



Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas | Development Guide

April 2009

Albion Street North



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

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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 North

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.



New Town looking South

Background

The site occupies an entire block bounded by Rosemary Lane, Albion Street and Swingpump Lane. The site backs onto the large multi-storey car park on Swingpump Lane. Rosemary Lane on the western side of the site climbs steeply, giving access to the High Road housing estate.

The Dusty Miller pub on the corner of Albion Street and Swingpump Lane is the only operational building on the site, the remainder are semi-derelict. The site is on the main approach to the town from the south-west and in its current state has a negative impact upon the amenity of this quarter of town.

Historical Background

The site is on the western edge of the town centre, close to the location of Whitehaven's early 17th Century fishing village settlement around the harbour and market place. The northern section of the site is listed as a free-hold tenancy as early as 1667. Subsequent development in the 18th and 19th Centuries followed the demarcation lines of the original ownerships.



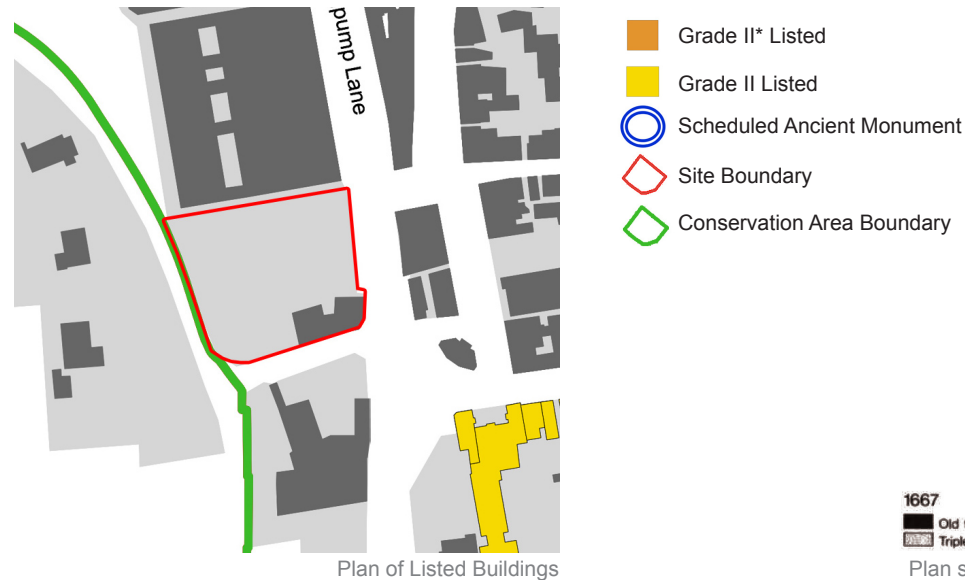
Site Plan

By the end of the 18th Century the site was substantially developed and contained a collection of buildings and gardens or allotments. Albion Street and Rosemary Lane were established by then and the site's buildings lined both routes. To the east of the site there was a narrow route (Old Town Lane) that connected with the market to the north. Originally the eastern edge of the site did not follow a consistent building line, unlike the planned streets of the town centre.

The site was redeveloped in part in the latter half of the 19th Century to accommodate the Phoenix Foundry. A small square was also created at the termination of Queen Street fronted by a school and a number of public houses.

The site remained relatively unchanged until Swingpump Lane was realigned in the 1970's. The Dusty Miller pub is the only building on the site that is still in use. The Phoenix Foundry has been demolished and there are three semi-derelict buildings fronting Albion Street. The Phoenix Foundry chimney has been retained and stands a relic which serves as a reminder of the site's industrial past.

The site is within the Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area but does not contain any listed buildings. The Dusty Miller pub has an attractive façade and should be considered for retention as part of a larger future development.





Aerial photograph of the Site

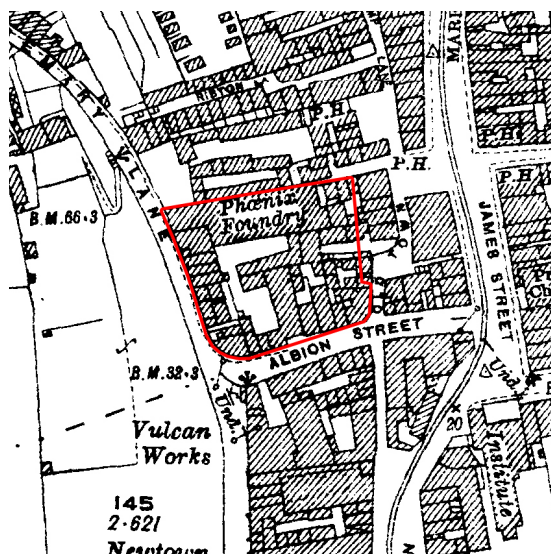
Urban Blocks

The block has been altered over the years to accommodate the realignment of Swingpump Lane and the building of the multi-storey car park. Originally the block terminated further north at Ribton Lane – a steep sloping route lined with cottages and connecting Rosemary Lane to Swingpump Lane. To the east of the block was an irregular profile fronting onto a narrow alley named Old Town. The south-west corner of the block had a curved profile, presumably to assist laden wagons turning the corner.

