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Field adjacent to Connemara Chalets, St Martin's



Shepherd's Hut and Solar PV Array

Field adjacent to Connemara Chalets, St Martin's

Design and Access Statement

Planning Statement

OVERVIEW

The proposal is for a change of use from agricultural to permit the construction of a shepherds hut within the field adjacent to Connemara Chalets in Higher Town, St Martin's, Isles of Scilly. The hut would provide staff accommodation for up-to two people. A 20-panel solar array along with inverter and battery storage would also be installed.

PURPOSE

The application is designed to provide a comfortable seasonal accommodation solution for up-to two people employed by the Applicant to manage their four holiday let properties and undertake agricultural work on the farm. The lack of appropriate, available and cost-effective accommodation for seasonal workers represents a significant impediment to the effective running of the existing business on the island. The solar PV array would provide power to the water system operated by the Applicant, thereby ensuring that the essential utilities are as sustainable as possible.

CONSTRUCTION

The shepherds hut would measure 11.32m x 2.43m with a height of 3.28m and would be clad externally with feather-edge timber to match existing building styles within the local environs such as the shepherd's huts constructed for holiday let accommodation on St Martin's Vineyard. The roof would be curved, dark-coloured corrugated metal sheeting. The unit would be constructed on two connected steel chassis with eight wheels in total. Ground works would be restricted to minor levelling work and the installation of concrete pads to support the wheels. The huts would be constructed in situ to facilitate freight and simplify access to the site - no vegetation removal would be required to facilitate access to the unit.

The solar array would follow a similar style and structure to the existing installation located at the Community Hall on St Martin's. Two rows of 8 panels each would be mounted on a steel structure with minimal ground work required. Inverter and battery would be situated beneath the panels.

ACCESS

Access to the shepherds hut would be from the existing track which serves the Connemara Chalets and continues in a westerly direction towards Little Arthur Café. This would provide the access both for construction including delivery of materials, and for the occupants of the shepherds hut.

Planning Statement

FACILITIES & SERVICES

The internal accommodation would comprise a kitchen area, a bathroom and shower, a double bed and seating area and a utility area for storage and laundry. Water would be sourced from the existing water system which serves the adjacent Connemara chalets which are owned by the Applicant.

Power would be provided from an existing three-phase supply serving outbuildings/workshop space to the south and the cable run would be entirely through land managed by the Applicant. Grey and black water would be pumped to the existing connection at Connemara Chalet and utilise the Septic Tank system which is designed to serve 6x dwellings and currently only manages the waste from 2x chalets representing significant spare capacity. A soakaway for rainwater would be installed within the field.

The proposed siting of the shepherd's hut would form a cohesive presence situated between existing buildings including Connemara Chalets to the west and Little Arthur Café and associated residential dwellings to the east. Visibility from the south would view the structure within this context, and any views would be partial and significantly softened by intervening hedgerows and other evergreen vegetation. Potential views from the periphery of Higher Town would be largely screened by the intervening Connemara Chalets which would result in an insignificant addition to the views. Additional planting is proposed to screen the shepherds hut from most proximate of the two Connemara Chalets.

The solar array would be situated to the north of the shepherds hut to ensure minimal visual impact from any aspect—there are no visual receptors to the north aside from Par Cottage. The existing roof-mounted PV panels on the adjacent buildings to the east would ensure that the panels do not represent a novel component within the landscape.

LOCATION & VISIBILITY

The proposed location for the shepherds hut & PV array is currently a disused flower field which has reverted to rough pasture totalling 0.08ha in size. The field is not under active agricultural management.

CURRENT LAND

Planning Context

MARTIN'S
SHEPHERDS HUTS ON ST

The style of accommodation proposed is already present on St Martin's. A total of three shepherds huts have been consented and built on St Martin's—these are at Sandy Lane Cottage, Middle Town (**P/16/091**) and St Martin's Vineyard (**P/19/059**). Both developments provide for holiday let accommodation. Permission for a further two shepherds huts at Lower Town have just been granted permission by the council (**P/21/075/COU**). These successful applications demonstrate the suitability of this style of construction on the islands.

STAFF ACCOMMODATION

Permission has been granted for staff accommodation on St Martin's in recent years. The most pertinent of these is the staff dwelling at Adam's Fish & Chip Shop (**P/17/080**). The scale of this building was related to the staff requirements which the Fish & Chip shop has in the summer including chefs and waiting staff.

