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Integrated Health & Social
Care Centre, Isles of Scilly
Temporary Works Yard
Heritage Impact Assessment



PORTICO HERITAGE

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1 Introduction

Purpose

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to support the submission for planning permission for the temporary works yard related to proposals for the new Integrated Health & Social Care building as part of St Mary's Hospital on Hospital Lane, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly.
- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to set out the history and heritage significance of the site and its context and to consider the impact of the proposals on that significance.
- 1.3 The report should be read in conjunction with the plans prepared by Bluesky Architects and Design & Access Statement prepared by Situ8 Planning.

Author

- 1.4 The author of this report is Nick Collins BSc (Hons) MSc MRICS IHBC. Nick set up Portico Heritage in 2014. Previously he was a Director of Conservation at Alan Baxter & Associates. Nick spent nine years at Historic England where he was a Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas leading a specialist team of historic building inspectors, architects, and archaeologists on a wide range of heritage projects in East & South London. Previously a Conservation Officer at the London Borough of Bromley, Nick began his career at real estate consultancy Jones Lang LaSalle as a Chartered Surveyor.
- 1.5 Nick has undertaken a considerable amount of work in the West Country, including for the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, Plymouth City Council and the Hall for Cornwall in Truro.

2 The site and its context

The Site

- 2.1 The site is located immediately to the east of St Mary's Hospital situated on the high ground to the south east of Hugh Town, just off the road to Old Town beyond Buzza Hill.
- 2.2 An agricultural field, it is known as 'Circus Field' and contains the Scheduled Ancient Monument: Platform Cairn on Northern Peninnis Head. (see figure 1). It is enclosed by a traditional Cornish Hedge.



Figure 1: Ordnance Survey Map 1875 with the site of the present hospital identified

The heritage context of the site

- 2.3 Circus Field contains a Scheduled Ancient Monument: Platform Cairn on Northern Peninnis Head and the site also lies within the Isles of Scilly Conservation Area. There are a number of other designated heritage assets in the vicinity, including Grade II listed Buzza Tower and the Scheduled Round Cairn with Funerary Chamber on Buzza Hill. Both of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) are also located in 'Isles of Scilly Archaeological Constraint Areas' (although the Hospital itself is outside this area). This is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Map showing the location of the nearby listed buildings (orange); Scheduled Ancient Monuments (hatched red) and Archaeological Constraint Areas (green)

- 2.4 The Historic Environment Record identifies other sites of interest, extant, archaeological and/or demolished. The closest to the site are a number of former quarry sites on and around Buzza Hill and two Bronze Age findspots to the north east the other side of Old Town Road.

Assessing heritage significance

- 2.5 The conservation area, listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments are 'designated heritage assets', whilst other structures (including any identified as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area) are 'non-designated heritage assets' as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.6 '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'.
- 2.7 '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.
- 2.8 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

- 2.9 The significance, character and appearance of the Isles of Scilly Conservation Area is embodied in the integration of the buildings and landscapes on Scilly and how its inhabitants have shaped the land over a long period.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 The islands' archaeological remains demonstrate clearly the gradually expanding size and range of contacts of their communities.
- 2.13 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 16th to the 20th centuries.
- 2.14 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. Important key buildings within Hugh Town that contribute to this evolution and character include the Town Hall, Church and former school.
- 2.15 Within this context the hospital makes an important contribution to the twentieth century social history and development of the Islands but is of little importance architecturally – described as '*plain and functional*' in Scilly's Building Heritage by Peter Madden. The building has been considerably altered and extended, particularly to the rear and is necessarily utilitarian.
- 2.16 The Cairns at Circus Field and Buzza Hill also lie within this wider conservation area context, as do the quarries and former windmill, now Buzza Tower – important elements of the evolution of St Mary's.

Platform Cairn on Northern Peninnis Head

- 2.17 The cairn is located to the east of the hospital in a field known as 'Circus Field'. The SAM is largely 'below ground'.
- 2.18 Platform cairns are funerary monuments of Early Bronze Age date (c.2000-1600 BC)¹. They were constructed as low flat-topped mounds of stone rubble, up to 40m in external diameter though usually considerably smaller, covering single or multiple burials. Some examples have other features, including peripheral banks and internal mounds

¹ Historic England Scheduled Monument Description LEN: 1009284

constructed on the platform. A kerb of slabs or edge-set stones sometimes bounds the edge of the platform, and a peripheral bank or mound if present. Platform cairns can occur as isolated monuments, in small groups or in cairn cemeteries. In cemeteries they are normally found alongside cairns of other types. Platform cairns form a significant proportion of the 387 surviving cairns on the Isles of Scilly; this is unusual in comparison with the mainland. All surviving examples on the Isles of Scilly are considered worthy of protection.

