



Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas | Development Guide

April 2009

Mark House, the former Victorian public baths and the Paul Jones public house, Strand Street



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.

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Site Development Guide

Harbour front site comprising:

Mark House, the former Victorian public baths and the Paul Jones public house, Strand Street.

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.

Background

The site is currently occupied by a redundant 1970s office building (Mark House), the former Victorian public baths and the Paul Jones public house. The site lies between Strand Street to the southeast and the quayside of the inner harbour to the northwest.

To the north east the site fronts Duke Street and to the southwest it backs onto Georgian properties fronting New Lowther Street. A narrow pedestrian access runs between Mark House and the baths connecting Strand Street to the harbour.

The harbour side of the site enjoys a western aspect (albeit bearing the brunt of the prevailing northwesterly winds) with expansive unobstructed views over the harbour and out to sea. The site occupies an important location in the town centre fronting the recently upgraded harbour and Strand Street, a busy vehicular route. The general amenity quality of the area is currently very poor and the buildings are in a poor state of repair.

Historical Background

The site was first developed in the early 18th Century.

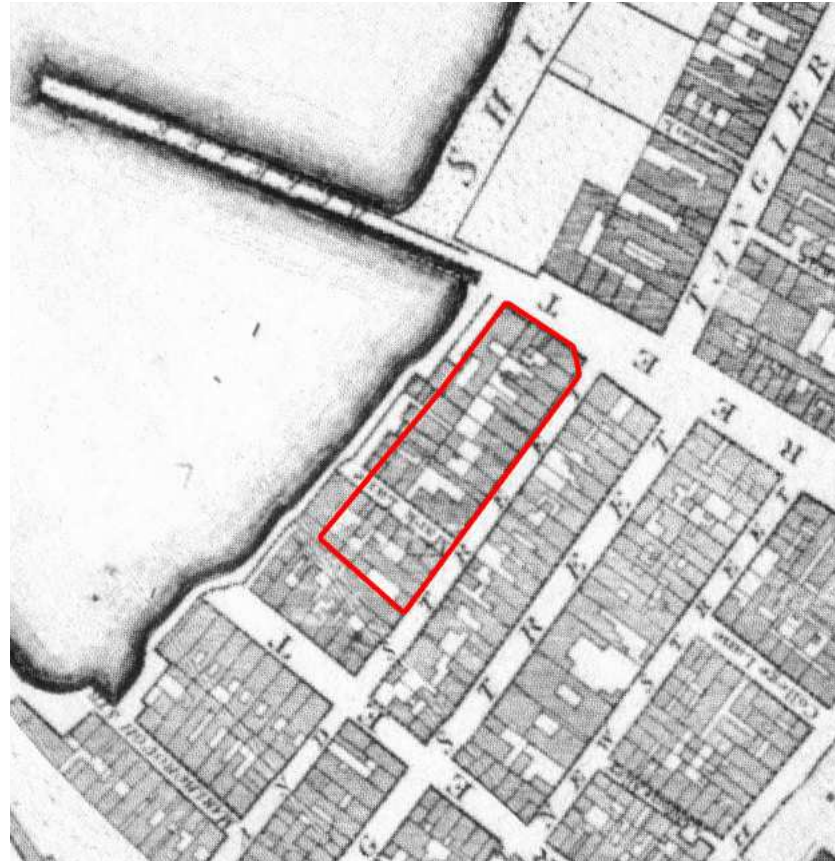


Site Plan

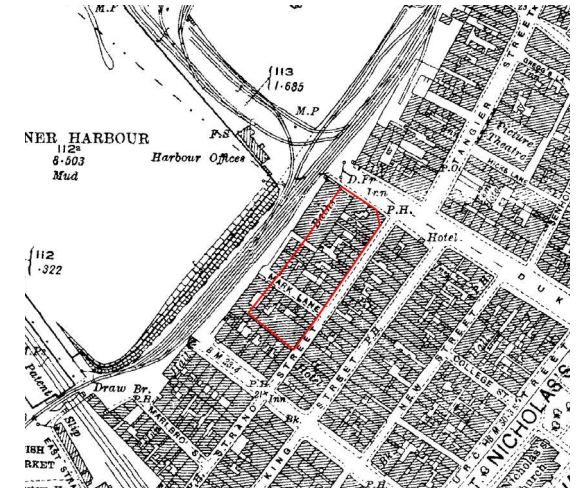
At this point in time the harbour was reaching its heyday as a trading port and the area would have been a hive of activity. Merchants would have been based here with accompanying warehouses. There would also have been artisans' workshops and shops. A line of properties faced the harbour and backed onto a row facing Strand Street. The introduction of the railway to the harbour side would have created an industrial backdrop to the properties facing the sea. The construction of the public baths in the late 20th Century was followed by the clearance of several Georgian buildings across the site.

