



Guernsey Character Study (Stage 1)

June 2013



St Peter Port
(Image: Alan Howell, Culture and Leisure Department)



Vale Church
(Image: Visit Guernsey)



L'Eree Bay and Rocquainne Bay
(Image: Environment Department)

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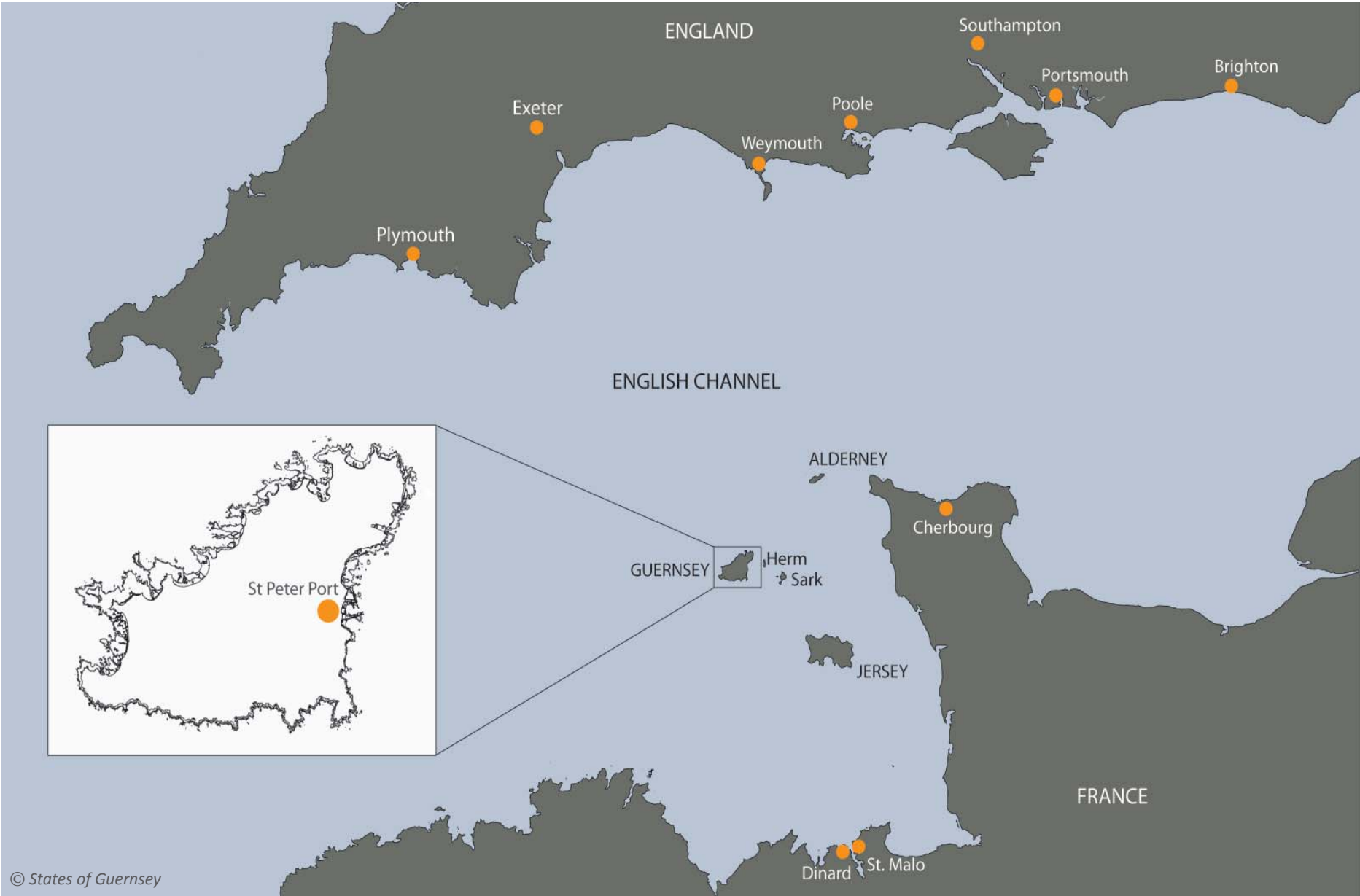
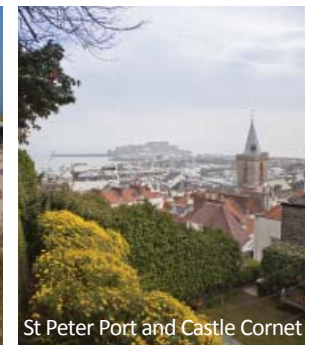


Figure 1

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Bailiwick of Guernsey is part of the Channel Islands, which are located in the Gulf of St Malo, off the coast of north-west France, and lie some 70 miles from the south coast of England (see Figure 1). The Bailiwick comprises of the islands of Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, Brecqhou, Lihou, Herm and Jethou. Jersey is part of the Channel Islands, but not part of the Bailiwick of Guernsey.
- 1.2. Guernsey is just over 24 square miles in area and is the largest Island in the Bailiwick. Guernsey's population is about 62,000. Its main centre of population is St Peter Port, known locally as 'Town'.
- 1.3. The islands of the Bailiwick are part of the British Isles, but not part of the United Kingdom. The Lieutenant Governor is Her Majesty's personal representative and official channel of communication between the Crown, the UK Government and the Bailiwick.
- 1.4. Guernsey, Alderney and Sark are each self governing with the freedom to legislate and levy their own taxes. Lihou, Herm and Jethou are politically linked to Guernsey; Brecqou is politically linked to Sark.
- 1.5. To the visitor Guernsey is probably most famous for its fortifications, beaches, attractive landscape, marinas, financial institutions and cows. However, to those who live and work in Guernsey it has a rich and unique character which greatly varies across the Island resulting in local areas having their own distinctive identity.
- 1.6. This document is the first stage of a strategic character study of Guernsey. This first stage is not a detailed study of Guernsey, its parishes or neighbourhoods. The document seeks to identify the broad aspects of the built and natural environments that define Guernsey's character and its distinctiveness. It does not study Herm, Alderney or Sark and their associated Islands. It will be used as evidence to inform the preparation of policies in the emerging Island Development plan.
- 1.7. This document forms part of a suite of the following documents that will be used to inform the review of the development plan: Guernsey Conservation Area Study, June 2013; Sites of Special Significance and other designated Nature Conservation Sites, June 2013; Analysis of Potential Local Centres, June 2013; Approach to Agriculture & Redundant Vineries, June 2013; Guernsey's Employment Land Study 2013; Open Space & Outdoor Recreation Survey 2012; Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Methodology, 2013; and The Use of Planning Covenants in the Delivery of Affordable Housing in Guernsey, 2012.



(All Images: Visit Guernsey)

2. Policy Context, Purpose and Methodology.

2.1. A review of the existing Development Plans was launched in 2012. The Island Development Plan must take into account the Strategic Land Use Plan (SLUP), which was approved by the States in November 2011 and which provides both general guidance and more specific directions for the preparation of the Island Development Plan. The SLUP sets out the spatial framework for Guernsey and requires provision for a range of development over the next 20 years to meet the Island's economic, social and environmental needs.

2.2. A core objective of the SLUP is that new development is provided for to accommodate the Islands future economic and social needs , but is also balanced with the conservation and enhancement of the character and landscape of the countryside and the historic environment whilst protecting local biodiversity and enhancing the cultural identity of Guernsey by protecting local heritage. In order to inform policy formulation to ensure this is achieved the SLUP requires the following research studies to be carried out:

- A landscape character study and analysis (SLUP Policy SLP27)
- An overall analysis of the built character of the island (SLUP policy SLP32)

2.3. These provide an opportunity to study the landscape/countryside, local distinctiveness and the built character at the same time, and therefore gain a holistic understanding of natural landscape character and human intervention. Indeed, SLUP Policy SLP32 suggests that the built character study is allied to the landscape character study.

The review of the Island's Development Plans – First stage public consultation

2.4. The first stage of the review of the Island's Development Plan was informed by public consultation on a number of broad subjects likely to affect the Island which were encompassed in Topic Papers, which were published in January 2012. One of the Topic Papers was entitled Natural and Built Character, which put forward suggestions for how the research studies should be carried out. The following two-stage approach was proposed:

- Stage 1. A speedy and decisive 'outline assessment' that focuses on the tangible elements but also considers the intangible elements that define Guernsey's character and distinctiveness.

- Stage 2. A detailed assessment that will build on the evidence collected in Stage 1. It will provide a finer level of detail and assess the character and distinctiveness of individual areas or neighbourhoods in both the urban and rural areas and will identify priority areas for the maintenance, enhancement and/or restoration of that character.

2.5. Comments received during the public consultation generally supported this two stage approach.

Purpose of this Study.

- 2.6. This Stage 1 study aims to identify, analyse and describe in a systematic and objective way, those elements and/or combination of elements that help to form the character and distinctiveness of Guernsey.
- 2.7. This study will focus on the tangible elements that define Guernsey's character and distinctiveness. The purpose of this study is therefore:
- a. To understand the common and unique themes that define the identity of the Island

- b. To use this understanding to inform development plan policies that guide where and when new development should occur and help to inform the balancing of demands on land so that local character and distinctiveness is reinforced.
- c. To establish the difference between those areas and features that are important to the whole Island and those that are have a more local importance
- d. To identify Local Character Areas that will be assessed in detail at Stage 2.

Methodology

- 2.8. The methodology comprises of the following five stages:
 - Stage 1. Literature Review
 - Stage 2. Desktop Data Gathering
 - Stage 3. Outline of Report.
 - Stage 4. Field Data Gathering
 - Stage 5. Evaluate Data.
- 2.9. Whilst the intangible influences are not the focus of this project, they will be identified where they make a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the island. Examples of intangible influences are:

- Climate (sunshine, rain, prevailing winds)
- language
- Cultural events
- Politics and Governance

What Does Character and Distinctiveness Mean? Character

- 2.10. Character is closely linked to the environment, the economy and social ambience. It is a subtle mix of different ingredients and how they affect our senses. The ingredients are made up of:
 - The things we can touch and see (known as 'tangibles') which include the landscape, topography, buildings, trees, hedges, earth-banks and streets. Generally, they remain static with only incremental change over the years, decades and centuries.
 - The things we feel, smell, hear and taste (known as 'intangibles'), which include the weather, traffic, people, activities. They are dynamic and can change over the day, the week, the season and the year.
- 2.11. Character has deep roots which are recognised in the relationship between the landscape, movement and settlements.

Distinctiveness

- 2.12. Distinctiveness is closely linked to character, but adds another dimension that makes a place special and different from anywhere else. There may be places that have similarities with other nearby places, but they often have a different 'twist' or way of doing things that makes them truly unique.

