

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION DISCUSSION PAPER /  
DRAFT POLICY PAPER** (delete as appropriate)

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**PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION**  
**DEADLINE FOR RESPONSES**  
**SUMMARY OF REPORT / QUESTIONS**  
**TO CONSIDER**

Policy Amendment  
27.03.2006

See chapter 9. –  
Summary and Conclusions

**FURTHER INFORMATION AND FEEDBACK**

Please send your comments to:

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Please respond by 27.03.2006

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

None

# Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on Tall Buildings for the St. Helier Waterfront.

for the States of Jersey



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# **Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on Tall Buildings for the St. Helier Waterfront.**

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## Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on Tall Buildings for the St. Helier Waterfront.

### 1 Introduction and background justification.

This document, prepared by Sandover Associates, provides advice and guidance on good practice in relation to tall buildings being proposed on the St. Helier Waterfront. It highlights issues that need to be taken into account by designers, developers and those reviewing applications for tall buildings. The document was commissioned by the Planning and Environment Department of the States of Jersey (P and E). It sets out the background justification and how a submission for a tall building on the St. Helier Waterfront should be evaluated.

This Guidance follows the principles established by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and English Heritage (*'Guidance on Tall Buildings' 2003*) and it elaborates further on the specific factors applicable to the Jersey and St. Helier context.

The need for a Tall Building Policy for St. Helier originated from the Island Plan that was approved by the States in July 2002 where it was acknowledged that:

*“there may be instances where a relatively tall building or group of buildings could add visual interest to the skyline. At certain gateways to the town, on the Waterfront or Esplanade or fronting public parks for example, it is considered that taller structures could act as strong landmarks to the town.”*

Policy BE5 of the Island Plan requires any tall building to be of the *“highest design quality”* but did not elaborate further on what would be acceptable in terms of location, context, visual impact, height and contribution to the character of St. Helier.

The Island Plan also recommends the preparation of an appraisal of the Urban Character and Townscape of St. Helier. The appraisal is now complete and gives clues where tall buildings might enhance and contribute to the overall townscape. It is not the intention in this guidance to revisit the valuable information contained in the appraisal however it will be referred to extensively. The Urban Character Appraisal of St. Helier 2005 is essential reading for all designers involved in the Waterfront.

St. Helier enjoys a unique setting and context, the town is contained within a strong natural landscape framework set by Fort Regent and the escarpment surrounding the town. A new landmark must respond to this in a strong, unique and locally distinctive way. Any proposal that draws too heavily from other outside influences will be at odds with this context. St Helier is also a complex place; through its history there is diversity of height, building line, composition, ornamentation and materials that demands refined, rich and sensitive design solutions.

*“One of the most distinguishing features of St. Helier is the complexity and richness of its urban environment. Although the town has a strong physical setting, is reasonably compact and has strong landmarks and iconic features, it is not particularly easily read.”*

**St. Helier Urban Character Appraisal October 2005.**

As part of the masterplanning process for the Waterfront representatives of CABA were asked to provide advice on the suitability of tall buildings. CABA believe that a case could be made for tall buildings but much depends on the design quality and composition of the structures proposed in this location. If tall buildings are to be considered as part of a planning application they should be designed to a height and mass that complements and contributes to the distinctive backdrop of the town. Most importantly CABA stated that the designer would need to demonstrate that the solution presented is the best architectural solution as well as having the desired commercial return.

The predominant building heights in St. Helier are 2 to 5 storeys and there are also tall buildings ranging in height up to 16 storeys. The tallest buildings are mostly for residential use (but include offices, car parks and a hospital) and they generally lack quality and do little to contribute to the overall character and distinctiveness of the place. It is however important to note that the higher buildings do not dominate or compromise existing landmarks and appear to have been absorbed into the overall townscape and dominant landscape backdrop.

This document provides background and justification for a tall buildings policy under the following headings:

- Baseline data, planning context and policy guidelines
- Strategic views with broad identification of important views, prospects and panoramas
- The quality expected of tall buildings
- The visual impact of tall buildings
- Urban Design principles
- Criteria for assessment of a planning application
- Procedures for consultation with stakeholders

At end of each section specific policy guidelines drawn from each section are provided and highlighted.

This guidance is specifically concerned with the physical, visual and cultural implications of tall buildings on the Waterfront. Other aspects associated with the development of tall buildings – such as their use, be that retail, residential, commercial or leisure – is not addressed by this guidance but will remain to be considered within the existing and emergent policy and planning guidance regime.

## **2 Baseline data, planning context and policy guidelines.**

We describe in this section a summary of documents previously produced by or for the States of Jersey that help inform a tall buildings policy.

### **2.1 The Island Plan**

The Island Plan adopted in 2002 sets out the vision for Jersey and a framework for planning policies up to 2011. The Island Plan recognises the significance of the Waterfront for economic and urban regeneration.

**Policy BE5** outlines the potential for tall buildings in St. Helier noting specifically the Waterfront and the Esplanade. Tall Buildings are defined as those either above five storeys in height, or rising more than two storeys above their neighbours. They will only be permitted where an

accompanying design statement fully justifies their exceptional height in urban design terms. Tall buildings will be critically assessed for:

- Appropriateness to the location and context;
- Visual impact;
- Design quality; and
- Contribution to the character of St. Helier.