A recent application on Tresco for a change of use to temporarily site 7 no. units for staff accommodation has been granted (**P/21/085/COU**). These comprise 'snooze pods' which are 6m x 2.7m in size and provide temporary accommodation for two unrelated workers over a three year period. The proposed size, scale and style of the shepherds hut accommodation would be larger than these pods and would be occupied by a single employee or a couple representing a significantly higher standard and scale of living space.

GROUND MOUNTED PV

Several ground-mounted PV arrays exist on St Martin's setting a precedent for this approach to renewable energy generation. Alongside the array at the Community Centre and Reading Room which is referenced as a template for this application, recent applications have also been successful at Blackbird's Perch (**P/20/100**) and the Seven Stones Inn (**P/20/099**).

Appraisal of functional & operational requirement for staff dwelling

- The Applicant has four holiday lets which require regular change-overs through the summer season. As well as these routine changeovers, there is a day-to-day requirement to respond to guests' needs and requests. This means that it is essential for there to be a constant presence to respond to both urgent and routine requirements in order to provide a high standard of guest experience.
- The nature of St Martin's means that there is very restricted accommodation available, especially during the summer season when all accommodation is occupied. In the past, we have found it impossible to find suitable accommodation for a seasonal employee.
- This issue has been raised by other island businesses and the justification for staff accommodation to address this need has been accepted in previous planning applications for the islands, most significantly Adam's Fish & Chip Shop (P/17/080).
- The size and style of accommodation proposed is designed to be comfortable, functional and appropriate to a seasonal worker (either an individual or a couple depending on applicants). The location in close proximity to the four holiday let properties would ensure that they are close on hand to respond to any guest requirements.
- There would be additional work available for the applicants on the farm as well as routine maintenance work throughout the summer months to guarantee suitable employment by the Applicant.
- The nature of the busy summer season on St Martin's, coupled with the lack of suitable employee accommodation, means that demand for seasonal workers is always higher than availability, and it is likely that the occupants of the hut would be able to find additional part time work supporting other local businesses if desired.

Hut: External Design (Illustrative)

