



## strategic directions



This section of the report examines the dynamics of St Helier, establishes relationships between policy initiatives and urban character, and describes the key components of what is effectively an urban design strategy for the town. This strategy has seven key **objectives**:

- to encourage and enable positive change and **development**
- to promote economic **dynamism** and a rich urban mix
- to enhance the **vitality** and attractiveness of the town
- to **conserve** and capitalise on valuable buildings and townscapes
- to encourage excellence in the **design** of new buildings and public spaces
- to **revitalise** under-performing areas
- to strike a better, more sustainable **transport** balance between cars, lorries, buses, cyclists and pedestrians

By delivering on these objectives, the strategy will contribute towards one of the stated objectives of the **Island Plan**: to make St Helier a *desirable place to live, work and play*.

The strategy will assist the delivery of other overarching **goals** for the town, including:

- establishing St Helier as the world's premier offshore **financial services** location
- encouraging the **diversification** of the Jersey economy through entrepreneurship and the development of knowledge-based businesses
- modernising the **tourism** product, and making St Helier more attractive to discerning, high spending visitors
- increasing the appetite of Jersey visitors for **urban living** and **urban experiences**.

### THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Many of these themes were trailed in our comprehensive baseline report, and have since been the subject of **consultations** with the clients and a wide range of stakeholder interests. These discussions have confirmed much of our initial analysis, including the apparent paradox that:



- St Helier is in many ways a **remarkable place**, with many of the assets and attributes of a much larger city, but – at the same time
- the **urban experience is disappointing**, and in some respects the town is dull and old-fashioned

Our consultees described some of the powerful **driving forces** that will shape the future of St Helier:

- the opening up of the island site and the rest of the waterfront will provide a **new focus for commercial development**
- as a result, the town's **centre of gravity** will shift south, and some traditional town centre activities will be displaced
- residents and visitors will demand a **more sophisticated product**, based on quality, distinctiveness and authenticity
- there will be **increasing competition** as other places raise their game, and market themselves more effectively
- 5-10,000 people will earn the right to buy homes in the next 10 years; this will create **demand pressure in the residential market**

Stakeholders described a **worst-case scenario** for St Helier, in which the town fails to respond to these challenges and drifts into anonymity and provincialism: sub-standard waterfront development would suck the life out of the traditional town centre, without creating an attractive new place, and the flight to the countryside – by residents and visitors – would continue.

## TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

By contrast, an effective urban design strategy will treat the driving forces as an exciting opportunity for St Helier, the catalyst for a process of **transformational change** which will deliver:

- a **world-class waterfront**, comprising a dynamic central business district; quayside cafes, restaurants and shops; visitor attractions; and apartments in a high quality, high density urban setting
- a **revived, repopulated and distinctive urban core**, with a lively mixed economy of shops, markets, cultural and entertainment venues; new workplaces; and city living apartments
- a sweep of **stylish, civilised and sought-after city suburbs**, including the regeneration of Havre des Pas as a seaside gem

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The urban design strategy is one of a number of tools for **place-making**, which is a complex and multi-faceted process, requiring policy and other interventions on many fronts. Our consultations helped to define guiding principles for the process in St Helier, including:

- **reconnecting** the town with its waterfront
- **integrating** waterfront development with the form and character of the town centre
- creating a sense of **arrival and welcome** at points of entry
- **overcoming severance** and environmental impacts of traffic
- nurturing the town's **distinctiveness** and authenticity through conservation and new development
- encouraging **diversity** and cosmopolitanism
- **animating** streets and public spaces.



## IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY IN THE CHARACTER AREAS

Our baseline report identified 10 provisional character areas. They are not prescriptive and it is in the nature of the urban change process that the boundaries between them will shift and blur. As we have developed the urban design strategy, we have **sorted the character areas into 3 groups**:

- **Central St Helier**: character areas 5 (Old Harbours), 6 (New Waterfront), 7 (The Parade), 8 (Town Centre Core), 9 (Town Centre North)
- **Major regeneration opportunities**: 2 (La Collette), 4 (Fort Regent)
- **Setting and context**: 1 (Esplanade), 3 (Havre des Pas), 10 (Edges and Slopes)

Each group of areas will contribute to the goals for St Helier, as follows:

	Central St Helier	Major regeneration	Setting and context
<b>Goals</b>			
Financial services	✓	✓	
Diversification	✓		
Tourism	✓	✓	✓
Urban living	✓	✓	✓



## CENTRAL ST HELIER

The future direction of the Central St Helier area, spanning the town centre core and fringes, and the waterfront is the **most important challenge** facing the town in the next 10 years.

This is the area where **development pressures** will be strongest, largely through the agency of the Waterfront Enterprise Board. The development of the new waterfront (area 6) beginning with the pivotal Island Site will cause the **financial services sector** to gravitate towards a new **central business district**, with inevitable consequences for traditional business locations in the town centre core (area 8). WEB also has plans to create a high profile **mixed use waterfront development**, combining retail, hotels, residential and visitor attractions, overlooking St Aubin's Bay.

