern facilities, seating and access. The stage will be 'turned around' to be positioned on the rear wall creating the much-needed accessible and modern Performance Hall.
- 4.11 Along the walls of the hall, galleries are to be created to provide both additional seating and also circulation space at first floor level. Access to the galleries will be provided through the currently blocked-up window openings – linking the performance space with the new café and new meeting/activity and exhibition space.
- 4.12 The former magistrates/council chamber and adjoining office will be opened up to create exhibition space overlooking The Parade.
- 4.13 A new staircase will be created in the 1970s extension that will link all the floors.
- 4.14 A 'new' second floor will be created at the front of the town hall building, in front of the performance space – effectively in the eaves of the building. This will provide necessary back-of-house accommodation for volunteers etc. There is currently no accommodation in this space at the moment, being just a void above the existing first floor.

*1970s extension*

- 4.15 The existing 1970s extension will be entirely re-configured to provide a new staircase, activity/meeting and WC and a dedicated archive facility for the extensive museum collection. Also, importantly, at roof level, the extension will house the primary plant and heat exchangers for the proposed air-to-air heat pumps. This is an important part of the overall sustainability strategy for the new complex allowing a move away from carbon fuels to electricity.

*New Extension*

- 4.16 On the eastern side of the Town Hall the existing boiler/plant room is to be replaced with a new two storey extension that will house a bar/café with views over Porthcressa Beach to the south. It will connect at ground and first floor level to the Performance Hall through the existing (blocked up) window openings. This element of the proposal is important for the financial viability of the project.

External Alterations

*The Town Hall*

- 4.17 The changes to the exterior appearance of the original town hall will be almost imperceptible. Its dominant gabled granite frontage will remain the prominent feature on The Parade, sitting forward and proud of the adjacent buildings. This is particularly important in views when approaching from the north west, where this frontage and flagpole will remain the immediate and notable feature.
- 4.18 To the rear, similarly, the dominant granite façade will remain largely unchanged except for the introduction of a discrete level-access entrance through an existing blind arch.
- 4.19 Photovoltaic tiles will be incorporated into the slate roof, enhancing the sustainability of the building. These will be largely unseen, on the elevation that is otherwise shielded by the side extension.

*1970s extension*

- 4.20 The existing 1970s extension will be almost entirely re-worked with a new slate roof profile to accommodate the

roof-top plant required for the air-to-air heat source equipment. Its narrow street elevations to the north and south will be significantly improved with a granite base to the ground floor, vertical timber profiled boarding above and new fenestration with a contemporary but appropriately vertical expression.

*New Extension*

- 4.21 The new extension to the east will sit behind Parade Cottage and be of a similar architectural language to that of the re-modelled 1970s extension, except with a seamed zinc sheet roof. The two bays will step down from the town hall – visually opening up views of the side of the town hall and also stepping down towards Ingram's Opening and the listed Parade Cottage and outbuilding.
- 4.22 The extension will not only provide secondary, level, access to the building but connect the building visually to Porthcressa Road and beach - providing a structure of high quality that can activate a currently unkempt and dead part of the public realm.

**Impact on the heritage significance of the listed building, conservation area and setting of nearby listed buildings**

- 4.23 Internally, the proposals will undoubtedly cause a considerable amount of 'change' to the building including the removal of original physical fabric and the loss of the former magistrates court/council chamber and stair at first floor. However, in reality this fabric is largely of little interest in its own right and the bones of the original plan form will be retained through the ground floor entrance space and first floor exhibition space to the front of the building and the volume of the performance space to the rear.
- 4.24 The proposals will, however, allow for the continued use of the building as one of community importance, giving it uses relevant to both Islanders and visitors – as was the original purpose and a key element of its significance.
- 4.25 Externally there will be little impact on any physical fabric of significance with the main front and rear elevations of the Town Hall remaining entirely intact. However, there

will clearly also be an impact on both the conservation area and the setting of listed buildings.

- 4.26 The extensions will also change the setting of the original Town Hall building – but in a complimentary way.
- 4.27 The most important architectural element of the original building will remain the prominent feature in many views.
- 4.28 Even where the proposed additions are prominent in their own right they will not compete with the granite solidity and presence of the original building – instead forming a complimentary cluster that signals the whole complex is of civic importance.
- 4.29 The extended roof of the existing town hall extension will be considerably higher than the existing roof, however it will be set back from The Parade and the main facade so visually its scale will be reduced – and where visible will be a beacon of sustainability.
- 4.30 The new extensions on the eastern side reflect the gable ended form of the town hall, stepping down towards Ingram's Opening, so providing a complimentary form that sits comfortably alongside the granite elevation of the original building.
- 4.31 Currently views of the eastern elevation of the Town Hall – adjacent to Porthcressa Beach - are filled by the large boiler/plant room and the car park/bin stores. The new extension will activate this space with character and life, providing level access to the building and offering views over the beach.
- 4.32 The overall impact on the setting of the listed Town Hall will be positive. The existing 1970s extension currently detracts from the significance of the historic building and the site of the new extension an unwelcoming area for bins and cars. The new and refurbished structures will be of high quality materials that will complement the town hall and creates a new unified cultural hub that reflects not just its historical importance but also the sustainable aspirations of the Islands.

