

# HERITAGE STATEMENT

**Former Whittles Store  
6-8 Duke Street  
Whitehaven**

On behalf of

**Energy Coast West Cumbria (Properties) Ltd**



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## 1. Brief History of 6-8 Duke Street, Whitehaven

By the date of the Ordnance Survey Map in 1900 (Plate 1), the site was fully developed as seen today. In 1889 number 6 Duke Street is recorded as Davis's Chusan Tea Warehouse, as evidenced in Plate 2. Immediately after that date the property appears to have undergone a significant change in character when the Italianate-style stucco modifications were carried out to the Duke Street and Tangier Street elevations (see plate 3).

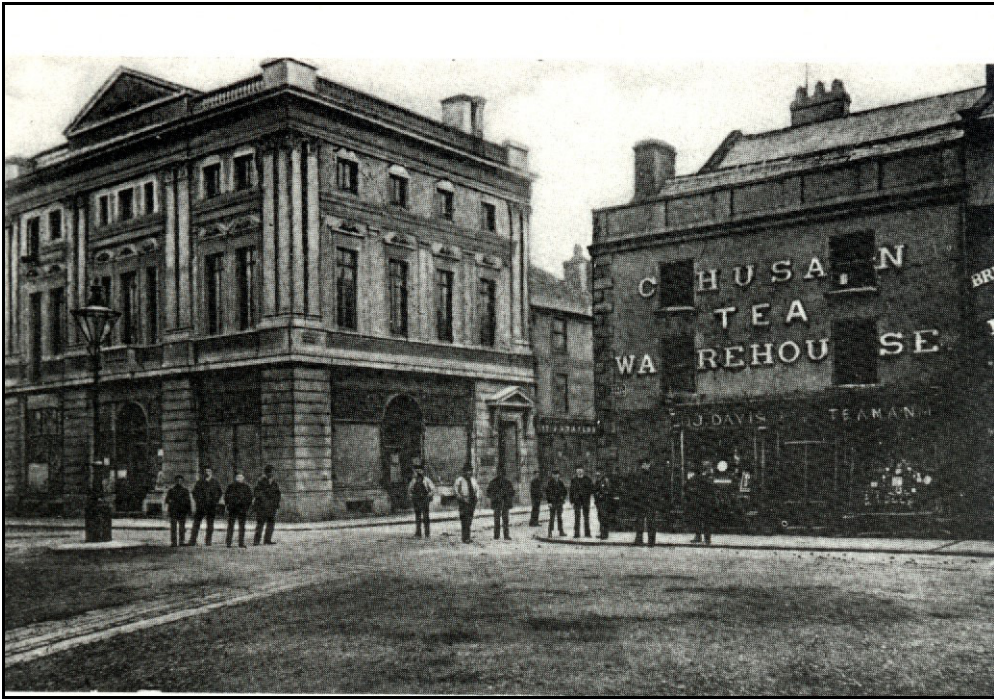
This first phase was followed with a further phase of alteration around 1909 when the adjoining building was demolished and extended into. Photographic evidence from 1920 (Plate 4) shows the later phase of development with signage to the front elevation entitled "Whittles", indicating that there was a change of ownership from J Davis before that date.

In 1939 the building at the junction of Duke Street and Tangier Street is recorded as within the ownership of J Whittle and Son as stated Kelly's Directory of that time. This company was a partnership created in 1870 between John Whittle, wholesale and retail ironmonger, and one of his sons, Walker. This partnership was created in 1870, one year before John's death. The family had held other properties at earlier dates at 9 Market Place and 57 Roper Street in Whitehaven and were well known as traders in nails, iron and steel, explosives and latterly as furniture dealers.

A third phase of development appears to have occurred in the early 1960s when 8 Duke Street was assimilated into the floor plan, creating additional floor space and the fire escape stair now evident along the right-hand party wall (see Plate 5).



1. Extract from Ordnance Survey Map of 1900



2. J Davis' Tea Warehouse in 1889



3. J Davis Tea and Coffee Shop from late 1889



4. By 1920 the building is in the ownership of John Whittle & Son and has been extended onto the adjoining site to the right, probably around 1909



5. Around the 1960's the property was extended further to the right and presented in part the simplified appearance of the period

## 2. Analysis of the Building, It's Setting and Development

### 2.1 Building Fabric

Situated at one of the principal road junctions in the town, and located within one block of the historic harbours, in its first pre-1889 phase of development the property appears to have comprised traditional load-bearing solid brick construction with pitched timber roofs finished with slate, stone cornice and rendered brick parapets to the eaves. Photographic evidence suggests that there were three bays of openings at ground floor level with two bays of sash windows above (see Plate 2).

This simple presentation from the late Georgian/early Victorian period was significantly altered in 1889 when the parapets were removed and the fenestration re-arranged to three bays at first and second floor levels; symmetry was achieved with three door and glazed openings at ground floor level. The Italianate stucco ornamentation was incorporated at this time with a hierarchy of split scrolled pediments and simple pediments at higher level, string courses and cornice immediately above shop level. The ornate dormer on the front elevation was added at this time. A distinct hierarchy in the treatment of window openings was introduced with mullion and transom windows at first floor level and 2-over-2 sash windows with horns above. Several of the mullion and transom windows remain.