## **2.2 Waterfront Design Framework and St. Helier Waterfront Masterplan**

In 2000 P and E commissioned Howarth Tomkins Architects (HTA) to produce a Waterfront Design Framework. It was intended that this should be adopted and define the parameters within which the waterfront should be developed. In 2001 property consultants Drivers Jonas assessed the financial viability of the framework and this identified a major budget deficit in the proposals and led to revisions.

The St. Helier Waterfront Masterplan was produced by Michael Felton Landscape Architects in 2001. It updates the proposals of the Design Framework and addresses some of the economic concerns of its predecessor. P and E consider the drawings accompanying this document to best represent the agreed Masterplan in terms of uses and building heights. It should be noted that neither the Waterfront Design Framework nor the St. Helier Waterfront Masterplan recommended any building above 7 storeys.

## **2.3 St. Helier Urban Character Appraisal**

Willie Miller Urban Design completed the St. Helier Urban Character Appraisal (UCA) in October 2005. This document responds to recommendations of the Island Plan for an appraisal of the Urban Character and Townscape of St. Helier. The intention was to aid the process of preserving and enhancing the town's character and guiding future policy and assessment of future planning applications. This document is a robust and thorough assessment of the character of the place. It sets out the historic context and identifies those elements that create local character, important features and constraints.

Many of the sections of the UCA raise issues that are pertinent to tall buildings. We have summarised these in Appendix 1.

It is essential for a tall building proposal to demonstrate how many of the urban qualities defined in the UCA are created or respected as part of the building design and surrounding landscape.

The UCA identifies the elements of historic and maritime environment and the qualities that make St. Helier special and should be respected. It also defines the existing characteristics of value in terms of streetscape, scale, height, grain, topography, significant views, landmarks and their settings, backdrops, important views, prospects and panoramas.

The new Waterfront is described as one of ten character areas making up the town. An assessment of the area completed to date is critical of many of the existing features and emerging themes. In addition to character areas the UCA identifies interstices - areas of transition between character areas. Significant to the Waterfront and a tall buildings policy is the relationship between the existing fabric of the town and the Waterfront, particularly at the Weighbridge site, the Esplanade/La Route de la Liberation and West Park. The UCA also provides specific guidance needed to maintain, repair and build upon the character of St. Helier in new developments.

From the above documents the following policy guidance is drawn and should be applied within a tall buildings policy for the St. Helier Waterfront:

### **Policy Guidelines: Character and Context**

Proposals for tall buildings will be supported at specific locations on the Waterfront providing the design:

1. Is appropriate to the location and context. Proposals should respect the historic and maritime environment and the qualities that make St. Helier special.
2. Respects the existing context provided by the town comprising its streetscape, scale, height, grain, topography, significant view of skylines, landmarks and their settings, backdrops, important views, prospects and panoramas.
3. Is set in the context articulated by the St. Helier Urban Character Appraisal (UCA) .The UCA defines qualities that create good places. The application should demonstrate how many of these qualities are delivered or respected and it should explicitly state how it contributes to the creation of place and how that place is specifically of St Helier.
4. Respects the design guidance provided in the UCA, notably that site planning and massing of the tall building should respond to the larger context and townscape of St. Helier with a human scale, and a network of connected spaces and streets should create a safe and interactive pedestrian environment.

### **3 Strategic views with broad identification of important views, prospects and panoramas.**

It is recognised that there are a number of views of St Helier and the Waterfront that are cherished by residents and visitors. This document identifies two categories.

**3.1 Important views** - views of specific buildings and features from specific viewpoints. Those applicable to the St. Helier Waterfront include:

1. From and along the axis of the Esplanade to Fort Regent
2. From the Esplanade to Elizabeth Castle
3. From the Waterfront to Elizabeth Castle
4. From the Waterfront to St. Aubin
5. From St. Aubin to Fort Regent and Elizabeth Castle
6. From Beaumont to Elizabeth Castle and Fort Regent
7. From First Tower to Elizabeth Castle and Fort Regent
8. From Noirmont to Elizabeth Castle and Fort Regent
9. From Conway Street towards the sea
10. Along the axis of the Esplanade towards First Tower

**3.2 Important panoramas-** taken from specific viewpoints, but encompassing broad vistas containing many objects of interest.

These include:

1. The changing panorama along Victoria Avenue across St Aubin's Bay to Fort Regent and Elizabeth Castle.
2. The panorama across St. Aubin's Bay from the sea with Noirmont and St. Aubin's Fort in the West to Elizabeth Castle and Fort Regent to the East
3. From Fort Regent to St. Aubin's Bay
4. The panorama of across St. Aubin's Bay from the escarpment above Victoria Avenue

Illustrations indicating the locations of these viewpoints and panoramas with photographs of the views enjoyed are included in Appendix 2.

