South-West St Helier: putting thoughts into action

April 2018
Introduction

The States of Jersey is in the process of developing the South-West Planning Framework to set the vision and parameters for the south west region of St Helier and deliver coherent, long-term development in this area. The concept of a Planning Framework has developed through a series of public engagement workshops with local community members and key stakeholders in St Helier. These workshops are as follows:

- Reimagining the Esplanade Quarter: Design Charrette 1 with the local community members and key stakeholders – 5 November 2017
- Reimagining the Esplanade Quarter: Design Charrette 2 with the States of Jersey, States of Jersey Development Corporation and the Ports Authority – 6 November 2017
- Reimagining the Esplanade Quarter: Design Principles and Wider Context for all key stakeholders – 31 January 2018

Each of these public workshops were facilitated by Design Council and attended by the States of Jersey and reports for each of these sessions could be found on the States of Jersey’s website. Design Council also carried out a series workshops on the Esplanade Quarter and wider waterfront area with the States of Jersey over the several months commencing in May 2017 on the following themes:

- Visioning
- Transport, movement and connectivity
- Uses and viability
- Urban planning and connectivity

Through the public workshops and workshop meetings with the States of Jersey as above, it was recognised that for the proper planning of the area the physical boundary of the Esplanade Quarter should be extended to include the waterfront and that engaging with the local community and key stakeholders was fundamental to the wider visioning and planning process. Consequently, the States of Jersey seeks to de-adopt the current 2008 masterplan and to create a planning strategy for South-West St Helier delivered through a process of community engagement. Based on the public workshops and meetings with the States of Jersey, this process of de-adoption and community engagement strategy is endorsed by Design Council and those members of the local community and key stakeholders involved in the engagement process.

Design Council would like to extend a special thanks to all participants for the valuable contributions to the public workshops to date which have helped to shape and inform our work and discussions with the States of Jersey. Design Council continues to provide independent support to the States of Jersey on South-West St Helier through the work of the Department of the Environment.
Connectivity & Movement:

- Government led
- Master plan/design guide for site de liberation
- Facilitates economic & movement
- Government led movement improvement
- Sites to be identified
Summary

This report summarises the public workshop ‘South-West St. Helier: putting thoughts into action’ held on Monday 26 March 2018, 11.00 – 15.00 at the Radisson Blu Hotel in St. Helier.

The public workshop provided:
- a platform for community members and key stakeholders to reflect and comment on the proposed vision and key principles of the Draft Planning Framework for the South-West St Helier.
- the opportunity to discuss three key themes:
  - the community engagement strategy
  - the proposed key sites in the Draft Planning Framework
  - the future of South West St Helier by envisioning changes to the existing transport infrastructure.

The Draft Planning Framework and key themes were discussed in groups on the workshop day.

Summary of public feedback across each of the public workshops to date

The overarching points raised by local community members and key stakeholders across each of the public workshops to date include:

- The great pride and interest of the local community and key stakeholders in the future of this part of St Helier, and therefore the great desire to be meaningfully and regularly engaged in the visioning and planning process.
- A critique of the character and quality of some existing developments and/or those that are in the process of being planned, as well as the relationship between these developments and their relationship to the town.
- Mounting concern about the quality and provision for the open spaces and the public realm in light of larger scale development in St Helier.
- Recognition of the island-wide traffic issues, and particularly its negative impact on St Helier in terms of pedestrian and cycle connectivity, noise and air pollution.
- The negative impact of La Route de La Liberation on the character of South-West St Helier, and general view that this route should not be sunken as in the 2008 masterplan.
- The crucial need to ensure local amenities are assessed and provided within new developments.
Summary of public feedback from the ‘South-West St. Helier: putting thoughts into action’
public workshop

In terms of the Draft South-West St Helier Planning Framework presented on the workshop day, feedback from the attendees at this workshop is as follows:

• The principle of a Planning Framework, rather than a masterplan, for South-West St Helier is welcomed to achieve a more strategic and coherent approach to this part of the town;
• The principle of including key sites in the document is also welcomed and the sites selected by the States of Jersey broadly appear to be those where development can reasonably be expected to take place. The key sites and their relationship to one another and the town centre could continue to be explored in more detail at subsequent engagement sessions, through the Planning Framework and/or in the delivery of these key sites;
• The proposed design principles and community objectives in the Draft Planning Framework could be more place-specific as they currently seem rather generic and utopian. Each should have a stronger sense of ‘St Helierness’ and relate to the physical and historical context more clearly;
• Public benefit, whether physical, financial or in some other form, should be secured at the outset of the development project through the planning process and key representatives should be held accountable to ensure these public benefits are achieved. This approach should be highlighted and described in the Planning Framework, and enforced in the delivery of schemes;
• The public realm and open spaces should be ‘world class’ and the amount of open space should be considered as a proportion in relation to the amount of development on key opportunity sites;

• The Planning Framework should be easily understandable and therefore all jargon should be replaced and where this is not possible a definition provided;
• The need for the States of Jersey to prioritise public engagement in all planning and development endeavours. The feedback from public engagement should meaningfully inform development discussions and proposals with key stakeholders such as the States of Jersey Development Corporation, the Ports Authority and developers.

Detailed feedback on the design principles and community expectations can be found in the Appendix of this report.
Key recommendations

The public workshop offered both strategic and detailed feedback on the Draft Planning Framework document as well as the proposed key sites identified in this document.

**South-West St Helier Framework Approach**

Based on the public workshop feedback, the Design Council recommends that the States of Jersey:

- Takes an active role in developing strong relationships with the local community and key stakeholders. This will require on-going discussions and engagement with these parties, alongside discussions with key groups and individuals on independent topics.
- Takes the necessary steps to engage with a wide range of local community members and key stakeholders to provide a broad view of the needs and desires of residents, employees and visitors to St Helier. To achieve this broad level of public engagement, a communication strategy – to include different forms of engagement - is urgently needed.
- Proactively leads in creating and achieving the vision for South-West St Helier to ensure the long-term and coherent approach to the area. Key stakeholders, such as the States of Jersey Development Corporation and the Ports Authority, should follow this strong vision and leadership.
- Encourages changes in the behaviour of people on the island, particularly towards greater use of public transportation, walking and cycling. Short, medium and long-term strategies will be required through shared projects and close working relationships between the Department for the Environment and the Department for Infrastructure.
- Strikes an appropriate balance between community and key stakeholder engagement and action to deliver on the vision and objectives set out in the Planning Framework. This will require planning key deliverables well in advance to ensure that the community are engaged and to ensure deliverables can be effectively achieved within an appropriate time-scale.

- Addresses the long-term island-wide issues of climate change and transportation at the earliest possible stage alongside the imminent and day-to-day needs of St Helier and its people. This approach will require bold decisions by the States of Jersey and some investment by the States of Jersey in time and resources. This approach is likely in the long term to ensure the economic, social and environmental sustainability and resilience of the island, and the health and well being of its people in times of global economic and technological changes and austerity.
- Carries out studies to test the amount and quality of existing open space and community facilities, and uses this information to help determine and define the need for further investment in new open spaces and community facilities. This information should be integrated into policies and the planning process to create active and lively places that meet the day-to-day needs of the residents. We support the concept of increasing building heights in appropriate locations to free up space at ground floor level to provide these amenities.

