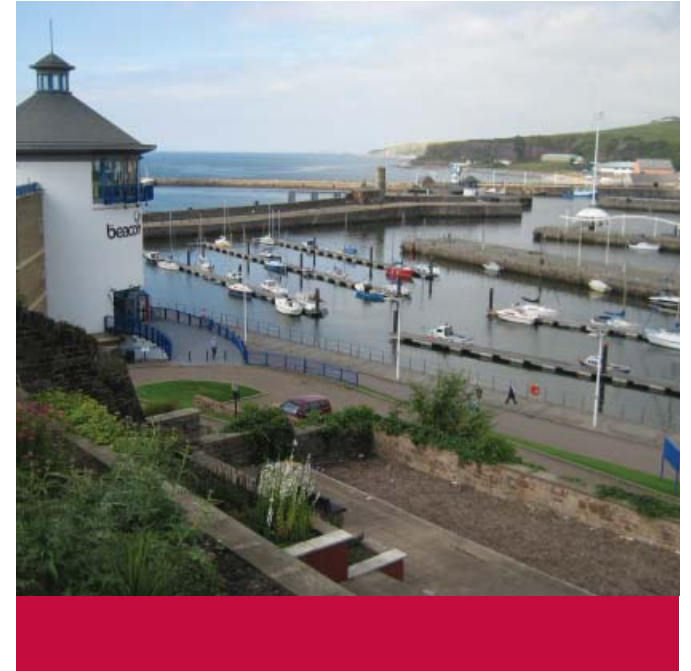




Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas | Management Plan

April 2009

Part of the Whitehaven Town Centre Heritage and Design Series



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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Contents

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Legislative Background
3.0	Conservation Area Status
4.0	Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas
5.0	Summary of Issues and Threats
6.0	Actions for Protection and Enhancement
7.0	Delivery of the Management Plan
8.0	Local Authority Commitment

Appendix 1:	Bibliography and Sources of Further Information
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1.0 Introduction

Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, local planning authorities (in this case Copeland Borough Council) have a statutory duty to designate as a conservation area any area of ‘*special architectural or historic interest*’ whose character or appearance is considered worthy of preservation or enhancement.

As such, conservation area designation is the primary means by which Copeland Borough Council can safeguard valued distinctive places that help to define the individual historical and cultural identity of its communities. However, the Council acknowledges that designation alone will not secure the preservation and enhancement of these areas and that active management is vital to ensure that they can adapt and develop in a positive way.

This report is called a ‘management plan’ and it has been produced in accordance with English Heritage’s guidance on the management of conservation areas as a companion to the Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas Character Appraisal. Whilst the character appraisal defines and evaluates the features (such as buildings, streets, views and open spaces) that contribute towards the special architectural and historic interest of the Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas, this management plan identifies, formulates and programmes a series of short, medium and long-term preservation and enhancement actions to help secure Whitehaven town centre’s long-term viability as an important heritage asset.

The primary aims of this management plan are to:

- Provide the basis for the proactive management of the conservation areas by informing future Council policy formulation and decision-making services for the next five years;
- Act as a material consideration in the determination of applications for planning permission due to its companion status to the character appraisal document;
- Fulfill the Council’s statutory duty in regard to s.71 and s.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- Illustrate the local planning authority’s commitment to the national planning policy provisions of Planning Policy Guidance note 15 (PPG 15) ‘*Planning and the Historic Environment*’ (1994), and;
- Support the emergence of future local planning policy relating to the historic environment.

The conservation area boundaries indicated on plans within this document are for illustrative purposes only. A definitive plan of the conservation area boundaries as adopted may be inspected at the Council’s offices.



Whitehaven's harbour



West Pier Lighthouse



St Nicholas Church tower



North Pier Lighthouse



Whitehaven Castle



Traditional signage

2.0 Legislative Background

National Planning Policy

The Council will have full regard to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which provides the principal legislative national policy base for the conservation of the historic environment, when taking development control decisions within the conservation areas. Regard will also be had to Planning Policy Guidance note 15 (PPG 15) '*Planning and the Historic Environment*' and to Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (PPG 16) '*Archaeology and Planning*' which provide the main sources of detailed advice for the implementation of the 1990 Act.

Local Development Plan

The Copeland Local Plan (2001 – 2016) contains a suite of planning, conservation, design and environmental policies that are of direct relevance to the preservation and enhancement of Whitehaven town centre's conservation areas and its listed buildings. Policies of particular relevance are:

- ENV 25 Demolition in Conservation Areas
- ENV 26 Development in and Affecting Conservation Areas
- ENV 27 Trees in Conservation Areas
- ENV 28 Article 4 Directions
- ENV 29 Shopfronts in Conservation Areas
- ENV 30 Alterations and Extensions to Listed Buildings
- ENV 31 Demolition of Listed Buildings
- ENV 32 Essential Repairs to Listed Buildings
- ENV 33 Development Affecting the Setting and Important Views of Listed Buildings