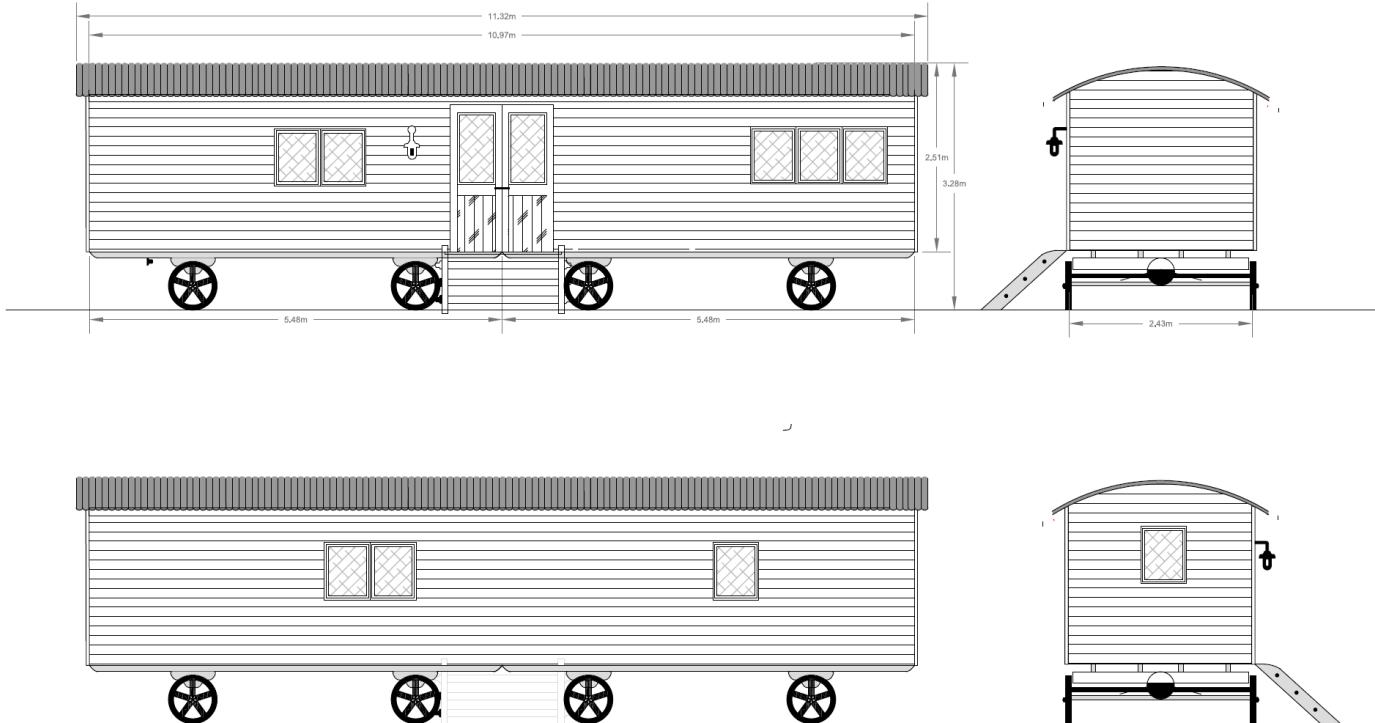


Figure: Showing the proposed elevations of the shepherds hut



Figure: Showing the exterior of the shepherds hut situated on St Martin's Vineyard which is finished in a similar style to the proposed hut adjacent to Connemara Chalets. The timber cladding and curved roof would be replicated along with the double-doors and windows.

Hut: External Finishing Details

The external timber cladding would be retained as a natural timber finish, potentially with a light stain to enhance the character and preserve the finish. The final colour and character will depend on availability and stock at the time of ordering and it will not be possible to further specify this in advance of commencement. However a natural wood cladding will aim to match other cladding on the island to ensure continuity of character, especially with regards buildings in close proximity such as the shepherds huts at the vineyard and Adam's Fish and Chip shop.

The final finish for the windows and doors would be selected sensitively to maximise the aesthetic character when viewed alongside the timber cladding. Determining this in advance of the completed construction is likely to constrain the finish and may result in a less optimal choice being selected; therefore the potential options are outlined at this stage to provide reassurance that the selection will be appropriate.

The first option would be to leave the windows and door frames as natural wood - this would be the preferred option if they could be lightly stained or oiled to complement and blend in effectively with the timber cladding. This is illustrated indicatively in the image below-left.

The second option would be to paint the window and door frames with a light-pastel shade - this option would be selected if the characters of the wood associated with the windows/doors and the timber cladding did not complement well. This is illustrated indicatively in the photographs of the shepherds hut at St Martin's Vineyard shown on the previous page.

Hut: Internal Design (Illustrative)



Figure: Showing a typical shower cubicle and toilet which would be fitted



Figure: Illustrating the table & chairs to be provided in a dining area



Figure: Illustrating the facilities proposed for the utility room..



Figure: Showing the partition style which would separate the bedroom from the remainder of the living area



Figure: Illustrating the galley-kitchen style which would be built into the hut

PV Array (Illustrative)



Figure: Showing the PV array at the St Martin's Community Hall and Reading Room—the proposed array adjacent to Connemara Chalets would replicate the size, scale and design of this array.



Figure: Showing the small concrete pads which would comprise the ground-works required to support the PV array with the inverter and battery situated beneath

Hut: Specification

- Outer walls to be clad with feather-edge cladding to match other buildings within the immediate environs; the chassis would be galvanised steel and the roof would be a dark-coloured corrugated metal sheet;
- Insulation to the walls, ceiling and floor to comprise Earthwool (or similar) throughout the structure with double-glazed hardwood windows strategically placed to maximise natural light and provide a bright, airy, spacious feel to the interior of the hut. These would minimise the requirement for energy consumption through lighting. Double French doors would provide access to the unit - these would be double-glazed and sealed to a high standard;
- A double-bed would comprise the sleeping area with associated furniture such as bedside tables and storage units.
- A kitchen area including a sink with running hot and cold water; an induction hob; and a work surface/food preparation area would be provided in a galley-style.
- The utility area would comprise a washer/dryer and a silent-running fridge/freezer unit along with waste and recycling bins;
- A toilet, sink and shower unit would be installed and serviced through the existing septic tank system which serves Connemara Chalets.;
- An engineered /laminated wood floor would be installed with under-floor heating; to ensure comfort throughout the season without reliance upon solid fuels or similar;
- A sofa seating area would be provided along with a table and chairs for dining;
- Lighting to be provided throughout as required and appropriate.

