



recommendations

STRATEGIC ISSUES AND DIRECTIONS

This report sets out a wide range of ideas, policy directions, physical proposals and practical advice for maintaining and enhancing the environment of St Helier. One of our conclusions is that St Helier is a very special place with many of the assets and attributes of a large city. At the same time, the urban experience is patchy, disappointing, dull and old fashioned. St Helier has been described to us as ‘the fly in Jersey’s ointment’ and indeed many people have told us that the town is unattractive, crowded and expensive. There is a strong desire to redress these negative external impressions of St Helier by building a waterfront that will don the mantle of a World City – like Sydney, Cape Town or Boston. While something intelligent has to take place on the waterfront, it cannot be a substitute for a proper urban renaissance in St Helier. To achieve that, more people have to start liking St Helier, to be interested in it, to care about it and to want to live there – instead of in the countryside of Jersey. For that to happen, the following strategic matters must be dealt with:

- **the dynamics of the town** – making the most of the driving forces at work in the town, pressure on the waterfront, the island site, dealing with demand pressure on the residential market
- **transformational change** – an effective urban design strategy delivering a world-class waterfront, a revived, repopulated and distinctive urban core, and a sweep of stylish civilised and sought-after suburbs
- **guiding principles** – reconnecting, integrating, creating a sense of arrival, overcoming severance, nurturing distinctiveness and encouraging diversity, animating streets and public spaces
- **managing change** – a comprehensive and integrated approach for St. Helier that successfully realises major regeneration opportunities such as the waterfront, the town park and Fort Regent

RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively and comprehensively deal with the strategic matters and to secure implementation the core recommendations are:

1. Strategy for St Helier

It is recommended that the States accept and adopt the strategic objectives for St Helier and employ them to provide direction and guide projects in the town in support of the Island’s overall objectives. They should underpin the development of a comprehensive regeneration strategy for St Helier which includes not only the waterfront but the rest of the town.

This needs to be developed within an integrated strategic and comprehensive framework that address the town-wide issues of travel and transport and management and maintenance. It also needs to consider St Helier’s role as the heart of the Island’s economy and its role and function for the Island’s culture and visitor experience – and to critically review and consider what St Helier can and should contribute to these roles – within the town’s setting and character.

The development of a strategy for St Helier should be considered within the context of a review of the Island Plan 2002.

2. Championing, engagement and implementation

It is recommended that the regeneration of St Helier is championed at a high level and that sufficient public sector resource is directed to manage and facilitate the necessary development of strategy and the investment in implementation to realise these objectives. Partnerships and engagement with other stakeholders in the town should be an integral part of this process.

URBAN CHARACTER

We have identified ten character areas in the town. All face different challenges and each has a different capacity to absorb change. They are:

1. **West Esplanade and Elizabeth Castle**
2. **La Collette**
3. **Havre des Pas**
4. **Fort Regent**
5. **Old Harbours**
6. **New Waterfront**
7. **Parade and Esplanade**
8. **Town Centre**
9. **Town Centre North**
10. **Town Edges and Slopes**

A range of policy directions, strategic initiatives, regeneration opportunities and physical interventions has been assembled for each character area. The aim is to maintain and enhance the character of each area, in some cases through major initiatives (which should be embraced by a strategic plan for St. Helier), but mostly through the small scale process of incremental change through the planning application process.

Design guidance has been devised for each area based on 13 criteria including building line, massing, colour, materials, frontage proportion and scale of detail. The guidance creates a simple system for assessing planning applications and creates a new degree of certainty about what is acceptable and what is not, and what will maintain or enhance the character of each character area and what might be damaging to it.

Recommendations

3 Character Area Design Guidance

It is recommended that the Environment and Public Services Committee endorse and adopt the design guidance set out in this report, to be employed as a means

of protecting and enhancing the character of the town in the process of development control.

4 Development briefs and other supplementary planning guidance

It is recommended that the Environment and Public Services Committee also develop supplementary planning guidance in the form of development briefs for key sites and policy or advice notes on key issues identified in the report so as to maintain and enhance the basis of local character, as identified in the key characteristics and objectives for each character area.

