



# 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.

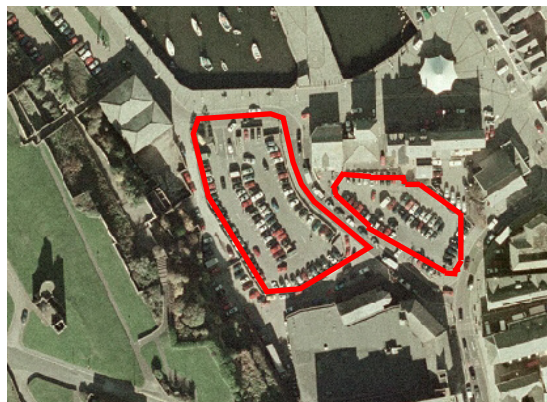
Thanks are also due to the staff at the Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library who provided helpful assistance and to the Lowther Estate who kindly permitted the reproduction of several of the plans within this document.

# Site Development Guide

## Quay Street East and West Car Park

### 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

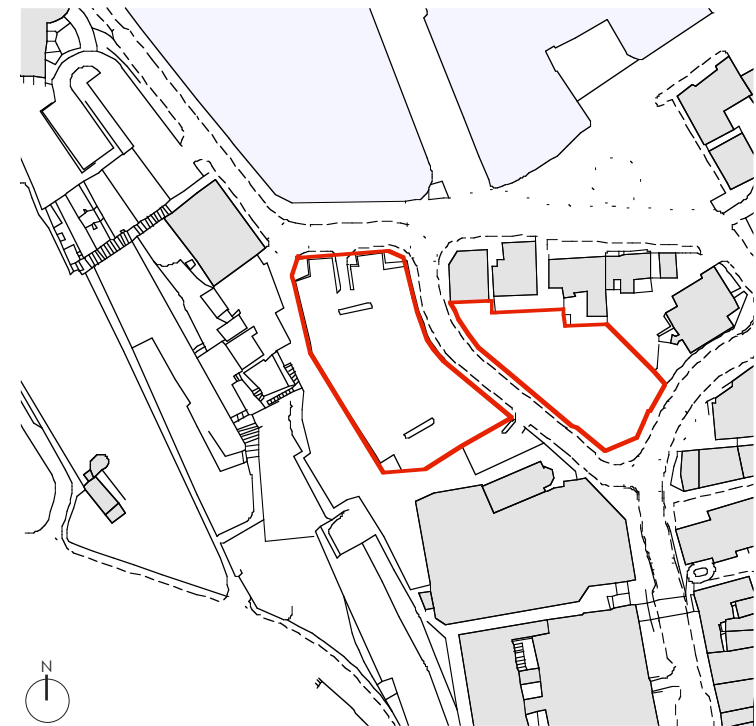
### Background

The sites are an adjacent pair of a large, flat plots of land fronting onto the South Harbour Quayside and Quay Street. The western site backs onto the hillside leading up to Mount Pleasant. The sites are currently used as public car parks.

These are both a high profile harbour sites that offer potential for high quality development that would enhance the attractive waterfront.

### Historical Background

The sites are located in one of the oldest parts of the town. The town's early beginnings as a fishing village were established around the harbour and Market Place. Quay Street is one of the oldest streets in the town centre. Both sites were significantly developed in the seventeenth century and would have accommodated merchant's houses, workshops and artisan's dwellings. In the eighteenth century the area was further developed. A narrow lane ran through the middle of the site, connecting Quay Street with Mount Pleasant. Another lane (White's Lane) subdivided the northern portion of the western site leading to the harbour. The eastern site also



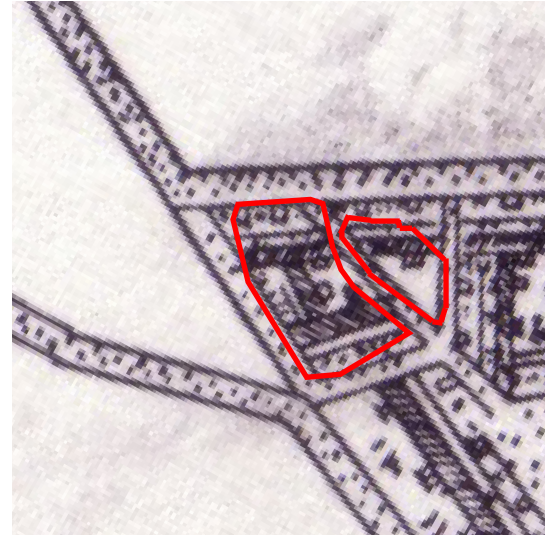
Site Plan



had a narrow lane connecting Quay Street and the harbour (now Hamilton Lane). The area benefited little from the gentrification elsewhere in the town and became a slum area with poor sanitation and living conditions. A report commissioned in 1849 to review the living conditions described the area as “a congregation of most wretched dwellings...”

However, it was not until the 1930s that clearance of the slums was started in earnest. By the 1970s, the majority of the buildings had been demolished. The sites were finally converted to public car parks.