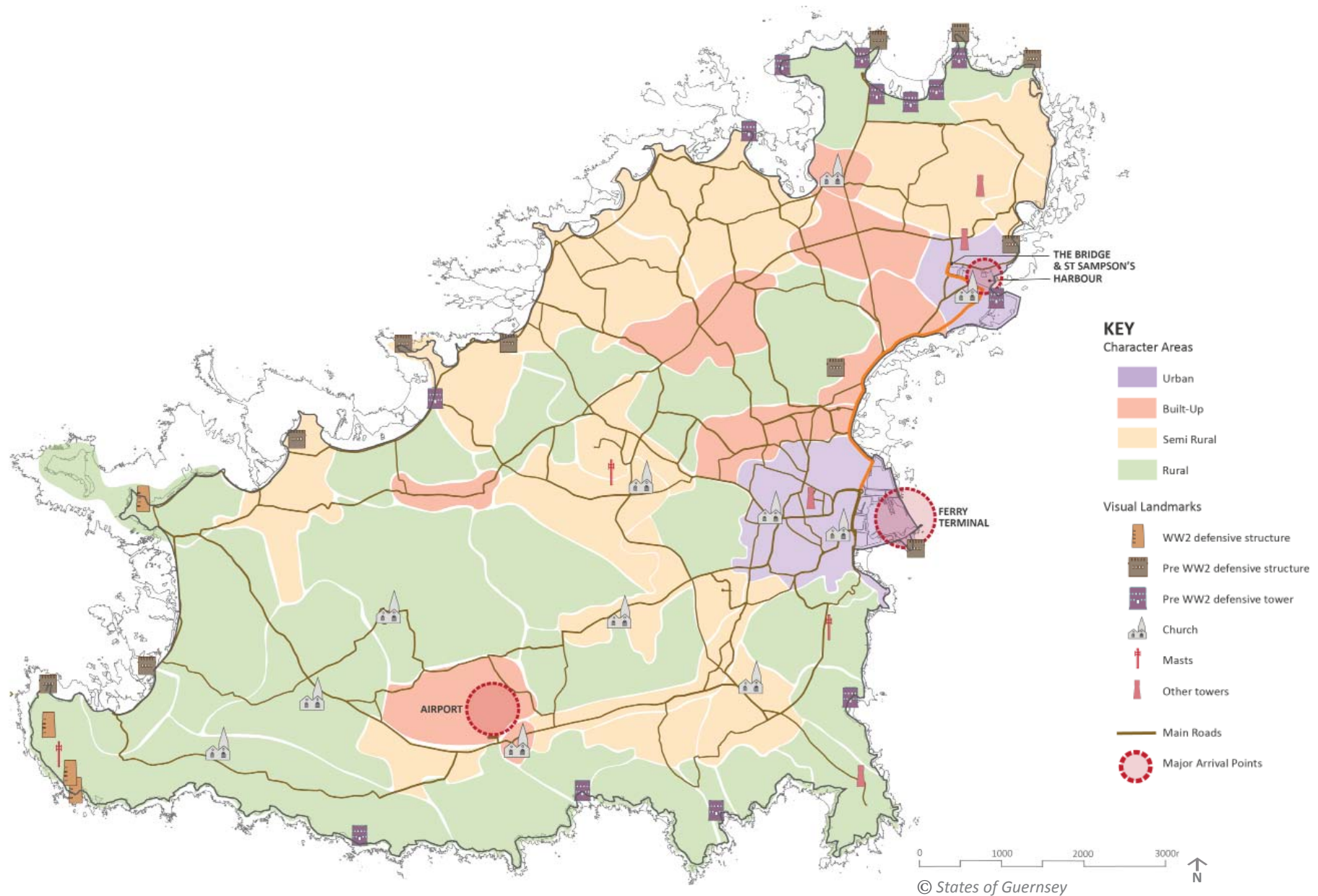


Figure 2. The Essential Character of Guernsey

3. The Character of Guernsey

- 3.1. Figure 2 shows an overview of the essential character of Guernsey, which is built up from the following elements, which are explained in more detail in the following sections:
- **Character Areas.** These are split into four categories, that help to explain the strategic character of the particular area. Many will comprise of a number of smaller sub-character areas. Refer Section 8 for an explanation of urban, built-up, semi-rural and rural.
 - **Landmarks.** The major landmarks that act as memorable features in the landscape, contributing to the identity of areas and helping to aid navigation (legibility).
 - **Movement.** The main paths and routes that people take when moving through the Island.
 - **Gateways.** The major arrival points to the Island
- 3.2. A number of other elements make a significant contribution to essential character and distinctiveness of the Island.
- 3.3. **Historic Environment.** Guernsey has an exceptionally fine and interesting historic environment that has remained largely intact. This is the legacy of thousands of years of human activity on the land. It ranges from the early history burial tombs to World War II fortifications.
- 3.4. **Underlying Landscape Character.** For a small island Guernsey has an incredibly varied landform and character. The island can be roughly divided into the upland plateau (in the south) and the lowland areas (in the north). The upland plateau is defined by an escarpment and by the southern and south-eastern cliffs.
- 3.5. **Settlements.** Guernsey has two main settlements, St Peter Port and St Sampsons, which have grown alongside the expansion of their nearby harbours. Although building has spread throughout the Island and there is a prevalence of ribbon development, there are no other settlements (e.g. villages) or main centres. There are, however, clusters/parades of residential, commercial and community buildings that form rural centres.
- 3.6. **Roads, Lanes, Ruettes Tranquilles and Paths.** The main road system has not been radically upgraded to meet the needs of modern day motor vehicles. For example, there are no motorways. Beyond the main road network is a finer network of lanes and ruettes tranquilles (with priority for pedestrians, cyclists and horses) and foot paths, including green lanes and coastal paths.
- 3.7. **Field Enclosure.** Guernsey has a distinctive network of small fields. In the south of the island they are usually enclosed by earth banks with trees and hedgerows. In the north of the Island they are frequently enclosed by boulder walls.
- 3.8. **St Peter Port Harbour.** Guernsey's main harbour for ferry connections and visiting boats is St Peter Port harbour. With the back drop of the historic hillside town, this is a spectacular entrance to the island. It also accommodates marinas for visiting boats and leisure facilities as well as the focus of the fishing industry.
- 3.9. **St Sampsons Harbour.** Although St Sampsons harbour does have a marina for local boats its uses primarily relate to industry. It is the harbour used for the remaining boat building and maintenance industry as well as for bulk importation, such as fuel (hence the adjacent power station and light industrial buildings). These modern uses and structures are immediately adjacent to historic structures, especially Vale Castle, St Sampson Church and Mont Crevelt fort.
- 3.10. **Outside the main centres orientation can be difficult.** This is due to a combination of factors including: the topography, the lack of landmarks; and the small winding lanes that are often enclosed by lush landscape.

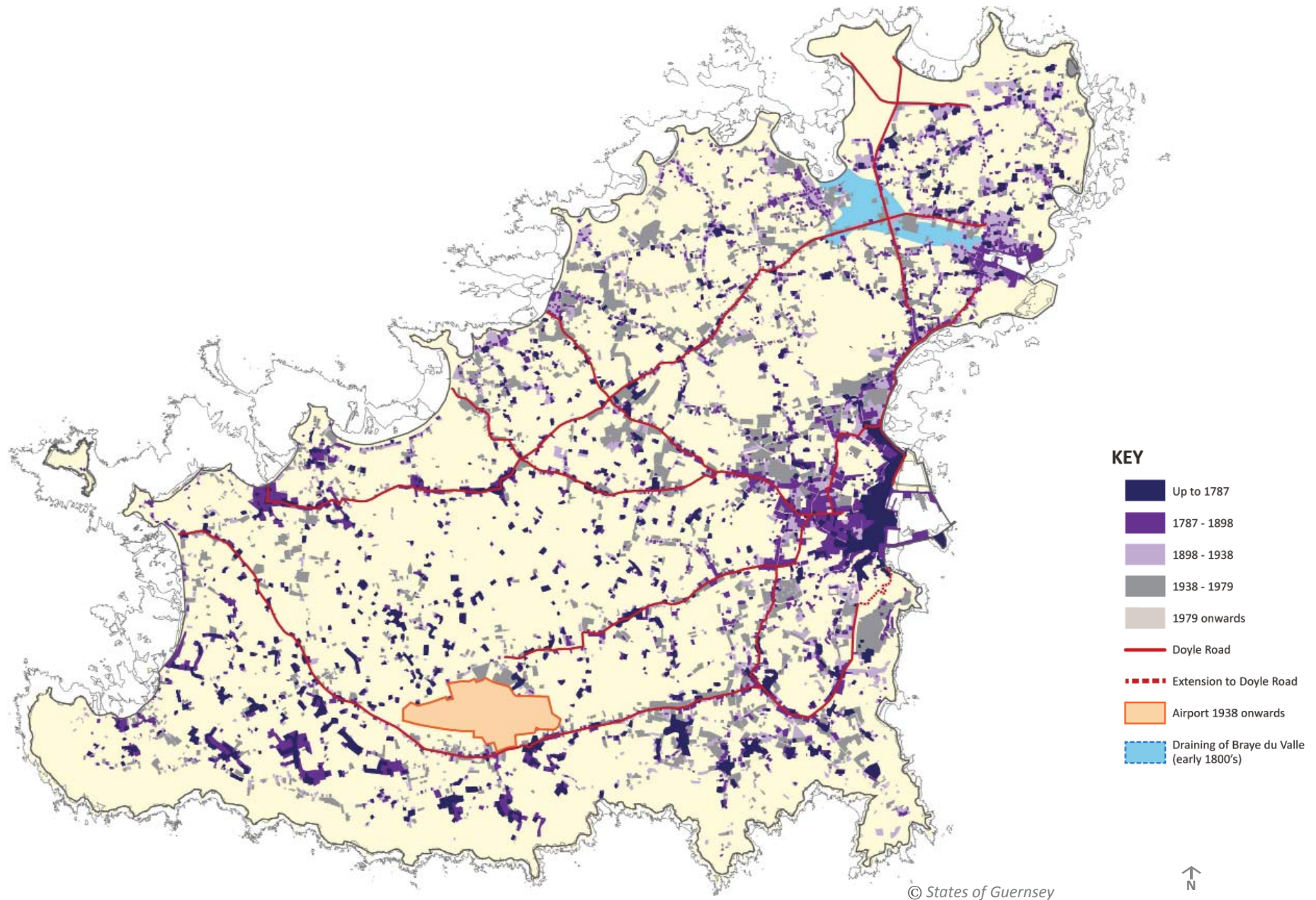


Figure 3: Historic Development

4. Historic Development and Surviving Elements

- 4.1. The historic development of Guernsey is a wide subject that is under constant review and study. The following section and figure 3, provides a summary of the historic development of Guernsey and focuses on those elements that survive today and contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the Island.
- 4.2. Therefore this section provides a brief summary of the early, Middle Ages and mediaeval history. The remaining history is described through the following themes, rather than a chronological events:
- Working the land and the sea
 - Building on the Land and Reclaiming from the Sea.
 - Defending Guernsey

Early History.

- 4.3. The Island of Guernsey was created at around 8000BC when it was separated from mainland Europe by rising sea levels. Mesolithic flints have been found dating back to 7000BC. Throughout the island are traces of Neolithic man dating back to 4500BC. These include defensive earth works, menhirs (places of worship) and dolmens (tombs) including Les Fouillages burial mound, which is possibly the oldest manmade structure in Europe.

- 4.4. Remains of Bronze Age (2000BC) and Iron Age (600-900BC) include earth bank fortifications and some settlement sites. The recent (1982) discovery of a Gallo-Roman boat at the mouth of St Peter Port harbour, and subsequent excavation of Roman building remains, provides some evidence that St Peter Port was used as a Roman trading settlement.



The Middle Ages.

- 4.5. In the 5th and 6th centuries many Celts fled from Britain to Brittany and some settled in the Channel Islands. These Celtic people were mainly farmers and their houses were scattered throughout the island. They did not form settlements and their places of worship were located by the sea or a pagan holy place.

- 4.6. In AD933 Duke Rollo conquered parts of Brittany and his son annexed the Channel Islands to the Duchy of Normandy. The Norman Dukes divided the land into fiefs, held by a Seigneur, who was responsible for running their land and collecting rent. The early farmsteads expanded into small clusters, which relied on the Norman system of open fields for growing crops.
- 4.7. The Channel Islands began to forge links with England when, in 1066 William II (Duke of Normandy) conquered England. These links were strengthened when, in 1204, King John of England lost Normandy to France, and the Seigneurs decided to side with the English Crown. Subsequently the English monarchs have ruled the Channel Islands, but not in their capacity as English sovereign, but instead as descendants of Norman Dukes.
- 4.8. Over the next centuries Guernsey was attacked and occupied a number of times by French forces. During this period St Peter Port expanded into a small settlement, and fortifications were built to repel attacks.

Mediaeval.

- 4.9. In this period the main occupation on Guernsey would have been subsistence farming. In 1480, following a request from King Edward IV of England, Pope Sixtus granted the Channel Islands neutrality that sustained a long period of peace. The neutrality brought major benefits to Guernsey and allowed the relatively free trade of wine and fish exports to France and England.
- 4.10. At the end of the 15th century, knitting of woollen clothes was an important industry to Guernsey. These woollen clothes were exported to England.

Working the Land and the Sea.

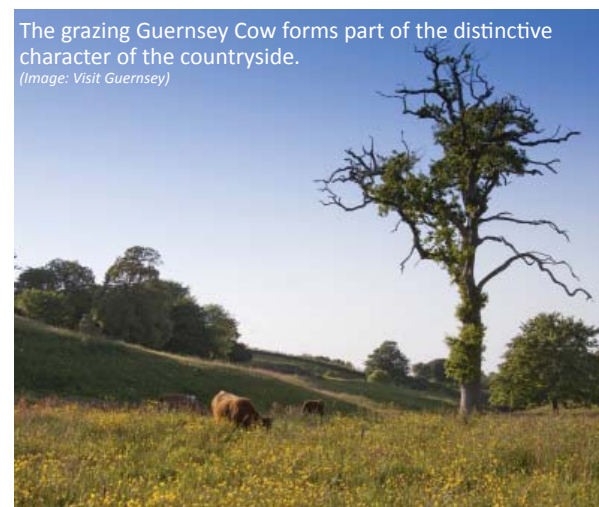
Agriculture

- 4.11. Arable. Farming declined with the rise of the knitting and privateering industries in the 15th century. However, after the Napoleonic War agriculture increased, with parsnips, wheat and potatoes the main crops together with cider production. A combination of competition and crop disease over the centuries ended significant exports of agricultural produce.
- 4.12. The pattern of small fields and arable/dairy farming, with interspersed buildings remains characteristic of much of the south of the island.
- 4.13. Livestock. Since 1763 cattle were imported only for slaughter, which stopped the spread of diseases and kept the purity of the local breed. Cattle export started around the 1830's with the Guernsey cow renowned for its milk and very yellow butter. Export declined between the two world wars, due to the expanding horticulture industry.
- 4.14. The grazing Guernsey Cow is an iconic image and forms part of the character and



Arable farming contributes to the character of the countryside.