Emphasis has been placed on the views of the Waterfront from St. Aubin's Bay and the coastal edge. Consideration has been given to views approaching St. Helier from the North along La Vallee des Vaux, Les Grands Vaux and La Route de Longueville. However, study has shown that views are obstructed by the existing topography and on the lower approaches existing buildings. The viewpoints change constantly due to the changing road alignment and direction. Viewpoints from the East have also been given consideration along Le Havre des Pas and from St. Clement. However, views of the Waterfront are already obscured by Fort Regent and existing buildings.

#### **Policy Guidelines: Strategic Views and Panoramas**

There are views of important buildings and features such as Fort Regent, Elizabeth Castle and St. Aubin's Bay that merit protection, especially from the negative impact of tall buildings.

1. Important views and panoramas are defined in this document. Any application for a tall building must illustrate clearly through photomontage techniques the impact the building has on these strategic views. Any application that has a negative impact will be opposed.
2. The views of Fort Regent and Elizabeth Castle need special consideration, however it should not preclude a tall building being set beside or in front of these historic set pieces providing the impact is assessed in detail and considered acceptable.

#### **4 The visual impact of tall buildings**

As defined earlier in this document any buildings that would exceed the predominant building heights in St. Helier are deemed 'tall'. The exact height should be determined on the needs and capacity of the site to accommodate height in an elegant form. The proportion of a tall building – the height to the width – must be elegant. All elevations and viewpoints should be considered. While a building may appear elegantly slim and responsive from one view it may look slab-like and bulky when viewed from other locations. The impact needs to be considered against the highest standards of design and performance; impacts should be studied from long, medium and close up views.

A tall building will inevitably have a greater visual impact on the skyline than lower buildings when seen from medium and long distances. This impact can be positive and beneficial or negative and damaging. Interesting or easily recognisable landmarks such as Fort Regent, Elizabeth Castle and La Collette chimney are attractive and positive when seen from a distance. Views along the low southern coastal terrain of the island and approaches from the sea are made more interesting by the recognisable forms mentioned above. From medium distances, the architectural detail of a tall building becomes more apparent and therefore more relevant to a proposal under consideration.

For a tall building to be acceptable, consideration to its visual quality and relationship with the ground is also of great importance. The ground floor form and character of the building needs to be appropriate in scale and identity and it should also convey local identity and contribute to or generate a sense of place.

## **1 The setting and views to and from tall buildings**

Particular settings should be given protection from change, however it is the juxtaposition and close interplay between buildings and landforms that should be considered with equal importance.

The setting of a tall building is very important particularly when it is seen from a distance in silhouette against the sky. In St. Helier the shorter views are also very critical, for example the views (identified in the UCA) of Fort Regent and the escarpment surrounding the town. These are seen to great advantage in close juxtaposition to buildings of a different character, scale, materials and size. A tall building will, without question, change the setting of existing landmarks but it is important for the existing landmarks to maintain their dominance of their immediate environs.

A tall building within the Waterfront will be seen most readily from the Esplanade and Waterfront approaches from St. Aubin's and St Aubin's Bay. The success of a tall building should also be assessed by its effect on the existing powerful and distinctive skyline profile set by Elizabeth Castle, La Collette chimney and Fort Regent. Not all the buildings on the skyline are attractive; there are poor precedents - notably the swimming pool on Fort Regent, which creates an insensitive silhouette.

In addition to the built forms of Fort Regent, the strip of planting below the second parapet of Fort Regent with tree top edges provides a significant horizontal landmark when viewed from a distance and should remain visible in all but exceptional circumstances. This horizontal constraint justifies the limit of 11 storeys for all buildings set against and designed in sympathy with the existing skyline.

A well-proportioned tall building with an interesting roof and facades could enhance the skyline and views either as a cluster with other buildings or on its own, but the building should not block the view of other landmarks or significant viewpoints. It should also not appear too close to another landmark.

As identified in the UCA the Waterfront needs new facades on the Esplanade and La Route de la Liberation that integrate with the traditional town façades of the Esplanade. They must respect the existing scale and backdrop. Exceptionally tall buildings that exceed significantly

the height of the existing buildings are not considered appropriate on these facades as they will without doubt compromise the traditional facades and the skyline profile.

To avoid the compromise and conflicts on the waterfront described above it is considered appropriate that the significant landmark tall building should only be located on sites to the south of Place de L'Étau and west of La Route du Port Elizabeth.

## **2 The scale and height of tall buildings**

The UCA states that none of the taller buildings built to date in St. Helier are considered of great architectural merit or are considered landmarks. However, there is a case for introducing one significant new tall building in some locations on the Waterfront that modifies the existing skyline as a new iconic landmark and that is complementary to the overall composition of the skyline. In addition a cluster of taller buildings of varying heights can be added to complement the overall planning and 3D massing of the Waterfront.

Although Fort Regent's dominance on the landscape has changed it is still seen as the most dominant feature of a more complex and changing skyline. St. Helier's historic buildings are generally small in scale with a predominance of 2.5-3.5 storeys. More recent developments towards the Waterfront and Esplanade have raised the average height to 5 to 7 storeys. Further in to the heart of St. Helier there are buildings up to 16 storeys. Fort Regent is huge in scale, integrated as it is with Mont de la Ville, compared to all these buildings.