**South-West St Helier Planning Framework**

Based on the public workshop feedback, the Design Council recommends that the States of Jersey:

- Strengthens and emphasises the vision for South-West St Helier in the Planning Framework and ensures that a long-term view (30+ years) is taken in major development and infrastructure work.
- Continues to explore the selection of key sites in South West St Helier in the Draft Planning Framework and builds on the high-level policy and land use relationships between these sites to ensure they are not planned in isolation.
Key points

- early community engagement
- more traffic management
  - "calmer place"
- bold engineering solutions
to deal with heavy traffic
- key views, vistas and landscape corridors
- specify
South-West St Helier Planning Framework: vision

Below are key feedback points by the attendees based on the group discussions at the public workshop. They relate specifically to the design principles and community objectives in the Draft Planning Framework:

**General Principles**

**Community engagement**
- Ongoing and regular engagement with the local community and key stakeholders to support and strengthen the States of Jersey’s leadership role in South-West St Helier. This will help to ensure the current and future development in South-West St Helier are relevant to the economic, social and environmental needs of St Helier, and supports the island as a whole.
- There is some concern that the wider public – those who are not actively involved in strategic community groups or discussions, or that are unable to attend such events due to personal or professional commitments - are not sufficiently engaged in the process of re-envisioning South-West St Helier. Online engagement, for example, could be enhanced to better connect with these members.
Planning

- The need for a more consistent approach to planning requirements for public amenities across sites in South-West St Helier. ‘Piecemeal development’ across South-West St Helier is a point of contention and concern for local community members.
- Consistency in the planning approach may include both developments in the planning process, and those that have planning consent. This might involve a review of these development proposals or ‘freezing’ planning applications for the sites in light of the South-West St Helier Planning Framework.
- The need for public amenities, open spaces and infrastructure, and importantly an open and transparent mechanism for financing these spaces and services, should be specified in the Planning Framework and other relevant policy guidance for key opportunity sites.
- Before engaging formally in the planning process on developments, developers should be made aware of the costs for open spaces, infrastructure and public amenities to ensure they are able to deliver these public spaces and services.
- The States of Jersey should also identify and include government-owned sites and proposals for their enhancement where appropriate in the South-West St Helier Planning Framework.

Height of buildings

- The local community and key stakeholders were generally supportive of taller buildings in key locations to take advantage of the views and prime location along the waterfront. It was felt that proposals for taller buildings should however consider their potential impact on key views, and townscape and heritage, and provide sufficient open space and movement routes.
- Potential benefits of taller buildings, such as environmental protection from the coast, were identified through the discussions, as well as the potential stronger sense of identity that tall buildings can bring to a development.
- The participants felt that ‘high quality architecture’ and ‘St Helierness’ – as opposed to ‘world-class’ buildings - are more important and relevant to South-West St Helier.

Views

- A policy on protecting key views in policy is crucial to the development of South-West St Helier. The participants re-emphasised the need to define key views in policy (either in the Planning Framework or supplementary policy guidance linked to the Planning Framework).
- The need to retain and celebrate historic views of the harbour, and key architectural features in the town from civic spaces, such as the Steam Clock.
- The participants recommended that more focus be put on the physical, social and economic value of St Helier’s heritage assets. For example, historic architectural features could be specified at the outset of a project, either through planning guidance, in the brief development, or otherwise.

Uses

- General support for residential uses across South-West St Helier with some key sites to be developed for cultural and community uses. The participants welcomed the idea of mixing uses and creating clusters to create focal points in the region.
- There was strong interest in providing a range of shared cultural and community facilities, such as play, art, nurseries alongside residential and commercial uses for all age groups, particularly children and teenagers. It was thought that these uses should be specified in the brief development stages, and potentially also in planning policy guidance. Particular focus on the integration of residential and commercial uses is needed in the design planning and deliver of the schemes thereafter.
Open space

- The participants were keen to see the quality and quantity of the public realm and open spaces prioritised over the architecture across South-West St Helier. The public realm and open spaces should be of an excellent quality. They felt the ratio between the public open space and development is crucial in the delivery of key opportunity sites.
- Open spaces should encourage walking, cycling and public transportation, and discourage driving.
- Natural and informal play areas for children should also be explored in the development of these spaces, as opposed to formalised play equipment.
- To ensure sufficient space in appropriate locations for public use, participants suggested that sites for open spaces are specified in the Planning Framework.