- 2.19 This platform cairn on northern Peninnis Head has survived substantially intact with only minor disturbance evident from an antiquarian excavation and the modern cable trench. The prominent location of this cairn and its relationship with the other broadly contemporary cairns and field systems on and around Peninnis Head demonstrates well the nature of funerary activity and the organisation of land use during the Bronze Age.
- 2.20 The monument includes a prehistoric platform cairn situated on the summit of the northern end of the broad ridge forming Peninnis Head, in the south west of St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly. The platform cairn survives with a turf-covered circular mound of heaped rubble, 10m in diameter, straddling a slight crest on the spine of the ridge such that the mound is 0.6m high from the south west side and 0.3m from the north east, rising to a flattened upper surface 4m in diameter. A row of three large slabs, each 1m-1.2m long and 0.5m wide, considered to derive from an unrecorded antiquarian excavation at the cairn, lie parallel to each other embedded in the turf from 1m beyond the western perimeter of the cairn, with a further slab partly exposed to their south. A modern electricity cable trench is visible as a slight, turf-covered linear hollow, 0.5m wide and 0.03m deep, running north-south across the eastern perimeter of the cairn. Beyond this monument, further broadly contemporary cairns are located on the crest of the ridge from 750m to the SSE at the southern end of Peninnis Head, with prehistoric field systems fringing the lower slopes. Two broadly contemporary chambered cairns, of which one still survives, occupied the summit of Buzza Hill, 200m to the WNW, the north westward extension of the ridge containing this monument. Until modern development, these cairns were intervisible with this monument. The electricity cable and its service trench are excluded from the scheduling but the ground beneath is included.
- 2.21 Notwithstanding the fact that historically there was intervisibility between the cairns, today the setting of this cairn is visually and physically largely confined to the field within which it sits. 'Suburban' development has grown up on the northern side of Old Town Road and along Hospital Lane, as well as the hospital and Health centre breaking any historic connection between the sites.

Buzza Tower

- 2.22 Buzza Tower is located approximately 200m to the north west of the Hospital. It was first constructed in 1821 as a windmill of squared and coursed granite. It stands on the site of a Bronze Age kerbed cairn previously excavated by William Borlase in 1752.

- 2.23 The structure was restored and extended in 1911 in commemoration of a visit by King Edward VII. Circular in plan the tower stands three storeys high and has a ground-floor veranda.
- 2.24 The reasons for its designation are twofold: Architectural – an interesting example of a pre-1840 windmill, later monumentalised; historical – a distinctive, commemorative monument marking the visit of King Edward VII. It is also recognised to stand on an unscheduled kerbed cairn, and beside a scheduled cairn with funerary chamber².
- 2.25 Reinterpreted as a landmark in 1911, the contribution that the tower's setting makes to its significance is considerable. It is particularly prominent from across Hugh Town and from the Garrison peninsula where it is seen in the backdrop of the town, the highest landmark other than the waste disposal chimney.

Round Cairn with Funerary Chamber on Buzza Hill

- 2.26 This round cairn on Buzza Hill has survived well. Its large mound remains intact and its large walled and slab-built closed funerary chamber is unusual. The recorded presence of this cairn as part of a cairn group on this hill and its relationships with the settlement sites on the coast of Porth Cressa Bay and the cairns and field systems on the ridge of Peninnis Head combine to illustrate well the diversity of funerary practices, the organisation of land use and the relationships between settlement and funerary activity among prehistoric communities.
- 2.27 The monument includes a large prehistoric round cairn with a central funerary chamber situated on the western crest of Buzza Hill, overlooking Porth Cressa Bay and the isthmus to the Garrison, on south western St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly.
- 2.28 The round cairn survives with circular, steep-sided mound of heaped rubble, 13.2m in diameter, situated across the western crest of the hill such that it rises up to 2.5m high on its west side and up to 0.5m high on the east. The funerary structure is visible near the centre of the mound's upper surface and survives as a rectangular chamber whose interior measures 2.4m long, north east-south west, by 1.5m wide and 0.9m deep. The chamber's sides are defined by a combination of edge-set slabs and coursed slab-built walling, whose upper edges are level with the upper surface of the mound. Each end of the chamber is closed by a single large edge-set slab, that at the north east end rising above the level of the other chamber sides to a height of 1.1m from the floor of the chamber.
- 2.29 The south west end of the chamber interior is covered by a large slab, called a capstone, rising proud of the mound's surface and resting on the side walling and end-stone. The capstone measures 2m long, across the chamber, by 1.3m wide and 0.5m thick.
- 2.30 This monument is one of a group of three recorded chambered cairns located on top of the prominent ridge forming Buzza Hill. The other two, of a type called entrance graves