There are tall building precedents such as Cyril le Marquand House which although high is absorbed within the overall skyline profile. To retain the current distinctive profile surrounding the St. Helier Waterfront a new building should not exceed 11 floors - unless considered a landmark. However, to avoid excessive massing there is a need for vertical variety in the range of 8-11 storeys (average 9.5)

The following **Table 1** summarises the overall maximum heights and locations of tall buildings that may be acceptable on the St. Helier Waterfront, subject to meeting other considerations set out in this guidance and within the policy framework of the Island Plan and emergent Waterfront Design Framework:

Level	Height	Where they occur	Notes
1	4 to 6 storeys	Sets the overall massing and height for the Waterfront and interface with the historic town. This height range is appropriate for perimeter facades throughout the Waterfront	The existing buildings up to 6 storeys have vitality taking many forms, periods and styles; little is consistent and homogenous. It is important to avoid building consistently at one building height – even within one development. There is no precedent for single height corporate and monolithic architecture in St. Helier; this will be resisted in new developments.
2	8 to 11 storeys	Used to mark the pedestrian and vehicle gateways to the Waterfront and major activities on corners (turning the corner)  To contribute to and reinforce an interesting skyline when clustered with the iconic building below.  To frame and give focus to long distance views  Provide local orientation points	Developments must be a combination of these heights for accent (average 9.5 storeys)  As stated above there must be vertical variety in the range of storeys. This will avoid monotonous corporate and monolithic architecture.  Too regular stepping of the façade along the street must also be avoided as there is no precedent for this in the St. Helier townscape.
3	Maximum 15 storeys	Creating a new architectural icon and landmark for the Waterfront.  Used to mark or draw attention to locations of civic or visual importance  Provide a long distance orientation point  Should be to the South of Place de L'Etao and West of La Route du Port Elizabeth	Capacity for only one within the St. Helier Waterfront  This iconic building is the one exception where the existing skyline can be modified with a complementary addition.

## Policy Guidelines; Visual Impact

In considering proposals for tall buildings the States of Jersey will encourage and support buildings that enhance St. Helier's changing skyline.

1. Any application that is considered to damage the setting of existing buildings or features of architectural or historic interest, having regard to a range of perspectives and different lengths of view, will not be approved.
2. The distinctive skyline profile set by Elizabeth Castle, La Collette chimney and Fort Regent must be respected.
3. New buildings must be sensitive to the impact they have on adjacent buildings or features in certain views.
4. The proximity of old and new buildings seen together will not be resisted as this is in keeping with the richness of St. Helier's complex urban environment. However, new buildings must not block significant views, especially important local views, or fill in the skyline.
5. **Table 1** summarises the overall maximum heights and locations of tall buildings that may be acceptable in principle on the Waterfront.
6. New Buildings on the Esplanade and La Route de la Liberation must integrate with the traditional town façades of the Esplanade. They must respect the existing scale and backdrop. Generally building heights should not exceed significantly the height of the existing buildings with a maximum of 6 storeys.
7. Taller buildings of 8 to 11 storeys may be supported on the Waterfront providing they are used to mark pedestrian and vehicle gateways and provide local orientation points. They could also be used to frame strategic views and help reinforce the existing or enhanced skyline.
8. Tall buildings exceeding 11 storeys on the Waterfront will be opposed with the exception of the area South of Place de L'Etau and West of La Route du Port Elizabeth. In this area there may be potential for one building to exceed this height up to 15 storeys. (60 metres above ground level)

## 5 The quality expected of tall buildings

All tall buildings, especially landmark buildings, must be designed to the highest architectural quality. They should help generate confidence in Jersey and St. Helier's future both economically and aesthetically.

The States of Jersey will be particularly vigilant when assessing the architectural quality and urban design credentials of proposals. The vision for St. Helier expressed in the Island Plan states that it will be a town of *"quality, character and visual interest in terms of its buildings and*

*public domain*". This is particularly important for tall buildings because of their wider impact. It will not be possible to secure permission for a beautiful tall building if it is in the wrong location.

The States' general policies included in the Island Plan on the built environment and those specifically relating to the town of St Helier and the Waterfront will apply to tall buildings as they do to other buildings (Policies G3 and BE4). In addition the broader policies relating to sustainable development, environmental impact, transport and access for all and designing out crime (Policies G1 to G9) will have greater significance on a tall building.

In considering proposals for St Helier, the Minister for Planning and Environment will consider the contribution that they make to the vitality and viability of the town (Policy BE2 (vi)). A tall building provides the opportunity to enrich the town's public realm internally and externally. It is desirable to dedicate parts of the ground floor and upper floors to public uses. It should be possible for members of the public to enjoy the views of St. Helier and the coastline afforded from a tall building. A tall building should also enhance the ground plane in which it sits and address the spaces around it in a positive and engaging way.

Where planning permission is granted for a tall building the original architectural quality proposed must be safeguarded through to completion on site. The quality of detailed design, specification of materials, finishes and treatment of the public realm will be secured through the appropriate use of planning conditions and obligations.

