



Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas | Development Guide

April 2009

Albion Street South



Whitehaven Town Centre Heritage and Design Series

This document is part of the Whitehaven Town Centre Heritage and Design Series. This series has prepared on behalf of Copeland Borough Council to ensure that all development proposals in, or adjacent to, Whitehaven town centre's conservation areas are well-considered, of high quality and have regard to their historical context.

This series is addressed to:

- Residents and businesses;
- The local community;
- Ward members;
- Council departments, including planning, land and property and highways;
- Potential public and private sector developers;
- Statutory service providers, and;
- Relevant professionals, including builders, architects and planners.

Documents in this series are:

- **Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas Character Appraisal**

This character appraisal identifies and explains the special historical and architectural character of Whitehaven town centre's conservation areas.

- **Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas Management Plan**

This management plan programmes short, medium and long-term actions to preserve and enhance the conservation areas.

- **Whitehaven Town Centre Development Guide**

This development guide outlines the urban design principles and criteria to be applied in the town centre.

- **Whitehaven Town Centre Site Development Guides:**

- Site 1: Former YMCA Building Irish Street
- Site 2: Albion Street South
- Site 3: Albion Street North
- Site 4: Quay Street Car Park
- Site 5: Bardywell Lane
- Site 6: Gough's Car Park, Strand Street/ Malborough Street
- Site 7: Mark House, the former Victorian public baths and the Paul Jones Pub, Strand Street
- Site 8: Former Bus Depot, Bransty Row
- Site 9: Former Bus Station and Works, Bransty Row

These site development guides are to be read in conjunction with the Whitehaven Town Centre Development Guide and indicate the degree and type of development that will be acceptable on each development site.

- **Whitehaven Town Centre Public Realm Appraisal**

This public realm appraisal provides guidance on the degree and type of surface materials and street structures that will be acceptable in the town centre.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the people of Whitehaven who provided invaluable local knowledge and encouragement during the preparation of this report, in particular Cllr John Kane, Cllr Jeanette Williams, Cllr Henry Wormstrup, John Crewdson of the Whitehaven and District Civic Society, Michael Moon of the Whitehaven Heritage Action Group and Celia McKenzie of the Whitehaven Harbour Commission.

Thanks are also due to the staff at the Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library who provided helpful assistance and to the Lowther Estate who kindly permitted the reproduction of several of the plans within this document.

Site Development Guide

Albion Street South

Purpose of the Guide

The information provided here is intended to be read in conjunction with the Whitehaven Town Centre Development Guide, 2008. The purpose of this Site Development Guide is to encourage appropriate high quality development on the site and the enhancement of the special historic character of this part of the town. The information provided should assist developers in appreciating the urban design issues relating specifically to the site and the town as a whole.



Aerial photograph of the Site

Background

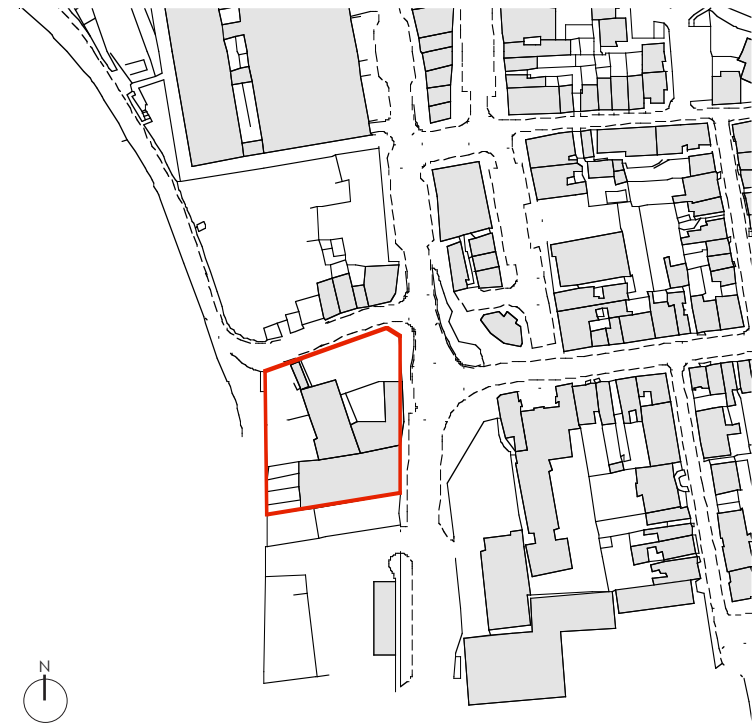
The site is on the periphery of the town centre on the main southwest approach along the B5345. The site abuts the hillside to the west and is accessed from New Town and Albion Street. This section of the town has suffered significant decline. There are a large number of vacant or dilapidated sites and buildings that detract from the character of the town centre.