Solar PV: Specification

- The scale of development on site has been determined by the equipment necessary to efficiently generate renewable energy to power the water pumping system which serves the existing holiday lets and the proposed shepherds hut. Two strings of panels will be arranged in two rows comprising a total of 18 panels running from east to west on a southerly aspect. The panels will be fixed to a steel framework anchored through concrete pads.
- The location is determined to maximise screening of the panels by the hut whilst avoiding shading which would negatively impact the electricity generation. The field is on a south-facing slope providing optimal light capture.
- It is considered that the benign appearance of the panels and the degree of natural screening afforded to the site, that the proposals would not have an unacceptably adverse impact on the visual or amenity value of the surrounding environment.

Location

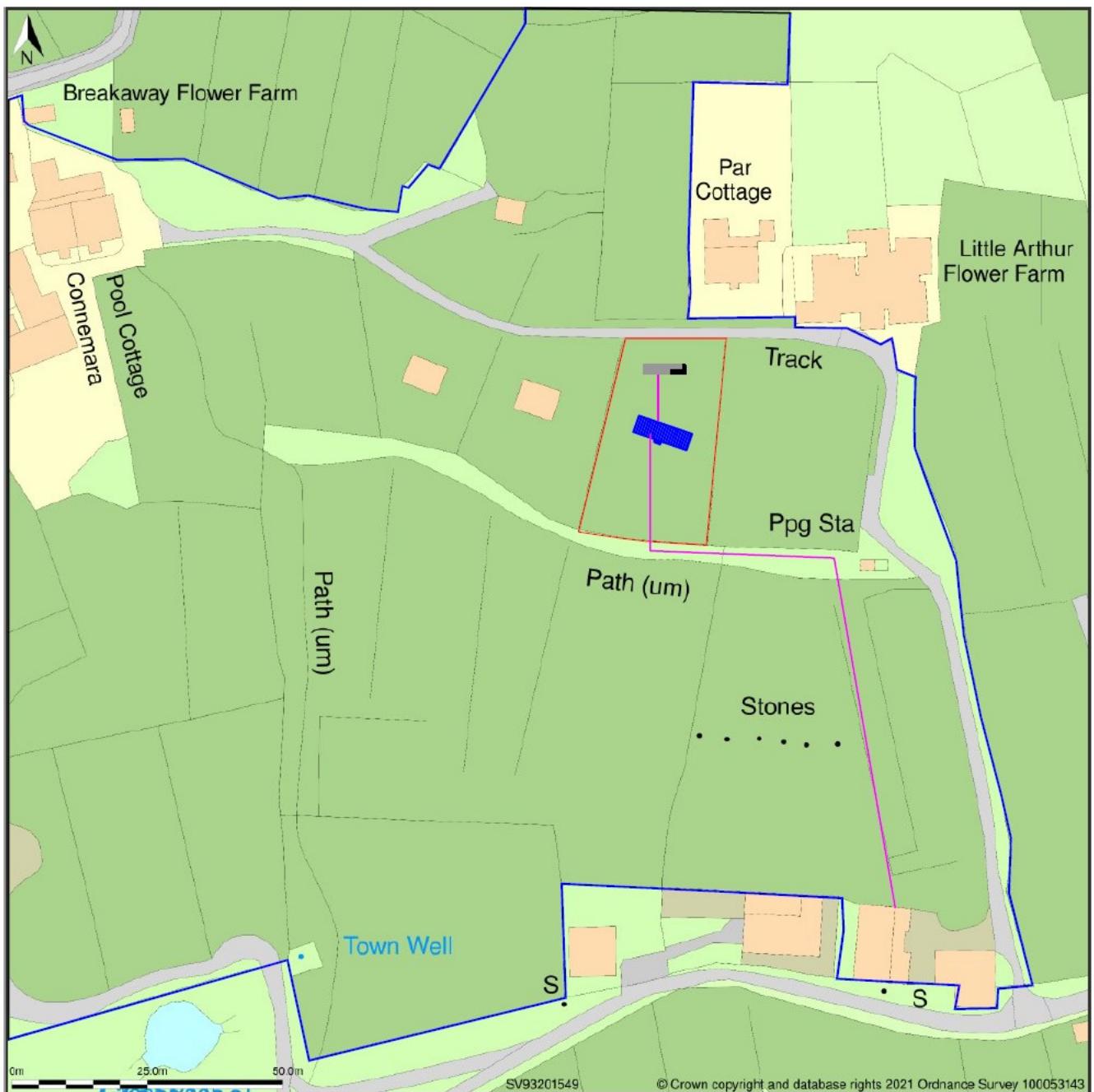


Figure: Showing the proposed location of the development with the shepherd's hut shown in blue and the ground-mounted PV array to the north. The redline boundary is shown along with the electrical connection to an existing three-phase electricity supply to the south shown in magenta.