The applicant must model the potential impact of a tall building using physical models and photomontages. Realistic and accurate photomontages must be produced for the proposals in all the significant views affected. Near, middle and distant views should be considered including the public realm and streets around the building. This will require methodical study and reference to the verifiable views stated in section 3 of this guidance.

#### **Policy Guidelines: Quality**

Proposals for tall buildings will not be supported unless the application is of the highest architectural design quality. This must be demonstrated through the submission of fully worked up proposals. An outline application for a tall building is not considered appropriate. All applications must consider fully the policies of the Island Plan relating to economic and environmental sustainability, built and natural environment.

The States of Jersey will wish to see:

1. The ground levels to be largely accessible to the public. A higher level should also be accessible in order for the public to enjoy the views afforded from a tall building.
2. Elevations to be varied and interesting.
3. The top of tall buildings to be well articulated and their impact on and contribution to the distinctive silhouette of St. Helier, from a variety of perspectives, is clearly demonstrated.
4. Materials specified to be of the highest quality appropriate to the setting on the Waterfront with due consideration of the local palette of materials and colours.

5. The surrounding public realm should also be designed to the highest quality. It should contribute to the creation of place and identity and should form part of a network of spaces and streets which connect to the street pattern of the existing town, and be capable of handling the predicted pedestrian movement.

## 6 Urban Design principles

The tall buildings policy has to be set in an overall Urban Design policy for the Waterfront. The existing town centre floor plan / figure ground should form the basis of future layout intensity. It is important to think clearly about the function, scale and hierarchy of the spaces created around and by a tall building. The figure ground should create more direct routes from the Waterfront to the town centre. Routes should form 'streets' and 'spaces' comparable to existing streets and spaces with an intimate feel and a human scale rather than anonymous spaces. The application should clearly demonstrate, through modelling techniques, what the spaces they create will feel like and to seek appropriate, relevant precedents to illustrate how this space will function. Their relevance and relationship to local character and identity should also be demonstrated.

## 7 Criteria for assessment of a planning application

The States of Jersey will use the criteria listed below for any planning application on the Waterfront where there is a building or element that is substantially taller than its neighbour and where it significantly changes the skyline. These criteria are drawn from the earlier sections of this guidance and the requirements of the Island Plan. The relative importance of the criteria will depend on the circumstances of each application. The criteria relate to a wider geographical area than the Waterfront and it will be necessary for the applicant's design statement, in terms of urban design and 3 dimensional objectives to address this broader context.

### **Policy Guidelines: Criteria for Assessment**

Applicants seeking planning permission for a tall building should address the following criteria:

1. The relationship to context with due consideration of the qualities defined by The St. Helier Urban Character Appraisal. This should include relation of the building to natural topography, waterfront, seascape, scale, height, urban grain, streetscape and built form and their affect on the skyline set by the existing landmarks and features described in this document.
2. The effect the tall building, or clusters of buildings has on the whole existing environment. The application should demonstrate how it will conserve not damage or detract from:
  - The foregrounds and backdrops of landmark buildings, features and listed buildings
  - Conservation areas and their settings (proposed or existing)
  - Existing parks, gardens other open spaces, landscapes and their settings including views from them.

- The distinctive waterfront setting of St Helier including existing views from the water and recognised view points prospects and panoramas from the land (refer to Section 5).
- 3. The relationship of the proposed tall building to the existing and proposed transport infrastructure planned for St. Helier, in particular the capacity of public transport, and the quality of the links between transport interchanges and the building.
- 4. The architectural quality of the tall building including its scale, form, massing, proportion and silhouette, materials (building and surrounding hard and soft landscape) and relationship to other structures.
- 5. The contribution the building will make to external public spaces and facilities on the Waterfront and within the historic town of St. Helier. This should include an assessment of the creation of place and its contribution to local character and identity. This will include the mix of uses particularly at street level and how this contributes positively to an active network of places and streets and integrates with public realm for the whole Waterfront and the town.
- 6. The effect on the local environment, including microclimate, overshadowing, nighttime appearance, vehicle movements. The effect on the environment on surrounding buildings and spaces should also be assessed - this should include but not be limited to wind, noise and overshadowing. Wind impact must be demonstrated to be within acceptable limits. Due to the significant impact a tall building will have on the environment a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment will be required in accordance with Policy G5 of the Island Plan.
- 7. The contribution the building makes to physical and visual permeability of the wider area of the Waterfront and St. Helier. This includes linkages for foot traffic, the opening up or effective closure of views and improving the legibility of the wider townscape.
- 8. The sustainability of the proposal, all tall buildings should be sustainable in the broadest sense taking into account the building's physical, social, economic and environmental impact based on whole life costs and benefits. All applications should have due consideration of Policy G1 of the Island Plan.

The Minister for Planning and Environment will also consider the application for a tall building in terms of a range of broader issues beyond their normal planning responsibilities, these will include means of escape and public safety.

Other aspects of tall buildings – such as their use – remain to be considered within the existing and emergent policy and guidance regime.

## 8 Procedures for consultation with stakeholders

Participation of the community of Jersey and St. Helier in the design of future tall buildings is an essential component to creating a sustainable solution. The Minister for Planning and Environment will encourage pre-application discussions with all those affected by the tall building application.