- ENV 34 Changes of Use to Listed Buildings
- TCN 9 Whitehaven Town Centre Strategy
- TCN 10 Whitehaven Town Centre

Policy ENV 26 details the main considerations that the Council will apply when assessing development proposals within the conservation areas. It advises that the Council will permit proposals for new development in or adjacent to the conservation areas providing that the proposed development:

- Respects the character of existing architecture and any historical associations by having due regard to positioning and grouping of buildings, form, scale, detailing and use of traditional materials;
- Respects existing hard and soft landscape features including open space, trees, walls and surfacing;
- Respects traditional street patterns, plot boundaries and frontage widths;
- Improves the quality of the townscape, and;
- Contains sufficient detail to enable the visual impact of the proposal to be understood (for outline applications).

Supplementary Planning Guidance

The Council has a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents which provide detailed design advice: '*SPG 2: Crime and Prevention Design Scheme*' (adopted June 1997) and '*SPG 3: Whitehaven Shopfronts Design Guide*' (adopted June 1992).

Local Development Framework

The Council has started to prepare its Local Development Framework (LDF) and it is anticipated that the Core Strategy will be adopted by 2010. The Core Strategy will be followed by a suite of Local Development Documents (LDD) which will identify specific sites for development and propose more detailed policies to promote and manage change. This management plan, and its companion character appraisal, will form key elements of the historic environment evidence base as this work progresses.

3.0 Conservation Area Status

Implications of Conservation Area Status

Conservation area status is not intended to stifle new development nor preserve areas as museum pieces; in fact conservation areas are allowed to evolve to meet changing demands. The Council is, however, legally obliged to ensure that the special architectural and historic characters of their conservation areas are not eroded when taking planning and development control decisions.

Conservation area designation brings a number of specific statutory duties which are aimed at assisting preservation and enhancement:

- The Council has a duty to review its conservation area designations periodically. There is a particular duty to prepare proposals (such as character appraisals or grant schemes) to that end [s.71 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990];
- In the exercise of any powers under the Planning Acts with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area [s.72 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990];
- Extra publicity must be given to planning applications affecting conservation areas. This is usually achieved through the use of advertising in the local newspaper [s.73 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990];
- Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of most buildings in a conservation area over 114 cubic metres and the Council or the Secretary of State may take enforcement action or institute a criminal prosecution if consent is not obtained prior to demolition [s.74 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990];
- Written notice must be given to the Council before works are carried out to any tree in the area above a minimum size (s.211 Town & Country Planning Act 1990);
- The display of advertisements may be more restricted than elsewhere (s.221 Town & Country Planning Act 1990);
- The Council or the Secretary of State may be able to take steps to ensure that a building in a conservation area is kept in good repair through the use of Urgent Works Notices and Amenity of Land Notices [s.54 and s.76 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and s.215 Town & Country Planning Act 1990];
- Powers exist for the Council, English Heritage or the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to provide financial grant schemes to assist with the upkeep of buildings in conservation areas targeted to areas of economic deprivation [s.77, s.79 and s.80 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990].
- In support of these statutory duties, the Council is expected to commit adequate resources by

ensuring it has access to the necessary skills and it adopts appropriate policies. The Council should also ensure that communities are sufficiently informed about the implications of designation so that they too can play their part.

Those who live, work and build in a conservation area are encouraged to recognise the collective benefits they enjoy. For this, they must be well-informed about the qualities of the conservation areas and understand the need to take a contextual view of any developments proposals, rather than acting in isolation. Some degree of change is inevitable in conservation areas and the issue is often not whether change should happen, but how it is undertaken. Owners and residents can minimise the effects of change by employing skilled advice when preparing development proposals and by avoiding unrealistic aspirations. While the Council is a useful source of advice, there is a significant role for amenity societies and other stakeholders to explain what matters, what is possible, what is expected and what has been achieved elsewhere.

There are many other actions that can impact on a conservation area's character and appearance, including: highways, the maintenance of trees within the public realm and the management of public buildings. It is important, therefore, that conservation aims are coordinated across all relevant Council services. Highway or building control standards designed for modern environments should not be applied unthinkingly to areas and buildings that have stood the test of time. The Council is, therefore, encouraged to be sensitive to the special architectural and historic interest of conservation

areas and listed buildings in exercising, for instance, building control, fire regulations and highways standards.

Permitted Development

Certain works to dwelling houses within a conservation area, which are normally considered to be 'permitted development', will now require planning approval from the Council. The overall effect of these additional controls is that the amount of building works which can be carried out to a dwelling house or within its curtilage without planning permission is substantially smaller in a conservation area than elsewhere. These are:

- Planning permission is needed for external cladding to dwelling houses in conservation areas;
- Planning permission is needed for any alteration to the roof of a dwelling house resulting in a material alteration to its shape, most notably the addition of dormer windows;
- Planning permission is needed for the erection of any structure within the curtilage of a dwelling house whose cubic capacity exceeds 10 cubic metres. This is especially important for sheds, garages, and other outbuildings in gardens within conservation areas.