Connectivity and movement

- The locations of car parking and the distribution of car parking across South-West St Helier was raised as a key issue to be resolved strategically by the States of Jersey. In this respect, the location of residential parking zones should be reassessed. Also, the amount of resident parking zones should be reduced to provide more public on street car parking.
- The need for better pedestrian access, including continuous routes and walkways and adequate street furniture (lighting, seating etc) was raised. These routes should help better connect the key opportunity areas and historic sites in South-West St Helier.
- The participants supported the idea that that La Rue de la Liberation could become a key opportunity site in its own right to help ensure that like the other sites it also delivers the vision and key design objectives of South-West St Helier. La Route de la Liberation may require its own design guide.
Public engagement strategy

Public engagement is a high priority for local residents and key stakeholders. The workshop participants were pleased with the opportunity to engage in the development of the Draft Planning Framework and provide initial insights on the South-West St Helier Draft Planning Framework. However, they would like to see “a formal commitment to ongoing dialogue” (image below) through a public engagement strategy to ensure:

- A wider demographic spread of local people (age, race, profession, interests etc) are also engaged in the process
- Engagement at different stages across the delivery of the project
- Different forms and approaches to engagement (in person, through traditional media, online etc) are taken into account
- Sufficient notice in advance of the public workshops

A group of participants on the workshop day focused specifically on the public engagement strategy. They considered and discussed an engagement strategy whereby user groups engage through a series of small and larger scale meetings and workshops (image to the right). Through this approach, a wider collective view from local community members and key stakeholders could be ensured. The group felt that through this system of engagement, feedback loops could be created between the local community and key stakeholders, and the States of Jersey. The proposal also set out the option for a large scale event to consolidate a wide range of viewpoints and the potential to create forums for discussions on planning matters thereafter.
In general, the participants welcomed the principle of key opportunity sites (KOS) in the South-West St Helier Planning Framework as a means of specifying development areas for the States of Jersey, land holders and/or potential developers to focus on. They identified the existing relationships between some sites and were keen to see how these relationships could be developed through the character and function of the sites using the Planning Framework, and in the delivery of the sites thereafter. Also, the participants suggested that other opportunity sites could be included in the list of key opportunity sites, for example, La Collette.

The numbered sites below relate to the map in the Draft Planning Framework which is included in the Appendix of this report.
KOS 1/2/3 – Esplanade Quarter East, West and Aquasplash/Cineworld

- Key opportunity sites 1, 2 and 3 have a strong relationship due to their location and existing uses for larger scale, commercial facilities. All three sites could accommodate commercial uses, including financial services, and residential in the future to build a stronger mixed use identity for this area with fairly large building footprints. Other potential uses for the site included retail facilities, such as food and beverage, and a small supermarket to serve the local community without impacting upon the viability of shops within town.
- To help maximise the space across these sites, it was felt that some uses could be relocated or submerged into the basement levels, and access could be provided above ground level. The cinema, for example, was identified as a use that could potentially be relocated below ground, and there were some ideas about bridging over the road.
- The existing Aquasplash facility was thought to be an important amenity for the local community, but its existing location on the site was not thought to be appropriate. Relocating this facility to Fort Regent with other sports facilities, was thought to be a potentially more suitable option.
- To support the interrelationship of these uses, there were suggestions for physically linking sites 1 and 2, such as bridging over the site and raising the under-pass to ground level.
- The need for active and attractive public open space was highlighted as a major opportunity and requirement in redeveloping these sites. It was felt that these spaces should be genuinely public in their use and management, and accessible at all times of the day. A wintergarden was suggested by some participants.
- There was some concern about the location and re-provision of car parking across these sites, and some suggestions for basement parking.
- The location of these sites along the waterfront was viewed to be one of their key assets. To ensure that the benefits of the waterfront (in terms of view, open space and access) were retained and accessible to all, the participants felt that some public uses could be accommodated or integrated along key edges of the waterfront. For example, public art or cultural use could act as a focal point in this location. In this regard there was some discussion on the merits of re-locating the hospital to this location. (Please note that the Department of the Environment has advised that the States of Jersey has not, currently, embarked upon a site-selection process for a new hospital and that a ‘live’ planning application for a replacement hospital building is pending).
- The Jardin de la Mer was felt to be a key development site for South-West St Helier which could help to strengthen the identity of the island, provide environmental protection to inland areas and provide public benefits to local people. The participants welcomed the idea of buildings in this location on the proviso that the open space is provided elsewhere in the area. Historic seaside towns in Europe with taller buildings along the coast to protect inland areas and that provide a public promenade along the waterfront are suitable precedents.