The design team should engage in a pro-active consultation process. Public involvement should be tailored to the particular audience, however the process should be seen as a means to inform, educate and promote ownership of the principle as well as the particular detail of a tall building application. It is particularly important to involve a representative cross-section of the community in the process, in particular young people.

Procedures could include:

- Public events to review the emerging proposals. Events have already been held as part of the process informing Waterfront 2000, the Urban Character Appraisal and the Waterfront design. Future events should be designed as a continuation of this process.
- Empowering people to engage in design issues, in particular involving younger people from the earliest stage possible.
- De-mystifying tall building design by clear, unambiguous and verifiable information. More three-dimensional (3D) representations that articulate designs as part of the future design statements and planning applications.

## 9 Summary and Conclusions

This guidance concludes that a case can be made for tall buildings on the Waterfront of varying heights, which could be taller than the existing buildings of St. Helier. New buildings must be properly planned as part of a place-making process, which is informed by a long-term comprehensive vision of the Waterfront that is integrated with the context of the existing town. They must not be designed in an ad hoc, reactive and piecemeal manner. This document proposes a range of storey heights appropriate for St Helier, however this can only be validated in a detailed planning application where the proposed heights of a development are fully modelled and detailed.

In summary any planning application for a tall building must:

- Identify and justify areas appropriate for tall buildings
- Demonstrate that it is appropriate and sensitive not an inappropriate, insensitive, speculative application in the wrong place
- Protect the historic and maritime environment and the qualities that make St. Helier special
- Have due respect for streetscape, scale, height, grain, topography, significant view of skylines, landmarks and their settings, backdrops, important views, prospects and panoramas.
- Demonstrate that it makes a positive contribution to the identity and character of St Helier and that it creates a sense of place that is related to the context and qualities of the town;
- Contribute to the vitality of St Helier and positively enhance the public realm;
- Be of high quality and followed through to ensure it is not substituted for poorer design later
- Be presented in a form that enables effective public consultation
- Be thoroughly tested and debated – the impact of tall buildings is such that they require careful scrutiny.

This guidance outlines a number of issues influencing a tall building strategy and can be summarised as follows:

- Any tall building must be set in the context of St. Helier and designers should draw on the Urban Character Appraisal for St. Helier for guidance. The existing town centre should form the basis of future layout intensity.
- There are important views, panoramas and prospects - one of the most sensitive areas is how the Waterfront is viewed around St. Aubin's Bay from the land and sea.
- The existing skyline and backdrop to St. Helier Waterfront is powerful and dominant over the waterfront. Distinctive landmarks like Elizabeth Castle, La Collette power station chimney and Fort Regent help define this and views from key viewpoints to these must be respected. The strip of planting below the second parapet of Fort Regent with tree top edges is a significant horizontal landmark and should remain visible.
- A tall buildings policy must be set in a broader Urban Design (3D) policy. It is essential that any application is accurately defined within its 3D context.
- A case is made for introducing one significant new tall building on the Waterfront that modifies the existing skyline, is a new iconic landmark and is complementary to the overall composition of the skyline. In addition a cluster of other taller buildings of

varying heights can be added to complement the overall planning and 3D massing of the Waterfront.

- The policy for tall buildings contained in Policy BE5 of the Island Plan should also be further defined into three distinct categories of building heights; higher than existing (4-6 storeys); high buildings in specific locations (8-11 storeys) and a special landmark building (maximum 15 storeys)

## Appendix 1

### St. Helier Urban Character Appraisal (UCA)

Willie Miller Urban Design October 2005

Using the UCA section headings we summarise below the specific points of note that impact on a tall buildings policy.

#### 1 Strategic Context

- The appraisal covers the whole St. Helier urban area and the town's most important road entrances. It covers the Waterfront area, its backdrop and approaches and it covers all areas where tall buildings are being considered.
- St. Helier is the island's only significant settlement; it is the administrative capital, centre for offices particularly financial services, retail and entertainment uses for the domestic market as well as those serving the tourism industry. This combined with constraints on urban expansion dictated by a desire to protect the rural areas and historic parish boundaries means that St. Helier has many of the characteristics of a small city and "*despite a number of shortcomings has the urban presence, vitality and choice of a much larger city.*"
- The general consensus drawn from a consultation process informing the appraisal was '*that St. Helier is a disappointing and under performing place which has failed to keep up with the changing expectations of residents, visitors and business.*'
- The UCA identified transforming the Waterfront into a vibrant and diverse urban quarter to be one of four key challenges facing St. Helier- the others related to continued growth of the financial sector, maximising visitor experience and development of an authentic urban lifestyle thus increasing the proportion of permanent island residents residing in St. Helier.
- The UCA was understandably critical of the severance between the town centre and the Waterfront and inappropriate nature of recent development. With the exception of the new apartments at Albert Pier - the first phase of development has been a sad disappointment.
- St. Helier needs to learn lessons from other comparable places and look forward to new approaches to place making. Future development must be driven by effective partnerships with all stakeholders.