Where a building is statutory listed different legislation applies as all internal and external alterations which affect the character of the building require Listed Building Consent (LBC). Furthermore, commercial

properties (such as shops and public houses), and houses which are in multiple occupation, such as flats or apartments, have fewer permitted development rights and therefore planning permission is already required for many alterations to these buildings.

The rules governing satellite dishes in conservation areas are significantly tighter than outside such areas. These state that the installation of a satellite antenna on any building or structure within the curtilage of a dwelling house in a conservation area is only permitted development if the following conditions are met:

- The dish does not exceed 90mm in any dimension;
- No part of it must exceed the highest part of the roof;
- It is not installed on a chimney;
- It is not on a building exceeding 15 metres in height;
- It is not on a wall or roof slope fronting a highway or footway;
- It is located so its visual impact is minimised;
- It is removed as soon as it is no longer required and;
- There is not a dish already on the building or structure.

If any of these do not apply, a specific planning application will be required.

The law governing the erection of masts and antennae is complex and whilst some companies have licences which allow some structures to be put up in conservation areas without planning

permission, legislation does allow for consultation with the local authority concerned before the work is commenced. Further information can be found in Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG8) 'Telecommunications' (2001).

4.0 Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas

Whitehaven is one of the earliest and most complete post-medieval planned towns in England. Until the middle of the seventeenth century it was a small fishing village, however it was then rapidly and deliberately planned and developed as a port and an industrial town by the Lowther family. By the eighteenth century, Whitehaven had become one of the largest ports in the northwest of England. By 1800 however, a recession, in part caused by the development and expansion of a number of the town's rival ports, had set in from which the town never really recovered, and the rapid growth and later decline combined to ensure Whitehaven's survival as an eighteenth century planned town.

Today Whitehaven is known for its attractive and colourfully painted Georgian buildings, its grid-iron streets, its harbour and marina and for its connections with the formative years of the United States of America (see the companion character appraisal for further details about the town's historic development).

The historical and architectural interest of Whitehaven is recognised by the volume of statutory listed buildings (see Appendix 1 of the character appraisal for a comprehensive gazetteer) and the existence of two conservation areas, Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area and High Street Conservation Area, within its town centre.

Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area incorporates much of the town's centre and harbour. Its northern boundary is formed by the North Pier, the North Harbour, North Road, Bransty Row and George Street, whilst its eastern boundary is



Location of Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas

Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area



Harbour at dusk



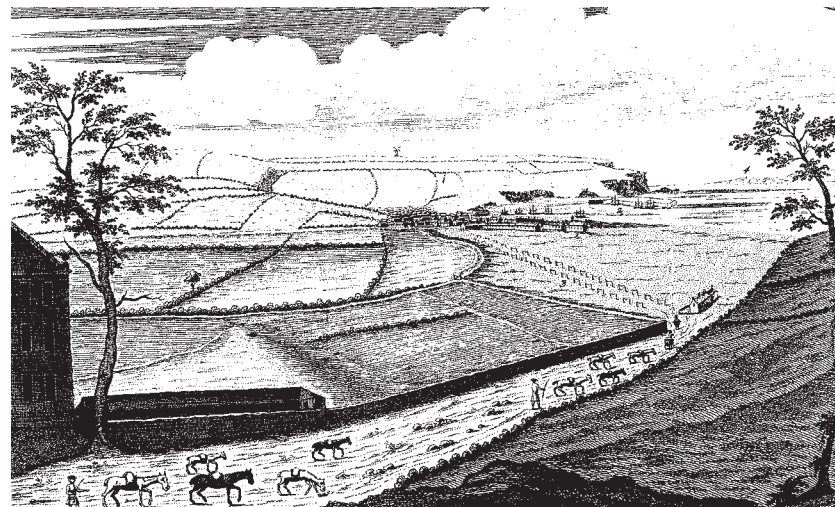
Market Place



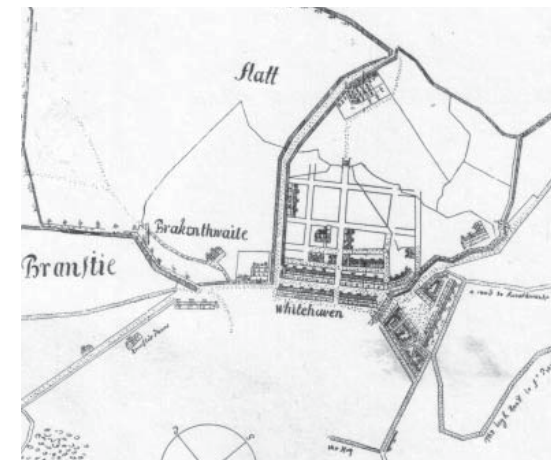
High Street

defined by Catherine Street, a line of yew trees within Castle Park and by Whitehaven Castle. The area's southern boundary is defined by Flatt Walks, Richmond Terrace and the rear of properties on the southern side of Catherine Street, whilst the western boundary follows the curvature of Rosemary Lane to Wellington Terrace before incorporating the site of Wellington Pit, West Pier, Old New Quay and Old Quay. Whilst much of the conservation area is relatively flat and low-lying, its western edge does incorporate the base and northern slope of the hillside which flanks the southern side of the town.