#### The impact on the setting of other nearby listed buildings

- 4.33 The proposed extension will sit directly behind Grade II listed Parade Cottage and its adjoining out building. Due to its scale it will be prominently visible behind the listed buildings in views from The Parade which will have a potentially negative effect on an ability to appreciate the cottage in its original setting.
- 4.34 However, as has been illustrated earlier in this report, the setting of the cottage has already changed considerably – with the building of the existing town hall. The proposed additional change to its setting should be seen in this context.

#### *Other listed buildings in the vicinity*

- 4.35 As described in the earlier sections, the contribution that setting makes to the significance of other listed buildings in the immediate vicinity – the majority of which surround the Parade Gardens – relates primarily to their collective contribution to the Square – their scale, materials and form. This includes the adjacent former Spanish Ledge Guest House to the west. The town hall has always been a prominent and differently scaled element – reflecting its civic status, with the existing 1970s extension detracting from both the town hall and the setting of surrounding buildings.
- 4.36 This contrast will remain un-changed with the proposals in terms of their relationship – if anything the enhancements to the 1970s extension will enhance their setting where they are seen within the same context.

#### The Conservation Area

- 4.37 The effect on the conservation area will be similar to that described above. The centre of Hugh Town is made up of domestic, commercial, and civic buildings and the differentiation is often articulated through the scale and architecture of the buildings.
- 4.38 The Town Hall has a rightly dominant position within the centre of the town. This will be visually retained with its repaired and restored granite front (and rear) elevations remaining the most prominent elevations facing the

street. The proposed extensions and alterations will contribute a high-quality piece of architecture to the town and conservation area that both reflects its collective status as a new cultural centre for the Islands whilst still allowing the existing Town Hall building to retain its primacy.

- 4.39 Even from further afield – particularly from the Garrison and from Buzza Hill – where views across the town are possible – the proposed buildings will sit comfortably as part of the overall townscape. The use of slates for the 70s addition roof extension will mean that it blends with the other slate roofs – including that of the town hall - whilst the zinc roof to the new extension will also share its colour palette and compliment the surrounding buildings.

#### Conclusions

- 4.40 Overall, whilst the proposals involve a comprehensive re-purposing of the Town Hall and its 1970s extension, the effect will be a beneficial one. The 'new' complex will be relevant, fit-for-purpose, economically viable, sustainable and complimentary to the significance and purpose of the listed building.
- 4.41 The proposals may cause an element of less-than-substantial harm to a number of the heritage assets: the loss of some historic fabric within the Town Hall, its setting and that of the adjacent Parade Cottage through the scale of the proposed new roof. However, this must be considered and balanced within the context of the considerable public benefits that the scheme will deliver.
- 4.42 These benefits have been considered above and are also outlined in the Design & Access Statement:
- The Town Hall's original principal space, the Hall, is being retained both in its original function and physically with its proportions, volume and its visible roof structure and construction effectively unchanged.
  - The proposed new balconies will enhance the hall visually and provide additional seating essential to its financial viability. The blocked original granite dressed stone openings will be re-opened to link the hall with

its side spaces, provide circulation and draw light from the adjacent spaces.

- The front and rear original elevations will remain unchanged but their masonry and joinery will be cleaned, repaired and redecorated.
- The 1970's utilitarian extension will be enhanced with a new roof and re-designed elevations that sit better visually with the adjacent granite elevations of the original building.
- The new extension to the south-east of the Hall will make better use of an important focal space in the town, currently used for waste re-cycling and parking. It will help the building better address the wonderful aspect of Porthcressa Beach. In addition, it will provide space for important functions such as the café, bar and foyer and the Klondyke display that will contribute to the Hall's future viability.
- New environmentally efficient servicing will allow the removal of the unsightly internal flue running up through the hall and the external boiler house and will help achieve future sustainability goals of net zero-carbon and reduction in the use of fossil fuels.
- The principal changes to the original Hall's existing fabric will be the insertion of a rooflight for the light well, slight raising of the slate coverings to allow ventilation and insulation of the roof, removal of some secondary internal partitions to create more flexible exhibition areas and re-opening of a number of the original hall windows.