The sites are within the Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area. There are no listed buildings on or immediately adjacent to the western site. The eastern site connects with a Grade II listed building fronting onto West Strand and is opposite a Grade II listed building on Market Place. To the west of the site is the Wellington Pit structure which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.



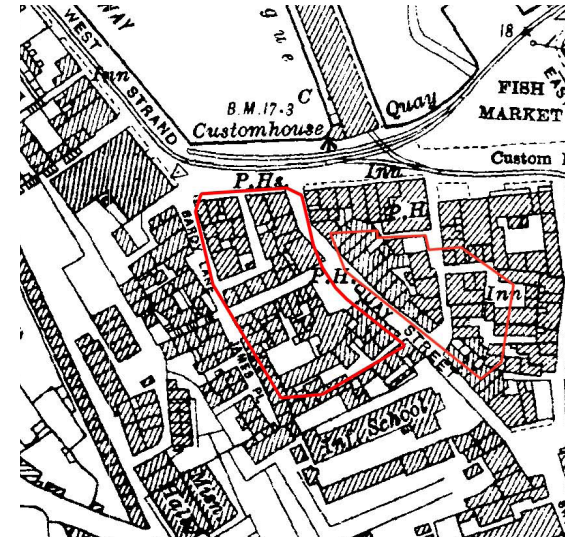
1693 Plan



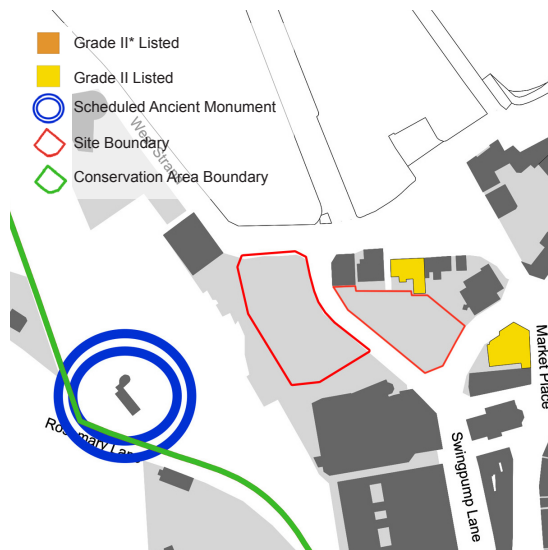
1710 Plan



1790 Plan



1925 Plan



Listed Building Plan

## Urban Blocks

The area follows a medieval pattern of tight knitted irregular shaped blocks subdivided by narrow lanes. This is in contrast to the gridiron pattern planned by the Lowther family in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The block's north, east and west boundaries still follow the original lines of the quayside, Quay Street and Bardywell Lane and James Place. A small square also existed in the early nineteenth century at the junction of Quay Street and Littledale Lane. The south portion of the western site formed a continual block extending as far south as Ribton Lane which connected Swing Pump Lane with Rosemary Lane. The lack of east/west routes in the block would have been due to the difficult terrain and the lack of development to the west. The eastern site was part of a grouping of blocks fronting West Strand, Quay Street and Swingpump Lane.



Plan of Blocks

## Building Plots

The original subdivision of the sites in the early seventeenth century was a series of narrow plots perpendicular to the street frontages. These plots were subsequently redeveloped. A number of lanes were added to access plots to the rear. The western site eventually accommodated approximately 40 individual plots most of which fronted onto the street. These were extremely small and would have been very modest properties. The eastern site accommodated approximately 30 individual plots. The buildings would have been built by different owners and the street facades would have varied to reflect the different building plots widths. Little or no evidence remains above ground of the building plots that previously existed on the sites.



Building Plots Plan



View from the south



## Density and Mix of Uses

The sites have previously been extremely densely developed with continuous lines of abutting buildings built up to the street edge. There was virtually no open external space within the sites.

The area's proximity to the harbour would have meant that it accommodated merchant's houses and artisan's workshops serving the ship industry. In addition to these uses, as one would expect, there were a number of public houses and inns.

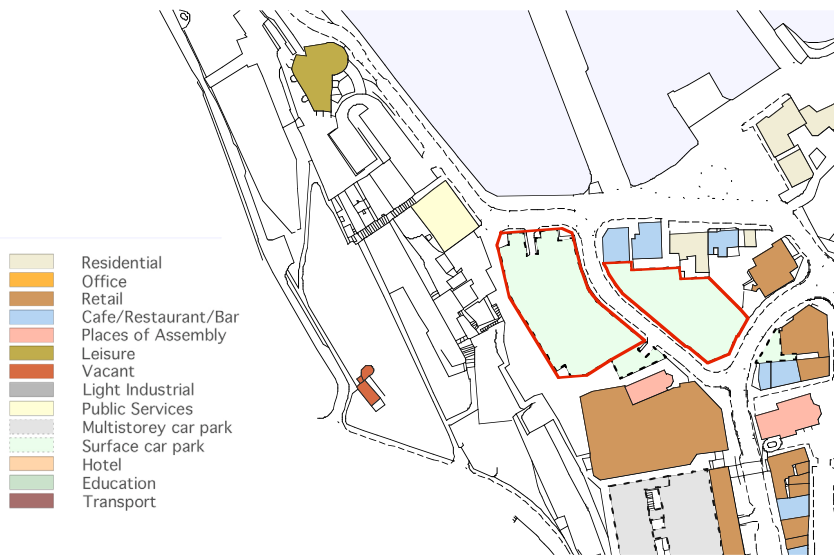
As the harbour activity moved elsewhere, this quarter of the town appears to have been severely neglected and lacked any investment.

