



public realm strategy



PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

St Helier's public realm is made up of four main types of public space:

- soft or green spaces
- the waterfront(s)
- hard spaces and squares
- the street network and connections

At present, this network provides a reasonable range of spaces of different scales and types but there are some notable weaknesses, with some parts of the network being not well-connected and certain types of open space under-represented. This strategy proposes a clarification of the role of the spaces and the reinforcement of parts of the network of links, through a range of physical interventions and improvements, as outlined below.

GREEN SPACES

The Parade, the proposed Town Park and Howard Davis Park should be the primary public green spaces of St Helier. They are all within 5 minutes walk of the town centre and complement one another in terms of the roles each could play. All of these spaces should remain predominantly soft and green but perform slightly different roles to accommodate a wide range of leisure and recreational activities, as follows:

The Parade

Role

The Parade should be protected as a formal 'green' with a strong cultural/civic/memorial function. It should continue to serve as a place to relax and a green oasis close to the main business area.

Character

The historic, formal and largely passive character should be protected. The original open character and simple elegance should be restored.

Recommendations (in order of priority)

Refinements to management/support for existing policy:



- protection and reinforcement of the avenue planting
- removal of accretions of unnecessary street furniture, 'features' and shrubbery

Design project:

- introduction of a more sophisticated palette of surface materials and more atmospheric lighting
- redesign of particularly weak areas such as the environs of All Saints Church (which should appear to be placed *within* the park rather than encroaching onto it)
- removal of the timber shelter facing onto Union Street (which unhelpfully divides the space and obscures important historic views to the Don monument and Cenotaph)



Town Park

Role

This is presently an area of derelict ground that is designated for a public park. The area should become the main public park for people who live in the town centre – St Helier's 'Central Park'. It needs to be a versatile and genuinely social space with leisure opportunities for all age groups.

Character

Devising an appropriate character will be a central objective of the designer's brief but it should develop from an understanding of the history of the town, its physical characteristics and the social and cultural traditions of the surrounding communities.

Recommendations

Design project:

- continued promotion of the project to create the park and an ongoing dialogue with community and relevant stakeholders through the design and implementation process
- investigation of potential for an early win to retain public confidence





Howard Davis Park

Role

These are the 'botanic gardens' of St Helier, a formal and decorative show garden of great value and character. The park should be protected as such. There may be a role for integration of more art in the park, either as a venue for art events or exhibitions, or as a location for more public art.

Character

The formal, traditional and ornamental character of Howard Davis Park should be protected and its supplementary role as a decorous cultural venue should be supported.

Recommendations

Refinements to management/support for existing policy:

- continued support for specialised horticultural activities and for arts/cultural events

Design project or competition for a landmark structure:

- upgrading/replacement of band shelter (potentially the introduction of a contemporary, iconic structure with integrated, state-of-the-art sound and lighting technology)

Secondary spaces

Other green spaces are important but in a secondary and more selective way; for example the Stadium is important specifically for its role as the town's key sports facility and the Green Street Cemetery for its family history interest and ecological significance. They have important roles but should be secondary to the three main public parks in terms of priorities for investment.