#### 2 Evolution of Character

- The UCA investigates in detail the evolution of character of St. Helier. It reviews the many and varied documents recording its development.
- There is recognition that the shortage of land and pressure on existing built – up land is not new." *The visual chaos produced (during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century) by the various building heights, building lines site layouts, gardens –let alone the diversity of quality, composition, ornamentation and materials of the older structures.*" This pattern of disorder has continued to the present day and dictates the complexity and richness of its urban environment.
- There is also a recognition that a shortage of larger sites has led to a tradition of amalgamating smaller plots to form larger parcels – this has drawn a conclusion that the grain of St. Helier is ever changing, however we would argue that this should not be exploited as an opportunity to create a new urban grain that is out of step with its predecessors.

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### 3 People and perceptions

- Through a series of facilitated workshops with community groups, businesses, government officers and local professionals conclusions were drawn on the perceptions and expectations of St. Helier.
- A most notable conclusion is that although residents value their heritage and regret the erosion of the historic townscape, they want it to be a forward looking and modern town - there is a strong commitment to the idea of a genuine urban lifestyle in the town centre.

### 4 Urban Qualities

The UCA defines and illustrates 14 qualities that create good places within the context of St. Helier these are:

- *Recognisable Places*
- *Strong Centres and Focal Points*
- *Strong Boundaries*
- *Gradients and Changes in level*
- *Nodes and Connections*
- *Repetition of Elements*
- *Local Symmetries*
- *Echoes and Similarities*
- *Solid and Void*
- *The presence of the past*
- *Integration*
- *Surprise*
- *Colour*
- *Little Gems*

A proposal for a tall building should demonstrate how many of the urban qualities defined in the UCA are delivered or respected as part of the building design and surrounding built and landscaped composition.

### 5 Character appraisals

The UCA sets out how the character of a place can be assessed. Using a multi-layered approach it set out categories of assessment. These are:

- Context - (topography, boundaries/edges/landmarks, sea views).
- Grain, scale and texture- (foot print, frontage width, set back and building height)
- Use and activity - (land use, street activity, waterfront, population density)
- Spatial issues- (places, green space, public realm)
- Built heritage - (historic value, listed buildings, architectural character)

In summary the UCA identifies the elements of historic and maritime environment and the qualities that make St. Helier special and should be respected. It also defines the existing characteristics that should be respected in terms of streetscape, scale, height, grain, topography, significant views, landmarks and their settings, backdrops, important views, prospects and panoramas. Points most relevant to tall building policy include:

- Fort Regent is recognised as an edge to the harbour areas

## Appendix 1

- Elizabeth Castle, Fort Regent and La Collette power station chimney are all recognised as iconic landmarks that influence the character of the town.
- The new apartments at Albert Pier and former abattoir and tourism office are major local landmarks that have an influence on the identity of the area. Similarly La Fregate restaurant is a more local landmark useful for way finding and affects the character locally.
- Sea views is a rather complex issue in that the sea is not visible from most of the town centre and that views to Fort Regent and the escarpment surrounding the town are more significant. Through the reclamation of Waterfront land historical, visual and physical connections have been closed off and new development should address this.
- Although there is a predominance of 2.5-3.5 storey heights there is recognition of existing building heights of up to 14 or so storeys. None of the taller buildings are considered of great architectural merit or are considered landmarks.

### 6 Character Areas

The new waterfront is described as one of ten character areas making up the town. An assessment of the area completed to date is critical of many of the existing features and emerging themes including:

- Severance between the historic town and the sea
- Lack of a traditional street layout
- Extensive use of man-made paving materials unlike the traditional materials of St. Helier
- There is little clarity in plot width or building heights (although new buildings tend to be between 4 and 6 storeys)

In addition to character areas the UCA identifies interstices - areas of transition between character areas. Significant to the Waterfront and a tall buildings policy is the Weighbridge site, the Esplanade/ La Route De La Liberation and West Park. Critical areas and issues include:

- The need for an effective interface between the town centre and the harbour/ Waterfront
- Spaces identified that are not pedestrian friendly (hostile)
- The need for more definition of the Weighbridge site from the South
- Rising ground levels causing visual and physical severance between the town and Waterfront
- The Waterfront needs a facade to integrate with the traditional town façade of the Esplanade
- The relationship between West Park and its surrounding buildings is becoming weak
- West Park is not an effective frame to a key entrance point of the town and Waterfront

Key observations and directions arising from the assessment of the character areas that are particularly relevant to the Waterfront and a tall buildings policy are:

- New development should be achieved within a coherent, high-density design framework and that the architecture and design are consistent with a sensitive and high profile location.
- Fort Regent is a Jersey Icon
- The Esplanade is the principal point of arrival to the town.

## Appendix 1

- Protecting and enhancing the setting of Elizabeth Castle should be a key consideration in future waterfront developments.
- Common themes should include maintaining and strengthening the natural landscape framework of sea, sand and hills, which bounds the urban area and gives coherence to the often-shapeless townscape.