(Image: Alan Howell, Culture and Leisure Department)



The grazing Guernsey Cow forms part of the distinctive character of the countryside.

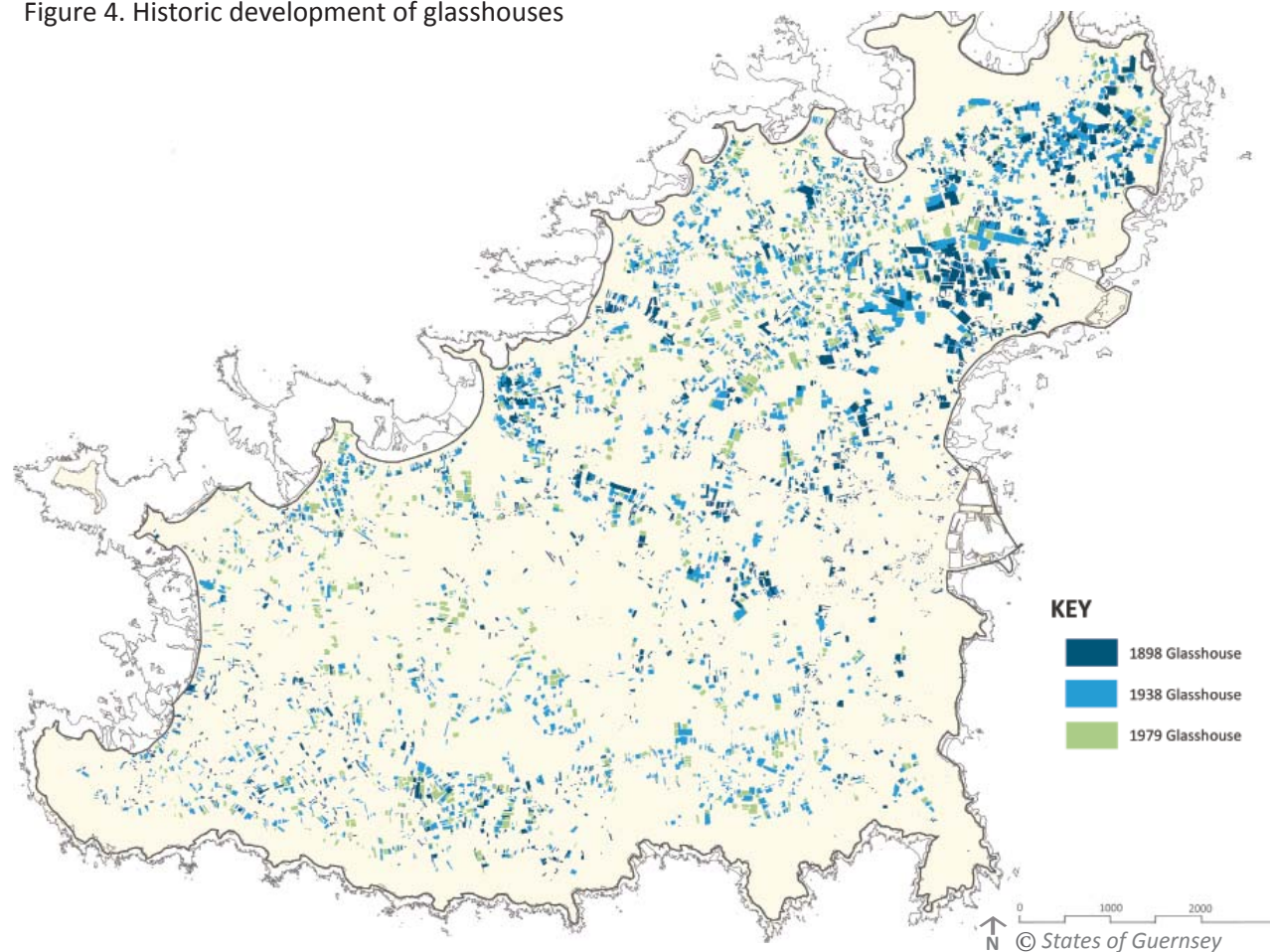
(Image: Visit Guernsey)

distinctiveness Guernsey.

Horticulture

- 4.15. The horticulture industry started in the early 19th century producing grapes, figs, melons and some peaches. In the latter part of the 19th century tomatoes began to be grown and at the same time the flower and bulb business began. In the early 20th century the industry expanded rapidly, with yields increased by heating the glass houses, fertilisers and steam sterilisation of the soil. The industry peaked in the 1970's after which it went into rapid decline due to a number of factors including the oil crisis and overseas competition.
- 4.16. At the peak of the horticultural industry glasshouses were scattered across the Island, but were mainly concentrated in the north and north-west (see Figure 4), mainly because the land in the south of the Island was better for arable and dairy farming. Large areas of glasshouses remain. They range from small glasshouses attached to dwellings, which occur throughout the Island, to the larger modern complexes of commercial glass that are mostly in the north. Redundant glasshouses, which have resulted from the decline in economic fortunes of the industry, as well as the effects of various storms, have an impact on the landscape.

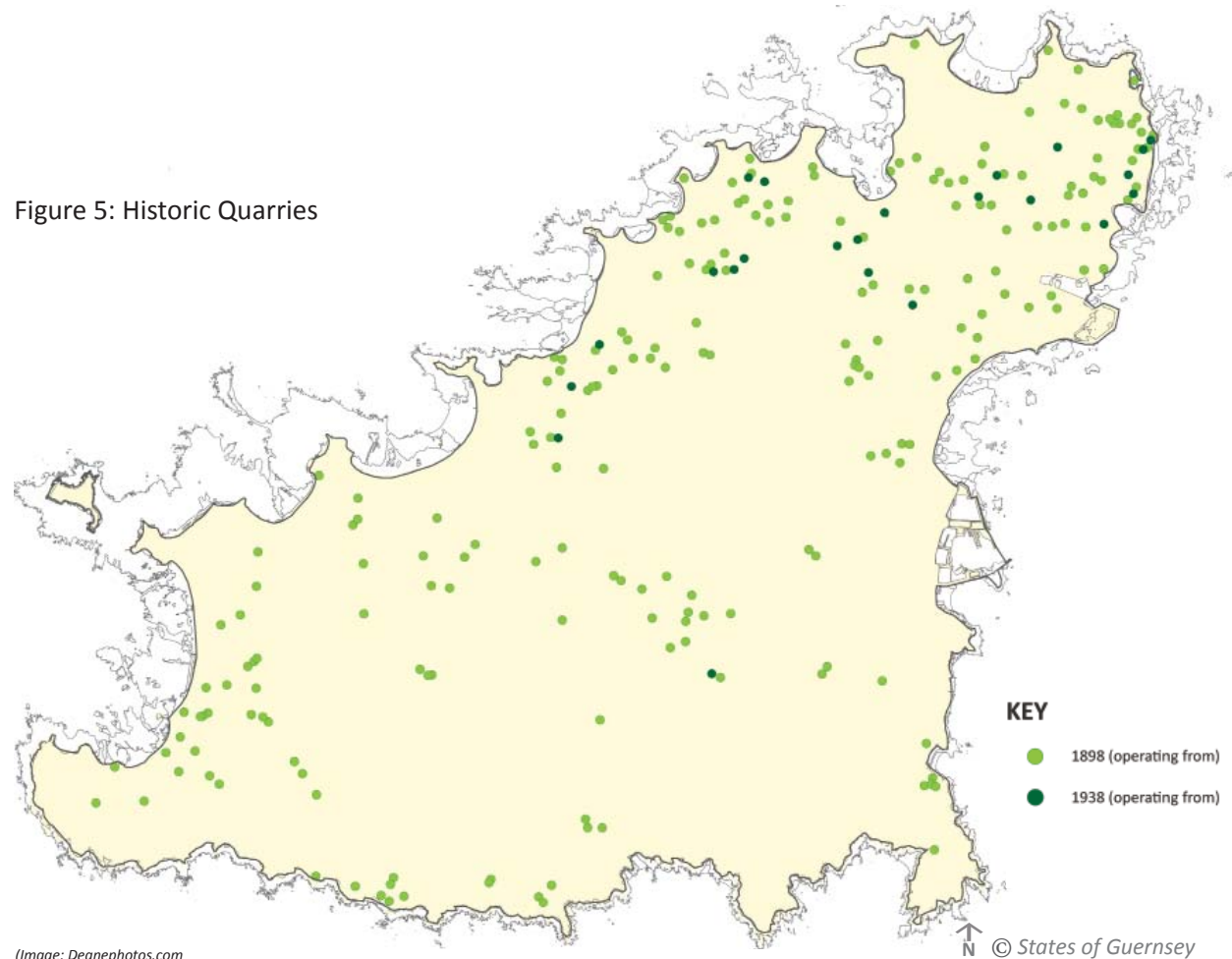
Figure 4. Historic development of glasshouses



Quarrying

- 4.17. The granite trade started in the late 18th century. At its peak in 19th Century there were over 250 active quarries. The quarries were worked throughout the island, but because of the Island's geology, the vast majority and the larger quarries were in the parishes of St Sampson's and the Vale (see Figure 5).
- 4.18. Some of the stone was used for the on-island construction of buildings, roadside walls, harbours and other civil engineering works. However, the vast majority of granite was exported to England for road surfacing, kerbs, granite setts and ornamental masonry.
- 4.19. The granite trade brought employment and prosperity to Guernsey. It was also partly responsible for the expansion of the harbours, especially St Sampson's harbour and its associated stone yards.
- 4.20. Today the quarrying has all but ceased. Many of the quarries have been filled, whilst others have flooded and provide a source of water as well as habitats for wildlife and opportunities for recreation and leisure.

Figure 5: Historic Quarries



(Image: Deanephotos.com)



Privateering, Smuggling and Shipbuilding.

- 4.21. Privateering in Guernsey began in the 17th Century with ships licensed by the British crown to seize enemy shipping. Guernsey's location in the English Channel, as well as local knowledge of rocks and reefs was of strategic importance and by the end of the 18th Century Guernsey's privateering fleet was a formidable force.
- 4.22. Many of the seized goods would often end up on sale in St Peter Port. However, goods such as wine and brandy carried heavy excise duty when imported into Britain, which were often avoided by smuggling.
- 4.23. The shipbuilding industry initially supported the privateering fleet. However, the ship building industry boomed with the development of merchant shipping and trade routes in the 18th Century, when St Peter Port became an established international entrepot.
- 4.24. These industries left a significant footprint on Guernsey. They lead minor expansions of many of the harbours along the coast, the importance of which diminished when St Peter Port and St Sampson harbours were significantly expanded in the 18th and 19th century.

Tourism

- 4.21. Guernsey's tourist industry began in the 19th Century. It grew over the century and in the early 20th Century Guernsey was a recognised tourist resort. The industry peaked after the Second World War with many British tourists attracted by the remnants of the German Occupation.
- 4.26. In recent times the industry has declined, but nevertheless remains an important part of the local economy. Tourism has left its footprint, contributing to the expansion of St Peter Port Harbour, La Vallette bathing pools and the network of open spaces and beaches that are enjoyed by today's tourists and Islanders.



Finance

- 4.27. The finance industry has left its mark on the Island. Buildings include the 19th century bank in High Street and later adaptations of buildings in St Peter Port. Finance has grown significantly since the 1980's and is now the island's major industry with many new, modern office buildings being built in St Peter Port and along the eastern seaboard.



Building on the Land and Reclaiming from the Sea.

Harbours and Ports.

4.28. Although there are a number of historic ports and harbours throughout Guernsey's coast, those on the east coast expanded due to the deeper water and relatively sheltered and navigable waters. Privateering, smuggling and shipbuilding all brought considerable wealth to the island and resulted in a growth in population as well as the expansions of St Peter Port and St Sampson Harbour.

4.29. St Peter Port Harbour. The first record of a harbour at St Peter Port dates back to the late 13th century when only the south pier existed. Work began on expanding the port in the late 17th Century, with the construction of the north Pier (completed 1750), and by the late 1770's the quay was built. In 1859 a breakwater was completed to Castle Cornet and shortly after the north pier was extended to the White Rock. Modern improvements to the harbour include the new jetty (1927), the car ferry ramp (1975) and the Queen Elizabeth II marina (1987).

4.30. St Sampson's Harbour. Prior to 1800 the area formed part of the Braye du Valle that flowed to the Vale Church. With the reclamation of the Braye du Valle in the early 1800's, building of the harbour and associated development began. The need to export granite and import goods such as coal resulted in the expansion of the harbour in the 1800's. The only major change in the 20th century was the construction of a marina, within the harbour, for the use of local leisure craft instead of commercial vessels and less formal moorings.