The old harbours (area 5) also have enormous potential, especially as a visitor destination for alfresco **eating and drinking** and a new location for the **evening economy**.

These market trends have the potential to generate substantial **economic benefits**, by creating **magnet attractions** for visitors and local residents and prestigious **residential accommodation**. However, the urban design strategy must aim to ensure that:

- new development on the waterfront is achieved within a coherent, high density **design framework**, and that the **architecture and design** are consistent with a sensitive, high profile location
- the design framework **links and integrates** the town centre and waterfront
- the **roads infrastructure** is reconfigured or supplemented to reduce the impact of traffic and overcome existing barriers and severance
- the town centre core remains the principal centre for **retail, cultural and civic functions**
- the town centre core continues to be a **pedestrian priority environment**, animated by events, activities and outdoor eating and drinking
- **mixed use developments** are actively encouraged: the town centre should be a preferred location for professional service employment, city living apartments, fine dining and quality shopping

- the town centre fringes (areas 7 and 9) provide a complementary urban setting for **enterprise, culture and creativity**: these areas should be preferred locations for start-up businesses, live-work space, knowledge workers, music venues, galleries and alternative shops

Our consultations showed that there is a perception that the development of the waterfront poses **a risk to the prosperity and well-being of the traditional town centre**. These concerns partly reflect disappointment with the poor quality of much of the new development, which has added nothing to the vitality, attractiveness or competitive advantage of St Helier.

Continuing in this vein would be an **historic lost opportunity**, and a **zero-sum game** for Jersey. But we believe that this danger is now well understood, and that there is a shared commitment both to **raise the quality of development** and to take the necessary steps to enable the traditional centre to **adjust and adapt** to a new role. At the same time, the creation of a high quality **business district** on the waterfront (including quality hotels) will help Jersey to position itself as the world's most competitive offshore financial services centre.



## REGENERATION OPPORTUNITIES

The baseline report identifies two contrasting locations:

- Fort Regent (area 4) is a **Jersey icon**, which dominates St Helier and provides a superb view of the town and the coast
- La Collette (area 2) is effectively a **closed zone**: a promontory of reclaimed land dedicated to utilities, industry and distribution

Fort Regent is a key location in urgent need of a **new role**. The landmark leisure developments which give the Fort its distinctive silhouette have been overtaken by more accessible – though architecturally inferior – facilities on the waterfront. The swimming pool is closed, and the leisure complex is under-used and out of date. There is an opportunity for **comprehensive redevelopment** of the site, based on the following principles:

- **architecture of distinction** for the town's most visible location
- a mix of uses that will **attract residents and visitors** to the fort and capitalise on its outstanding **views**
- **conservation and interpretation** of the historic fort
- retention of significant areas of **public open space**
- improved **pedestrian access**.

A number of development opportunities have been identified and should be subject to market testing. Fort Regent has been identified as a prime location for an **international graduate business school**, and we recommend that this project should be the subject of a detailed feasibility study.

The redevelopment of La Collette will be a **long-term project**, but the regeneration of the old harbours will change the area's relationship to the town and open up new opportunities. The possibility of creating a new **deep-water berth** for ferries and visiting cruise ships has been mooted, but this will inevitably raise questions about the image and environment of an area which accommodates much of the island's essential infrastructure, and which may also be an **alternative location** for economic activities displaced from the English Harbour area.





## SETTING AND CONTEXT

The final three areas provide the topographical frame for the town of St Helier. While the character of the town itself is often **elusive and enigmatic**, these areas have a strong and generally **positive impact**:

- the Esplanade (area 1) is the principal point of arrival for air travellers: the public realm interventions (Victoria Park and the Jardin de la Mer) are disappointing, but the **coastline** and **Elizabeth Castle** are superb
- Havre des Pas (area 3) has the character of a traditional seaside resort, and is down at heel in places, but it is an area of **great character and appeal** with charming 19<sup>th</sup> century houses and an evocative sea water bathing pool
- the edges and slopes (area 10) overlook the town from the north, and include some of St Helier's **most favoured residential districts**: the quality is variable, but the rising ground provides a **natural, green boundary** for the more densely packed lower town, and there are a number of **landmark buildings**, including Victoria College.

This group encompasses a large swathe of the urban fringes of St Helier, and will require a range of approaches. However, common themes should include maintaining and strengthening the **natural landscape framework** of sea, sand and hills, which bounds the urban area and gives coherence to an often shapeless townscape.

Specific area priorities include:

- protecting and enhancing the **setting of Elizabeth Castle**: this should be a key consideration in future waterfront developments
- nurturing Havre des Pas as a **discrete and distinctive urban quarter**: the area should become an increasingly popular residential location, with a bohemian flavour, and the bathing pool should be restored and upgraded, preserving its period feel.

