

Delivering Investment in the Public Realm

Date: October 2024

R.158/2024

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Purpose

To provide an update to States Members on progress with regard to the vision and programme of improvement works to the Public Realm in St Helier and across the Island.

Minister's Introduction

It could be said that delivering investment in, and improvements to, the public infrastructure is the very embodiment of my role as Minister...and I wouldn't disagree. I inherited from my predecessor a team of officers that see the need for change and have ambitious plans. I have worked over the last few months to provide the impetus to turn those plans into a programme of works that, I believe, will transform the town of St Helier and enhance communities around the Island. Delivering change is not easy and I am fully aware that you will not please 'all of the people, all of the time', but without momentum to move forward we cannot realise the benefits that change brings.

I am grateful for the support and insight provided by my colleagues and, in particular, my Assistant Minster, the Connétable of St Helier, who shares my passion for making our Island a better place to work, shop, visit and in which to live.

I also wish to thank the Broad Street Advisory Board, whose work has helped to set the ambition and shape the vision to deliver change to the heart of St Helier.

Investment in our public realm and transport infrastructure is both necessary to ensure it is fit for purpose, but also to provide a better built environment and as a catalyst for growing the economy. In developing a vision for the future, I am conscious that whilst we need to ensure that changes are practical, we must not slavishly follow a 'form follows function' approach and lose the opportunity to enhance the experience of the Island's capital and other centres of habitation.

The recent 2023 Road Traffic Collision report¹ has further highlighted the need to deliver improvements to areas where there are high levels of vulnerable road users, to reduce the likelihood of collisions and lessen their severity should they occur.

We have delivered some excellent public realm projects and are working hard on further improvements, but this is just the start of a journey that I want to share with you in this report.



Connétable Andy Jehan Minister for Infrastructure

1 2023 ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISON AND CASUALTY UPDATE r.91-2024.pdf (gov.je)

Background

The public realm is the streets and spaces that we use in our daily lives and which contribute to how we can enjoy our towns and villages, when walking through those spaces or lingering to enjoy our built environment and heritage. Town is becoming intrinsically important for the large proportion of Islanders who live there, as well as those who come to shop, work or relax. These spaces are important to visitors to the Island, many of whom chose destinations because they offer attractive streets and squares to enjoy.

In May 2021, the States Assembly approved Proposition P28/2021² of the Connétable of St Helier, as amended, to deliver change to the centre of town through, amongst other things, the creation of a sustainable transport corridor. Whilst this proposition concentrated on the future of Broad Street and its surrounding area, with the creation of a Broad Street Advisory Board, the need to invest in routes into and through town is clear if we want to deliver the ambitions of the Public Realm and Movement Strategy (PRMS)³.

The former Infrastructure Minister, the then Deputy Kevin Lewis, reported the Advisory Board's progress to the Assembly in December 2021⁴. The traffic restrictions in Broad Street were made permanent by Ministerial Order on 19 April 2022.

The Bridging Island Plan, approved in March 2022⁵ and covering the period to 2025, developed the PRMS further to endorse the need for an active travel network with a focus on the reallocation or road space to prioritise walking and cycling.



² PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY IN BROAD STREET, ST. HELIER <u>P.28-2021.pdf (gov.je)</u>

³PUBLIC REALM AND MOVEMENT STRATEGY <u>R St Helier Public Realm and Movement Strategy - Stage 3 Report ARUP.pdf (gov.je)</u>

⁴ P.28/2021 – BROAD STREET ACTIVE TRAVEL CORRIDOR AND PUBLIC REALM REPORT <u>r.188-2021.pdf</u> (gov.je)

⁵ BRIDGING ISLAND PLAN gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Planning and building/P Bridging Island Plan.pdf

The Assembly further demonstrated its support for investment to revitalise Town as a high priority in the recently endorsed Common Strategic Policy 2024-2026⁶, utilising funding allocated to the Infrastructure Rolling Vote and Public Realm capital budget in the Government Plan 2024 -2027⁷ together with site specific Planning Obligation Agreement funding.

