

St Helier Development and Regeneration Strategy

Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance: New Development Guidelines for the Town

INTRODUCTION

1. In March 2006, with the support of the St Helier Task Force, the Minister for Planning and Environment appointed a team of consultants, led by urban master-planners EDAW, to produce a development and regeneration strategy for central St Helier – defined as the area shown on Drawing No.1. The contents of this policy guidance relate only to this area. The report was published in April 2007 and was followed by a period of consultation.
2. The report sets out a clear vision for change, which aims *“to create a vibrant, compact and characterful town which is worthy of its role as Jersey’s capital and principal settlement, with an economically sustainable future which offers the highest quality of life for its communities.”*
3. The first of the four central objectives of the strategy is to *“improve the town’s profile as a residential area, providing a diversity of attractive, high quality residential environments and increase the proportion of the Island’s housing to be delivered in the town.”*
4. The Council of Ministers has decided to set up a Regeneration Task Force, comprising members of the Council and the Constable of St Helier, which will be responsible for the leadership, co-ordination, decision-making and implementation of St Helier’s regeneration. It will be supported by an executive, (called the Regeneration Unit), which will be based at the Planning and Environment Department. It is intended that this will act as a one-stop shop for proposed developments in the town.

BACKGROUND

5. The report was procured for a number of reasons:
 - There had never been any strategic planning policy focus on St Helier;
 - It was recognised that development in the Waterfront would shift the town’s economic centre of gravity to the west, possibly to the detriment of the north and east of the town centre. This might manifest itself principally by a shift of town centre employees in large numbers to the Waterfront, and the vacating of existing commercial properties in the established part of town;

- Concerns had been expressed that new investment in the Waterfront may lead to a lack of funding for the rest of town;
 - There was a need to focus attention on the areas most likely to be affected adversely by the predicted changes.
6. The report concluded that residential development was likely to be the principal 'driver' of regeneration in the older, established parts of town. Not only would this provide additional homes in the Island, reducing the need to extend the built-up areas into open countryside, but it would also ensure that a significantly increased residential population in the central area would continue to provide customers for the retail trade and other businesses, and reduce the need for travel, particularly at peak-hour periods.
 7. It was recognised, also, that there are a significant number of potential development opportunities in the central St Helier area, for the most part privately owned, and that these opportunities should be optimised in accordance with the strategy.
 8. The draft Strategy recommended by EDAW has yet to be formally adopted. The reason for this is that the various traffic management and car parking proposals are currently subject to detailed testing on Transport and Technical Services' new traffic model. However, it is clear that this need not prevent other regeneration initiatives from commencing and the members of the St Helier Task Force are keen to 'kick-start' the regeneration of central St Helier as soon as they can. These development guidelines are an important first step in achieving this.
 9. The Minister for Planning and Environment is especially keen that these new development guidelines will encourage property owners and developers to consider how they can produce higher densities from their sites in high-quality developments, while at the same time benefiting the St Helier community.
 10. The guidelines draw on, and are consistent with, previous planning studies in the town. In October 2005, the former Planning and Environment Committee published a report entitled 'St Helier – Urban Character Appraisal', which had been produced for it by a team led by Willie Miller Urban Design. This report was a thoroughgoing assessment of the physical character of St Helier: how it had evolved; its urban quality; and its design characteristics. The report identified areas of distinct character within the town, and produced design guidelines for each area. It also identified prospective conservation area boundaries. The EDAW report drew heavily on Miller's work, although it has focussed more on the changes that are likely to emerge as development opportunities.
 11. The contents of this policy guidance relate only to the area shown on Drawing No 1.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AS THE 'DRIVER' FOR REGENERATION