The development of briefs should be prioritised in accord with the objectives, timescales and resources identified in the strategy for St Helier.

5 Monitoring and review

It is recommended that a monitoring process be put in place to identify changes in development pressure, sensitivity or other changes which would materially affect the 10 character areas. These changes may be reflected in revised policy or guidance.

Subject to the availability of resources, the consultant team should be invited to monitor the results of this process. A period of twelve months from the date of commencement of the guidance regime may be appropriate: this should be kept under review.

6 Action Areas

It is also recommended that in the course of reviewing the Island Plan 2002 the Environment and Public Services Committee should replace the Action Area definition and policy identified in the Island Plan at Policy BE6 with the character area definition and any other associated policy and guidance.

7 Promoting urban living

It is recommended that the Environment and Public

Services Committee, in partnership with others, consider producing promotional material on the history, development and urban qualities of these areas as part of a campaign to increase interest in the town and urban living;

CONSERVATION ISSUES

These initiatives need to be accompanied by attitude change, particularly in relation to the quality of St Helier's physical environment. We have documented at some length the historical development of St Helier and the rich heritage that is present across the town. We have also drawn attention to the ease with which that heritage can disappear in a gradual manner or more dramatically through amalgamation of small sites into larger developments which have little relationship with the grain of the town.

We have pointed out the value of conservation to the local economy in earlier sections through increased cultural capital, cost-effectiveness, promotion of tourism, a wider range of residential and business accommodation, sustainability and maintenance costs. Conservation has to be seen as the natural process through which St Helier will change for the better rather than simply a restriction to be overcome.

Recommendations

8. Designating Conservation Areas

It is recommended that the Environment and Public Services Committee designate Conservation Areas in St Helier. This would involve the development and application of a stricter regulatory control of development to protect the declining architectural, historical and visual quality of the town.

These could be introduced on a phased basis. The three key areas of primary interest are the Town Centre, Havre des Pas and St Helier North.

This should be considered in parallel with the ongoing designation of SSIs and BLIs.

9. Enhanced grant aid

It is recommended that the level of grant aid from the States for the conservation of historic buildings in Jersey be increased. To arrest the decline of historic physical fabric of St Helier greater focus and resources should be directed to the repair and retention of important features and buildings of historic, architectural and cultural importance in the town.

Even in times of economic uncertainty, investing in heritage should be seen as an investment in Jersey's infrastructure and of benefit to the local economy both indirectly and directly.

10. Promoting owner-occupation in the town

It is also recommended that in addition to a greater level of public sector investment (through an enhanced grant aid programme for the repair of historic buildings) that the States should seek to explore mechanisms to enhance the level of owner-occupation – and hence investment in the maintenance and upkeep of the historic building stock – in the town.

11. Supplementary guidance

It is recommended that the Environment and Public Services Committee, in partnership with others where appropriate, review and develop specific technical guidance to assist the maintenance and repair of the features and buildings of historic and architectural character in the town.

12. Celebration, education and awareness

The Island rightly cherishes the quality of its coast and countryside but lesser value is placed on its urban environment and the buildings and spaces which contribute to it. It is recommended that the Environment and Public Services Committee, in partnership with others, develop and implement an educational campaign which promotes the value of older buildings to the economic, social and cultural benefit of St Helier.

PUBLIC REALM

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 of routes and places 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.

Recommendations

13. The Environment and Public Services Committee, in partnership with other stakeholders, should adopt and develop the Public Realm Strategy as potentially the most productive set of physical interventions which could benefit the general environment of the town.

Government support, in the form of funding and resources, should be provided to enable the development and implementation of this strategy, within the framework of the overall strategy for St Helier. Where appropriate, partnerships with the private sector should be developed to achieve improvements to the public realm.

The implementation of the strategy should deliver physical improvements to the quality of St Helier's public realm which should be sustained by the review and implementation of a sustainable, high quality maintenance regime.

We hope that our own enthusiasm for the town has come over in this study. We immodestly think that this study follows in the tradition of the work carried out by C E B Brett (1977) and Melville Dunbar Associates (1984). Both Brett and Dunbar clearly thought St Helier was a great place. So do we.

States of Jersey



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