St Sampson's Harbour
(Image: Alan Howell, Culture and Leisure Department)



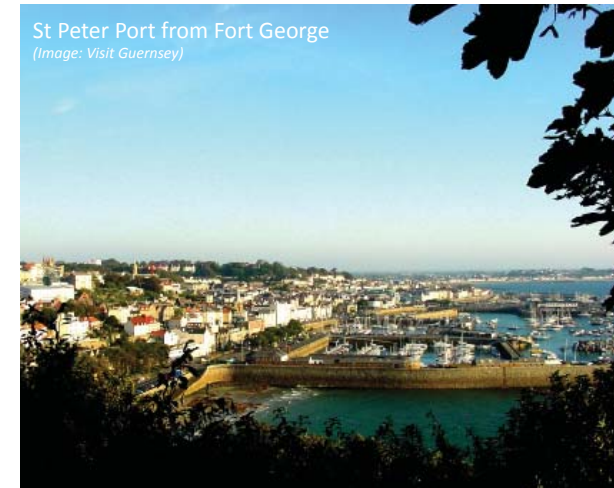
St Peter Port Harbour (Castle Cornet in the foreground).
(Image: Alan Howell, Culture and Leisure Department)

Urban Settlements

4.31. Although housing development has spread throughout Guernsey and there is a prevalence of ribbon development along the main roads, the main urban areas have developed along the east coast in tandem with the harbours. St Sampson's main centre developed around the commercial harbour which occupies the eastern end of the Braye du Valle. Waterfront development along the east coast and around Belle Greve Bay links the urban areas of these two harbour towns, although behind this is a large swathe of undeveloped, green land known as St Sampson's Marais.

4.32. **St Peter Port:** The increase in the Island's economy and wealth, resulting in a growth of population that was accommodated in St Peter Port. St Peter Port has spread up the escarpment behind the principal harbour and, to its north. Although a medieval settlement pattern is evident in the winding streets and vennels, the architecture of the buildings gives the distinct impression of a late 18th and early 19th century town.

4.33. **St Sampsons:** Similar to St Peter Port, the development of St Sampson's main centre is closely related to the development of its harbour. Part of the area is called the Bridge which gets its name because it stands on the former site of a Bridge across the Braye du Valle. The reclamation of the Braye du Valle in the early 1800's and the development of St Sampson's harbour brought commercial, retail and housing development to the area.



St Peter Port from Fort George
(Image: Visit Guernsey)



St Sampsons Centre
(Image: Environment Department)

Rural Settlements.

- 4.34. Outside the two main centres of St Peter Port and St Sampsons there are no nucleated settlements, such as villages. The Duke of Richmond Map (1787) shows buildings that are scattered across the Island, which are predominately in the south. They are some clusters of buildings/hamlets located near the coast, churches, streams, springs and areas of shelter at the bottom of valleys. Some of these areas have developed as small clusters/parades of housing, commercial, retail, and community uses.
- 4.35. There seems to be no apparent reason why nucleated settlements have not evolved. John McCormack, in *The Guernsey House*, considers this might be possible due to the Celts that settled on Guernsey in the 5th and 6th Centuries who were predominantly farmers whose typical pattern of settlement was that of scattered homesteads rather than nucleated villages.

- 4.36. The 1898 OS Map shows some expansion of the clusters, together with new clusters that have formed around the industries, such as quarrying. Interestingly, the 1898 map provides names for the clusters/hamlets, which indicates that 'places' have been formed. Some of these names are used today, whilst others are a distant memory and not commonly used.
- 4.37. The 20th century saw ribbon development along the roads radiating from St Peter Port and St Sampsons. In many areas the ribbon development filled between the historic clusters, resulting in the roads being enclosed by buildings. In many areas this gives a perception that Guernsey is densely developed. The reality, however, is that behind the buildings are open fields giving a lower density of development.



Defending the Island.

- 4.38. The close proximity to mainland France, together with their allegiance to the English Crown, made the Channel Islands of strategic importance in the cross-Channel wars between France and England. Also, Guernsey was occupied during the WWII and was fortified as a part of Hitler's 'Atlantic Wall'.

Land Reclamation and Drainage.

- 4.39. In the early 19th century the draining of the Braye du Valle began on instruction from Sir John Doyle. This joined the north island (Clos du Valle) with the main island. The area was not filled, - much of the Braye du Valle remains at, or just below sea level - instead the two dams were built at either end of the Braye. As with many of the civil engineering projects carried out by Doyle, the main purpose of draining the Braye was to aid the defence of the island.
- 4.40. At first glance there is little evidence that Guernsey was once two islands. However, the names of places and roads near the Braye Du Valle indicate uses associated with the sea – for example 'Saltpans Road' where sea-salt was harvested. Also, there are remnants of the sea wall on the north side of the Braye.

Sir John Doyle Roads.

- 4.41. Doyle also improved many of the roads in Guernsey at the end of the 18th Century/beginning of the 19th Century. The main purpose was to enable efficient movement of troops to aid the defence of the island. These road improvements would have radically changed their character by widening and straightening them. In particular Route Militaire and Braye Road (both are in the north of the Island and intersect with each other) are unusual because they are relatively long, wide and straight roads, having been built constraints and largely across the drained sea bed

Fortifications.

- 4.42. The location of the Channel Islands made them a strategic prize in the cross-channel power struggle between Britain and France. Guernsey's early fortifications were built to repel French invasion in the Middle Ages.

- 4.43. The threat of French invasion, and intermittent occupation during the 13th and 14th centuries resulted in the construction of a number of castles and reinforcement of existing fortifications. These castles and fortifications were built to both repel invasion and act as places of refuge from raids.

- 4.44. After a period of peace in the 15th and 16th Centuries, the threat of French invasion began once again between the 17th and 19th Centuries. During this time the coast was fortified with a number of forts, barracks, watch houses, batteries and loop-hole towers.

- 4.45. The Channel Islands were substantially fortified during the occupation by German forces during WWII. These fortifications were part of Hitler's Atlantic Wall and consisted of a number of new batteries and barracks. Many existing fortifications were also upgraded to meet contemporary standards.

- 4.46. Many of Guernsey's fortifications are major landmarks in the landscape and therefore form a significant part of its character and distinctiveness.



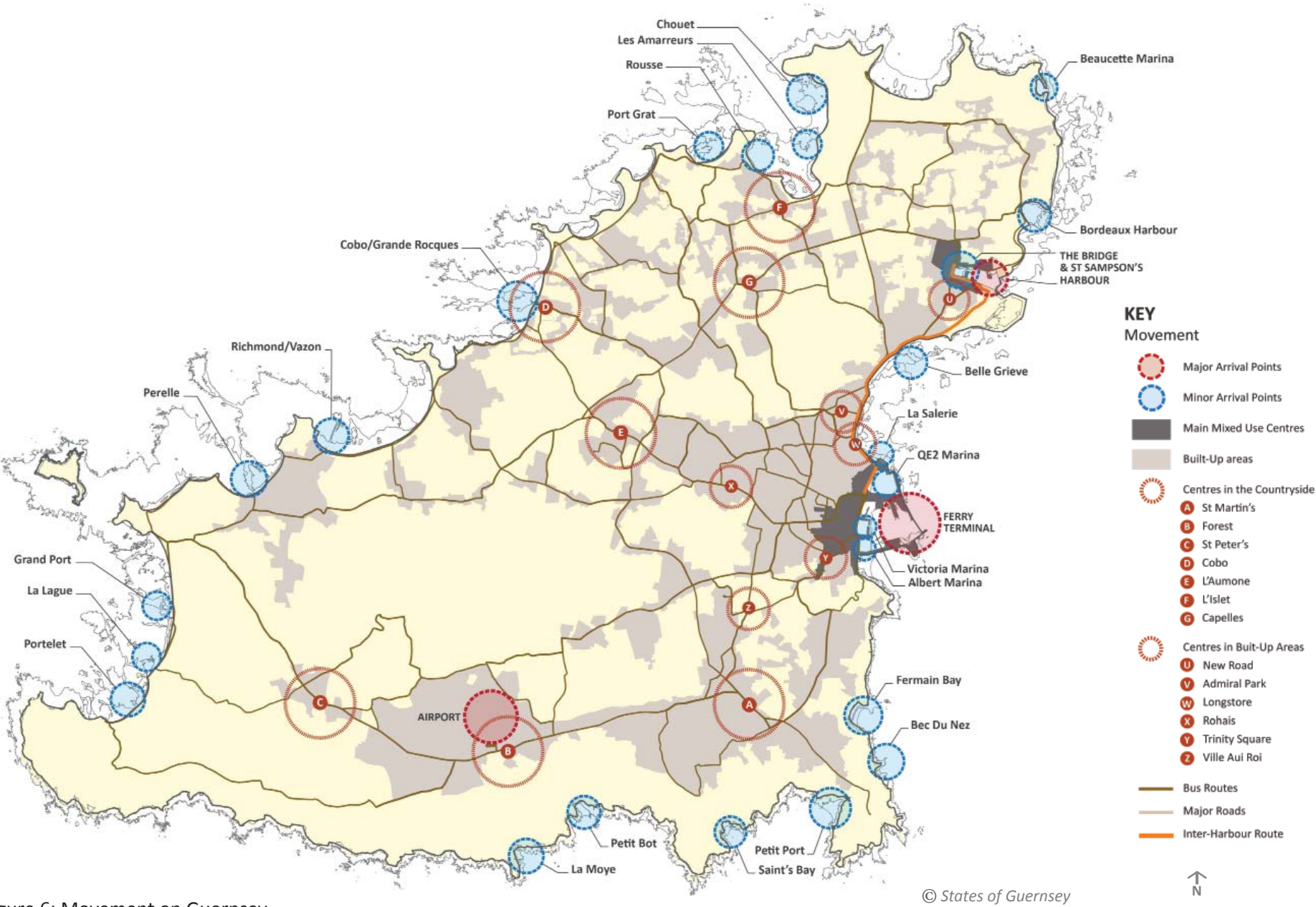


Figure 6: Movement on Guernsey

5. Movement

Movement to and From Guernsey

- 5.1. Guernsey's airport is located approx three miles south west of St Peter Port and is one of the main gateways to and from the Island. Currently five airlines offer flights to/from the other Channel Islands, the UK and European mainland.
- 5.2. The other gateway to/from the Island is via the ferry terminal at St Peter Port. Ferry services are available to other Channel Islands, the English south coast (Poole, Weymouth, Portsmouth) as well as St Malo in Brittany (see Figure 7). St Peter Port and St Sampsons harbours are the Island's commercial harbours where goods are imported and exported. There are also a number of marinas and harbours along the coast that offer mooring for private boats.

Movement On Guernsey

- 5.3. Figure 6 provides a summary of the movement on the Guernsey. It shows the main road network, together with the bus routes and the main gateways to the Island. It also shows the minor gateways, which are the marinas, slipways and moorings for local and visiting boats.

The Road Network.

- 5.4. The Island's road network generally follows the field pattern, creating a dense network of narrow winding lanes. The system is predominately the same as the pattern on the 1787 Duke of Richmond Map, with only minor realignments. The main exceptions are the main roads, many of which are a directly related to the roads that Sir John Doyle upgraded (see section 4).
- 5.5. The speed limit on most of the Island's roads is 25 miles per hour. This relatively low limit is necessary due to limited forward visibility, narrow winding nature of roads and concealed entrances/exits. Some of the main roads have a speed limit of 35 mph.

- 5.6. The Island's widest and busiest road connects St Peter Port harbour to St Sampson's harbour and is known as the inter-harbour route. It is heavily used by traffic, cyclist and pedestrians and carries a significant proportion of commercial traffic.
- 5.7. The main roads and primary routes radiating out from St Peter Port and St Sampsons have a carriageway no wider than to allow two lanes for traffic. If two large vehicles have to pass each other, it is often necessary for one to mount the pavement.
- 5.8. Off the main roads is a dense network of lanes and neighbourhood routes. Most are a single carriageway with passing places for vehicles. Some of the lanes have been designated Ruelle Tranquilles – where pedestrians, cyclists and horses have priority and the speed limit is 10 mph.
- 5.9. Guernsey has a relatively high car ownership and use. When this is combined with the road network and its local bottle-necks, this can lead to congestion and or air quality issues at certain times and places.