² Historic England List Description LEN 1291886

and located on the crown of the ridge, 45m to the east and 50m to the ENE, were the subject of the earliest recorded excavations at such cairns in 1752 by the antiquary Borlase, but both cairns have subsequently been destroyed as visible monuments by stone robbing and by the early 19th century construction of the Buzza Tower, formerly a windmill, believed to occupy the site of one of the cairns. A fourth funerary cairn, formerly visible from this monument until modern buildings intervened, survives on the northern end of the Peninnis Head ridge, 240m to the ESE. Prehistoric settlement sites are exposed in the cliff face on the eastern side of Porth Cressa Bay, from 180m to the SSE. Another, dispersed, cairn group is located on the southern end of Peninnis Head, with further prehistoric field systems around the flanks of the Head, from 950m to the south east.

- 2.31 Whilst the cairn is located in a prominent open position, with wide views in almost all directions, the setting of the monument relates primarily to those other cairns identified above. Being a largely 'ground level' structure its physical, visual setting is not large.

Summary

- 2.32 Whilst the site of the proposed temporary yard and containers is neither listed nor within the boundary of the nearby Scheduled Monument, it does form part of the open setting to the SAM and is within the Conservation Area.
- 2.33 The field is partly enclosed by a Cornish Hedge which is a traditional characteristic of the agricultural parts of the islands and conservation area.
- 2.34 Although the SAM is 'buried' the open nature of its setting is an important element of understanding its significance, location and relationship with the Islands.
- 2.35 The proposals will not have any impact on any other above-ground heritage.

3 The proposed scheme and its effect

- 3.1 The proposed scheme is illustrated in the drawings prepared by Bluesky Architects and described in further detail in the Design & Access Statement and other documents accompanying this application. The proposal is for a temporary works site for the period of construction of the proposed new Integrated Health & Care Centre at St Mary's Hospital.
- 3.2 The proposals have been carefully considered to balance the practical operational needs of a site with the sensitivity of the location. A temporary opening is required in the Cornish hedge close to Hospital Lane and temporary surface laid to provide both level access and also a base for a series of temporary storage containers. None of the structures or works require any foundations or excavation. A second entrance to the site will be through an existing gate.
- 3.3 The location of the containers, temporary hard surface and opening in the hedge have been chosen to ensure that there is no incursion on the Scheduled Monument.

Impact of the Proposals

- 3.4 There will be no physical impact on the Scheduled Monument, however for the duration of the project it will lose its open setting which will lessen the ability to appreciate an element of its significance for a temporary period.
- 3.5 Similarly, whilst only for a pre-determined period, the presence of the containers and the opening of the Cornish hedge will have a short-term negative impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area – being of a utilitarian design that will be visible from Old Town Road.
- 3.6 However, it is intended that following completion of the construction of the Integrated Health & Care Centre the site will be fully restored to its existing state – repairing the Cornish hedge, restoring the grassed field and, in doing so, restoring the open setting to the Scheduled Monument and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Compliance with legislation, policy & guidance

- 3.7 Taking into consideration the temporary nature of the project and the proposed mitigation measures, the proposals will ensure the long term character of the Isles of Scilly Conservation Area will be preserved and thus complies with S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.8 This report has provided a description and analysis of the significance of the site and its heritage context, as required by Paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3.9 The proposed scheme complies with Paragraph 207 and 208 of the NPPF in that it conserves the heritage assets whose setting it affects. For the reasons given earlier, we do not believe that the scheme involves any 'substantial' harm and that whilst an element of 'less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset', has been identified - to the setting of the Scheduled Monument and character of the conservation area – this is temporary in nature, mitigated in full by the proposed restoration works and should be considered in the context of the considerable public benefits that the proposals facilitate through the construction of the Integrated Health & Care Centre.

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- 3.10 With regards Policy OE7 of the Local Plan, irrespective of any potential temporary harm, the benefits of the health care provision for the Islands are substantial and clearly wholly exceptional. Further, this report and others submitted demonstrates that all reasonable efforts have been made to mitigate the impact of the proposal – ensuring heritage harm is visual rather than physical and temporary.
- 3.11 Overall, the proposals have attempted to strike a balance between the health care needs of the Islands with the temporary impact of any proposal on its surroundings. Even though a small element of temporary less-than-substantial harm is identified we believe that this has been adequately mitigated to allow for a balanced judgement to be reached when considering the substantial public benefits that the proposals will deliver.
- 3.12 We therefore believe that the proposals meet the legislative, national and local policy requirements and guidance relating to the historic built environment.

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