High Street Conservation Area is located on the southern slope of the hillside which flanks the northern side of the town centre. Whilst this elevated location provides impressive views across the town, the conservation area itself is relatively flat as it follows the horizontal contours of the hillside. As its name suggests, the conservation area is principally formed around High Street, but it also incorporates Pipers Court and much of Wellington Row. Although separated from the main body of the town centre by a residential area which was developed during the 1960s/1970s, High Street Conservation Area is still very much part of Whitehaven's townscape.



South-easterly view of Whitehaven, 1642



Whitehaven as built and projected, 1693



View across harbour and town centre

5.0 Summary of Issues and Threats

The character appraisal identified a series of elements which detract from and/or are threatening to harm Whitehaven town centre's unique historical and architectural character and its important features. If left to persist without intervention, these elements could put the town centre's historic fabric at risk from chronic deterioration:

Negative Buildings which Erode Character and Quality

The conservation areas contain a number of buildings and features which fail to make a positive contribution to the character of the town.

Threat of Unsympathetic New Development

One of the principal threats to the town centre's special character is the development of new buildings or features that are unsympathetic to historic street patterns, building lines and architectural styles.

The detailed building regulations imposed by Sir John Lowther (1642 – 1706), which stipulated that new buildings had to be at least three storeys high and constructed in continuous rows at the front of building plots immediately adjacent to the street, continue to dominate the town centre. However, there are a number of more modern buildings which fail to adhere to Sir John's design regulations and have removed sections of the area's fine grained street pattern. These buildings have created single continuous blank and inactive façades and uncharacteristic building set-backs. There is a threat that the area's special character may be further undermined by future unsympathetic development.



Existing buildings which erode character and quality

Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area
- Building which fails to make a positive contribution



Multi-storey car park



Telephone Exchange



Wilkinsons, Church Street

Gradual Erosion of Special Character

One of the biggest threats to the town centre's character is the loss of traditional features and the introduction of inappropriate modern features onto historical and architecturally interesting buildings. Uncharacteristic tiling, modern fenestration, steel security shutters and inappropriate signage and shop frontages are evident, whilst several buildings have been rendered with pebble-dash, painted using inappropriate and unsympathetic colours or have lost some or all of the wrought-iron railings which historically defined their curtilages and entrance steps. Whilst such changes may be small in themselves, if left to persist without intervention, they may have a gradual but cumulative erosive effect on the area's special character.



Gradual erosion of special character

Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area
- Inappropriate shop frontages/signage
- Loss of detailing from historic buildings



Inappropriate colours



Inappropriate signage

Lack of Building Maintenance and Structural Issues

Through a probable combination of age, a lack of maintenance and structural issues, a number of buildings within Whitehaven town centre's conservation areas are now considered to be at significant risk.

Underuse and Vacancy of Historic Buildings

Several historic and extremely visually prominent buildings within the town centre are vacant or semi-vacant and have been for some time. They are now considered to be at significant risk. It is considered essential that these historic buildings are protected, preserved and enhanced to ensure that they make a positive and lasting contribution to the town centre's character.



Visually prominent vacant and semi-vacant buildings

Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area
- Significant vacant building



44 - 45 Irish Street



6 Market Place



Former Methodist Church

Gap Sites Harming Character and Appearance

The demolition of several buildings within the town centre has created a series of gap sites. These gap sites have inadvertently exposed building elevations which were not designed to be within public view and have also reduced the visual and physical coherence of the town centre's built form.



Gap sites harming character and appearance

Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area
- Incoherent built form



Quay St South Car Park



Swingpump Lane



Albion Street

Threat of the Maritime Location

The town's maritime location is threatening the area's character as features constructed from St Bees New Red Sandstone, such as West Pier and the former Methodist Church at the corner of Lowther Street and Scotch Street, are suffering substantially from the erosive effects of sea air and strong prevailing winds.



Threat of maritime location

Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area
- Erosive effects of town's maritime location



West Strand



Old Quay



Former Methodist Church

Inadequate Gateways into the Town Centre

Gateways are special places where the combination of street layout and prominent buildings 'announce' the entrance to a town. It is here that the first impressions of a town are typically created. The gateways into Whitehaven's town centre are currently poor and inadequate as they are dominated by vacant, underused and derelict buildings and cluttered with street furniture and vivid and inconsistent signage.