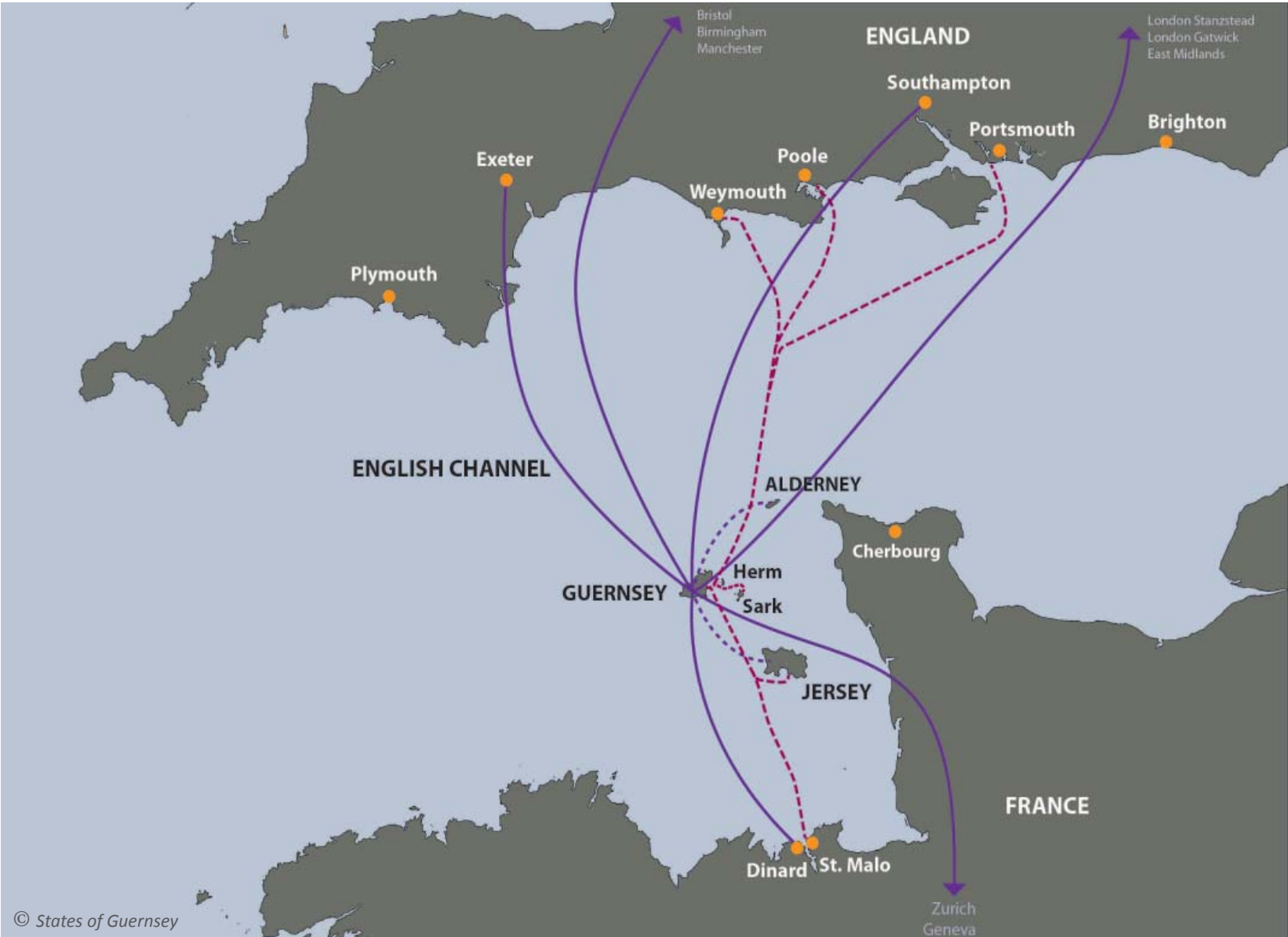


Figure 7: Movement to Guernsey

Public Transport.

- 5.10. Public transport is provided by buses as well as a taxi service. The buses serve the majority of the Island by a number of routes that radiate out from the bus terminus at St Peter Port. The frequency of the service to some areas is limited during the day and very few routes run through to the night.

Cycling.

- 5.11. The topography of the Island is relatively flat with few long, steep hills making cycling and walking relatively easy. However, the long gradients of the escarpments to the higher parishes can be difficult for cyclists. Cycling is popular for both leisure and travel to work. The only designated cycle lane runs alongside the inter-harbour route.

Barriers to Movement

- 5.13. The island is relatively free from natural barriers to movement (eg topography, landform and watercourses). The only major natural barrier to movement is St Sampson's Marais that has formed by natural features (douits etc) and the condition of the ground (boggy/marshy in some areas).
- 5.14. There are also very few man-made barriers to movement, due to there being no significant roads (e.g. motorways) and no railway lines. Furthermore, the dense network of relatively small fields permits movement across the island. albeit movement through the lanes can be slow. The largest man-made barriers are the reservoir and the secured area of the airport.
- 5.15. Being a relatively small island, the coastal edges form obvious barriers to movement. However, there are many marinas, slipways and bays with boat mooring that serve as entrances/exits to and from the island.



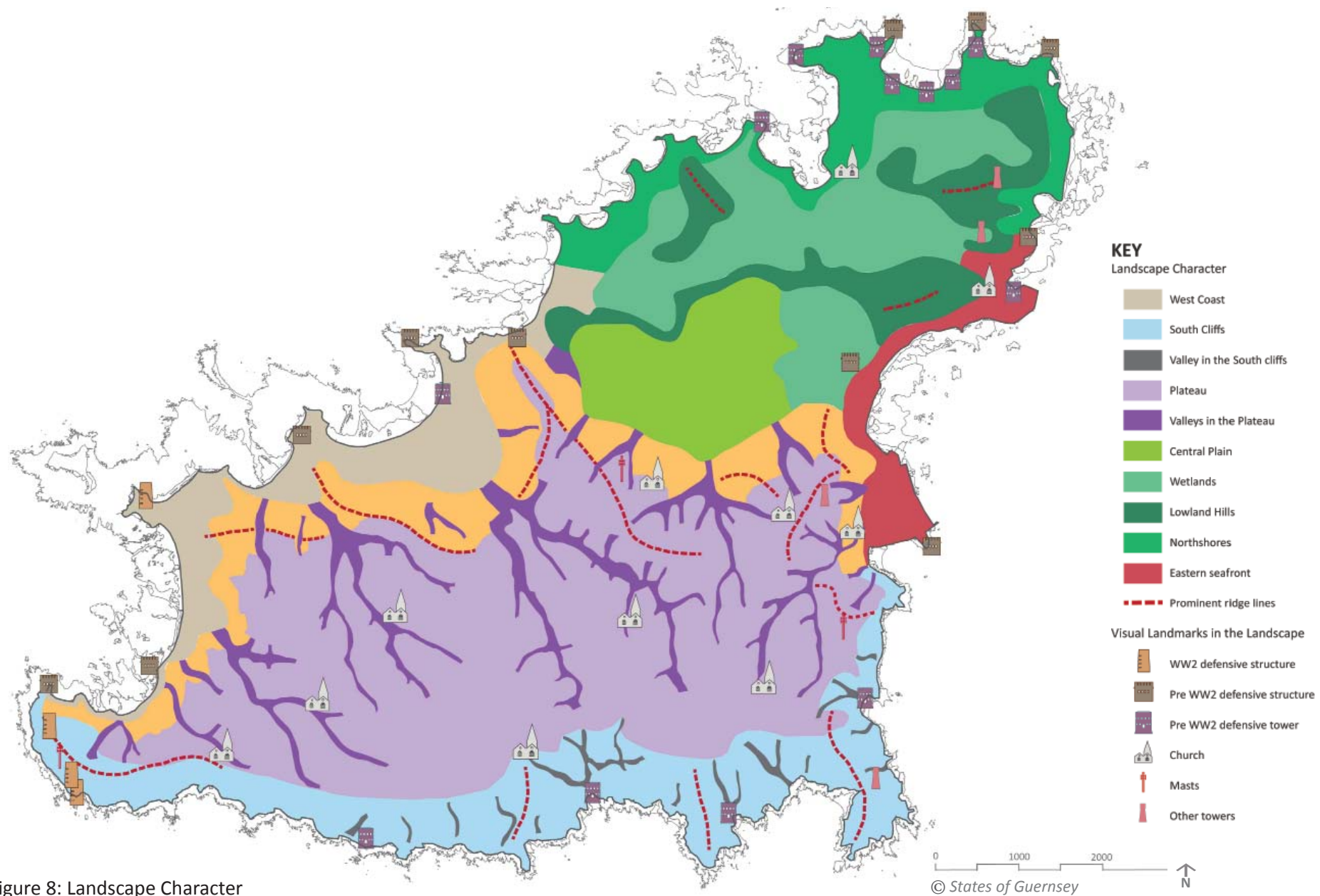


Figure 8: Landscape Character

6. Underlying Landscape Character

Topography and Landform

- 6.1. Guernsey's topography (see Figure 9) has evolved from the igneous geological origins of the Island, modified by the process of weathering and inundation by higher sea levels over thousands of years. This results in marked topographic contrasts occur over a relatively small area.
- 6.2. Figure 8 shows the board landscape charcaters across the Guernsey. The Island can be roughly divided into an upland plateau in the south and a lowland area in the north. The upland plateau is defined by an escarpment and by the southern and south-eastern cliffs. The escarpment runs from the cliffs at Pleinmont half a mile inland along the west coast, and then across the middle of the Island between Cobo and Salerie Corner to link back to the cliffs at Fort George through the St Peter Port escarpment.
- 6.3. The upland plateau is cut by a series of long, narrow, branching valleys most of which drain down through the escarpment to the west coast. Much shorter cliff valleys drain the southern rim of the plateau to the south.

- 6.4. The lowland landscapes to the north are a series of low lying poorly drained basins punctuated by a scattering of rocky, often tree covered hills or hougues. Towards the south, forming a transition to the escarpment edge of the upland plateau is a slightly raised area, which can best be described as a central plain.

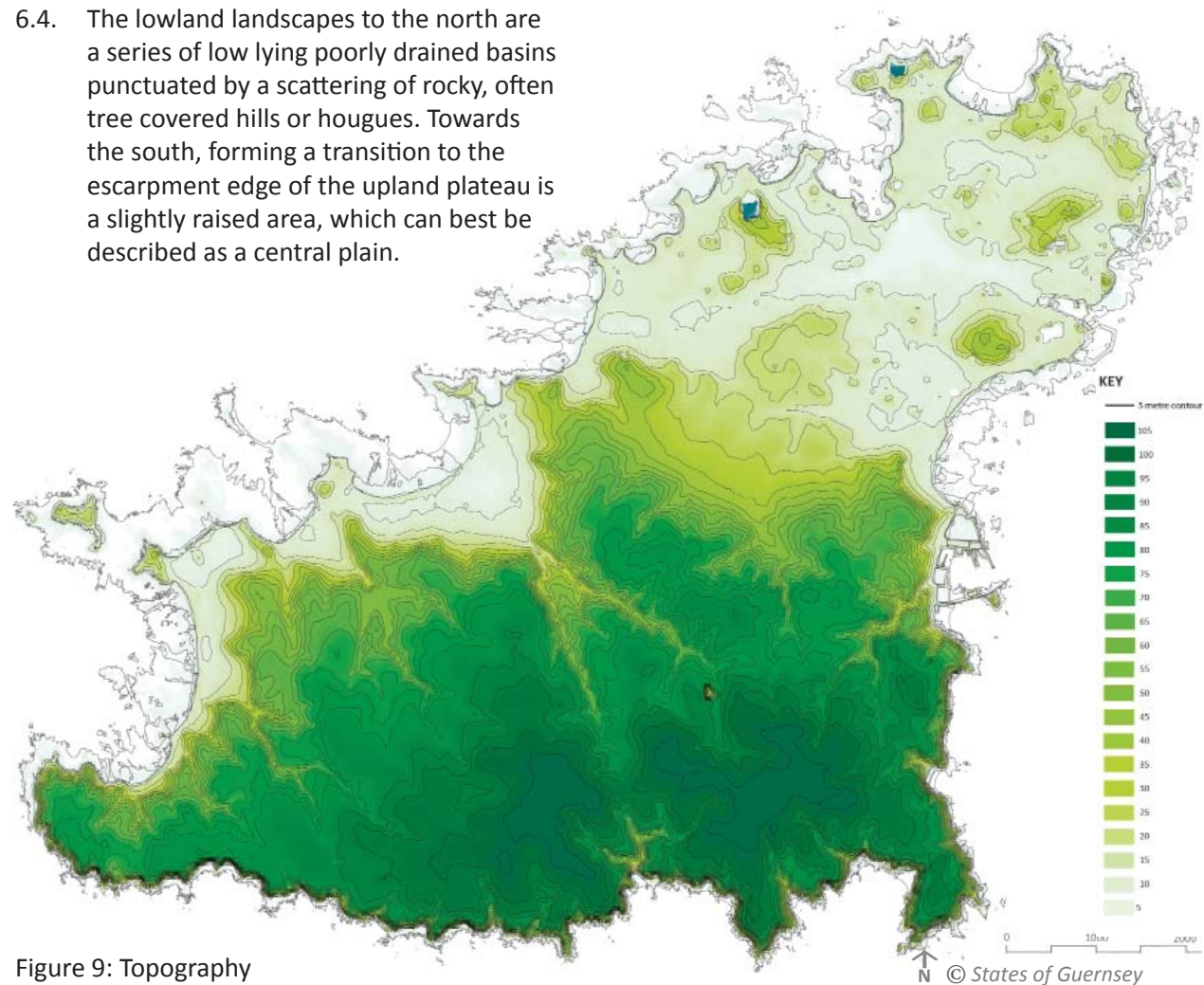


Figure 9: Topography

Coastal Edges

- 6.5. The Island coastline is varied, ranging from the steep rocky cliffs in the south, to the sweeping sandy bays in the west, and the low windswept northern shoreline. The east coast is less indented and is scoured by the tidal race between Guernsey and Herm and Jethou. It is also more protected, lying in the lee of the prevailing wind.