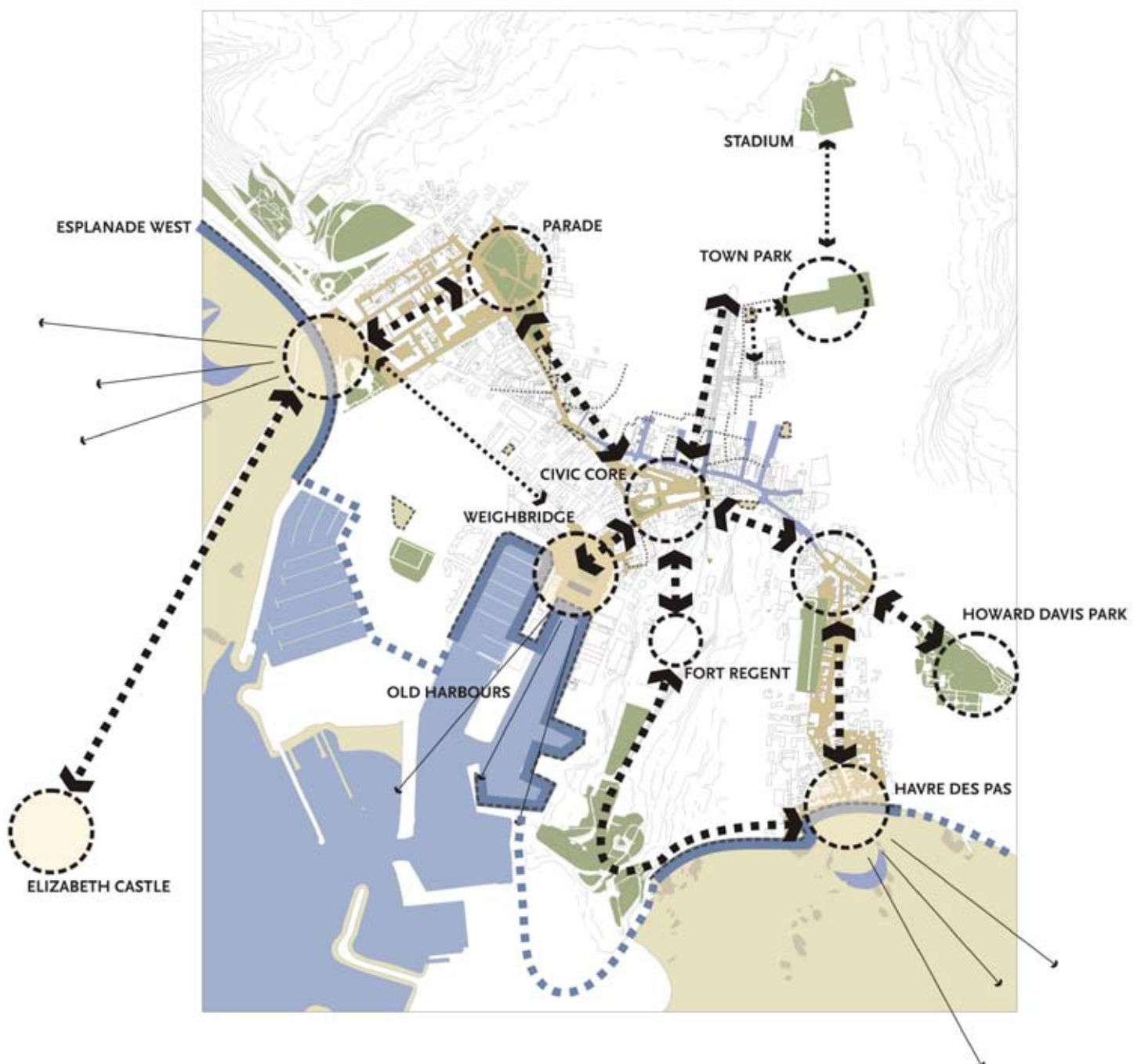
Recommendations

Refinements to management/support for existing policy:

- continued support for stadium as primary sports venue



Public Realm Strategy: connecting places and spaces



Design projects/gradual upgrading through existing maintenance programmes:

- improvement to key pedestrian links and access points to sports grounds
- improvements to environment at entrypoints to Green Street Cemetery
- updating of heritage and natural history interpretive material
- improvements to boundary treatments, especially along the car park edge

WATERFRONT SPACES

The three main areas of useable public waterfront should be seen as the essential building blocks of a waterside system of pedestrian priority areas, which in turn link seamlessly to the rest of the town's public realm. Key spaces include:

- West Esplanade/St Aubin's Bay
- The Old Harbours
- Havre de Pas

West Esplanade/St Aubin's Bay

Role

The West Esplanade should be retained as a traditional esplanade/promenade edging St.Aubin's Bay and linking St Helier with First Tower.

Character

The traditional and simple character of the promenade - with its robust stone quay wall, the broad pavement and poles strung with lights - should be retained.

Recommendations

Refinements to management/support for existing policy:

- minimisation of encroaching parking areas
- improvements to the key arrival point at Le Fregate to optimise first impressions (eg removal of clutter/ garish commercial signage)

Design projects/gradual upgrading through existing maintenance programmes:

- continued programme of upgrading/modernising shelters and kiosks
- improvements to parking areas to ensure they match the character and quality of the higher quality, pedestrian parts of the promenade

The Old Harbours

Role

The old harbours are an authentic remnant of the historic harbour town. They provide an attractive counterpoint to the contemporary waterfront further west.

Character

The chunky, historic, lively and slightly chaotic character of the old harbours should be protected.

Recommendations

Refinements to management/support for existing policy:

- continued promotion of rich mix of uses
- protection and enhancement of historic artefacts and features
- potential improvement of pedestrian safety/amenity in a light-handed manner(through, for example, removal of clutter and selective widening of footways)

Havre de Pas

Role

The Havre de Pas waterfront is a more intimate waterfront than those to the east. Local residents and holiday-makers should mingle here to enjoy the beach, pool and promenade. It should be a safe, relaxed, lively and fun place to bring a family.

Character

Havre de Pas has traditional seaside resort charm in abundance, although it is becoming shabby in places and needs updating and more intensive maintenance. Distinctive Victorian and early 20th century features should be protected and enhanced but ways should also be found to sensitively integrate contemporary elements.