Historical Background

The site was defined as early as the 17th Century by the route of Pow Beck (stream) to the east which is roughly the line of Market Place; and to the north by a lane (later to become Albion Street) leading up the slope to access Rosemary Lane and The Wellington coal pit beyond.

A map of 1790 indicates the site subdivided into a number of common gardens or allotments. The line of what is now Swingpump Lane and New Town was not established until the 1970s. Prior to this the route to the east of the site was a narrow street named Albion Lane.

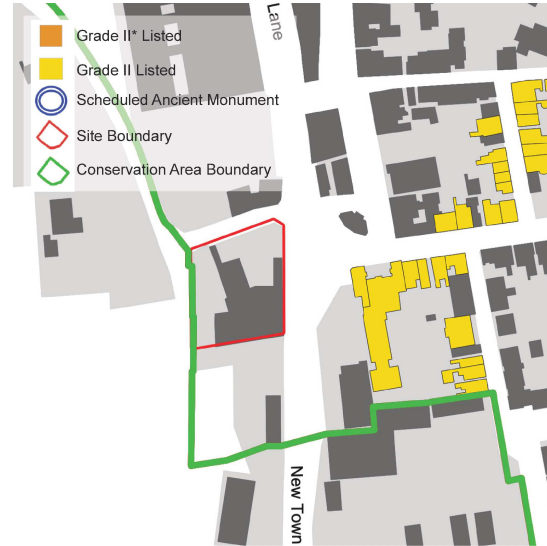
Development was established along Albion Street



Site Plan



Three storey building on New Town contributes to the character of the area



Listed Building Plan

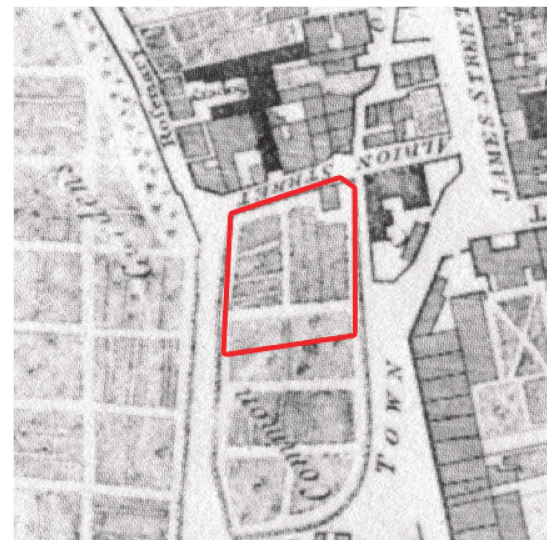
Historical Background (Cont).

and Albion Lane by the early 19th Century. By the latter half of the 19th Century the site had been fully developed and consisted of a large foundry (later named the Vulcan Works) and associated workshops and cottages.

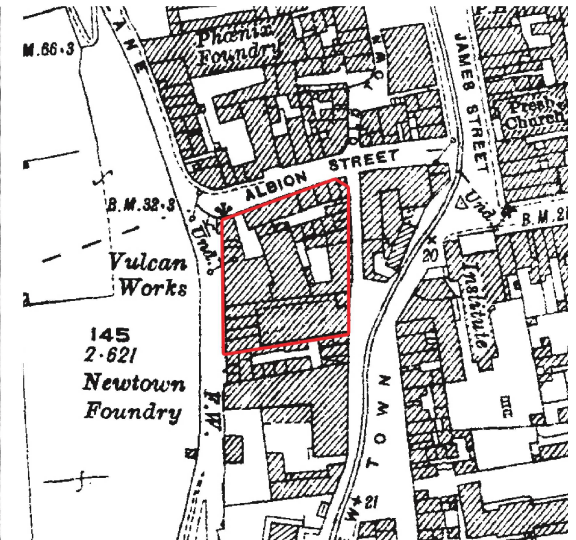
The site lies within Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area. None of the buildings remaining on the site are listed. The three storey building onto New Town contributes to the character of this quarter of the town but is somewhat isolated and is no longer part of a dense group of buildings.



1710 Plan



1790 Plan



1925 Plan

Urban Blocks

The site is contained within a block that extends from New Town westwards as far as Rosemary lane, which is cut into the hillside. Albion Street defines the north of the block and is the only vehicular route from the town centre to the hilltop residential neighbourhood overlooking the town to the west.

The block extends southwards for a considerable distance fronting the wooded slope to the west. The block shape differs from the planned grid pattern of the town centre and owes its shape more to natural features such as Pow Beck and the steeply sloped topography.



Plan of Blocks

Building Plots

The developed site was originally made up of a range of plot sizes to accommodate smaller workshops and workers cottages. This would have resulted in a variety of frontages sitting cheek by jowl along the street edge.

A significant number of buildings on the site have been lost and the plot subdivision bears no relationship with the overall character of the town.