Sweeping, sandy bays along the west coast
(Image: Alan Howell, Culture and Leisure Department)

Geology

- 6.6. Beneath the surface the geology is largely composed of gneiss, granite and diorite and the soils tend to be acid, ranging from sandy loam in the north to heavier loess silt deposits on the higher parishes to the south.
- 6.7. The geology has a significant impact on local character and distinctiveness. As noted in Section 4, some of the locally quarried stone was used for the on-island construction of buildings, roadside walls, harbours and other civil engineering works. Furthermore, the local stone has varying colour depending on its source and include: a pink or brownish red from Cobo and Albecq; yellow/golden brown from L'Ancrese; and a grey/blue from the northern parts of the Island.

Land Use

- 6.8. Cultivation and development have had an increasingly important influence on the Island's environment over the centuries. Agricultural land is focused in the south/higher parishes of the Island. The fields are interspersed with farmhouses and scattered clusters/hamlets, usually nestling into valleys besides streams or into lower sheltered ground.
- 6.9. Although the horticultural industry rapidly declined from its peak in the 1970's, large areas of glasshouses remain. They range from small glasshouses attached to dwellings, which occur throughout the Island, to the larger modern complexes of commercial glass that are mostly in the north. Redundant glasshouses, which have resulted from the decline in economic fortunes of the industry, as well as the effects of various storms, have a detrimental visual effect on the landscape although they can provide areas for habitat and biodiversity.

Field Enclosure

6.10. The medieval open fields and commons were replaced relatively early (14th century) by enclosure. Inheritance practices have since divided and re-divided fields to form an elaborate pattern. Nearly half the area of the Island is still covered by a network of small irregular pastures. These are enclosed, usually by earth banks in the south, and with hedges and/or hedgerow trees, but more often by boulder walls in the north (see Figure 10). This enclosed landscape, termed “le bocage” in France, is found only in small pockets of north western Europe.

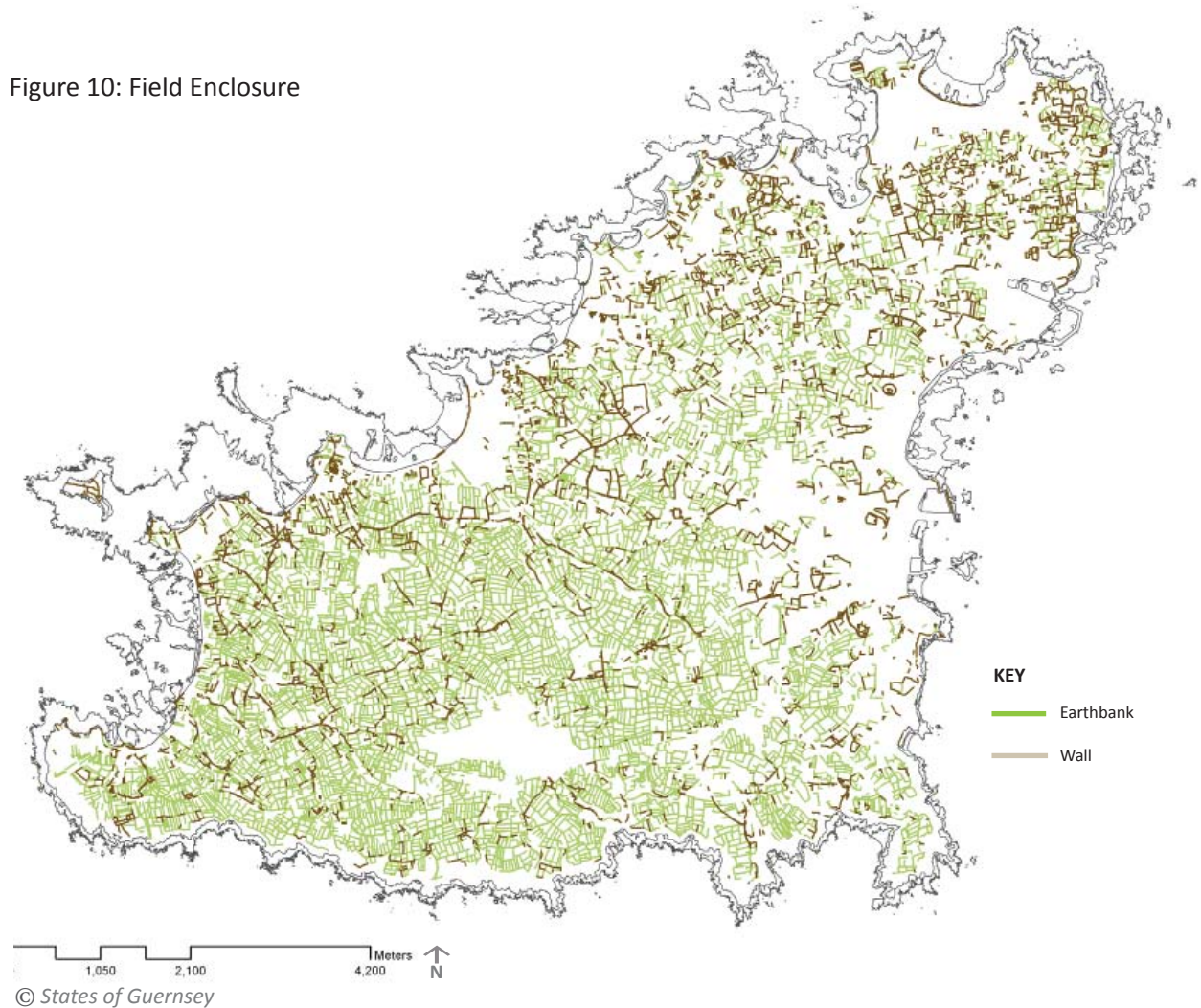
Stone boundary walls are predominant in the north of the Island

(Image: Environment Department)

Earthbanks are predominant in the south of the Island

(Image: Visit Guernsey)

Figure 10: Field Enclosure



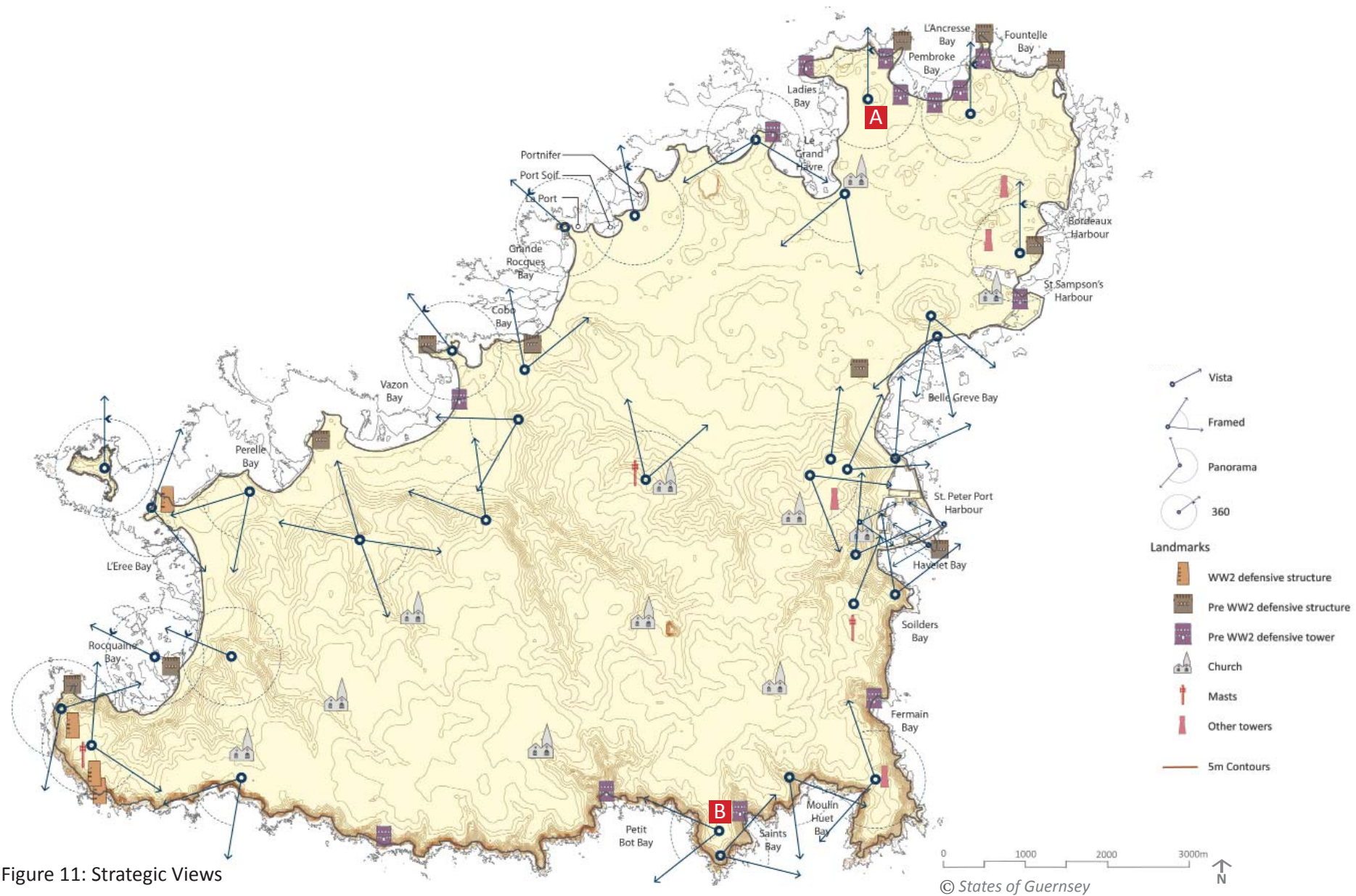


Figure 11: Strategic Views

Views

- 6.10. Figure 11 shows the long range views from which large areas of the Island can be seen. Due to the dense network of narrow lanes, topography and enclosure by buildings, walls, and earth banks; long range views are not common. Therefore, where they are available they are often spectacular. Also, in the rural area there are countless short and medium range views across fields, where enclosure is broken giving important visual access to open spaces. These views have not been identified.
- 6.12. The other Channel Islands and the French coast can be seen from the eastern seaboard as well as from the south east of the Island. These views set Guernsey in its wider context as part of a collection of islands that are off the French coast.