Inadequate gateways into the town centre

Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area
- Poor gateway



Bransty Row



Railway station



Flatt Walks

Lack of Visual and Physical Linkages between the Town Centre and the Harbour

Whitehaven's conservation areas consist of two distinct zones – the town centre and the harbour. Visual and physical linkages between these two zones are currently poor and inadequate and this is directly attributable to the town's one-way traffic system and its resultant heavy traffic flows and to the extremely incoherent, incomplete, vacant, derelict and inactive streetscapes which fail to connect the harbour with the town centre.



Lack of visual and physical linkages between the town centre and the harbour

Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area
- Poor linkages
- Inactive street frontages



Swingpump Lane



Strand Street

Underuse and Inadequate Maintenance of Public Space

The recreation ground historically associated with St James' Infant School is the largest open green space within the character area; however despite enabling excellent panoramic views across the town and helping to give the Brackentwaite area a dramatic green backdrop, it is little used and inadequately maintained. The space has tremendous potential to become one of the most attractive areas within the northern section of the town centre.



Key

- Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area
- High Street Conservation Area
- Underused open space

Underuse and inadequate maintenance of public space



Recreation ground

6.0 Actions for Protection and Enhancement

Summary of Issues and Threats

Detailed study and assessment has revealed that Whitehaven town centre's unique architectural and historical character is being undermined by a number of issues and threats:

- Negative buildings which erode character and quality;
- Threat of unsympathetic new development;
- Gradual erosion of special character due to loss of traditional materials and the introduction of inappropriate modern features;
- Lack of building maintenance and structural issues;
- Underuse and vacancy of historic buildings;
- Gap sites harming character and appearance;
- Threat of the maritime location;
- Inadequate gateways into the town centre;
- Lack of visual and physical linkages between the town centre and the harbour;
- Underuse and inadequate maintenance of public space, and;
- Loss of historic surface materials.

It is proposed that a series of preservation and enhancement actions will be adopted and implemented to address these issues and threats and secure Whitehaven town centre's long-term viability as an important heritage asset.

Securing Quality Development

It is recommended that a partnership approach to the strategic management of Whitehaven town centre's conservation areas be developed. Paragraph 4.13 of PPG 15 and English Heritage best practice guidance recommends the establishment of a formal joint Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC).

A broad partnership will be essential if there is to be wider community involvement and buy-in to the management plan and its aims and objectives. If a CAAC were established, its membership would need to include representatives from local businesses, the local community, professionals (including architects), stakeholders and others who have a role in the future of the town and its historic environment, such as local historical, civic and amenity societies.

The CAAC could provide an independent critical voice and assess applications for proposed developments in the town centre's conservation areas. In addition, an established CAAC could also regularly monitor and annually review the progress of this management plan.

Compliance and Monitoring

It is important to have an objective understanding of change so that informed responses can be made. These may be adjustments to policy and practice or action for enforcement and compliance. As English Heritage recommends in *'Streets for All: North West'* (2005):

'The aim should be to establish a virtuous circle of monitoring, review and action as necessary to maintain a sustainable equilibrium'

It is recommended that a full and detailed photographic survey of the entire town centre is undertaken as a baseline record for measuring change, monitoring building condition and to provide evidence for enforcement. For the latter, however, it is important that the record is updated every four years because breaches more than four years old cannot be enforced against.

Most local authorities subscribe to the Cabinet Office Enforcement Concordat (1998), which sets out best practice principles for enforcement, such as appropriate standards for helpfulness, openness, consistency, proportionality and responding to complaints. The Council should take these forward into an enforcement strategy in order to:

- Explain the scope of planning enforcement;
- Openly define priorities;
- Set measurable standards for service delivery;
- Explain how investigations are carried out, and;
- Explain enforcement procedures and actions.

While the need to ensure public safety will always come first, enforcement in relation to the historic environment should generally have the next highest priority because, as national Government guidance recognises, so much historic fabric is irreplaceable. The enforcement strategy should also explain the circumstances when the Council would make use of Repairs Notices, Urgent Works Notices and Amenity

Power	Statutory Basis	Purpose	Work Required by Council	Potential Issues
Amenity of Land Notice	s.215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990	Remedy the poor condition of land and exteriors of buildings	Drafting of notice and accompanying schedule	Appeal to magistrates
Urgent Works Notice (Listed Buildings)	s.54 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To allow the Council to undertake urgent necessary works	Drafting of notice and accompanying schedule	Unoccupied parts of properties only
Urgent Works Notice (Unlisted Buildings)	s.76 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To allow the Council to undertake urgent necessary works	Drafting of notice and accompanying schedule	As above but also requires prior approval of SoS
Repairs Notice	s.48 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To allow the Council to undertake lasting necessary works	Drafting of notice and accompanying schedule	Unoccupied properties only
Compulsory Purchase Order	s.47 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To allow the Council to purchase the property in order to repair	Drafting of notice and accompanying schedule / value	Follows service of Repairs Notice Appeal to Lands Tribunal
Planning Enforcement Notice	s. 172 Town & Country Planning Act 1990	To remedy a breach of planning control	Drafting of notice and accompanying schedule	Appeal to Planning Inspectorate
Listed Building Enforcement Notice	s.9 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To remedy a breach in listed building control	Drafting of notice and accompanying schedule	Appeal to Planning Inspectorate
Conservation Area Enforcement Notice	s.38 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	To remedy a breach in Conservation Area Consent	Drafting of notice and accompanying schedule	Appeal to Planning Inspectorate

Table 1: Principal powers available to the Council in dealing with issues affecting the historic environment and its proactive management

of Land Notices. The principal powers available to the Council in dealing with issues affecting the historic environment and its proactive management are detailed in Table 1.