Proposed Site Layout (Illustrative)



Figure: Showing the proposed location of the shepherds hut (blue) and the solar panels (red) in the site. The photograph is taken from inside the redline boundary to the south looking north with Par Cottage visible to the right. Connemara Chalets are situated to the west.



Figure: Showing the view taken from the proposed footprint of the shepherds hut looking south. This illustrates the significant existing evergreen vegetation which would do much to screen the site visually.

Assessment of Visual Impact

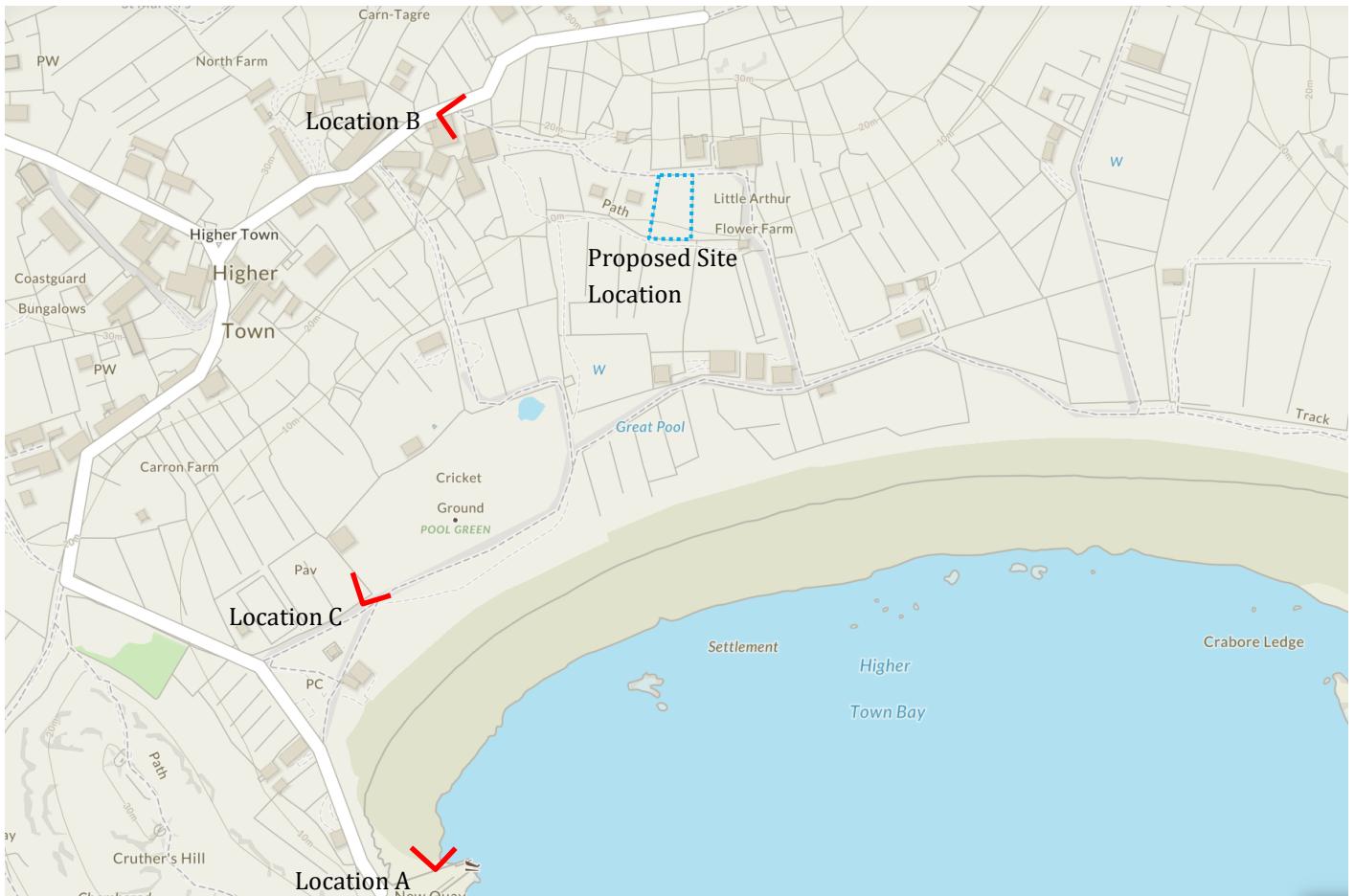


Figure: OS plan showing the locations of the three viewpoints along with the site indicated by the blue dotted line. The lie of the land, coupled with the pittosporum hedges which surround the proposed location, mean that no other viewpoints are considered relevant.



Location A: Showing the view across Par Beach from New Quay. There is significant tree cover which would screen and soften the visibility, even during the winter after leaf-fall as shown in the image which was taken in mid-November. The hut would be viewed in the context of the more prominent Par Cottage and Little Arthur Café to the east.

Assessment of Visual Impact



Location B: Showing the view from the road which passes through Higher Town in a gap between the houses. This is taken from a publicly accessible location but is likely to represent the most significant view from residential properties. The existing Connemara Chalets and several evergreen hedges lie between the viewpoint and the proposed shepherds hut location, largely obscuring visibility.



Location C: Showing the view from beside the gig sheds and public facilities beside Pool Green. There would be no visibility of the proposed site from Pool Green itself, and here on the higher ground, the site would be entirely screened by the intervening elm trees.