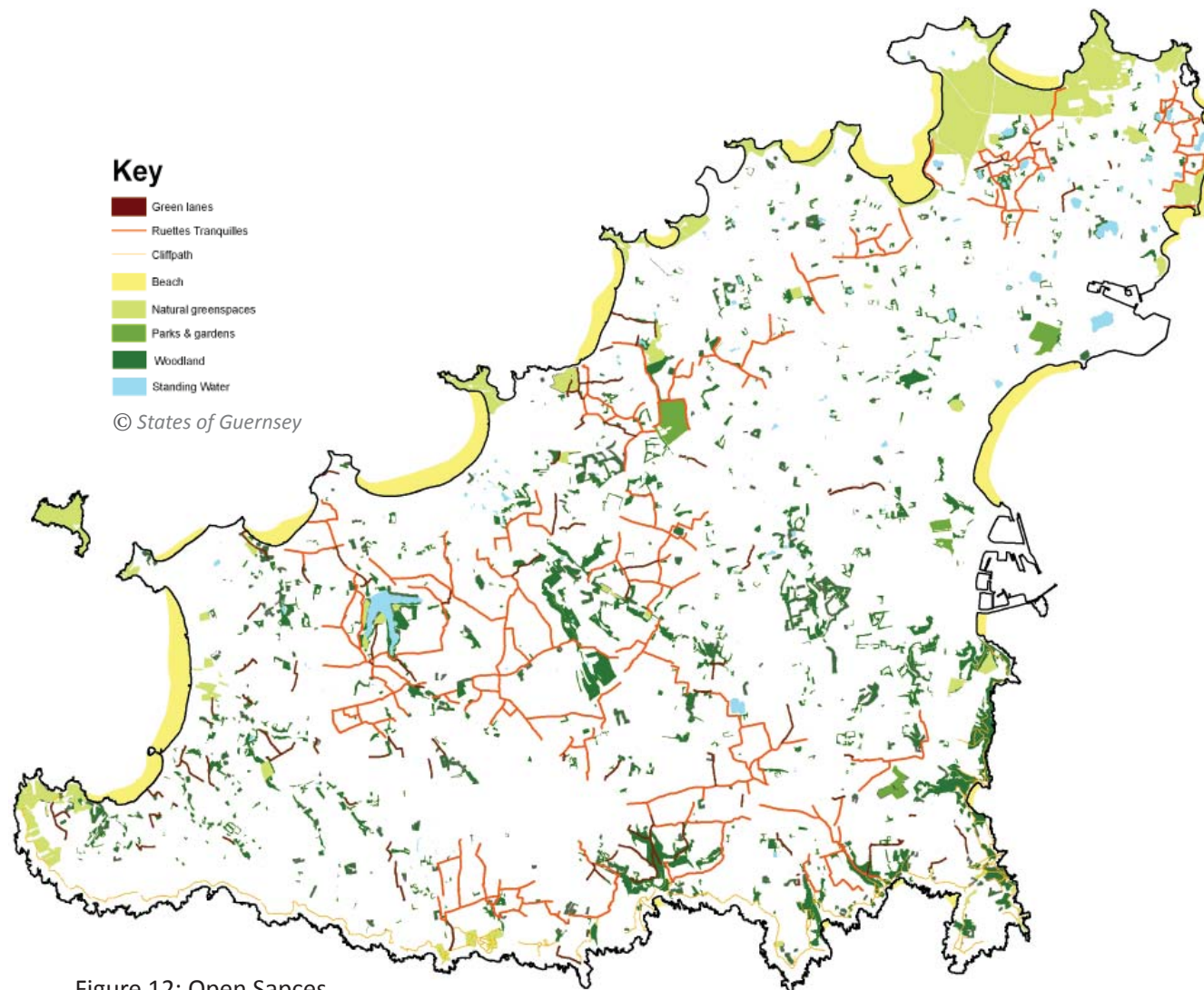
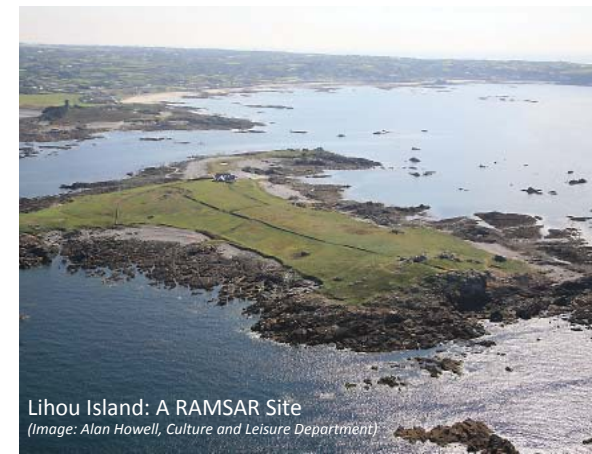


Figure 12: Open Sapces



7. Open Spaces

- 7.1. This section provides a summary of the network of open spaces that combine to create a network of spaces that contribute to the character of Guernsey. In a relatively small Island these spaces are based both on land (green spaces) as well as the sea (blue spaces). Also, because Guernsey has a significant tidal range (approx 10 metres), the inter-tidal range has a significant impact on the character of the Island, especially its bays and beaches.
- 7.2. These open spaces also have many social, environmental and economic benefits, such as:
- Space and habitat for wildlife
 - Outdoor relaxation and play
 - Food production
 - Improved health and well-being
 - Tourism.
- 7.3. Guernsey has a number of green corridors linking natural green spaces and areas of habitat and biodiversity. They have formed in conjunction with the Island's green lanes, valleys and ruelle tranquilles, footpaths and coastal paths (see Figure 12).

Natural Green Spaces

- 7.4. The Island has a large amount of natural open space. Some natural spaces are maintained in designated reserves across the Island in the form of wetlands, meadows, cliff tops and woodlands which

provide walking routes, and wildlife havens contributing to the well-being of the population. Others are not managed or are used for agriculture and provide visual access to natural green spaces. Areas such as L'Ancrese Common, the coastal headlands and St Saviour's Reservoir provide an Island-wide draw.

Parks and Formal Gardens

- 7.5. There are five parks and gardens in Guernsey: Cambridge Park; Candie Gardens; Delancey Park; Saumarez Park; and Sausmarez Manor. All of the parks have a strategic function due to their Island wide appeal and function as structuring elements in the developed landscape.

Beaches

- 7.6. The beaches contribute greatly to the health and wellbeing of Islanders and host a wide variety of land and water based recreational activities, though some are more suited to certain activities than others, including: walking, dog walking, horse riding, swimming, kayaking, shore fishing, boating, windsurfing, surfing, kite-surfing and sand racing. The most popular beaches tend to be the sandy beaches with the highest quality facilities and good access, such as Cobo, Vazon and Pembroke/L'Ancrese whilst the small beaches to the

south of the Island are located at the base of steep cliffs and approached through wooded valleys.

Heavily Wooden Areas

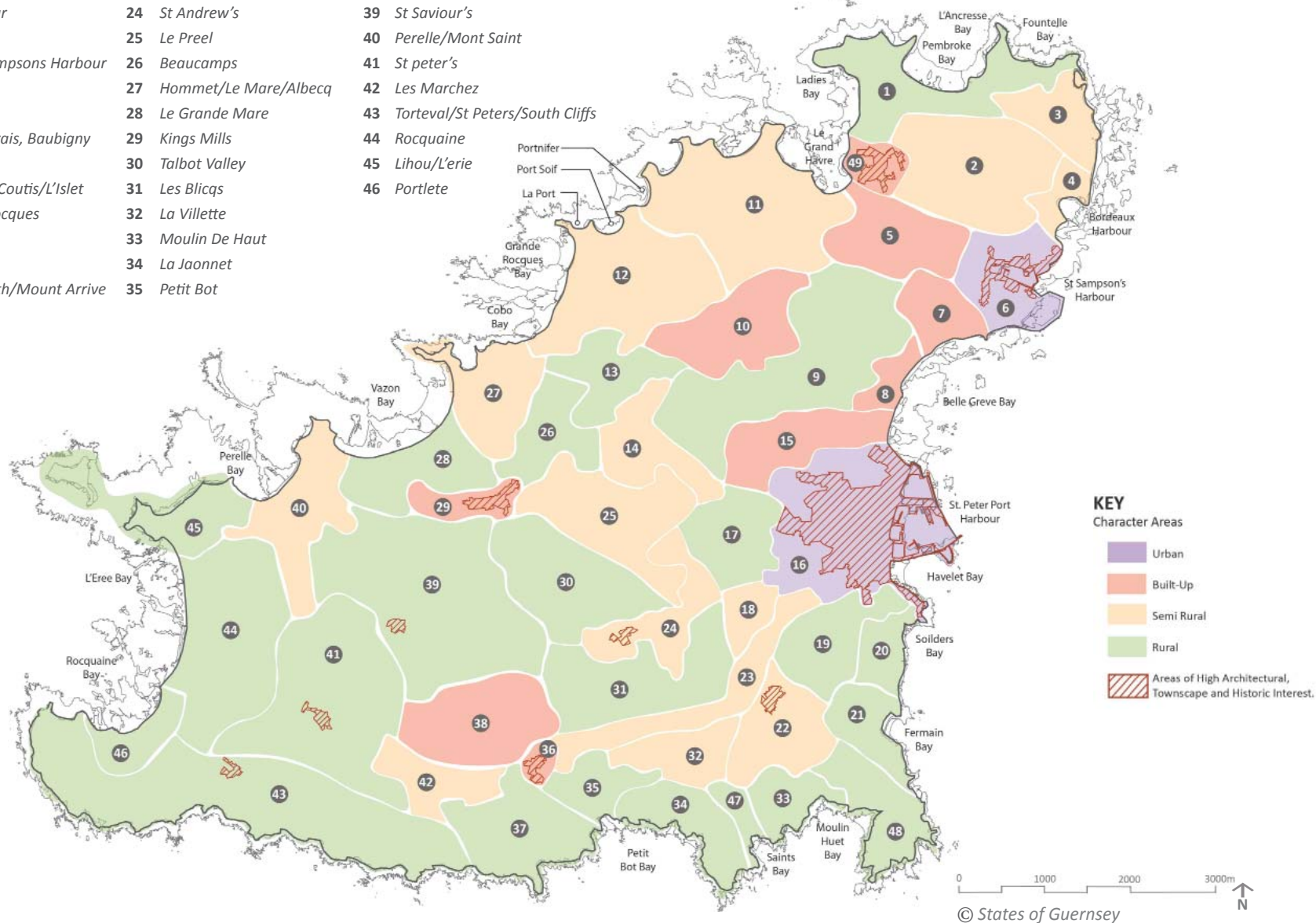
- 7.7. Guernsey's woodland is largely confined to the steep slopes of valleys, the escarpments and the protected south-eastern cliffs. The main native tree within these woods is Oak. Although disease has taken its toll, Elm, Ash, Holly, Sycamore and Holm Oak are also common.

Biodiversity

- 7.8. The Channel Island's have a different set of species from most of the UK, and some common UK species are not found in Guernsey (e.g. foxes and moles). Some species are named after the Island and have cultural significance: Freater White-toothed Shrew (*Crocidura Russula*); and Guernsey Vole, (*Microtus Arvalis Sarnius*). The Ormer (*Haliotis Tuberculata*) is of great cultural significance and this species does not occur in the UK. In Guernsey ormering is a social occasion when many people descend on beaches at low spring tides and try to find them.

Figure 13: Character Areas

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 L'Ancrese | 21 Fermain | 36 Le Bourg | 47 Saint's Bay |
| 2 Les Landes | 22 St Martin's | 37 Le Gouffre | 48 Jerbourg |
| 3 La Moye | 23 Airport Corridor | 38 Airport | 49 Vale Chuch |
| 4 Bordeaux Harbour | 24 St Andrew's | 39 St Saviour's | |
| 5 Braye Du Valle | 25 Le Preel | 40 Perelle/Mont Saint | |
| 6 The Bridge/St Sampsons Harbour | 26 Beaucamps | 41 St Peter's | |
| 7 Delancey | 27 Hommet/Le Mare/Albecq | 42 Les Marchez | |
| 8 Le Bouet | 28 Le Grande Mare | 43 Torteval/St Peters/South Cliffs | |
| 9 St Sampsonx Marais, Baubigny | 29 Kings Mills | 44 Rocquaine | |
| 10 Capelles | 30 Talbot Valley | 45 Lihou/L'erie | |
| 11 Les Vardes/Haut Coutis/L'Islet | 31 Les Blicqs | 46 Portlete | |
| 12 Cobo/Grandes Rocques | 32 La Vilette | | |
| 13 Saumarez Park | 33 Moulin De Haut | | |
| 14 L'Aumonne | 34 La Jaonnet | | |
| 15 St Peter Port North/Mount Arrive | 35 Petit Bot | | |
| 16 St Peter Port | | | |
| 17 Fouloun | | | |
| 18 Hospital | | | |
| 19 St Peter's Valley | | | |
| 20 The Fort | | | |



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8. Character Areas

- 8.1. Figure 13 provides an analysis of the different character areas across Guernsey. In line with the strategic nature of this document, the areas are intentionally very broad and the boundaries are approximate. Furthermore, the vast majority of the character areas merge into each other and very few have defined, tight boundaries.
- 8.2. Each character area is made up of a number of smaller, sub-character areas. Stage 2 of the Character Study will look at these broad character areas in more detail. It will refine the boundaries as well as identify the sub-character areas.
- 8.3. The names of the character areas are those typically used by Islanders, although in some cases the historic names on the 1898 OS map have been used.
- 8.4. Due the relatively small size of the island, it is important to note the connection between the character areas and the inter-tidal areas of the bays. Therefore, some character areas have a strong association with the adjacent bays.
- 8.5. The character areas are categorised into four character types: rural, semi-rural, built up and urban. These broad categories capture the predominant character, but it must be recognised that the sub-areas may have a different characters. They also

recognise a spectrum of density of the built environment

- 8.6. The following provides a description of the character areas:

Rural: The landscape and its underlying character dominates and encloses spaces. The landscape features often appear to be natural, but can be re man-made (e.g. earth banks, ploughed fields). Long range views are frequent. Individual buildings and/or small clusters of buildings sit within the landscape. Buildings therefore only occupy a small proportion of the area. The areas have a relatively low density of development.