The PRMS identified four key concepts that are mutually supportive, to be delivered through a series of specific and integrated projects:

- Bridging the Ring Road
- Developing the Active Travel Network
- Growing a Vibrant Core
- Creating Liveable Neighbourhoods

These PRMS concepts have been embodied in the following five virtues, developed with the Broad Street Advisory Board, which are used to reference and underpin project design:



Following the permanent closure of Broad Street to through traffic in April 2022, the Advisory Board seized the opportunity to develop a vision for the wider Broad Street area. This was informed through meetings with key stakeholders, Government and Parish officials and representative bodies, supplemented by gathering of relevant data and analysis of current usage. This work culminated in a stakeholder workshop in April 2023, from which a strategic approach to delivering improvements has emerged.

A chronology of key decisions, events and relevant policies is shown in Appendix A

Government Plan 2024-2027: Capital and Other Projects 2024 - 2027, page 70, Table 25 Government Plan 2024 to 2027.pdf

⁶ CSP 2024-26 p.21-2024.pdf (gov.ie)

La Grande Rue

Public realm works to date within St Helier have seen improvements delivered to areas outside the commercial centre. Whilst we will continue with works around the wider town, our focus over the next few years will be on the area from the Royal Square to The Parade, which we have identified as 'La Grande Rue' district.

La Grande Rue (Broad Street) was the high street in the 19th century and remains an important spine that links the Royal Square to the Parade and beyond. With major developments on the horizon, we need considered how the area can be reanimated to become a high quality public realm link serving new local residents to the area as well as sustaining the growing mix of cafes and specialist shops joining established businesses.

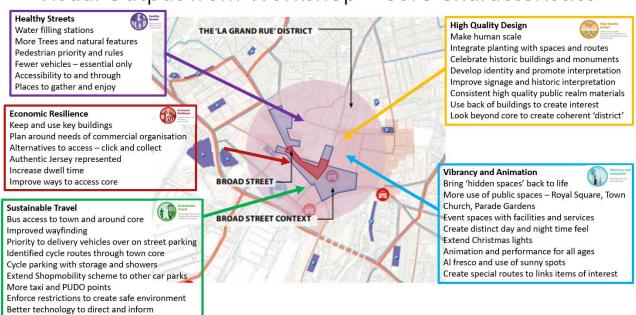
The Advisory Board, working with the then Minister and Connétable, developed these proposals into a format for consideration at a stakeholder workshop in April 2023. The workshop discussed ways in which the area could be improved, whilst retaining its historic character and maintaining the access and infrastructure to operate as the retail heart of town.

The workshop attendees identified the following as priorities for a vision for the area, which has created a framework for the scheme development:

- VIBRANT, easy to get to place with activities and events prioritising walking, cycling with buses close
- VIBRANT and connected for movement and enjoyment of people for children to be proud of
- LANSCAPE destination, focused on people, not cars. Big bold, loves St Helier
- VIBRANT residential area for community and visitors delivered in stages, phases and supporting the economy with good consultation
- · HUMAN scale place (not streets) supportive of local community

The workshop output, which is detailed in Appendix B, was captured to inform a high level concept for the area:

Visual Output from Workshop – Core Characteristics



In the period since the workshop, this Vision has been developed to produce a set of structured proposals that together form a future programme of improvement works for the area. These works will transform the current incoherent streetscape, where pedestrian and alternative travel movements are subordinate to road users into a high quality environment, unscarred by tarmac.

The pedestrianisation of the retail core, and more recently the removal of traffic from the link from Sand Street to Charing Cross, is testament to the value of investing in the built environment of our capital.



Delivery of improvements to the built infrastructure and environment within St Helier will help to address concerns raised in the Economy Department's 'Barriers to Business' report September 2023:

"Concerns over the lack of vibrancy; attractiveness; accessibility and parking were the main barriers raised by the retail and hospitality industries. Specifically businesses said empty units; building work; lack of coordinated design in town with shop fronts often not in keeping with the architecture of the buildings and tatty shopfronts as reasons why the town was not attractive. They felt that St Helier had "no identity as a place to go to".

Public realm improvement works will commence in New Street and New Cut will commence in 2024 and continue into 2025. Concept designs for Broad Street, linking through to the Royal Square and Library Place are being prepared for consultation with businesses and other stakeholders later this year.



Wider St Helier and Across the Island

Whilst there will be a focus on La Grande Rue and the heart of St Helier, improvements to the public realm elsewhere in St Helier, together with village improvement works, will also be funded from the Public Realm budget.