Relevant Designations

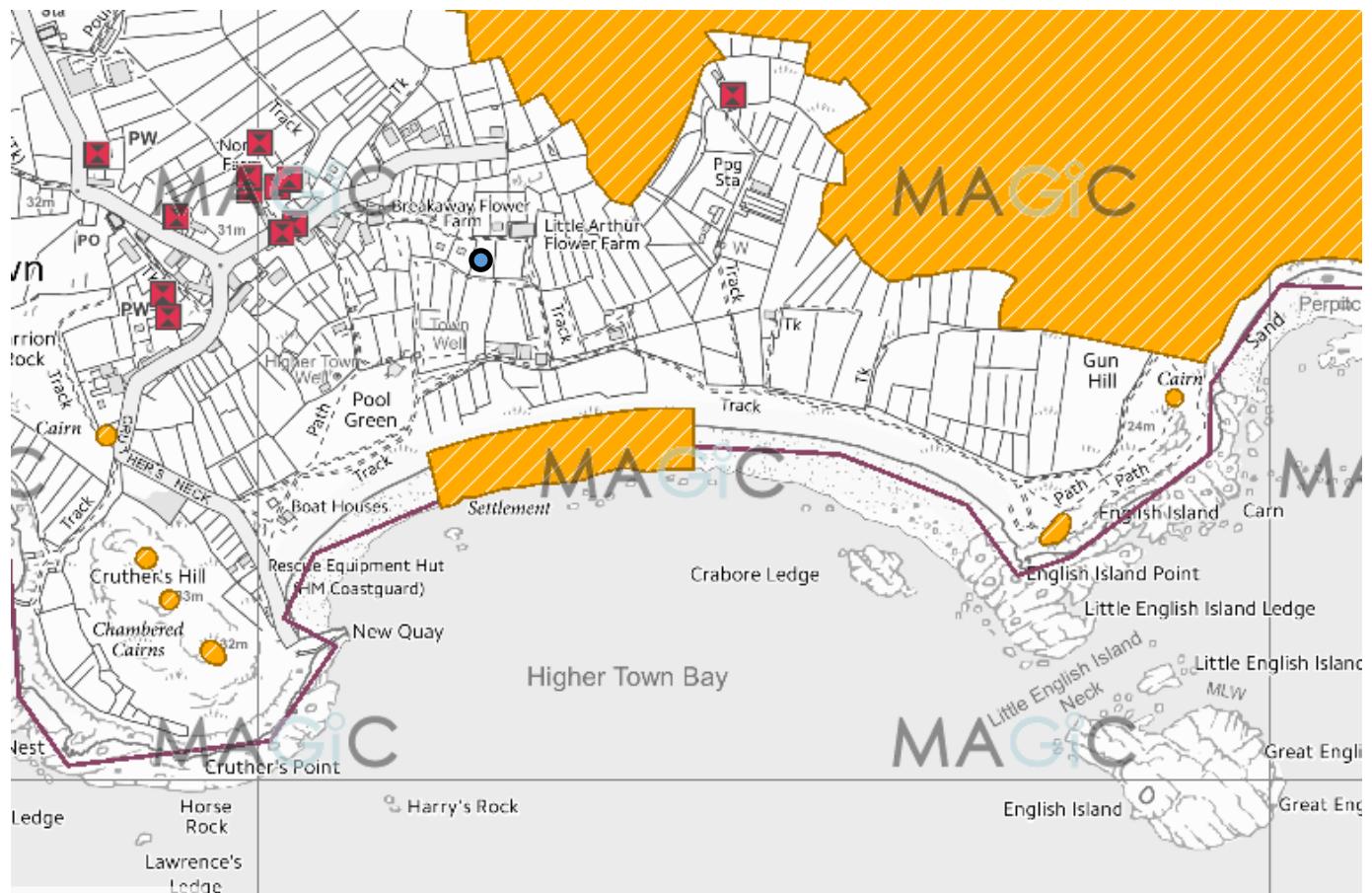


Figure: Illustrating historic and heritage designations in the vicinity of the site taken from the MAGIC website. Orange hatching shows Scheduled Monuments whilst the red squares show Grade II Listed Buildings. The blue dot illustrates the proposed siting of the proposed development.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Isles of Scilly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a designation which covers the whole of the Isles of Scilly. The Council's statutory duty is to produce and review a management plan for the AONB to demonstrate how the AONB can be protected and enhanced. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) were created by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and, along with National Parks, they represent the finest examples of countryside in England and Wales. The Isles of Scilly were designated an AONB in 1975. Natural England states that:

'The primary purpose is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. In pursuing this primary purpose, the needs of agriculture, forestry, and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of local communities, should be taken into account. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development, which in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. Recreation is not an objective, but the demand for recreation should be met in so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses'.

Relevant Designations

Historic and Heritage Assets

The proposed site is not subject to any heritage or historic designations; however consideration of impacts upon these assets can include changes to the setting of the asset as well as direct impacts to the assets themselves.

- The Scheduled Monument "Prehistoric to Romano-British ritual, funerary and settlement remains on Par Beach, St Martin's" lies to the south;
- The Scheduled Monument "Prehistoric cairns, field system and settlements, medieval chapel and post-medieval daymark, lookout and signal station on north east St Martin's" lies to the north
- Three Scheduled Monuments "Prehistoric entrance grave, on Cruther's Hill, St Martin's" lie to the south-west;
- The Scheduled Monument "Platform cairn on Cruther's Neck, St Martin's" lies to the west;
- The Scheduled Monument "Prehistoric house platform settlement south west of English Island Carn, St Martin's" lies to the east;
- The Grade II Listed "Barn at Little Arthur's Farm" lies to the north-east;