Semi-Rural: The landscape and its underlying character dominate, but the landscape is largely man-made - e.g. front gardens, hedges, boundary walls – which enclose the spaces and restrict many long range views. There are large clusters of buildings and ribbon development along the main roads which impedes visual access to open spaces. Notwithstanding the somewhat built up appearance caused by ribbon development the areas have a relatively low/ medium density of development.

Built-Up: The landscape and built form compete with each other. Spaces are enclosed by a mixture of buildings and boundary walls and landscape features. Long range views are few. The areas have a relatively medium density of development.

Urban: Only the underlying landscape character (topography) is evident. The spaces are enclosed by continuous building frontages and/or front boundary walls. Any landscape is man-made and managed –e.g. potted plants, playground, cemetery. Views are usually short range, but when long range views are apparent they are often dramatic. The density of development is relatively high and there is a mix of uses.



(All Images: Environment Department)

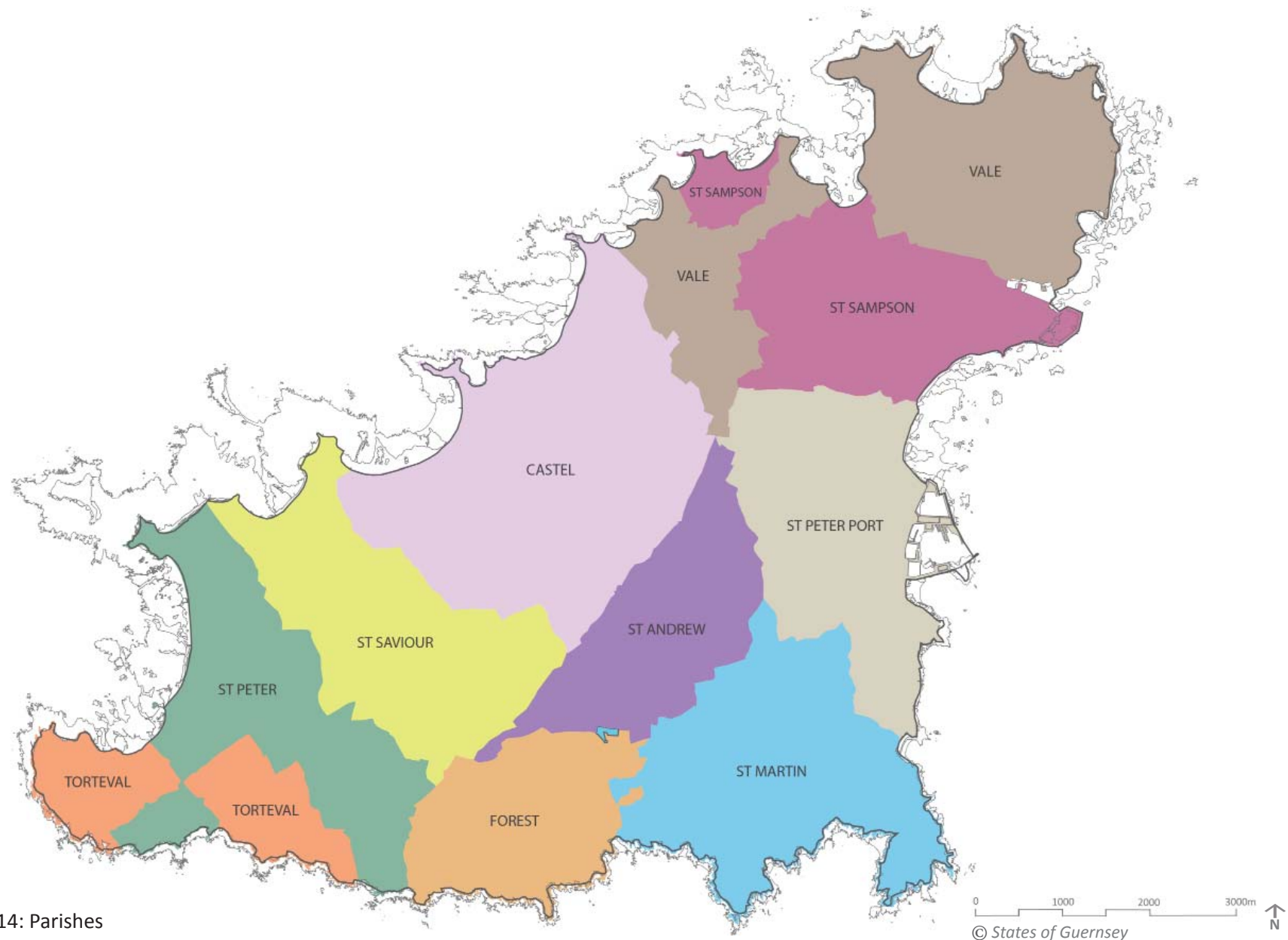


Figure 14: Parishes

9. Intangibles

- 9.1. Intangibles' affect our senses of smell, hearing, touch, taste and a sense of place. They are dynamic and can change over the day, the week, the season and the year. Guernsey has a number of these elements that have a significant influence on the character and distinctiveness of the island. Those most important intangibles are listed and explained below.

Parishes

- 9.2. There are ten Island parishes or local administration areas called St. Peter Port, St. Sampson, Vale, Castel, St. Saviour, St. Peter-in-the Wood (St Pierre du Bois), Torteval, Forest, St Martin and St. Andrew (see Figure 14).
- 9.3. Islanders have strong ties to their Parishes, which gives a strong sense of local identity. For example the street names often have

the Parish name (see Figure 15).

- 9.4. Each of the 10 parishes provides local administration, which is carried out by an elected council of 12 residents call the Douzaine (from the French word 'douze' or twelve). Two Constables for each parish are also elected who are tasked with delivering the decisions and administration as required by the douzeiners.

Climate

- 9.5. The climate is similar to coastal parts of southern England and adjacent French coasts but with a stronger oceanic influence. Strong salt-laden winds, prevailing west or south west hinders tree growth which impacts shelter and there are long periods of cold northerly and easterly winds in spring/early summer.
- 9.6. Guernsey has mild winters and extremes of temperature are rare with few severe frosts or lingering snow. There is relatively high humidity and heavy dews are frequent. Annual rainfall is well distributed throughout the year.

Annual Events

- 9.7. Due to the political, historic and religious connections, many of Guernsey's annual events are the same as those in the UK. There are, however, a number of events local to Guernsey and the Channel Islands such as:

May

- 9th Liberation Day.
12th-15th Guernsey Literary Festival

June

- 24th/25th Island Flower Show

July

- 2nd-3rd Festival of Performing Arts
c.4th Viaer Marche (first Mon)
23rd-30th La Fete de Musique de Ville (Town Carnival)
30th Torteval Scarecrow Weekend

August

- 6th Rocquaine Regatta
c.11th South Show (second Thurs)
14th Fete d'Etai
c.18th West Show (third Thurs)
c.25th North Show and Battle of Flowers
28th Guernsey Marathon

September

Figure 15: Street name plate St Andrew's



(Image: Environment Department)

c.8th Battle of Britain (second Thurs)
Smells, Sounds and Ambience

- 9.8. Due to the spread of development across island the sounds from motor vehicles are almost everywhere. Some roads are heavily trafficked, but the majority have light traffic resulting in a relatively quiet, peaceful countryside.
- 9.9. The horns of the arriving and departing ferries can be heard across the east coast. During misty days the fog-horns are sounded, which can be heard across the Island. Planes land and take off from the airport and can be heard and seen when in the south of the Island, although the airport does not usually operate after between 9.00pm and 6.00am. The Island is exposed to strong winds and the sounds it generates, including crashing waves on the coast. The sounds of the gulls also give a strong association with the sea.
- 9.10. The Island's association with the sea also gives a smell of sea air as well as *vraic* (type of seaweed) along the coastal bays and beaches. At certain times of the year the countryside, especially in the south of the Island where arable and dairy farming is prevalent, has smells of silage.
- 9.11. The different aspects of the island can be appreciated in a day. The rising sun can be

seen from the east coast, the south coast cliffs receive sunlight throughout the day and the setting sun can be seen from the west coast.

- 9.12. At night, Guernsey's roads have low light levels. Indeed most of the major roads are not lit after midnight. This results in little light pollution and relatively dark skies, which provide great views of the night sky.

Language

- 9.13. The national language of Guernsey is D'gernesiais (also called patois or Guernsey-French), which has Norman roots. This distinctive part of Guernsey culture has all but died out over the last 50 years or so, resulting in only 2% of the population that speak the language fluently and some 14% claim to have some understanding.
- 9.14. Initiatives to ensure the language endures include teaching in schools as well as reading of poetry at the Eisteddfod (the local cultural competition). Also, family names, the names of the buildings and street signs still bear the original Guernesiais and are a distinctive part of the Island (see Figure 16). Local names and their origins (see paragraphs 9.13) form part of the character and the distinctiveness of local areas.



Local Names

- 9.15. Probably the most notable intangible is the names given to areas and places. The names use the local language and often reflect the historic uses. The historic uses can result in a number of roads across the island being given the same name (for example there are four roads named *Les Buttes*, the historic archery practice grounds, on Guernsey). Table 1 provides a list of typically used local names.

Table 1: Local Names

Abreveur	confluence of waters, often a watering place	La Hougue/Les Hougues/La Houquette	rocky outcrop, barrow or mound
Banque	seashore	La Jaonnière/Le Jaonnet	furze break/gorse
La Bissonerie	bramble thicket	La Lande/Les Landes	commons, heathland, unenclosed fields
Le Bordage	area of fief measurement	Lavoir	clothes washing place
Le Bourg	site of (former) standing stone	Le Marais/La Mare/Les Marettes	marshy land
Les Buttes	archery practice ground	Les Mielles	sandy coastal plains
La Cache	house at the end of the cart track	Le Mont	height/hill
Le Camp	arable strip; Les Camps – group of arable strips	Le Moulin	mill
Le Chemin (le Roi)	road/way/path (King's Highway)	Les Pecqueries	fishing place
Le Courtil	field	Le Picquerel	pebbly beach or ground
Le Douit	water course	La Planque	fording place over a stream
Eperquerie	fish drying ground	Le Pont	fording place over a stream
Etonnelerie/Etournellerie	"a kind of wrack washed ashore"	La Porte	gate/entrance
Fontaines/Fontenelle	fountain, spring or well/small version	La Querièrre	cart track covered with ruts
Fontenils	swamp/wetland	Le Rocher/La Rocque/La Rocquette	rocky outcrop/site of (former) menhirs
La Garenne	rabbit warren	Les Salines	salt marshes/salt pans
La Haut/Les Hautes/Les Hauts	higher/upper	Les Terres	common grazing land belonging to the Church
Haugard	rickyard	Le Val	valley
Heronière	frequented by herons	Venelles	narrow passageway
		Verte	green

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Summary

- 10.1. Guernsey forms part of the Channel Islands which are located in the bay of St Malo, just off the off the French coast. Views of the Channels Islands and the mainland France are available from Guernsey's east and south coast. These views are a constant reminder that Guernsey is part of a collection of islands.
- 10.2. Guernsey has a strong character and distinctiveness that varies considerably for such a relatively small island. This character and distinctiveness started with the natural formation of the island when rising sea levels separated it from mainland Europe in 8000BC. Humankind has since formed and shaped the land to create the island we experience today.
- 10.3. Both individually and collectively the character and distinctiveness of Guernsey is derived from the following elements:
 - The underlying landscape character, which is remarkably varied for such a relatively small island. The north of the island is flat, just above sea level and has a number of hills. The south of the island is a plateau, approx 80 metres above sea level and has short steep valleys daring towards the coast. The north and south character are connected by a escarpment
 - The historic environment, which has remained remarkable intact. Some of which forms landmarks on the landscape.
 - The defensive towers and parish churches and that create landmarks on the landscape
 - The main urban settlements of St Peter Port and The Bridge which are located on the sheltered eastern coast.
 - The rural area/countryside is a mix of typical rural scenes, such as farmland and grazing cows, which area inter-mixed with built up development. This gives Guernsey a distinct character of being relatively densely developed, especially along the main roads.
 - Outside the main roads, the road network and the finer network of lanes, routes tranquilles and paths where speed limits are low.
 - The enclosure of the fields and the difference between the north of the Island (stone walls) and south (earthbanks).
 - The spectacular arrival by ferry/boat into St Peter Port Harbour.
- 10.4. The above elements combine to create a varied character across the island. The result is an often significant change in character across a relatively small distance. The character areas in section 2 are therefore very broad and further research is needed to describe the character of these areas in more detail as well as their distinctiveness. This should be carried out in the Stage 2 Character Study.
- 10.5. Guernsey's intangibles are a significant part of its character. The strong representation of the Parishes, the language, politics and governance all combine to make Guernsey distinctive. Furthermore, the culture is expressed through numerous annual events that are particular to the Island.