The following schemes have been delivered, or will be on site in 2024/2025:

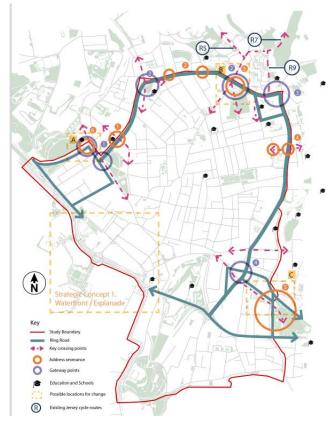


Details of these projects are included in Appendix C

2025 and Beyond

In addition to the proposed works relating to La Grande Rue and adjacent areas, a long term programme of improvements within wider St Helier and across the Island will be developed during the remainder of 2024 for engagement in 2025. These works will be tailored to deliver those benefits identified in the PRSM and other relevant policies, but will require consultation with key stakeholders and to be programmed around financial and logistical constraints.

A key theme of the PRMS over this period is 'Bridging the Ring Road', which seeks to address the severance of the busy traffic route around the periphery of the town, which was exacerbated in the 1990s with roundabouts, gyratory systems and traffic signals to increase traffic capacity.



Additional crossings have been recently added near the Fire Station on Rouge Bouillon and to Springfield on Janvrin Road.

There are a number of other locations that need improvement works for pedestrians and cyclists to provide connectivity, with a programme of interventions starting in 2025.

Further information on the overall programme and individual schemes as they are developed can be obtained from the Public Realm website: Home | Public Realm (gov.je)

Communication

The PRMS has established the principles for an enhanced public real for the Island and in particular the Town core. The further work of the interim Advisory Board and the La Grande Rue stakeholder workshop have established principles for the La Grande Rue District. To ensure scheme development considers the operation needs of traders, business and those who live and work in the areas engagement will be carried out before designs are developed. Feedback on designs will be sought. Through a structured, sequential process, engagement and communication of final schemes will be communicated through a process of direct dialogue and updates to the government public realm and roadworks websites.

Public realm schemes cannot be delivered without affecting users of the area. These works are often extensive and can be disruptive. Early communication and engagement with those most affected is the best way to try to minimise this impact and address significant issues. The communication approach is multi layered and tailored to each scheme and its lifecycle. Every scheme will have its own nuances and specific communications plan based on the following structure:

Project Stage	Concept	Design	Pre-Delivery	Delivery	Post Completion
Stakeholder	Residents and businesses in the area; Key users (e.g. taxis, bus company, disabled parking etc.) Parish and other authorities (emergency services etc.) General public	Residents and businesses in the area;	Residents and businesses in the area; General public	Residents and businesses in the area;	Residents and businesses in the area;
Purpose	To alert stakeholders and wider public to the proposal and share vision	To test designs with key stakeholders and understand any issues/concerns	To provide specific information on programme of works, closures, working hours	To update on progress and provide contact information	Understand what went well/not so well and how process could be improved

As well as through the project communications plan, interested parties are able to contact the department directly, place feedback through the website and, where relevant, comment on planning applications using the facilities on the planning register website.

Summary

The Government's ambition for improved public realm is driven by the desire to have streets and spaces in town that are more accessible, animated and attractive to visit. Change will need to ensure that not only is business activity and vibrancy supported, but also that the blight of vehicle dominance in areas of high pedestrian use is addressed.

There is now an annual recurring budget for the programme, which will focus on the town core as well as 'bridging the ring road' by improving pedestrian crossings on the busy route around the town.

With Broad Street now established as an area for pedestrian priority, improvements to the Public Realm to make it an attractive space to walk through and enjoy can now be progressed.