- Various Grade II listed buildings are associated with Higher Town to the north-east including the Methodist Church, Corner Cottage, the Telephone Kiosk and Rock Cottage in closest proximity.

The siting and screening of the proposals would not have any direct impact on the visual setting of any of the sites located.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other wildlife conservation designations

The proposed site for is not itself subject to any wildlife or other conservation designations such as SSSI, SPA or SAC. Such designations do exist in the local environs; these include St Martin's Sedimentary Shore SSSI to the west and Chapel Down SSSI to the north-east. Areas of the islands are also subject to higher level designations such as the Isles of Scilly RAMSAR and SPA sites.

The proposals would not result in any direct impacts to these sites.

Conservation Area

In 1975 the whole of the Isles of Scilly was designated as a Conservation Area making it the only local authority area covered entirely by a single designation. This recognises the integration of the buildings and landscape in Scilly and how man has shaped the land over a long period. The Council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area and to protect features of special architectural or historic interest. Responsibility for conservation lies with the Planning Department of the Council of the Isles of Scilly.

Further Planning Considerations

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

It is not considered that further archaeological assessment would be required for this site as the level of excavation/ground disturbance proposed is restricted to concrete footings for the wheels of the shepherds hut and the PV supports. This represents a minimal impact.

FLOOD RISK

The proposed location is on a south-facing hillside more than 5m above sea level and a flood risk assessment is not therefore considered to be required as part of this application in accordance with the Local Flood Risk Management Plan.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The shepherds hut would be served by an existing electricity supply provided by Western Power; an existing septic tank system and an existing water system which is owned and operated by the Applicant. There is abundance space capacity in all of these existing services and no upgrades would be required to meet the additional draw on the capacity. An existing access road runs past the field and would be used to serve the shepherds hut and solar array.