The current car park usage is inappropriate for these prominent sites, imposing a negative impact upon the amenity of the area. Adjacent sites have

suffered the same fate and this has combined to impact upon the area's lack of any sense of place.

Quay Street remains the main thoroughfare connecting West Strand with Swing Pump Lane, Market Place and beyond. However, the lack of any definition to the street creates an unfortunate approach to the now attractive harbour area.

Adjacent uses include leisure, cultural, retail, commercial and residential. This is a high profile site with an important harbour frontage. Appropriate new development will help redefine the area and reinforce a sense of place. At street level, new frontages on West Strand and Quay Street should encourage activity and animate the street scene.



Building Usage Plan



Street Activity Plan

## Height and Massing

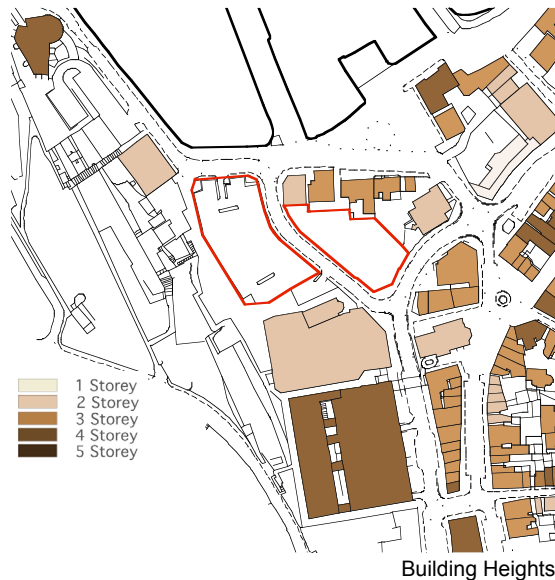
The town centre buildings are predominantly 3 storeys in height with vertical proportions and relatively modest massing. The area has lost most of its original buildings. Nearby structures are two and three storeys in height and the overall impression is of a low, undeveloped area that has no association with the historic town centre. A paradox given that this is one of the oldest parts of the town.

## Views and Vistas

The western site is viewed from the entire harbour and is at the termination of the distant views along West Strand. It is also set against the green backdrop of the hillside. The eastern site occupies the corner of Swingpump Lane and Quay Street, an important junction viewed from the south along Swingpump Lane.

The curved profile of Quay Street also offers an opportunity to frame glimpses of the harbour from Swinging Pump Lane. The openness of the sites exposes a number of low-grade façades that were not intended to be viewed from street level.

The site is also overlooked from Mount Pleasant. Consequently the roofscape of any new development will need to be fully considered from this vantage point.



View from Mount Pleasant



The Harbour view



View looking west towards Mount Pleasant



Quay Street western car park looking South



Quayside looking west

## Building Type

The sites originally comprehensively developed with individual properties that had extremely small floor plates and low storey heights reflecting their modest value. Access to the properties was directly off the street and the buildings were built up to the street line.

Large floor plates have been introduced to adjacent sites along Swingpump Lane to the south for retail uses and car parking. This scale of floor plate is unusual for the town centre and appears somewhat alien.

## Façade and Interface

The loss of the buildings on the sites has removed any definition to the surrounding streets. The character of the town is of continuous rows of buildings fronting the street. The reinstatement of a strong building line would connect the site back to the town centre and reinforce this historic harbour route.

## Details and Materials

The town has a consistent blend of traditional materials in its buildings. This includes painted harled walls with stone dressings to openings and double pitched roofs with dark slate.

It is perhaps inevitable that any future building on the sites will utilise modern building methods and materials. This should be encouraged providing the design is of a high quality and any contemporary materials enhance the historical townscape.

## SITE RESPONSES

- Encourage high quality development on the sites.
- Reflect historic building plot widths at street level to encourage a varied street scene.
- Encourage development that extends to the site perimeter.
- Encourage a range of uses that will provide active street frontages.
- New buildings to be minimum 3 storeys in height.
- Heights greater than 3 storeys to be justified in urban design terms.
- Limit the overall massing of any new development. A collection of forms is preferable to a single mass.
- Façades at ground level to extend to back of footpath.
- Encourage high quality contemporary building and materials that enhance the historic town centre.