Appendix A: Chronology of Key Decisions and Events

The table below lists key policy, strategy and decision documents that contextualise and underpin investment in the public realm:

Date	Date Decision/Event	
February 2020	Carbon Neutral Strategy Approved	P127/2019
March 2020	Sustainable Transport Policy Approved	P128/2019
May 2020	Temporary Road Closure order (1)	COVID Restrictions
February 2021	Interim Retail Strategy	R68/2021
March 2021	Public Realm and Movement Strategy - Stage 3 Report	n/a
May 2021	Pedestrian Priority in Broad Street, St Helier - Con St Helier R&P	P28/2021
June 2021 Temporary Road Closure order (2)		MD-T-2021- 0039
December 2021	Ministerial update report to States	R188/2021
March 2022	Bridging Island Plan	P36/2021
April 2022	Carbon Neutral Roadmap	P74/2022
April 2022	Permanent Road Closure Order	MD-INF-2022- 266
April 2023	La Grande Rue stakeholder workshop	n/a
December 2023	Government Plan 2024 -2027	P72/2023
May 2024	Common Strategic Policy 2024-2026	P21/2024

Appendix B - La Grande Rue Workshop Output

The Workshop

A workshop took place In April 2023 for stakeholders representing business and commercial entities, community groups and public sector bodies, with a specific interest in the future of central St Helier that forms La Grande Rue District.

The workshop output and meetings with stakeholders on specific issues, has been used to help create a vision for the future for the area of the old town from the Royal Square to the Parade, being a key part of the historic heart of St Helier.

The vision centres around five key virtues that will drive proposals for improvements to the area:



The workshop attendees worked in mixed groups to consider how the area could be improved, what should change and what should remain. Their responses are set out below:

Question 1

The group was asked to provide a 'one word' response to who they currently look and think about the area. The Wordcloud below summarises the responses, with larger text representing the most common responses:



The consensus view was that the area included important historic and other civic assets that could provide a catalyst for change to move forward from the current confused usage and tired looks to create a vision for the future.

The workshop attendees saw an opportunity to drive forward change and identified a number of ideas that have been compiled into a 'top ten' summary list:

Top Ten List

- 1. The workshop identified the importance of maintaining and celebrating open spaces, historic landmarks, and the variety of uses in the town to align with the virtues of People, Place, and Prosperity.
- 2. One of the key improvement ideas is to replace the current multi-story parking lot with underground parking to free up space above ground for other uses.
- 3. The workshop highlighted the need for better access for disabled users of taxis, with a particular emphasis on drop-off points.
- 4. The suggestion to encourage more residential development in the town was seen as a way to provide economic resilience and enhance the vibrancy of the area.
- 5. The workshop called for more natural features, such as trees and water, to soften the environment, aligning with the virtue of Planet.
- 6. The idea of creating 'pocket parks' and enhancing and celebrating hidden lanes and spaces was suggested to create an element of surprise and delight for visitors to the town.
- 7. The workshop suggested extending the concept area to link to the future of Fort Regent to create a more coherent and collaborative approach to town planning.
- 8. The recommendation to extend the pedestrian priority through Library Place to connect Broad Street and Royal Square with essential vehicles only is an interesting idea that could enhance the pedestrian experience while maintaining necessary vehicle access.
- 9. The workshop suggested creating a common specification for paving, signage, street furniture, etc., which could improve the visual cohesion of the town and create a more consistent aesthetic.
- The workshop highlighted the importance of better-designed public amenities, including functioning public toilets with facilities for children/pushchairs to help extend dwell time, an often-overlooked element of town planning.

Question 2

To understand further what should remain and what could change, the attendees were asked two specific questions.

The first was to consider what was good about the area that we need to keep and celebrate even more. A consistent theme was the importance of trees and open spaces for people to gather and enjoy. Many attendees also mentioned the need to maintain key buildings that have both historical and retail value, and the importance of having links between these buildings with pedestrian and service access. Good access by bus was stressed as a way of reducing the number of cars on the road and improve air quality. Additionally, pedestrian flow and animation were seen as ways to create vibrant streets and encourage social interaction.

On the other hand, some concerns were raised about accessibility for disabled car and bus users, while others expressed the need to retain traffic restrictions to maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment. It was also mentioned that the architectural heritage of the area should be preserved, while still incorporating new elements.

A mix of old and new was favoured, with some participants emphasizing the importance of retaining the human scale of the area. Additionally, the need for cycle facilities and recycle bins were mentioned, along with the importance of creating communal spaces for people to dwell and enjoy. Finally, lighting was mentioned as a key element in creating a safe and vibrant environment.

Question 3

As well as proposing what should be retained, delegates were asked to discuss what needs to change (and why).