A road called Mark Lane originally connected Strand Street with the harbour approximately opposite No.11 Strand Street. When Mark House was built in the 1970s Mark Lane was subsumed and an important link between the town and the harbour lost. A former courtyard access was opened up to the south of the baths to provide a discrete pedestrian link through to the harbour. The industrialisation of the harbour and the port's subsequent decline has served to divorce the site from the town centre. Consequently, redevelopment of the site offers an opportunity to link the harbour back to the town.

The site is within the Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area. None of the buildings on the site are listed but there are grade II listed buildings nearby on New Lowther Street and Duke Street.



Map 1790



Map 1925



Aerial View 1970

Urban Blocks

The urban blocks in this part of the town are long and narrow. The depth of the block is only 30 metres and this creates difficulty in achieving a solution that provides active fronts on both sides of the block. The dimensional constraints are even more acute on the adjacent block between Strand Street and



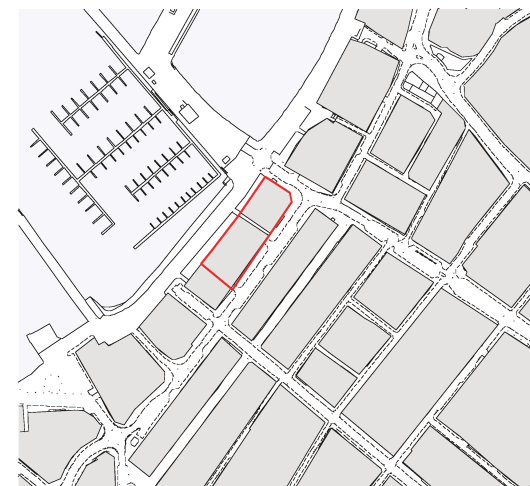
Listed Building Plan

King Street and this has resulted in the block having only an active front to King Street and low grade service/rear access fronting Strand Street.

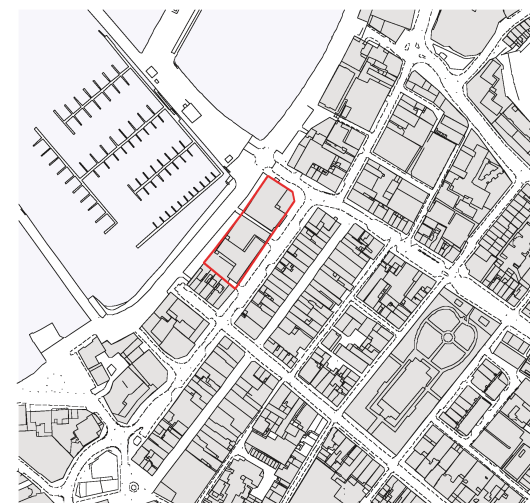
Permeability is good in the southwest to northeast direction but is poor in the opposite axis with no major through routes between New Lowther Street and Duke Street, a distance of more than 130 metres. This creates a physical barrier between the town and the harbour.

Building Plots

The Georgian building plots established by the Lowther estate have been amalgamated over the years. Currently there are only 3 plots whereas originally there would have been more than 35. This has dramatically changed the character of Strand Street in particular where the street's original balance of subdivision has been lost. The absence of any significant plot subdivision has resulted in the site's street frontages having no relationship with the rhythm of the town centre's historical frontages.