The block is now a more regular square shape with streets on three sides. The remaining side to the north has a steep access ramp to the carpark (Harmless Hill).



Plan of Blocks



1925 Plan

Building Plots

The site was originally developed as approximately 20 separate building plots built up to the street line. These plots would have been expressed on the street façades as a series of individual properties joined together. This is consistent with the character of the Georgian town, where plot widths varied in order to attract a broad range of uses and occupiers. Despite their current poor condition, the buildings on Albion Street give an indication of the original variety of the original street scene.



Building Plots Plan

Density and Mix of Uses

The site has been densely developed since the 18th Century. Buildings were first built around the perimeter of the block and then further infill development followed within internal yards and gardens. New uses, such as the foundry were accommodated by demolishing older properties.

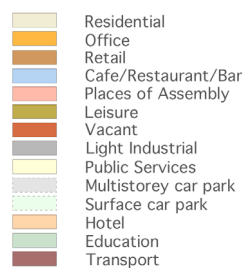
At its peak the site would have certainly been a hive of activity with cramped living and working conditions. The principal use was industrial but there would also have been housing and public houses.

The site has lost all its industrial uses and there is only the Dusty Miller pub and a scrap yard in its place. This has impacted upon the vitality of the area and the streets surrounding the site are lacking any activity.

Nearby uses include the retail and leisure uses along James Street and Market Place. The site to the south of Albion Street is partially used as a scrap yard and to the north is the multi-storey car park.

The site is at a prominent location on the south-west approach to the town centre and in its current condition has a negative impact upon this quarter of the town.

The proximity of the adjacent multi-storey car park would be a benefit to a number of potential uses on the site.



Building Usage Plan



Street Activity Plan

Height and Massing

The site originally had a collection of buildings that would have generally been 3 storeys in height, consistent with the building development that took place in the town in the 18th Century.

The volume of the buildings would have ranged from a large foundry shed to small cottages. However, the limited construction techniques available at the time relied upon similar building methods for all buildings, i.e. masonry walls, timber floors and roof trusses and pitched slate roofs. Consequently the apparent massing of the group of buildings would have been relatively consistent.

Features such as door and window openings would have been similar size, regardless of the building mass.

The remaining buildings on site range from 2 to 4 storeys. Adjacent buildings follow the town's 3 storey norm however, to the north the multi-storey car park is higher and the massing is significantly greater than that generally found in the town centre.



Aerial view of site from Swingpump Lane car park



Views and Vistas

The site terminates a distant view along Queen Street. This north eastern corner of the site previously formed a small square at the end of this vista, however, this feature was lost following the realignment of Swing Pump Lane. The view currently focuses upon the side ramp to the multi-storey car park.

There is also a distant view of the south-east corner of the site across the junction with Swingpump Lane and Irish Street.



View from the New Town and Irish Street junction



View from Queen Street

Building Type

The original buildings on the site were under separate ownership and would have been constructed over a period of time. The usage also varied considerably. The result was a collection of different buildings with varying floor plates in keeping with the character of the Georgian town. Storey heights varied and this would have resulted in a varied roofline as can still be seen on Albion Street.

The periphery of the site was fully developed fronting onto the surrounding streets. Within the site buildings and external yards were shoehorned into place to maximise the efficiency of the available building land.

Façade and Interface

The original buildings on the site provided a strong building line defining the street edge. Building entrances were directly off the street and the internal yards were accessed via narrow ginnels.

The elevation treatment would have typically been a simple symmetrical arrangement of the rectangular openings. Buildings such as the Dusty Miller Pub received a more elaborate elevation treatment to convey a greater civic quality.

At the south-east and south-west corners of the site the buildings were shaped to exploit the corner. The corner of the Dusty Miller Pub is splayed and the entrance placed there to give presence on both Albion Street and Swingpump Lane.

Details and Materials

The dilapidated buildings on Albion Street still retain the characteristics of the town's historic character. Plain masonry walls with harled finish and double pitched slated roofs. The corners on the street elevation have stone quoins. The Dusty Miller has a more elaborate classical treatment with moulded window surrounds, string courses and a cornice at eaves level. There is also elaborate stonework at the entrance doorway.

The Dusty Miller façade is painted – in keeping with the general character of the town. The effect is not unattractive however the use of dark colour to certain elements of the façade detracts from the building's appearance.

SITE RESPONSES

- Repair the urban grain and encourage good quality contemporary development on the site.
- New developments to acknowledge the variety of historic plot subdivision and the resultant rhythm to the street frontage.
- Encourage good quality dense development on the site particularly on the periphery.
- Encourage uses on the site that will enhance the area.
- Entrances to front onto the street.
- Building heights to be no less than 3 storeys.
- Heights greater than 3 storeys may be appropriate and should be justified in urban design terms.
- Encourage the retention of the Dusty Miller Pub and Chimney as part of a comprehensive redevelopment.
- New developments to achieve a balance of scale and massing with retained buildings and the adjacent multi-storey car park.
- New developments to mask the blank elevation of the multi-storey car park as viewed from the south-west approach.
- Encourage emphasis of the south-east and north-west corners of the site to exploit distant views.
- Encourage materials and detailing that reflects the context and enhances the conservation area.