One of the most frequently mentioned items was the need for more vibrancy both day and night. Participants suggested that this could be achieved through animation for all ages, as well as pop-up events and facilities, and by providing more event spaces with decent sizes and shelters. Increased activity would be enhanced by increasing the number of trees, greenery, and water features throughout the town, to create a more appealing and healthier environment.

Another important area of focus was to improve traffic flow and accessibility, with clear rules and priorities for cars, cyclists and pedestrians, and better coordination of commercial operations. Attendees also suggested a review of taxi pick-ups and deliveries to meet future requirements, more cycle parking and pedestrianisation of surrounding streets, and the need to clarify traffic regulations. Participants also highlighted the need for better character identity and purpose, intuitive wayfinding, and more information on history to enhance the narrative of the town.

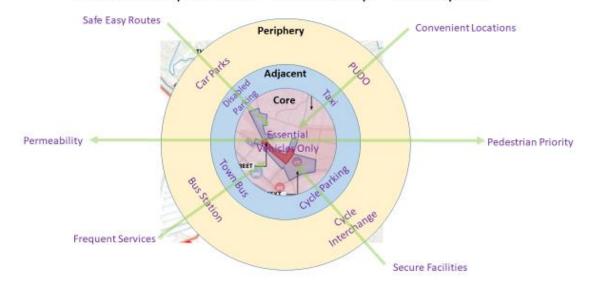
Question 4

Having considered the types of things that should be retained and where change could be beneficial, the workshop was asked to provide more specific, tangible ideas that could be taken forward to develop a vision for the area.

Transport and Access

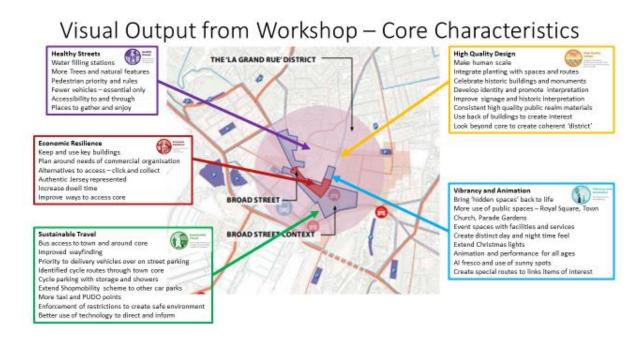
- The pedestrianisation of Library Place and Church Street, and switch from vehicle dominant to pedestrian priority streets. The vision would see:
- Appropriate delivery infrastructure with limited or no on-street car parking
- Bus stops, taxi ranks and 'pick up drop off' located in adjacent street with easy access to the retail core

Visual Output from Workshop - Transport



Environment and Design

- · Electricity points and utility access for events
- A 'Covent Garden' feel with performers, al fresco dining, and festival celebrations to create a vibrant atmosphere
- · Bottle filling stations, and increasing accessibility to and practicality of public toilets
- Providing enhanced planting, such as hanging gardens, and introducing more public art and heritage trails
- More trees, green walks, and small areas of green, with a new town square and enhancements to the area around Sand Street Car Park, and in the vicinity of La Croix de la Reine
- Vibrancy and economic activity by encouraging a variety of businesses, facilitating living above shops, and promoting the use of alternative transport such as electric trolleys, e-bikes, and scooters. Improved connectivity with cycle routes to and across town
- Consistency in design, better quality paving, and encouraging high quality shop fronts to enhance the built environment.



Vision

The following statement was produced to describe an overall vision for the future of the area:

- VIBRANT, easy to get to place with activities and events prioritising walking, cycling with buses close
- VIBRANT and connected for movement and enjoyment of people for children to be proud of
- LANSCAPE destination, focused on people, not cars. Big bold, loves St Helier
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Delegates were then asked to consider the first word that comes to mind about the vision, which were captured as a Wordcloud:



Next Steps

The work delegates' consensus of a vision for the future: A vibrant, people-focused place that is easy to get to and offers activities and events for people of all ages. It should be a place that prioritises walking, cycling and buses, and is connected for movement and enjoyment of people. It should have a landscape destination, focused on people, not cars, and should be a vibrant residential area that supports the economy with good consultation. It should be a human-scale place that is supportive of the local community.

