



## introduction

This report, prepared by a consultant team led by Willie Miller Urban Design with Drew Mackie Associates, yellow **book**, Glasgow Conservation Trust West and Malcolm Fraser Architects, sets out the findings of an Urban Character Appraisal of the town of St Helier. The study was commissioned by the Planning and Environment Department of the States of Jersey and originated in the Island Plan which was approved in July 2002. In particular, Policy BE1 states that:

*“The Planning and Environment Committee will initiate an appraisal of the urban character and townscape of the town of St. Helier as an aid to the process of preserving and enhancing its character and in guiding policy formulation and the assessment of planning applications”.*

The appraisal of the urban character of the town coupled with design guidance for each character area forms the core of the study. The guidance is set in a strategic policy context which identifies

### Central St Helier



potential change in each area and makes proposals for conservation and physical intervention. The design guidance could enable the States of Jersey to take a new approach to assessing and processing planning applications.

### Context

St Helier originated as a medieval settlement which was extensively developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Today, St Helier continues to change in order to meet the needs of a growing population. The Island Plan 2002 provides the main context for the Urban Character Appraisal - some parts of St. Helier are likely to be the subject of significant change during the next ten years. These have been designated **Action Areas**, and could be the subject of individual development frameworks. Nine of these are located in St. Helier.

The Island Plan has identified the following aims for the study:

- to increase the understanding of the urban form of the town.
- to understand the inter-relationships and interfaces between the town and the other built up areas.
- to further define those areas most in need of renewal and target resources accordingly.
- to further define those areas most in need of protection and for possible designation as Conservation Areas.
- to assist in the preparation of development frameworks for Action Areas.
- to assist with future urban policy formulation and assist in the assessment of development applications.

These aims are set in the context of an agreed vision for St. Helier based on the views of a comprehensive range of local groups who were asked to consider:

- what quality of urban life should be aspired to in the future?
- what sort of physical, social and economic characteristics should prevail in the town?
- what should particularly identify the town?

The responses to these questions helped to evolve a vision for 2011 in which St Helier would be:

- a vibrant focus for Island life
- a place of strong historic identity and sense of place, but also an environment of design innovation
- a service centre of great vitality and viability – day and night
- a town of civilised streets and spaces for enjoyment as well as function
- a town with a strong feeling of safety and security

- a town of quality, character and visual interest in terms of its buildings and public domain.
- an environment accessible by all modes, with a town centre that is pedestrian friendly, particularly for the mobility impaired
- a place for all people and all ages

#### Study Area

Initially it was proposed that the study area would incorporate that part of St Helier included in the Town Proposals Map of the 2002 Island Plan. As the study has progressed, the consultant team have generally kept to this definition although it has been extended to include the town's more important road entrances.

#### Purpose of the Study

It was agreed that the study should:

- identify key factors which contribute to character, and use these to provide an appropriately sophisticated and objective assessment of the character of the town and the various character areas within it
- identify where the character is strong and requires conservation, and where the character is weak and eroded and requires restoration or more radical measures
- provide a policy base for management, protection and enhancement in different character areas

The brief also asked for the provision of development frameworks for those areas likely to undergo significant change in the coming 5-10 years (eg the designated Action Areas).

#### Objectives of Study

It was also agreed that the study should:

- provide supplementary planning policy and guidance for different parts of town, which build on the strategic policy framework provided by the Island Plan 2002
- provide a framework for assessing the impact of future land use proposals to help inform development control decisions
- help identify the capacity of different areas to absorb new development, and help ensure that any new development is appropriate for the area in question having regard to its distinctive character
- assess sensitivities/ vulnerabilities of different character areas to the forces of change.
- provide a framework for developing appropriate urban design/ public space strategy for conservation/ enhancement of town character

- provide a benchmark against which changes in various character areas can be monitored
- present the findings of the study in a professional and clear manner appropriate to the end user groups, and of a standard to be adopted as supplementary planning Guidance where appropriate

View south east towards Havre des Pas from Fort Regent



### Scope of the Study

It was agreed that the scope of the study should include the following:

1. A literature review of important and relevant documents including historic studies, previous townscape and other proposals, the Jersey Island Plan itself – including web based information sources – and a Character Appraisal of the Countryside of Jersey carried out in 1998 by Land Use Consultants.
2. The identification, definition and description of key character areas within an agreed boundary of St. Helier, based primarily on historical and morphological data, but also related to movement systems and social/cultural infrastructure.
3. Definition of key townscape characteristics and the relationship between public and private space, including the green environment within the town.
4. Identification of land-use patterns and their effect on character, both in terms of building form and the social characteristics of the public realm.
5. Obtaining and analysing public perceptions of the selected character areas, and identifying how this might impact upon future proposals.
6. Identification of the constraints and main elements of potential change within each character area.
7. Determination of the relative levels of protection and enhancement required within each character area, including areas of archaeological significance.
8. Establishing the relative capacity of the various character areas to accept new development without undue detrimental impact on their character.

The output from these tasks is a series of planning guidance and urban design frameworks for the character areas together with area based supplementary policies covering physical interventions, public realm strategy and conservation policy.

### Structure of the Baseline Report

The report is in two parts.

#### Part One:

Section 1 this is the introduction to the study  
 Section 2 describes the methodology used  
 Section 3 examines strategic issues which form the context for the work

Section 4 investigates the evolution of the character of St Helier  
 Section 5 deals with the perceptions of a range of people and interest groups within and outwith St Helier  
 Section 6 sets out some rules, definitions and typologies which have created today's St Helier  
 Section 7 describes how the character areas of St Helier were defined  
 Section 8 describes each character area in detail  
 Section 9 explores issues relating to conservation of the historic environment

#### Part Two:

Section 10 sets out a strategic direction for the character areas  
 Section 11 sets out the design guidance for each character area  
 Section 12 describes a conservation policy for St Helier  
 Section 13 deals with a public realm strategy for the town  
 Section 14 sets out the study recommendations

Elizabeth Castle from the New Waterfront Marina