FIRE SAFETY

The Island Fire Service have previously assessed and confirmed that access to the adjacent Connemara Chalets is sufficient to meet their requirements. The distance between the existing buildings and the proposed Shepherds Hut would ensure that the siting of the unit is appropriate in terms of proximity of access. The existing arrangements relating to the storage of water to serve the Connemara Chalets would be available for the shepherds hut.

Ecology & Biodiversity Enhancement Measures

The application site is a former flower field which has fallen into disuse. The sward is a mix of typical mesotrophic meadow species with remnants of bulbs such as daffodils present in places. The majority of the sward would be largely retained, with direct impacts restricted to mown grass paths to reach the hut; and likely loss of sward beneath the hut due to shading.

The hedges are likely to support nesting birds during the breeding season; the timing of any works which may cause direct impacts, or indirect disturbance, to nesting birds would be scheduled outside of the breeding season (mid-March to end-August inclusive).

No further protected species are identified at this site.

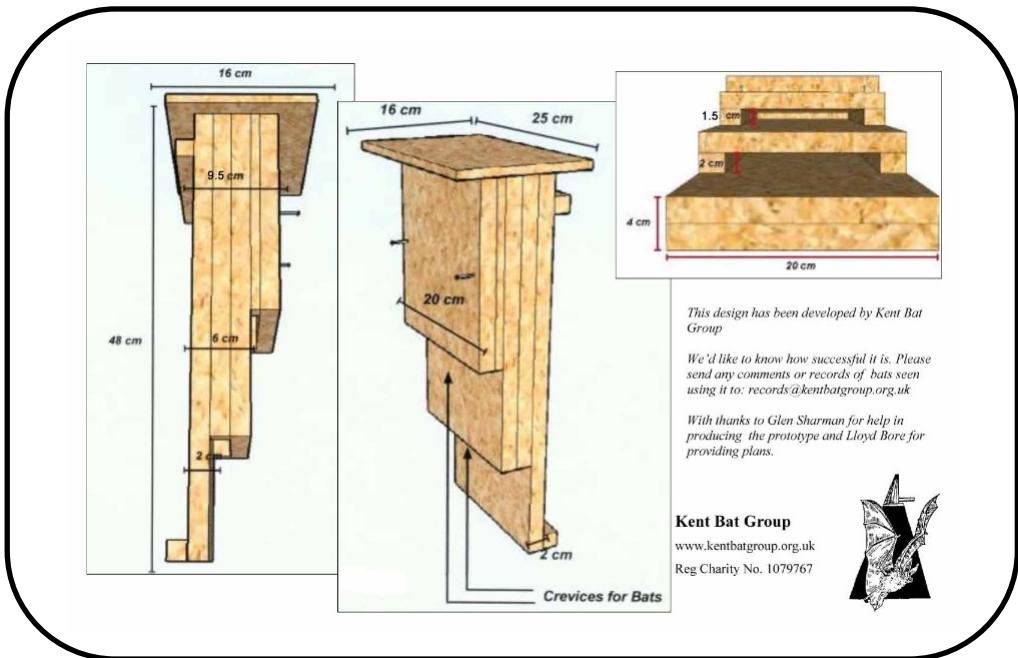
The size and situation of the hut would not be especially well suited to the installation of these features due to their height, the level of disturbance likely to be caused by the presence of occupants, and the risk of predation by cats through low siting of the boxes.

The locations of the boxes would instead be in the elm woodland which lies to the south of the huts and is under the control of the applicant.

Two Kent Bat Boxes would be constructed and installed on suitable semi-mature trees. These boxes are well suited to crevice dwelling species such as the common pipistrelle which is the only bat species known to be present year-round on St Martin's and which is regularly recorded foraging in the local environs.. These boxes would be constructed by the applicant in accordance with plans provided by the BCT.

Four blackbird/thrush boxes would be installed in the woodland to provide further habitat for nesting birds. These boxes would be constructed by the applicant in accordance with plans provided by the RSPB.

Biodiversity Enhancement Measures



Kent Bat Box Design



Blackbird Box

Location for Boxes

(indicated by the red circle—the shepherds hut is indicated in blue)