There is a desire for a vibrant and connected town that prioritizes the needs and enjoyment of people, with an emphasis on healthy and sustainable modes of transportation. The importance of preserving historic buildings and architectural characteristics is also emphasized. There is a strong desire for more greenery and open spaces, as well as a need for clear rules and plans for traffic flow, deliveries, and commercial operations. The output also highlights the importance of inclusivity and community involvement in the planning process.

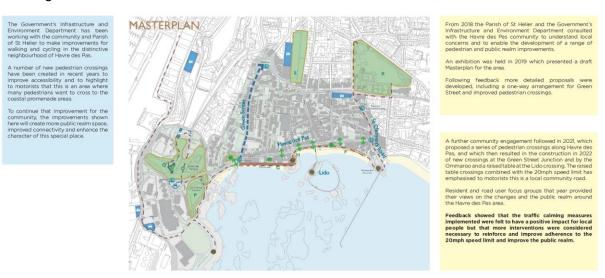
The most important next steps are meaningful wider consultation and discussions about measures to encourage people into town, including late opening, free parking, bicycle routes, and free buses. Further research is required to gather more information to develop the vision into designs that provide the basis for consultation.

Appendix C - Schemes Delivered and In Train

2022

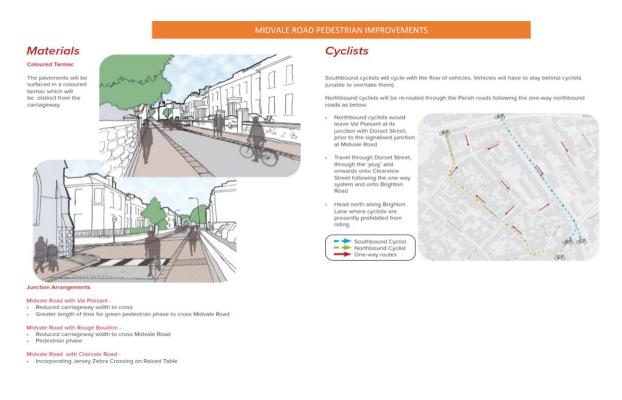
Havre des Pas

Havre des Pas has a unique seaside town period character, however, traffic along the coast road and created severance for pedestrians. The introduction of raised tables and enhanced crossings for pedestrians has helped through character change and speed reduction to make crossing to the seafront easier.



Midvale Road

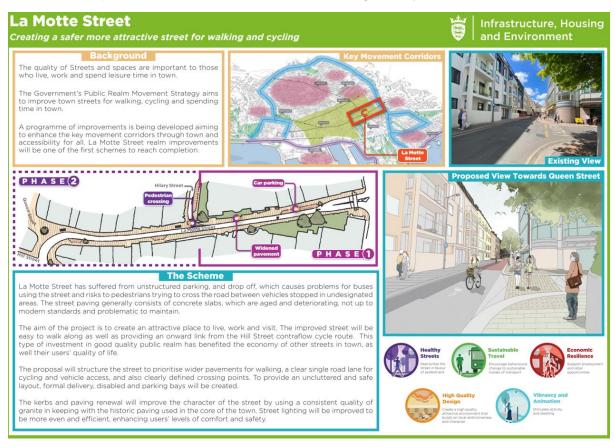
Midvale Road had very narrow pavements and a carriageway, which was not up to standard for two way traffic. The pavements were so narrow that pedestrians were at risk of being hit by wing mirrors when traffic passed in the road. By making the road one-way, pavements were able to be widened improving pedestrian safety and comfort. Raised tables emphasise the residential nature of the road.



2023

La Motte Street

La Motte Street connects eastwards for those cyclists using the Hill Street contraflow cycle route and is an important bus route servicing the north east of the Island. Many pedestrians, especially students, use the route to the east of town and to the secondary school cluster. The street was poorly laid out with some narrow pavements and a proliferation of unauthorised parking, making it difficult for pedestrians to cross safely and buses to route along the road. The phase nearing completion has created wider pavements, a defined single vehicle lane to discourage overtaking of cyclist and unauthorised parking and stopping in the bus running lane. A raised planter will enhance the street with new greenery.