Article 4 Directions

The Council already has controls available through its planning powers, and much depends upon how they are interpreted and implemented. For instance, any material changes to the appearance of properties that are not single dwellings require planning permission, but the interpretation of what is 'material' is left to the Council. A new shopfront is generally regarded as a material change, but there is less certainty about the renewal of windows on upper storeys or a change in roof materials.

Single dwellings have permitted development rights that enable some alterations to be carried out without the need to obtain planning permission. These works include changes to doors, windows, roof materials or rainwater goods and the construction of minor extensions. Although they may be minimal in each case, such alterations can have a cumulative effect that is damaging to historic areas. An Article 4 (2) Direction of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 can remove permitted development rights. This does not necessarily prevent alterations, but it does mean that planning permission is required.

Commercial buildings and flats have fewer permitted development rights, but an Article 4 (1) Direction can be useful for controlling, for instance, the painting of walls. These directions can only be approved by the

Secretary of State.

A number of Article 4 Directions are already in place in Whitehaven's town centre (*see Appendix 3 of the companion character appraisal for full details*). Further directions could be introduced within the town centre.

Promoting Appropriate Design

Unfortunately a number of more recent developments fail to make a positive contribution to the special visual and physical character and appearance of the town. As such, careful consideration will need to be given to the treatment, building line, height, scale, massing, form and quality of all future development, alterations and extensions within and adjoining the town centre's conservation areas.

A number of gap sites were created within the town centre following the demolition of buildings. These sites reduce the visual and physical coherence of the town centre's built form and visually undermine the special character of the area and there is therefore considerable opportunity to redevelop them. However, in their redevelopment the Council will only encourage the highest quality schemes that respond positively to the historic setting and accord with planning policy.

The Whitehaven Town Centre Development Guide (and supporting site development guides) considers how the buildings, streets and places within the town centre can be conserved, improved and developed to enhance that area's special qualities. These development guidance documents have

been formulated to enable potential planning and Conservation Area Consent applicants to gain an appreciation of the town centre's character and set out a series of principles to be adopted in future developments.

Consider the Appointment of a 'Heritage and Design Champion'

As part of their commitment to giving priority to heritage and design issues, the Council could consider the appointment of a Heritage and Design Champion at Cabinet level. The Champion's role would be to act as the voice to ensure that heritage and design issues are given proper consideration in all decision-making. The Champion would be supported through the English Heritage-led Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) initiative. This support includes regular conferences for members and non-planning staff on heritage issues. Similarly, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) champions design and is supported regionally through RENEW Northwest, the Regional Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities.

Planning Policy

Planning policy in the adopted local plan covers general points in relation to conservation and heritage. However, there is now a need for more specific policies, controls and guidance to support the managerial approach that is necessary for the long term viability of Whitehaven's town centre. It is important to establish these needs now so that they can feed into the emerging Local Development

Framework (LDF).

Issues where guidance will make a significant difference to public understanding include:

- New buildings in historic areas – Siting, design and materials (*considered within the Whitehaven Town Centre Development Guide*);
- Shopfronts – Design approaches for different types of buildings (*included within the Whitehaven Shopfronts Design Guide SPG but could be updated*);
- Traditional doors and windows – Maintaining, repairing and replacing as well as energy efficiency and sustainability (*additional guidance required*);
- Streetscape and public realm – treatment of the public realm, including pavements, streets and spaces (*included within the Whitehaven Town Centre Public Realm Appraisal*);
- Boundary walls and parking within gardens – Retaining historical detail, planting, landscaping (*briefly considered within the Whitehaven Town Centre Public Realm Appraisal, but additional guidance required*);
- Trees and hedges – Maintenance, species, legal requirements (*briefly considered within the Whitehaven Town Centre Public Realm Appraisal, but additional guidance required*).

Where guidance has public support and has been formally adopted by the Council, it will carry material weight in the consideration of planning and Conservation Area Consent proposals. Guidance also reduces the need for the Council to repeat advice in every case, allowing scarce professional

resources to be deployed more effectively.

Establish In-House Officer Forum

It is suggested that an in-house officer forum be created to ensure a coordinated approach by the Council to respond to the issues and threats identified in the companion character appraisal and to deliver the actions outlined in this management plan. This forum would be an informal working group of officers from key services from across the Council, including: development control; planning policy; conservation and heritage; regeneration and property; investment; tourism; town centre management and highways, and other bodies who have an input into the management of the town centre's conservation areas, including West Lakes Renaissance. The group would meet quarterly to discuss relevant issues.