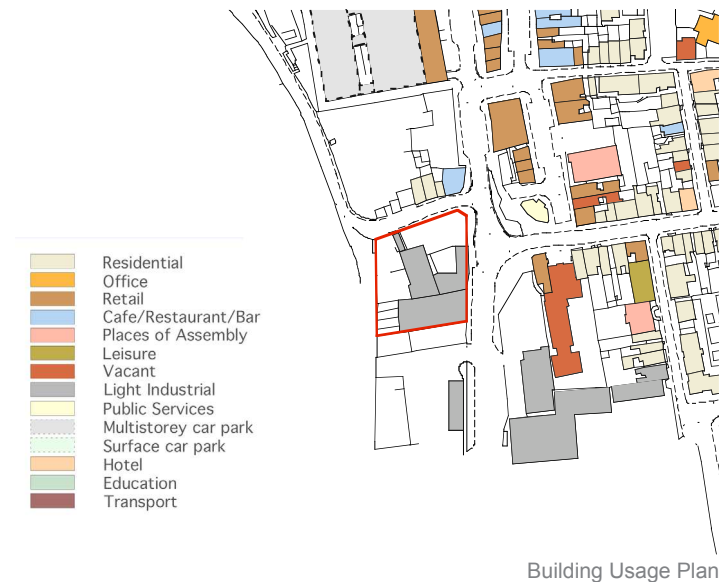
Building Plots Plan

Density and Mix

The site has been fully developed since the early part of the 19th Century and has been used for a number of industrial processes.

The density has been significantly reduced over the years as buildings have become redundant and demolished. A portion of the site is used as a scrap yard and the remainder is vacant.

To the north of the site is a similar block that contains a public house, a number of redundant buildings and a scrap yard. Beyond this block to the north is the large multi-storey car park on Swingpump Lane. To the south of the site are a series of light industrial and retail “sheds” with surface car parking. To the east of the site is the start of the historic market on James Street, where there are a number of shops and pubs.



Building Usage Plan

Density and Mix (Cont).

New Town is a busy vehicular route into the town from the southwest. There is very little activity at street level and the street edge is poorly defined. Consequently, the route is not an attractive pedestrian thoroughfare. New Town intersects with Irish Street and a traffic roundabout has been added to reduce traffic congestion. Albion Street is a relatively busy vehicular route providing access to the residential development further up the hill.



New Town



Site from Rosemary Lane



Street Activity Plan

Height and Massing

The predominant height of the Georgian town centre is three storeys as dictated by the Lowther Estate in the 17th Century. The remaining buildings on the site conform to this standard. The site was made up of a number of buildings that would have varied in volume but retained a consistent simple form that collectively read as a cohesive grouping. The scale of the remaining buildings is consistent with the character of the town centre with modest window openings within simple three storey façades.



Building Heights

Views and Vistas

The principal vista of the site is along Irish Street. The site terminates this view and is a clear opportunity to celebrate this with a high quality building. This view is also important because of the backdrop of the wooded hillside and the housing on High Road. It is a dramatic view that could be enhanced by greater building height on the axis of Irish Street.

The corner of Albion Street and New Town is viewed from along Swingpump Lane. There is also a high level view of the site when approaching from Rosemary Lane.



Principal vista along Irish Street



The corner of Albion Street and New Town

Building Type

The site is made up of a collection of buildings that were originally part of the Vulcan Works foundry. The floorplates vary between the large building in the centre of the site to the smaller residential/office building fronting onto New Town. Access to the site is from either directly off New Town or from Albion Street via a series of courtyards. The buildings on the site originally defined a strong built edge to the adjacent streets. However, many of these have been removed and the overall effect is a random grouping of buildings and enclosed yards.

Façade and Interface

The retained buildings on New Town are consistent with the character of the town. The openings are arranged in a regular repetitive pattern. At street level there are a series of entrances to the separate properties.

Details and Materials

The buildings fronting New Town have harled walls and a double pitched slated roof. The openings on ground and first floor have expressed keystone lintols which is unusual for the town. The second floor windows are much smaller and extend up to eaves level. A number of the original sash and case windows have been replaced. The buildings do not have any chimneys suggesting the chimneys were either removed at some point or the buildings were unheated warehouses.

Within the site the buildings are in a poor state of repair. The wall construction is random coursed stone and the original slate roofing has been replaced with a variety of cheap cladding materials.

SITE RESPONSES

- Repair the urban grain and seek good quality development on the site.
- New development to extend to the back of footpath on New Town to maintain a strong building edge.
- New developments should be presented as a collection of forms rather than a single mass.
- Building heights should be no less than three storeys.
- Heights greater than three storeys should be accommodated within the interior of the site and justified in urban design terms.
- Encourage uses that will improve and enhance the area. The proximity of the multi-storey car park should enhance a number of uses.
- Encourage high quality design terminating the vista along Irish Street and at the corner of Albion Street and Swingpump Lane.
- Encourage good quality contemporary design that acknowledges the character of the town.
- New developments to use details and materials that enhance the character of the town.