Trinity Village

Trinity Village has a church, shop and community centre as well as other amenities with no good walking route connections, resulting in a village centre that lacked definition. By creating gateways to the new 20mph village zone, the village is more defined. The establishing of a raised table crossing to the parish homes for the elderly enables better connectivity to the parish field path.

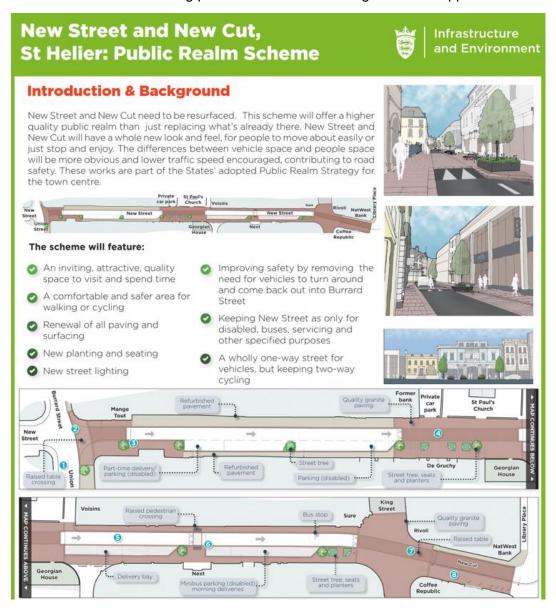


2024/2025

New Street and New Cut

This first phase of improvements for La Grande Rue District comprises the remodelling of New Street from its junction with Union Street to the junction of New Cut and Library Place. The street is already restricted to access for disabled vehicle users, regulated unloaded and other permitted uses.

The scheme will emphasize these restricted uses at the Union Street end entry and, by the use of granite paved areas outside of the single vehicle lane the street, will change the appearance from a through road to a pedestrian street with a limited access for servicing. The junction with King Street will be renewed and enhanced. The crossing linking to the De Gruchy period frontage will have enhanced paving, planting and seating. The works will retain existing levels of disabled parking provision, whilst improving pedestrian access, introducing new raised tables and a crossing point as well as enhancing the visual appeal of the street.



This section of New Street will become an attractive street to wander up from King Street to explore the shopping and cafe opportunities it offers. The works, which combines essential repairs to New Street/New Cut road surface with improvements to the streetscape, will commence in 2024 and continue into 2025.

Western Bus Gateway

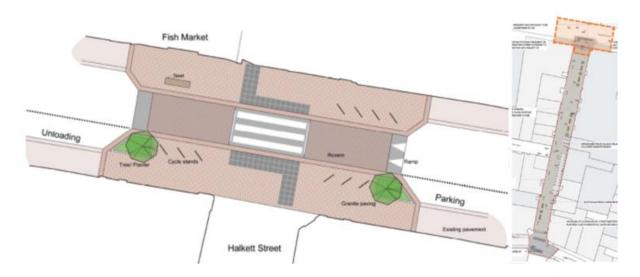
The Western Bus Gate intervention works will make the westbound bus routes exiting town more reliable by avoiding peak time delays at the underpass on La Route de la Liberation. This will be achieved by enabling westbound buses to travel along the full length of The Esplanade, joining at the southern end of Gloucester Street, with a dedicated traffic light phase triggered by each bus. The shortened route will reduce the journey time from the Bus Station to West Park by approximately two minutes at peak times and remove these buses from the roundabout access to La Route de la Liberation.



The scheme will also enhance the quality of the public realm in the vicinity to provide a more comfortable, safe and attractive environment for pedestrians, together with improved cycle parking. The works are due to commence in 2024 and continue into 2025.

Halkett Street/Beresford Street - Enhanced Public Realm

This project demonstrates the close working arrangements between the Department for Infrastructure and Parish authorities. The recent improvement works to the Parish's Halkett Street pedestrian area, which is partly funded by the Government public realm budget, will be enhanced through improvements to the Beresford Street crossing point. The revised crossing will provide increased cycling and pedestrian space in a more attractive setting that enhances the link between the fish market and central market, to provide a safer and more pleasant journey into the centre of town. The crossing works will follow on from completion of the Parish works to Halkett Street to create a contiguous pedestrian route.



Appendix D

Broad Street vision - artist impression only, not the final design.





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