Establish an 'Officer Champion'

In establishing new ways of working and managing conservation areas it is often important to ensure the Council's Conservation Officer (once appointed) has sufficient high level support to ensure decision-making has proper regard to historic environment considerations. It is proposed that a relevant Head of Service within the Council be identified as an 'Officer Champion'. The Champion's role would be to support the Conservation Officer, particularly in strategic matters where the historic environment can often be inadvertently overlooked.

Maintenance of Properties and Features

To ensure that the properties and features which contribute positively to the town centre's special character and appearance are sustained and protected in the future, it will be necessary to build awareness that maintenance is a constant issue which needs to be considered on at least a seasonal basis. To assist in this process, the Council could promote the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) sponsored National Maintenance Week and National Gutters Day in November to remind property owners of the need to prepare for the winter months. This could be achieved through the extensive distribution of the SPAB/Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) publication '*A Stitch in Time*' to owners and other relevant stakeholders, including local building contractors and professionals. Detailed guidance on the maintenance of the public realm can be found in the supporting Whitehaven Town Centre Public Realm Appraisal.

Maintain Conservation Values

Recognition of the value of stewardship is central to achieving good practice in historic area conservation. PPG 15 states that Councils can achieve this by:

- Maintaining a commitment to managing the historic environment;
- Reflecting this commitment in policies and budgetary locations;
- Provide highways policies which encourage and support economic growth whilst preserving the historic environment, and;

- Ensuring they have access to specialist conservation advice in order to make informed decisions.

It is also recognised that the stewardship of the historic environment is shared by all stakeholders with an interest in Whitehaven's town centre, who might include local business, property owners, residents, shoppers, visitors and professionals. The concept of stewardship is supported by several key documents, including English Heritage's *'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance'* (April 2008) and BS7913:1998 *'Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings'*.

Ensure Targeted Grant Assistance

The availability of grant assistance to tackle vacancy, dilapidation and architectural and streetscape degradation can act as an important catalyst for change and provide opportunities for economic development. Townscape Heritage Initiatives (THI) are a form of targeted historic environment funding, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which can be used in partnership with other public sources of grant assistance to achieve the repair, reuse and regeneration of historic buildings.

In Whitehaven, a THI could be focused on the town centre's key shopping streets and pedestrian routes and could aim to relink the town centre to the harbour. It will be important to ensure that such investment is prioritised and appropriate. THI grants should seek to tackle the properties which are most damaging and problematic to community, business

and investor perceptions to facilitate enhanced economic vitality. This investment must be carefully focused during implementation to ensure that works are appropriate for the structure and meet the highest conservation standards, whereby acting as exemplars for future work elsewhere within the town centre.

Public Realm and Environmental Improvements

Retaining historic features within the public realm gives streets individuality and helps to create a sense of place. However, in parts of the town centre, the public realm is inconsistent with the architectural and historical qualities of the buildings and features which it surrounds. The supporting Whitehaven Town Centre Public Realm Appraisal contains a full audit and analysis of the town centre's existing public realm.

Future public realm works and environmental improvements will need to have regard to their context, including existing historic features within the streetscape and surrounding historic buildings and features of interest, and should enhance local distinctiveness and reinforce those qualities which make the area special. Detailed guidance on public realm materials and recommendations for the future, including those for open spaces, biodiversity and linkages between the town centre and harbour and gateways into the town centre, can be found in the supporting public realm appraisal.

Improving Urban Form

Proposals for improving urban form are detailed in the supporting Whitehaven Town Centre Development Guide (and supporting site development guides). It is important that these documents are used as everyday tools for both pre-application discussions and decision-making. Its wide availability will be key to ensuring its utilisation by developers, architects and agents when preparing applications for developments within the town centre.

7.0 Delivery of Management Plan

Vision and Aims

It is recognised that whilst an increase in the economic activity in the town centre is a key element of its ongoing regeneration, the historic environment can be used as a positive resource for safeguarding and creating employment opportunities and for improving the quality of life for the local community and those who live, work and visit the town. This vision will be achieved through the following aims:

Aim 1:

Ensure consistent decision-making between Council services that have regard to the town centre's historic environment

Aim 2:

Increase the awareness and understanding of the local community and key stakeholders to the value and role of the historic environment in the regeneration of the town centre;

Aim 3:

Work with other key stakeholders in encouraging complementary initiatives for both physical enhancement and the positive promotion of the town centre as an attractive place to work, live and visit.

Strategy and Timetable

Successful future management of the conservation areas within Whitehaven's town centre requires coordinated commitment by all Council services and their partners to ensure the sensitive exercise of their controls, including planning permission, Conservation Area Consent, building control, fire regulations and highways standards.

A programme of short, medium and long term actions that will enable the Council to address the issues and threats facing the Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas and therefore achieve its vision are detailed in the action plan overleaf.

