



# conservation area policy

## Conservation Area Policy and Designations

In the UK, the principle of Conservation Areas has been well established for over thirty-five years. Scotland now has more than 600 Conservation Areas, and in England there are over 9,000 ranging from small rural hamlets and village squares to the World Heritage Site of the city of Bath. Although in the UK individual buildings gained statutory protection from planning legislation in the immediate post war era, it was not until the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 that the wider townscape, including lesser structures and the public realm of historic districts, was earmarked for preservation and enhancement.

Over the years, further legislation across the UK has developed the principle of protecting areas of distinctive quality and character, and perhaps most significantly have compelled local authorities to enact policies for the enhancement of designated Conservation Areas. In most cases, enhancement includes a targeting of financial assistance and other initiatives to improve the condition of elements of the historic townscape.

### Designating a Conservation Area

Several important criteria are used to determine an area's suitability for statutory protection:

- its special architectural and historic importance
- its distinctive character
- its uniqueness or value as a good example of an unusual local or regional type
- its condition and scope for improvement and enhancement

Without doubt, St Helier's historic areas have a special quality and character, a strong "sense of place," and a feeling of continuity. In a period of comparatively rapid change, cherished buildings, streets or views are likely to become increasingly valued by residents; a high quality, well-maintained built heritage also attracts tourists, enhances small business opportunities and generally adds vitality to the town.

Although the historic townscape of St Helier may appear robust, many valuable buildings and their surroundings are fragile and are prone to long term decline due to neglect and incremental change (eg loss of original architectural features or despoiling of settings).

Policy BE9 of the Island Plan 2002 addresses these issues and

introduces a new level of statutory protection in Jersey. It states that:

- Conservation Areas will be designated within the Plan period subject to a detailed appraisal of their conservation merits
- once designated as a Conservation Area, the Planning and Environment Committee will initiate the preparation of Conservation Management Plans for each area to inform their long term conservation and enhancement.
- development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it would conserve or enhance the architectural or historic character of the Conservation Area
- development proposals will be expected to be in accordance with all other principles and policies of the Plan and in particular should:
  - a) respect the historical context in scale, form and layout
  - b) use materials and colours that are appropriate and sympathetic to the site and its setting
  - c) protect boundary features such as trees, hedges, walls and railing that contribute to the special character of the area
  - d) protect and enhance views into and out of the area
- developments that area likely to have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of a Conservation Area will not normally be permitted

This policy was further elaborated upon in the Supplementary Planning Guidance — The Historic Environment (10/2003) which stated that "Conservation Areas will be areas of distinctive townscape quality and character, which include particular concentrations of historic buildings, and which would benefit from the formulation of specific enhancement strategies and their implementation through Conservation Management Plans."

It is important to determine a strategy for implementation of Conservation Areas that is tailored to the particular physical and political circumstances of St Helier. A judgment must be made as to whether a bold step or an incremental process is most likely to produce the appropriate result. The designation of Conservation Areas could be undertaken in phases or in a single initiative across the entire historic built-up area of the town:

## Comprehensive Initiative

A single Conservation Area encompassing the historic built-up area of St Helier would provide the opportunity to protect and enhance the essence of the old town, that is, the traditional mix of high and low style architecture that provides St Helier with its character. St Helier's finest buildings are distributed widely throughout the town, set within a matrix of more modest buildings. The more "ordinary" architecture is often, however, of a consistency and quality that means it still contributes in a significant way to the overall character of the town. As it defines the context or setting for St Helier's most important buildings and townscape features, it is important in its own right and therefore worthy of protection. Any dilution of the character of these lesser historic buildings would diminish the amenity of the town as a whole.

The designation of a single St Helier/Havre-des-Pas Conservation Area is, however, an ambitious strategy and would require considerable political will from the authorities and a certain confidence that the community would support the initiative.

## A Phased Approach

Alternatively, a phased approach could be conceived, starting with selected areas of particular historic significance. There are three key areas that could be considered as "primary" areas of interest:

- Town Centre
- Havre-des-Pas
- St Helier north (a district incorporating upper David Place, Stopford Rd and St Mark's Rd, across Val Plaisant to Midvale Rd, Clarendon St, Rouge Bouillon up the hill to Almorah)

The Island Plan has earmarked the Town Centre for designation, and as the historic heart of St Helier and the site of some of the town's finest architecture it is entirely logical that it is considered to be the primary candidate for Conservation Area status. Certainly, a publicity campaign highlighting the benefits of designation might have particular success in the town's retailing and leisure centre. As a predominately business area, however, there may be some more entrenched resistance to the concept of Conservation Area from commercial landlords and their tenants. Still, with a high density of Registered Buildings located in the Town Centre, it may also be the case that there is already a certain level of acceptance of conservation controls and thus property owners might be disposed to accept the new level of protection.