KOS 4 and 5 – Freight Park and Ports and Harbour

- The groups considered the key opportunity sites 4 and 5 to have a strong programmatic and physical relationship. Suggestions for these sites focused on improving the walking and cycling connectivity between the sites.
- The Freight Park, Ports and Harbour are key assets to Jersey in terms of their historic and economic value to the island. The groups supported the retention of the ports in this location but suggested that some existing buildings on these sites could be enhanced in the future.
- Some participants suggested that the States of Jersey could be more strategically and actively involved in redevelopments to the ports and its operation to ensure a more coherent approach in South-West St Helier.
KOS 6 and 7 - Commercial buildings and Liberation Square
• The groups generally welcomed the inclusion of the commercial buildings on key opportunity site 6 in the South-West St Helier Planning Framework and felt that this site offered benefits to the character of the town and waterfront.
• There were mixed views about the character of the existing buildings, their heritage value and whether they should be retained or not.
• The existing road layout and level of traffic movement presents a potential issue to redevelopment in this area of South West St Helier. Traffic is cited as particularly problematic in this area. The existing road located to the east of the commercial buildings could be a potential issue and its removal could be considered in the context of the potential redevelopment of this area.

KOS 8 and 10 – Fort Regent and South Hill
• South Hill and Fort Regent were considered to be key opportunity sites of potential high value for primarily residential use. Their location on a hill offering key views over the bay could provide an attractive location for residential, together with leisure uses.
• Open space in this location was thought to be important to maximise the key views and location for public use.
• Access to Fort Regent was identified as a major issue in terms of creating a relationship with the other key opportunity sites.
Appendices

Below are detailed suggestions by some participants at the workshop in terms of the wording of the design principles and community expectations in the Draft Planning Framework. The wording highlighted indicate the suggestions by the local participants on the day.

General Principles and Community Expectations

- Where possible In all cases, politicians and developers as early as possible will be encouraged to engage with the community at an early stage in order to work collaboratively on development schemes within the area. The Department of the Environment will assist in the facilitating of such partnerships if necessary and will freely offer planning guidance to all parties.

Building Height

- To experience interesting architecture, with active street frontages, without feeling hemmed in by tall buildings all around.
- To feel that buildings relate to a human scale and that any tall building is of a world class high quality in terms of architecture and choice of locally relevant materials.

Views

- To be able to sit and enjoy iconic views and to be delighted by a surprise glimpse of a view around a corner or from between buildings guaranteed wider vistas.

Planning Obligation Agreements

- To have require developers, politicians and the Department of the Environment to communicate to communicate continuously and enter into Planning Obligation Agreements to secure essential community and infrastructure provision and public realm improvements to all developments for the benefit of all.

Design

- To experience world class high quality architecture within a fine urban grain and to feel that new developments have a sense of ‘St Helierness’ about them. Fine urban grain is too complicated and there may be a contradiction between St Helierness and world class.
- To ensure that new developments are founded on the principles of green and healthy place-making with opportunities for outdoor activities and community events.

Uses

- To enjoy a vibrant and colourful district with excellent community facilities, shops, cafes, and restaurants which remain lively during the evenings and at weekends, all year round.
- To feel that this is a new an inclusive and sustainable community.

Open space

- Establishing and maintaining key views, vistas and landscaped corridors (suggested new bullet point)
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