12. The vitality of the town centre is sustained by the success of its commercial enterprises. Over many years, and for different reasons, the physical extent of the town centre has contracted. The character of areas such as The Parade, New St, Bath St (beyond Minden Place), La Motte St and Colomberie has changed and they have, for the most part, become secondary shopping areas. In some cases, such as Cheapside, David Place, and the eastern end of Colomberie, they have become primarily local shopping areas, serving mainly the residential areas surrounding them.
13. To arrest further decline in importance of the peripheral retail areas, particularly with the predicted shift of 'existing' customers to the western end of town, it is proposed that opportunities for residential development, with ground floor commercial uses, should be maximised to increase the local customer base and retain vitality in those areas.
14. It is proposed that the physical environment of these areas will be improved by extension of the Street Life Programme, which has successfully transformed certain areas of town, such as Broad St and Charing Cross, through the implementation of pedestrian and environmental improvement schemes.
15. There is concern about the range of housing available in central St Helier. The last 20 years has seen a considerable quantity of new accommodation, the vast majority of which are apartments, constructed in both the social and private sectors. There has been little new house construction within the ring-road.
16. Even though it would lead to a reduction in the stock of homes, the Minister for Planning and Environment and his Task Force colleagues would like to see many of the 'set piece' 19C villas and terraces restored to family homes from multi-occupancy (apartments, guest houses, lodging houses and so on), and the reinstatement of their grandeur. There are many examples in the town, notably Almorah Crescent, Clarendon Rd, the curved terraces in St Mark's Rd, and the Royal Terrace in Don Rd. The Population Office (Housing Control) and the Housing Minister support this policy as it will achieve a better mix of tenure and family-sized accommodation in town, and may also lead to better maintenance of the built heritage.
17. Equally, there are several sites suitable for development, which are more appropriately developed for high-value family town houses than apartments. The Minister will encourage this type of accommodation on appropriate sites.

LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

18. The Waterfront and East of Albert areas will provide significant extensions to the facilities of the town and the town centre, including potential for a major new residential community. These major sites are the subject of separate master-planning programmes.
19. Besides the Waterfront and East of Albert areas, the established town contains a number of significant development opportunities where change can be expected to occur over the next 10 – 15 years. Several parts of the town have already seen significant redevelopments taking place in a relatively short period – most notably, the Esplanade and Gloucester St – and it is intended that other areas will see equally significant development occur in the next few years. These include:
- Le Masuriers' and Odeon site in Bath St
 - Britannia Place and adjoining properties
 - Charles St (south side) and Wesley St Church site
 - Former Jersey Brewery and adjoining properties
 - Cash and Carry and warehouse adjoining Co-op Grande Marché
 - Randall's Brewery, Clare St and Cannon St
 - Land enclosed by Spectrum, Seale St and The Parade
 - Westmount Quarry
 - South Hill
 - Fort Regent Swimming Pool site
20. All these sites have in common the fact that they are sufficiently large and discrete that they are not overly constrained by their context. They all display individual circumstances but generally afford the opportunity to produce mixed-use (but predominantly residential), large-scale, permeable, well-designed developments, while making a positive contribution to the character and urban texture of St Helier, without damaging their surroundings or the design principles in the Willie Miller report. Some of the sites are more sensitive than others, and contain buildings with inherent qualities and value, and the Department will advise on the general parameters, on a site specific basis. Outline Development Briefs will be prepared for the most sensitive sites.
21. There are also a considerable number of smaller, but not insignificant, sites that could come into development over the next 10-15 years. Generally, they are more constrained by their context, and there is less certainty of them coming into development. They include sites such as:
- The car park adjoining the Masonic Temple
 - Sunshine Hotel
 - Salisbury Cottages, opposite Coop Grande Marché
 - The single-storey garages in Oxford Rd
 - The warehouses in Le Breton Lane
 - Several hotels and other commercial premises that could come into development

SITE ASSEMBLY

22. Several of the above sites, and many others, would benefit by incorporating adjoining land, making them larger and more regular in shape, more efficient to develop and thereby increasing the overall yield in appropriate circumstances. Developers will be encouraged to investigate the possibility of increasing the size of their sites by acquiring additional land in order to obtain higher yielding development. One task of the Regeneration Unit will be to actively identify and facilitate such opportunities, where they exist.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