Plan of Blocks

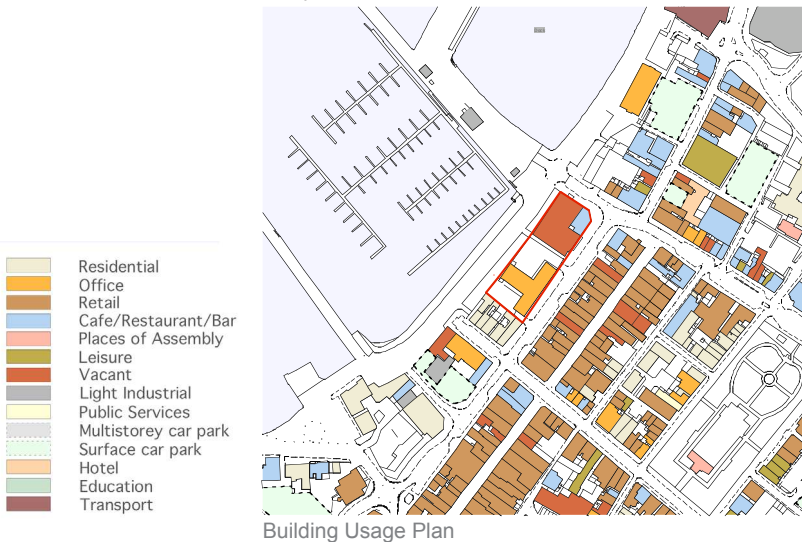


Plan of Building Plots

Density and Mix of Uses

The entire site is developed although its density is significantly less than the original Georgian layout. The site was formerly used for office and leisure purposes. Adjacent uses include leisure, retail, professional offices and residential. The site is adjacent to Tangier Street that is the focus for nightlife in the town.

There is very little street activity to the boundary of the site. This, combined with the lack of activity on the south east side of Strand Street, has created a bland corridor of a route that is both uninviting and at times perceived as potentially threatening to pedestrians. On the harbour side the lack of activity detracts from the attractiveness of the upgraded quayside.



Strand Street looking northeast



King Street

Height and Massing

The scale of the buildings on site is at odds with the character of the town centre. The buildings have no relationship to each other or to their neighbours. The collection of buildings appears somewhat ad hoc, lacking any composure or recognition of the town's tight knitted urban massing.

The building heights on site range from 3 storeys on Mark House, 2 Storeys on the Paul Jones public house and single storey on the baths (albeit a particularly tall store). Adjacent buildings are generally 3 storeys. To the north of the site is currently a new development that is 6 storeys in height. The heights of the buildings on the harbour front varies from 2 to 5 stories.



Views and Vistas

The northeast corner of the site fronts onto a widening in the street pattern and implies a modest square. There are distant views of this corner across the square. Any new building in this location should celebrate this corner. The site forms a backdrop to the quayside when viewed from the sea approach. Behind this is the green wooded backdrop that surrounds the town. Any new building on the site that exceeds 3 storeys will be visible, particularly from distant views down Lowther Street and Duke Street.



The Harbour



The quayside looking southwest

Building Type

The floor plates of the baths and Mark House are considerably larger than the floor plates of the surrounding buildings. Mark House is accessed via a private car park. The Paul Jones public house is accessed off Duke Street/Strand Street.

Façade and Interface

On Strand Street the buildings on the site are set back to create a wide pavement with tree planting. Mark House is set back from the quayside and has a low-grade boundary wall. The baths and the Paul Jones public house define a continuous building line up to a wider than normal pavement.

The façade treatment on all three buildings is in contrast to the town centre's historic character. The baths building is of architectural interest, however the other buildings are of little value architecturally. The roofline across the site is a collection of flat roofs and pitched slate and tile which is somewhat alien to the town centre.

Details and Materials

The buildings on the site are constructed from red sandstone (public baths), brick (Paul Jones public house) and pre-cast concrete and curtain walling (Mark House). None of these materials are particularly common in the town centre. Adjacent buildings are generally traditional painted harled render with stone dressings to window and door openings.



Disused baths building



Mark House has a larger floorplate than surrounding buildings

SITE RESPONSES

- Site redevelopment should be achieved by good quality architecture that improves and enhances the character of Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- Investigate the retention of the public baths' facade as part of a comprehensive scheme for the site.
- Maintain and reinforce a route (or routes) between Strand Street and the harbour
- Introduce active frontages on the harbour, Duke Street and Strand Street
- Architectural emphasis to be placed upon the northeast corner to help define the public square
- Acknowledge the nearby listed buildings on New Lowther Street and Duke Street and do not detract from or overwhelm their setting
- New development to be taken up to the back of footpath.
- New buildings to be minimum 3 storeys in height
- Any new building higher than 3 stories to be of high quality, justified in urban design terms and fully considered from all vantage points.