Priorities for Action

While significant and visible advances could be made by implementing larger projects for the enhancement of 'eyesore sites', these are heavily dependent on the private sector and the availability of funding. Of more fundamental and lasting value will be action to secure the basic foundations of sound policy and guidance. Policy development is already occurring with the preparation of the emerging Local Development Framework, but there is a need to secure an appropriate emphasis on the historic environment as a driver for quality, social cohesion and economic stability.

Implementation

Whilst the overall responsibility for the successful future management of the town centre's

conservation areas will lie with Copeland Borough Council, the proposed Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) does offer the opportunity for local businesses, the local community, professionals (including architects), stakeholders and others who have a role in the future of the town and its historic environment, such as local historical, civic and amenity societies community, businesses and professionals to support the ongoing management of the conservation areas.

The action plan overleaf considers the Council's vision and aims and proposed actions before detailing the means by which they can be achieved, the responsible bodies and the proposed timescales - where Year 1 is 2009/10 and Year 5 is 2014/15.

Review of Progress

While the action plan assigns responsibilities and timescales to the proposed actions, their implementation and management will only be meaningful if the programme is subject to regular review in order to evaluate progress. It is recommended that reviews should be undertaken on a twice yearly basis, although the frequency may be adjusted to an annual cycle as individual projects develop programmes of their own.

The review cycle for this management plan will be triggered by its adoption. The next review will follow six months later. Responsibility for conducting the review lies with Planning Services. To ensure that these management proposals and the companion character appraisal are accepted and acted upon by the local community it is recommended, in line

with English Heritage policy, that these documents should be reviewed every five years in the light of the emerging Local Development Framework and government policy.

This five year review should include the following:

- A resurvey of the conservation area and its boundaries;
- An assessment of whether the management proposals detailed in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;
- A Buildings At Risk survey;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and proposed actions and amendments, and;
- Public consultation on the review findings and any proposed changes.

Aim 1: Ensure consistent decision-making between Council services that have regard to the town centre's historic environment

Proposed Action	Achieved Through	Main Responsibility within Council for Implementing Action	Time Frame
1. Securing Quality Development	Development Control	Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)	Years 1-5
2. Compliance and Monitoring	Statutory powers	Enforcement	Years 1-5
3. Additional Control	Article 4 Directions	Planning	Years 2-5
4. Promoting Appropriate Design	Development Control	Planning, Conservation Officer and CAAC	Years 1-5
5. Appoint 'Heritage and Design Champion'	Support from HELM	Planning	Years 1-5
6. Planning Policy	Local Development Scheme	Planning	Years 1-5

Aim 2: Increase the awareness and understanding of the local community and key stakeholders of the value and role of the historic environment in the regeneration of the town centre

Proposed Action	Achieved Through	Main Responsibility within Council for Implementing Action	Time Frame
7. Establish In-House Officer Forum	Stakeholders	Planning to coordinate	Years 1-5
8. Establish an 'Officer Champion'	Appointment of a lead officer	Corporate but Planning to coordinate	Years 2-5
9. Increase Access to Historic Buildings	Heritage Open Days event	Corporate but Planning to coordinate	Years 2-5

Aim 3: Work with other key stakeholders in encouraging complementary initiatives for both physical enhancement and the positive promotion of the town centre as an attractive to work, live and visit

Proposed Action	Achieved Through	Main Responsibility within Council for Implementing Action	Time Frame
10. Maintenance of Properties and Features	National Gutters Day events	Conservation Officer	Years 2-5
11. Maintain Conservation Values	Promotion of stewardship	Conservation Officer	Years 1-5
12. Ensure Targeted Grant Assistance	Townscape Heritage Initiative	THI Project Officer and THI Partnership	Years 1-5
13. Education and Promotion	Various	Conservation Officer	Years 2-5
14. Public Realm and Environmental improvements	Public Realm Strategy	Corporate	Years 1-5
15. Improving Urban Form	Development Guides	Planning	Years 1-5
16. Protection of trees	Preparing guidance	Landscape Officer	Years 2-5

Table 2: Action Plan for achieving the successful delivery of this management plan

8.0 Local Authority Commitment

The Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas Management Plan will be appraised by Copeland Borough Council's Executive and the following recommendations for adoption will be considered:

- Adopt the management plan and support its proactive implementation for the next 5 years;
- Endorse the management plan as a companion document to the character appraisal and to afford it material consideration status to inform decision making;
- Commit itself to using the full range of planning powers to ensure proper management of the conservation area;
- Support the monitoring and review of the management plan on a regular basis;
- Undertake to support the review of the character appraisal and management plan at five year intervals, and;
- Endorse the establishment of the Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC).

Appendix 1

Bibliography and Sources of Further Information

Bibliography and Sources of Further Information

Bibliography

Collier, S. with Pearson, S. (1991) *Whitehaven 1660 - 1800* Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

Hay, D. (1979) *Whitehaven: An Illustrated History* Michael Moon

Sources of Further Information

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