Recommendations

Refinements to management/support for existing policy:

- continued support for the iconic tidal pool – as an architectural feature but also as a node of activity
- active conservation of historical artefacts and features

Design projects/gradual upgrading through existing maintenance programmes:

- upgrading/modernisation of shelters and street furniture
- investigation of potential to expand public pedestrian areas along the water's edge - potentially including the upgrading/reconfiguration of the seaward garden/terrace areas (presently private and partitioned)

HARD OPEN SPACES and URBAN SQUARES

St Helier should have a clear hierarchy of spaces and squares. Two civic spaces should be pre-eminent:

The Civic Heart

Role

The 'civic heart' encompasses an expanded space sequence around the States Building, Parish Church and Royal Square which takes in Broad Street, Bond Street, Mulcaster Street and Vine Street. This collection of spaces represents the cultural and political heart of the town.

Character

The spaces should be formal, hard urban spaces within which all manner of urban life is played out, but in particular, they should have a role as the stage set for important civic ceremonies and events.

Recommendations

Design project:

- extending the current high quality treatment (eg in Royal Square) to adjoining streets and spaces (as identified above) to create a much larger, cohesive civic heart

The Weighbridge

Role

The Weighbridge area is especially important to St Helier as it represents a vital link between the civic and retail core of the town and the waterfront.

Character

Proposals currently under consideration for the area are not based on the principles of sensitivity to context, the need to address issues of severance or what is required to cultivate a diverse and active range of uses. A more ambitious and robust approach would be to view the entire space between the buildings as a whole, and aim to develop it as a large, vibrant and active socialising and event space in the manner of a market square – a type of space that is presently absent from St Helier. Innovative alterations to the road system around the entrance to the tunnel and through the space are required, so that the design is based much more on the spatial qualities of the area and pedestrian needs rather than on traffic needs.

Recommendations

Design project:

- promotion of highest urban design aspirations for the redesign of the space
- ongoing promotion of ideas with community and relevant stakeholders through the design and implementation process

Other hard open spaces

Whilst the improvement of the main civic spaces is the priority at present, there is also a need to boost the number of small paved spaces throughout the town to create more choices of places to pause, meet, people-watch or set out café tables. Where opportunities for incidental spaces arise and where there is a clear purpose for the space, the formation of positive, useable spaces should be encouraged.

Recommendations

Refinements to management/support for existing policy:

- encouragement to cafes and shops to colonise pavement spaces (where space allows)
- selective expansion of footways where demand arises
- consideration given to temporary treatment of vacant/underused ground to allow use as public space

CONNECTIONS

Creating clearer connections between important parts of St Helier's public realm will improve the legibility of the town, increase pedestrian use and benefit the residential and business community. It will increase the appetite of Jersey visitors for exploring the town and contribute to making St Helier a desirable place in which to live, work and play.

Primary connections

The primary network includes:

Green Space Connections:

- Parade to Civic and Retail Core
- Howard Davis Park to Colomberie
- Town Park (proposed) to Civic and Retail Core

Waterfront Connections:

- West Esplanade to the Parade
- West Esplanade to Elizabeth Castle (especially departure point)
- West Esplanade to Old Harbours
- Old Harbours to Havre des Pas
- Havre des Pas to Colomberie
- Fort Regent to Havre des Pas via Rope Walk and La Collette Gardens

Hard Open Spaces and Urban Squares:

- Civic Heart to Weighbridge
- Weighbridge to Old Harbours
- Snow Hill to Fort Regent

Recommendations

Refinements to management/support for existing policy/design projects:

- protection of, and additions to, the network of primary routes to be a consideration in all building and street works
- promotion of pedestrian comfort and convenience on primary routes

- development of quality treatments, continuity and consistency across the primary network
- reduction of severance along key routes

Secondary connections

A number of secondary routes should also be improved, especially to link north-south, connecting the town centre to open spaces and particularly to the waterfront. Also, lanes and arcades provide an opportunity to build a more comprehensive network of minor links that give greater choice of route through the town and provide an interesting contrast in scale and character to the main streets.

Recommendations

Refinements to management/support for existing policy:

- promotion of new secondary routes during consideration of new building and street works
- formalisation of presently ambiguous secondary links (eg through car parks)
- promotion of 24 hour access along secondary routes (where feasible)

Design projects:

- improvements to environmental quality and accessibility along existing secondary links

Management

There is one single overarching recommendation that applies to all the spaces and connections listed above and that is that there should be a particular emphasis on the stewardship of public space in St Helier. Spaces must be of a certain quality and designed to be 'fit for purpose' in order to be deemed "successful" but beyond that, upkeep is the most important characteristic that ensures that spaces are used and respected. Efforts to enhance the appearance of spaces or to embellish or 'prettify' are not as important as dedicated and meticulous cleansing and maintenance.

At present, the quality of management and maintenance of St Helier spaces is patchy. A more consistent approach is required so that all streets and spaces are reliably, consistently and scrupulously maintained. This may require a rationalisation of management responsibilities, to address, for example, the existing difficulty in coordinating the various parties involved in improving and managing open space.