23. Some review of current planning standards is required to facilitate the regeneration of town. The planning requirements below relate to the core area of town, as shown on Drawing No1. The Department is currently revising Planning Policy Note 6 – ‘Minimum Specification for New Housing Developments’ in the light of the findings of the recent Scrutiny Panel report. Planning Policy Note 3 ‘Parking Guidelines’ will also be reviewed in 2008. Both documents remain in force in the areas beyond the boundary of the town shown on Drawing No 1.

24. Design Quality: The Minister for Planning and Environment has made it clear that he wishes to raise significantly the design quality of new buildings, and is prepared to ‘reward’ excellent design with greater yields. Equally, within the town area, he is prepared to reduce certain planning requirements to facilitate high quality development – in particular, car parking requirements and, for residential development, outside amenity space.

25. It is important that the design of new development has regard to and is sensitive to the character of the town and the distinct areas of the town. In this respect, the St Helier Urban Character Appraisal provides a significant baseline and reference: the Minister for Planning and Environment will shortly issue design guidance based on this work.

26. Residential Parking: This report reduces the minimum requirements for residential parking within defined areas of the town (see Drawing No 2). These supersede the requirements in Policy Note 3 – ‘Parking Guidelines’.

Minimum spaces per home	New build	Conversion
Area 1	0	0
Area 2	0.5	0
Area 3	1	0.5

27. It should be noted that the Parish of St Helier intends to extend the designation of Residential Parking Zones throughout St Helier.
28. Office parking: The following requirements for private office car parking provision within the town area (see Drawing No 2) introduce maximum standards and supersede the requirements in Policy Note 3 – ‘Parking Guidelines’.

Maximum provision permitted	Private car park spaces
Normal requirement	1 space per 100 m ² (gross)
Area 1	Maximum 10% of normal provision* (1 per 1000 ²)
Area 2	Maximum 50% of normal provision*(1 per 200m ²)
Area 3	Normal requirement
Adequate arrangements must be made in all cases to service the property	* the remaining proportion of the normal requirement will usually be commuted to a financial contribution towards the provision of transport infrastructure

The creation of private car parking spaces in the central area (Area 1), and to a lesser extent in Area 2, is not conducive to implementing enhancement schemes and pedestrian-priority schemes in the town’s central streets, as continued access for private vehicles becomes necessary. Accordingly, and in line with paragraph 12.92 of the 2002 Island Plan, it has been decided that maximum rather than minimum parking requirements should be introduced. A ‘normal’ requirement will be set, and in the two areas where maximum provision will be allowed, the difference between the normal and maximum requirement will be commuted towards a negotiated financial contribution towards, for example, off-street public parking or improved public transport.

29. Retail parking: The following requirements for customer car parking provision within the town area (see Drawing No 2) supersede the requirements in Policy Note 3 – ‘Parking Guidelines’.

Supermarkets (above 500m²)	Other retail stores
1 customer space per 25m ² in all areas	No customer car parking permitted in Area 1
Adequate arrangements must be made to supply the store with goods	Adequate arrangements must be made to supply the store with goods

No dedicated parking for other retail stores will be permitted in the central, pedestrian-priority areas (ie. Area 1), but provision in edge of centre and outer locations will be sought where practical.

30. Amenity space: The requirements for open amenity space in residential developments are altered. The current ‘one-size fits all’ requirement fails to address qualitative issues which are more important than absolute size. The provision of open space and private space needs to be appropriate to the type of development and the

needs of the likely occupants. For example, the utility of the space provided and surveillance of it from the dwellings is particularly important where children are likely to occupy the premises. Equally, where the dwellings are likely to be occupied by single people or childless couples, the provision of private balconies may be more appropriate than a communal space. Accordingly, the Department will be flexible in terms of amenity space and prepared to negotiate the appropriate provision on a case by case basis.

