



methodology

Introduction

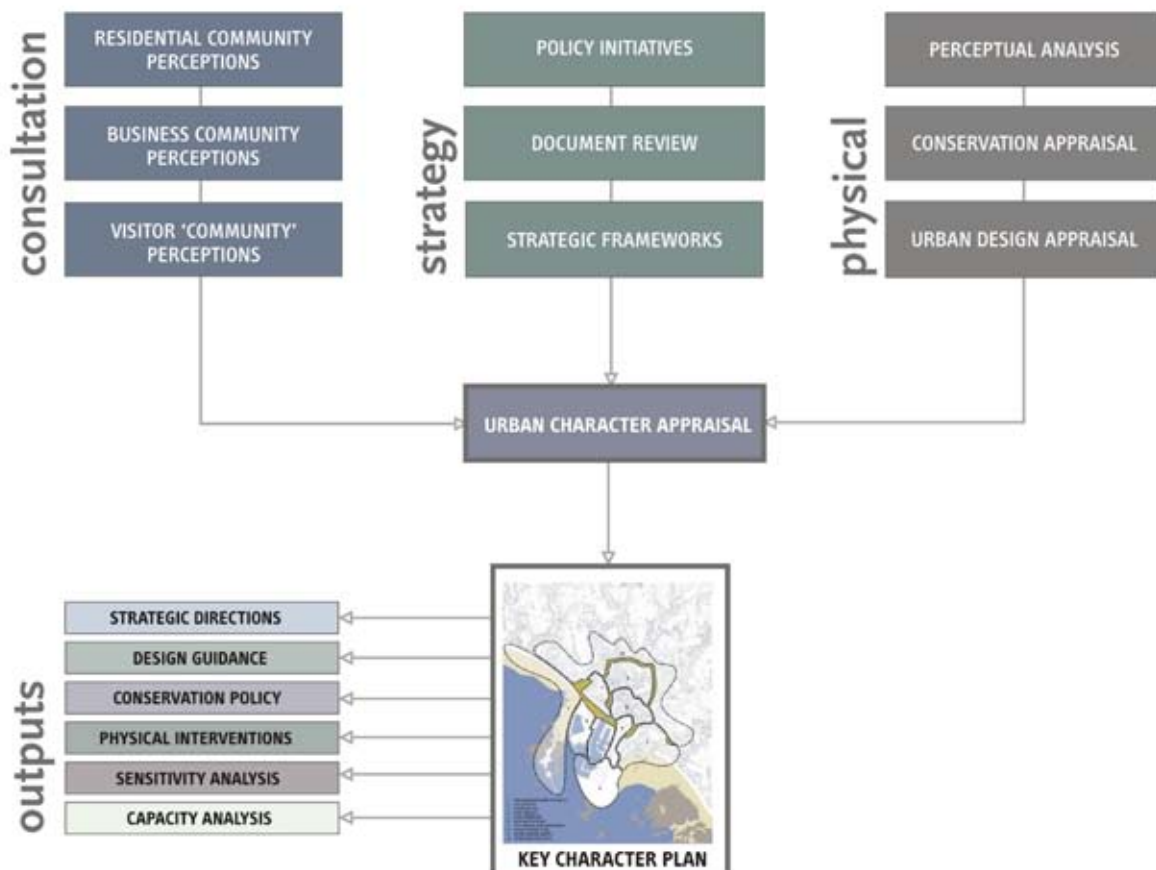
In our proposal for this commission, we noted a growing interest in producing methodologies which attempt to categorise urban character in (more or less) objective terms. We considered this to be a dead end approach, unlikely to provide either meaningful or useable information but at the same time, we thought it was important to bring some sense of order to bear on the process of defining urban character. At the same time, a simple physical assessment of the town would have been too one-dimensional and would have left many issues unresolved. In order to produce the character assessment for St Helier, our starting point was to blend together a wide range of objective criteria with subjective views, as well as expert knowledge. This desire to create an integrated and holistic output was echoed in the range of expertise in our team.

The diagram below outlines our ideas on how these analysis strands would be brought together.

Perception and Consultation

Our intention was to run a broad series of interactive programmes during the study period using a consultation kit devised for the study. From the brief it was evident that a good deal of consultation had already been carried out in St. Helier. There was no point in repeating this so we decided to audit previous streams of consultation and work with other organisations carrying out consultation at present. Where groups had not been consulted, we tried to bring them into the process if possible. The purpose of this

Key Study Diagram



work was several fold:

- to inform local people about character and conservation issues
- to incorporate local knowledge in the study
- to secure local support for the policies and projects that emerge from the study

The consultation methodology was designed to explore the perceptions of a range of local people and interest groups in relation to:

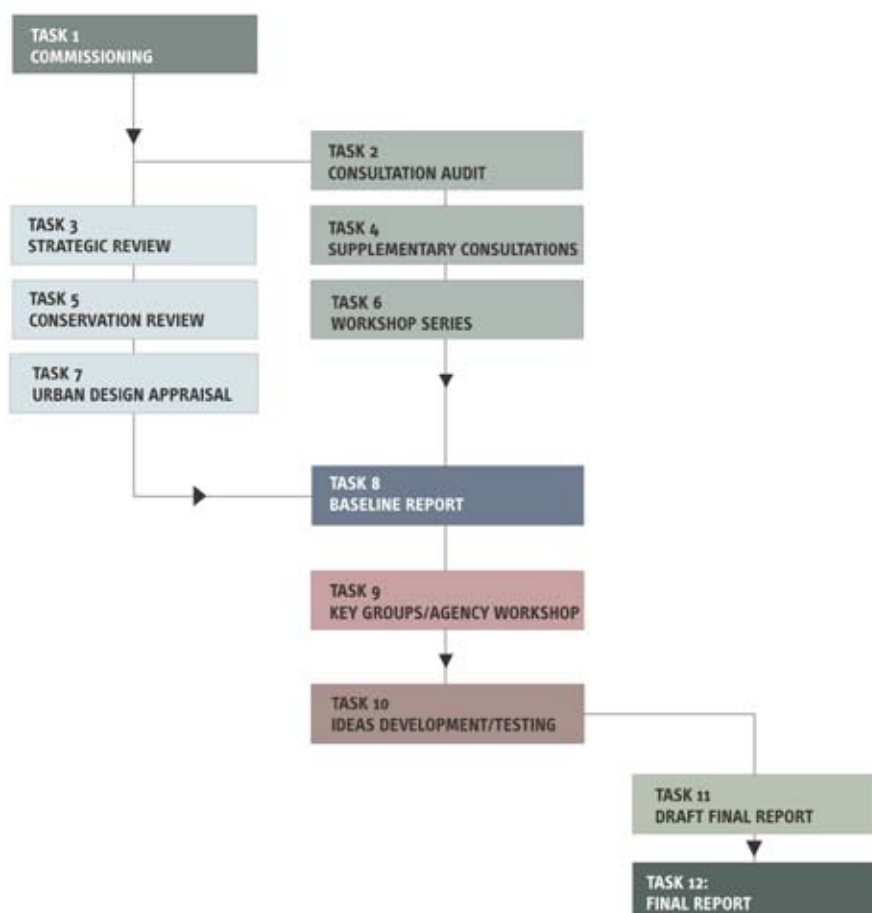
- places that are significant
- places that are included in or define key areas or neighbourhoods

- how different places are used and how popular they are
- what is especially distinctive and valued in the town

The intended range of consultees was primarily:

- young people
- college students
- readers of the Jersey Evening Post
- retailers and market tenants
- the Association of Jersey Architects
- the client group

Methodology diagram



The consultations were to take the form of:

- formal workshops of interest groups organised by the consultant team (retailers, architects - and others if required)
- workshops held by others (eg schools, colleges, other local interest groups)
- work on the street with young people
- a feature publication in the Jersey Evening Post

As it turned out, for a variety of reasons, we were not able to work with young people on the street nor run the feature publication in the Jersey Evening Post.. Nevertheless we do think that these would have contributed valuable information.

Retailers:

We ran a workshop with The Retailers Association and the Market Tenants group. This was facilitated by a kit of cards and maps but the emphasis was on how the centre of St Helier works for retail and what role the character of the area plays in the success of businesses. Questions were framed as follows:

- how and whether the character of the town (fine grain, small scale etc) was an asset or hindrance from their point of view
- whether the nature of the town encouraged shoppers to linger in the retail core
- which places best typified the character of St Helier and worked best from a retailers point of view
- one part of the town they might change and in what way

Association of Jersey Architects:

We also ran a workshop with the AJA. The same basic approach applied for this session but in this case there was a greater concentration on matters of guidance, development control, conservation and related topics. The cards were available as prompts, but the architects were asked to work predominantly with plans, recording aspects such as:

- the different neighbourhoods and character areas of the town
- key townscape qualities of different parts – using words and/or sketches
- places and spaces of value – social, historical, architectural
- what features/places are most distinctive to St Helier and which are more 'generic'

Client Group: Development Control + Conservation staff:

A workshop was held with the client group. This consisted of two interrelated parts intended firstly to bring detailed local knowledge of St Helier to the study and secondly to explore the range of issues

involved in planning and administering change in the town.

As with the sessions described above, the workshop group initially:

- identified the different character areas of the town and particular places/focal points
- suggested what sort of place St Helier should be – what sort of character.....

The group then identified:

- the general condition of townscape and priorities for conservation
- threats to the town and opportunities for change
- a list of issues which affect their work

Other Interest Groups and Individuals:

During the course of the study, other interest groups who expressed an interest in contributing to the work were consulted. The study team also contacted a number of individuals, other groups and organisations in St Helier (from the list issued by the client) to obtain a wider range of perceptions on the issues relating to the study. These included locally based artists, travel agents, property consultants and individuals who have visited St Helier in the past or who may intend visiting the town in the future.

Strategic Context, Conservation and Urban Design Appraisals

In parallel with the consultation and perception aspects of the studies, the team addressed the wider strategic context of the town through document research and interviews with key people in St Helier and the States of Jersey. St Helier does not exist in a vacuum and many influences on the economy of the town and its future inevitably affect the character of its various areas. The team also carried out extensive research on the history and development of the town and an in depth urban design appraisal of the physical aspects of the town. These various streams of work were brought together into a Baseline Report which was widely circulated.

Following this and after a period of consultation and feedback, we produced this Final Report which describes in some detail the steps which should be taken to maintain and enhance the character of the town.