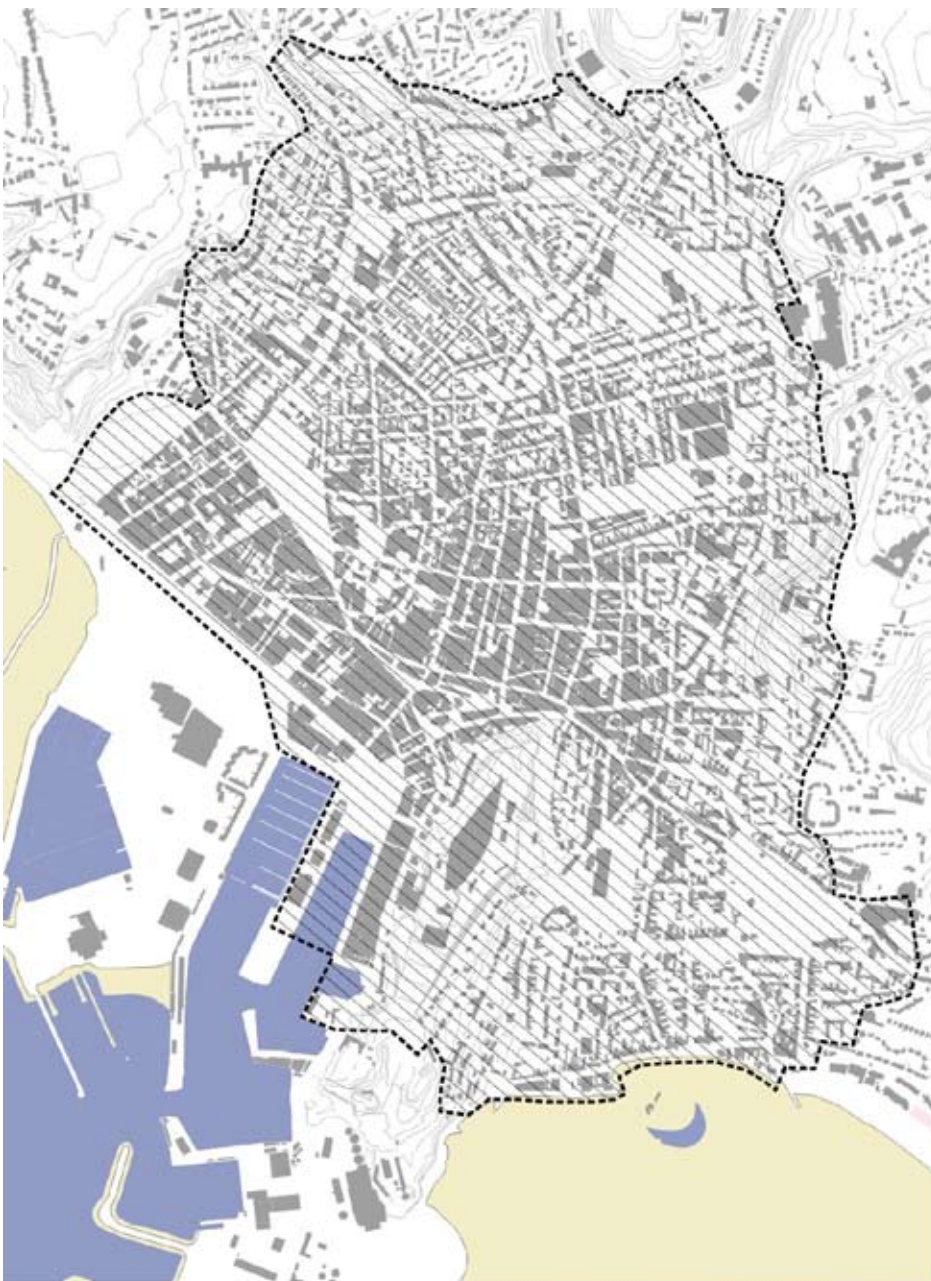
It is a point worthy of debate, however, whether all the States' energies should be concentrated on the commercial core of St Helier. There is a danger that, if the designation process is protracted, there may be a gradual decline in the architectural and townscape quality in the other important but un-designated parts of the town over the same time frame, this would be a particular concern in Havre-des-Pas and the north end of the town. These two important residential districts have concentrations of high quality historic architecture but there is the potential of continued erosion of the townscape without the protection offered by Conservation Area status.

## Further Extensions


If these three Conservation Areas are designated in the first instance, and are deemed to be a success by both the States and the population at large, a secondary phase of designations can follow. This second phase could encompass further, smaller Conservation Areas, mainly in residential districts, either as independent Conservation Areas or as extensions of the existing three Conservation Areas. Potential examples include:

- Great Union Road
- Queen's Road
- Peirson Road
- West Park Avenue/Parade Road
- St Saviour's Road
- Royal Crescent district

An incremental designation process could be continued across the town over a period of years until the ultimate objective of a comprehensive Conservation Area is complete.



**COMPREHENSIVE INITIATIVE**

 Single conservation area