### 7 Design Guidance

The UCA provide specific guidance in order to maintain the character of St. Helier in new developments. The broad principles include:

- Site planning and massing should respond to the large context and townscape
- Architectural expression relates to neighbourhood context
- Street facades should create a safe and interactive pedestrian environment

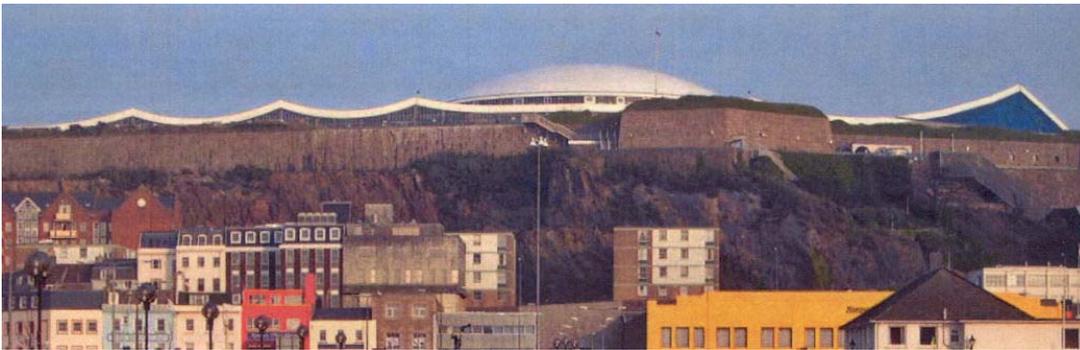
Guidance that can be applied with a tall building policy include:

- *Contribute to distinctiveness and integrate surrounding townscape* - The use of landmarks, vistas, focal points and existing landscape or built features can give urban areas a unique character and memory.
- *Protect important views.*
- *Make positive relationships with public space* - Buildings should give positive definition and enclosure to public space.
- *Horizontal / vertical* -There are opportunities to explore both horizontal and vertical emphasis on the Waterfront.
- *Turn the corner*- New corners can be an opportunity for visual emphasis and for introduction of a landmark or skyline feature.
- *Colour* - A waterfront palette of colours has been proposed.
- *Massing* - Clues can be taken from the immediate context to determine the appropriate height and massing of new development.
- *Building line* - The majority of St. Helier has a consistent and uninterrupted building line that can be easily identified, however there is an opportunity on the Waterfront with a new street system to contrast street (respecting the traditional) and quayside setbacks.
- *Diversity/homogeneity* - The UCA promotes a high level of variety, however new buildings should also draw on elements of the significant local architectural themes.
- *Frontage proportion* - This is a function of the plot width and building height. Criteria should be taken from the older examples along the Esplanade.
- *Scale of detail* – The UCA promotes a simple robust level of detailing appropriate for harbour areas, however this should be softened and reduced for residential areas.
- *Roof shapes and finishes* - The roof silhouette is important along the Waterfront and careful consideration should be given to the overall composition of and impact on the skyline.
- *Activity and street interface* - This is very important along quaysides, links to the town centre and especially where tall buildings meet the street
- *Flanks* - Blank side elevations on large (tall) buildings should be minimised (avoided).

## Appendix 2

**Important views**- views of specific buildings and features from specific viewpoints. Those applicable to the St. Helier Waterfront include:

1. From and along the axis of the Esplanade to Fort Regent



2. From the Esplanade to Elizabeth Castle

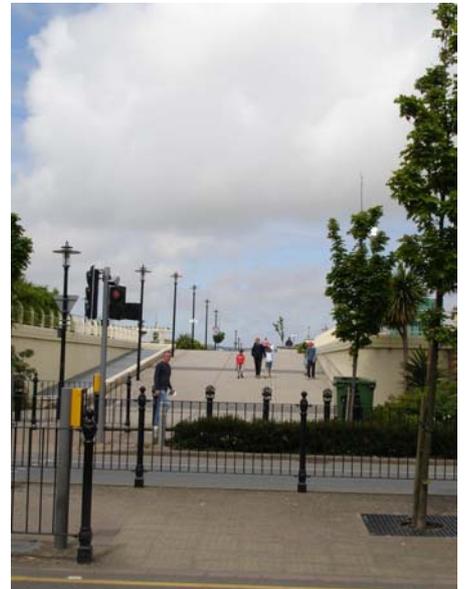


Appendix 2

3. From the waterfront to Elizabeth Castle



4. From the waterfront to St. Aubin



5. From St. Aubin to Fort Regent and Elizabeth Castle



## Appendix 2

### 6. From Beaumont to Elizabeth Castle and Fort Regent



### 7. From First Tower to Elizabeth Castle and Fort Regent



## Appendix 2

### 9. From The Pomme D'Or Hotel towards the sea



### 10. The Esplanade towards First Tower



## Appendix 2

**Important panoramas-** taken from specific viewpoints, but encompassing broad vistas containing many objects of interest.

1. The changing panorama along Victoria Avenue across St Aubin's Bay to Fort Regent and Elizabeth Castle.



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2. The panorama across St. Aubin's Bay from the sea with Noirmont and St. Aubin's Fort in the West to Elizabeth Castle and Fort Regent to the East

Appendix 2

3. From Fort Regent to St. Aubin's Bay



Appendix 2

4. The panorama across St. Aubin's Bay from the escarpment above Victoria Avenue