31. The recommended guidelines for residential private and shared outside amenity space within the town area (see Drawing No 1) supersede those in Planning Policy Note 6 – ‘Minimum Specification for New Housing Developments’. The guidelines to form the basis of negotiation are as follows

Outside Area	Private space	Communal space
Apartments	3m ² per bedroom (where balconies are provided)	10m ² per unit with balconies 15 m ² per unit without balconies
Houses	10m ² per bedroom	Where more than five houses, 15m ² per unit

32. Developers should seriously consider the provision of well-designed landscaped roof-spaces as additional amenity space.
33. Tall Buildings Policy: Policy H5 of the 2002 Island Plan deals with Tall Buildings. It is not intended to change this policy, but it is important to restate that tall buildings are permissible in appropriate circumstances.
34. The policy defines tall buildings as those above 5 storeys or rising more than two storeys above their neighbours. The policy allows for the construction of tall buildings, provided the accompanying design statement fully justifies them in urban design terms. Proposals will be critically assessed for their appropriateness in context; their visual impact; their impact on nearby properties; their design quality; and their contribution to the overall character of St Helier.
35. Protected Buildings: Some potential sites will include buildings on the Minister’s Register of Buildings and Sites of Architectural, Archaeological or Historic Importance in Jersey. Some sites may also have implications for areas of archaeological interest. There is, and remains, a presumption against the demolition of buildings on that Register. However, in exceptional circumstances, it may be possible to demolish a registered building of lesser quality where the public benefits derived from redevelopment significantly outweigh the retention of the building. Any exception to this presumption will require a robust, transparent and demonstrable justification. There are several

instances where this has occurred in the past, including the current developments in Conway St and the Colomberie/Little Green St corner.

RE-USE OF SECONDARY COMMERCIAL ACCOMMODATION

36. There is a likelihood that a significant number of commercial occupants of the new financial and business centre to be created in the Esplanade Square development will have relocated from other premises in central St Helier. Potentially this creates the spectre of long-term property voids, as secondary office accommodation becomes difficult to re-let or sell. This could have a damaging effect on the appearance and vitality of the town, as was seen recently in Hill St.
37. Inevitably, property owners will hold out for a certain time in an attempt to secure new office tenants, and eventually the market will adjust. However, this may take a considerable time given the number of premises likely to be vacated between 2010 and 2015 as the Esplanade Square scheme is developed.
38. Many of the properties vacated may never find new commercial tenants, and these guidelines are intended to make their change of use for residential purposes more attractive by reducing the planning requirements normally applicable. Many of these buildings make a positive contribution to the streetscape, and are worthy of retention, albeit in a use for which they were not intended and where it may be difficult to meet normal residential requirements. Accordingly, in such cases, where an application is made to change the use for residential purposes, the planning requirements for shared and private amenity space, and for on-site car parking, will be reduced by negotiation if they are unable to be met fully on site. For buildings which are less important in the contribution they make, the Minister will actively encourage their redevelopment for residential purposes. Compliance with the Building Byelaws will continue to be necessary.

POLICY

For changes of use of buildings that make a positive contribution to the streetscape, from office or other commercial use to residential use, the normal planning requirements for shared and private amenity open space, and for on-site car parking, will be reduced by negotiation, if they are unable to be met fully on site

PROCEDURES

39. The Planning and Environment Department will put in place procedures to prioritise requests for preliminary advice on development proposals within the town area, both on policy matters and on design, and will similarly minimise the time taken to deal with applications. A senior Planner will take overall responsibility for co-ordinating our response to

development proposals in town, working closely with the Regeneration Unit to ensure a streamlined and integrated response.

References

St Helier Urban Character Appraisal – Willie Miller Urban Design, October 2005

St Helier Development and Regeneration Strategy – EDAW, April 2007