4.43 Overall, the benefits arising from the proposals will help to secure the long term sustainability and future of the listed building and ensure that a key element of its significance and contribution to Hugh Town and Island life can be perpetuated.

## 5 Compliance with policy and guidance

- 5.1 This report has provided a detailed description and analysis of the significance of the Town Hall and its context, as required by Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition, the report also describes how the proposed scheme will affect that heritage significance. The effect is, overall, positive and for that reason, the scheme complies with policy and guidance.
- 5.2 The proposed scheme, in our considered view, preserves the special interest of the listed building, preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings, and thus complies with S.66(1) and S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### The National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.3 In respect of Paragraph 197 of the NPPF the proposals very clearly 'seek to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; recognise the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to character and distinctiveness'.
- 5.4 As outlined in Appendix A, the NPPF identifies two levels of potential 'harm' that might be caused to a heritage asset by a development: 'substantial harm...or total loss of significance' or 'less than substantial'. Both levels of harm must be caused to a *designated* heritage asset – in this instance the Town Hall, the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.
- 5.5 The proposal meet the requirements of Paragraphs 200-202. The proposals clearly do not cause substantial harm to the significance of any designated heritage assets – the key elements of all heritage assets remains in tact and legible.

- 5.6 It is possible that the proposals will cause a small element of less-than-substantial harm to the significance of a number of assets, however this harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including securing its optimum viable use.
- 5.7 For the reasons given earlier in this, and other submitted reports, we believe that the benefits of the proposals clearly outweigh any identified harm.

#### The Council of the Isles of Scilly Local Plan

- 5.8 In positively addressing the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, the works also meet the policy requirements of the Council of the Isles of Scilly Local Plan relevant to the historic built environment.
- 5.9 In terms of Strategic Objective OE7 the proposals will ensure that the historic environment 'continues to contribute to the special character and identify and quality of life of the Isles of Scilly'; importantly and very uniquely the proposals will 'increase public understanding, awareness and enjoyment of and access to our heritage for both residents and visitors'. They will 'support the vital tourist economy of the islands, recognising that heritage is a key element'; and 'ensure that the historic environment is used as a key driver and focus for inward investment, regeneration and re-development, particularly within the islands' settlements'. The proposals will also enable the 'creation and support for strong partnerships between public, private and voluntary sectors'.
- 5.10 In conclusion, we believe that the proposals meet the legislative, national and local policy requirements for the historic built environment.

## Appendix A – Policy Context

Any proposals for the site must have regard for national and local policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of change in the historic built environment.

### The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act'). Section 66(1) of the Act requires decision makers to 'have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses' when determining applications which affect a listed building or its setting. Section 72(1) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay 'special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

The legislation governing Scheduled Ancient Monuments is the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

### The National Planning Policy Framework

The revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2021.

Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework deals with design: Achieving well-designed places. It begins:

'The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process' (paragraph 126).

Paragraph 130 advises that 'planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework: 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' deals with Heritage Assets describing them as 'an irreplaceable resource' that 'should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations'.<sup>8</sup>

Proposals affecting heritage assets

Paragraph 194 brings the NPPF in line with statute and case law on listed buildings and conservation areas. It says that:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'

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<sup>8</sup> The policies set out in this chapter relate, as applicable, to the heritage-related consent regimes for which local planning authorities are responsible under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as to plan-making and decision-making.

In terms of the local authority, paragraph 195 requires that they 'identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.'

Further, 'Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision (paragraph 196).

Paragraph 197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Considering potential impacts

Paragraph 199 advises local planning authorities that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 200 continues, 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;

b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of proposed development that will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, paragraph 201 states that 'local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use'.

It continues 'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use' (paragraph 202).

In taking into account the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset the local authority should employ a 'a balanced judgement' in regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (paragraph 203).

The NPPF introduces the requirement that 'Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred (paragraph 204).

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<sup>9</sup> Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.

Where a heritage asset is to be lost, the developer will be required to 'record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible' (paragraph 205).<sup>10</sup>

In terms of enhancing the setting of heritage assets the NPPF states that 'local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably. (paragraph 206).

It goes on however that 'Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole' (paragraph 207).

Finally, paragraph 208 requires that the onus will be on local planning authorities to 'assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies'.

Local Policy: Council of the Isles of Scilly Local Plan 2015-2030

The Council of the Isles of Scilly Local Plan was adopted in November March 2021.

Policy OE7 relates to Development affecting Heritage.

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<sup>10</sup> Copies of evidence should be deposited with the relevant historic environment record, and any archives with a local museum or other public depository.

## Appendix B – Historic Environment Record Maps

Immediate and Wider Context

Orange: Statutory Listed Building; Red/hatched: Scheduled Ancient Monument; Red, blue, green dots: identified sites on HER