The next phase of development around 1909 appears to have instigated significant structural alteration to the building when the floorplan was extended into the adjoining building. Some elements of the fenestration were repeated with simple pediments but internally it appears that many cross-walls were removed at this time and the steel frame structure now evident was inserted. The incorporation of the gated lift and adjoining stair are in typical 1920's style and align with this phase of alteration.

## 2.2 Notable Building Features

As evident currently, the only remaining internal features from the earliest phase of building are an ornate plaster cornice at the front left at ground floor level and the second-floor staircase in the front left corner. By the late 1930s, when J Whittle and Son were recorded in ownership, most of the internal historic fabric appears to have been lost. However, the gated lift and adjoining stair echo the styles of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and thereby 'signpost' a key phase in the development of the property. The pictorial record below highlights those features that contribute to the interpretation of the building phases and can therefore be attributed with some heritage significance (see Plates 6 to 12).



6. The elevation onto Duke Street showing the three phases of development from 1889 to mid 1960's



7. The Tangiers Street elevation dating from 1889 to 1909



8. The view of the rear of the building from Tangiers Street with the Waverley Hotel adjoining



9. The steel columns that support the shop frontage date from the early 1900's and will be retained



10. The gated lift and adjoining stair date from the early 1900's and will be retained





11. The internal partitions within the building hold no historic merit and will be removed



12. The surviving mid-Victorian staircase between first and second floors will be retained

## 2.3 Condition

A Condition Survey dated December 2019 was commissioned by Copeland Borough Council and identified that the building was “in very poor condition” with backlog maintenance of almost £1m. With evident severe weather penetration and some structural disrepair, the property can be considered as a heritage asset at risk, albeit that the classification system employed by Historic England does not record it so as Grade II buildings outside London are not assessed.

## 2.4 The Setting

Of particular importance is the setting of the building and the contribution it makes to the Whitehaven Conservation Area. The Character Appraisal of the Whitehaven Town Centre and High Street Conservation Areas (April 2009) identifies that the building sits within the Georgian grid layout of the streets dating from around 1790. The site is directly associated with the development of the North Harbour which began around 1709 and continued to around 1876 when a new wet dock was created and named Queen’s Dock in honour of Queen Victoria.

The Character Appraisal identifies that 6-8 Duke Street represents one of a group of Grade II Listed Buildings around the junction of Duke Street, King Street and Tangier Street, all of which make a significant contribution to the appreciation of the Conservation Area. Indeed, the building can be appreciated from all four points of the compass as shown in the photographs below. Historic England have emphasised the group value of the property and its neighbours in the listing document, ref: NGR:NX937518318.



13. Whittles occupies a prominent position when viewed from King Street

The Character Appraisal identifies that Duke Street provides an important vista from south east to north west, passing directly in front of the subject premises and linking the appreciation of the Conservation Area with the harbour and its historic features.

It is contended that the current dilapidated condition and appearance of the property detracts significantly from the setting and the appreciation of the Conservation Area.



14. The view along Duke Street is recognised as one of the principal views of the Conservation Area; Whittles plays a major role in its appreciation



15. 6-8 Duke Street plays an integral part in the appreciation of Duke Street when viewed from near the Bath House building



16. The approach through the Conservation Area towards the historic docks along Tangiers Street is dominated by the contribution made by Whittles

### 3. Statement of Significance

“Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance” published by English Heritage in April 2008 set out the heritage values by which significance could be assessed, namely:

- Evidential value – this derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value – derives from the way in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.
- Aesthetic value – derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value – derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

The site of the property was developed during the Georgian period and the buildings upon it altered significantly from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. **The potential for the building and the site to reveal evidence about past human activity at this date is therefore low.**

The property is not directly associated with famous people or historical events but the prosperity of the first phase as Davis’s Chusan Tea Warehouse in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century has strong historical links with the development of the harbour through the late 18<sup>th</sup> and earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century periods. **Accordingly, the property can be attributed with medium historical importance.**

The aesthetics of the building, though altered and diminished in later phases, reflect the fashionable interest in Italianate design of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with its heavily modelled presentation of window and door openings, pediments, string courses and cornice. The use of stucco, probably with the weaker Roman cement of the period, was an approach commonly used. The modifications to the fenestration sought to achieve a degree of symmetry that previously did not exist but was a technique commonly employed to ‘design for effect’ rather

than ‘design for function.’ Whilst much of the internal historic fabric has been lost through early 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations, the exterior of the building makes a powerful contribution to the appreciation of the immediate group of buildings and their setting within the Conservation Area. **The building can therefore be considered as having high aesthetic value.**

The building and its earlier uses through the associations with Davis and Whittles has created strong linkages with the commercial development of the town throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Whilst those associations extend no further than Whitehaven itself, **the property can still be attributed moderate communal value.**

#### **4. Schedule of Works and Impact upon Significance**

The following evaluation of the impacts of proposed interventions is made in light of those attributes that underpin the property’s significance, i.e. principally its historical and aesthetic values.

- Repair and reinstatement of windows, closed window openings, render repair to match the existing fabric – these aspects of the works will **significantly enhance** the appearance of the property and its contribution to the wider group and setting of the Conservation Area. These measures will also **safeguard** the fabric for the appreciation of future generations.
- Retention of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century box for the folding canopy and upgrading of the plate glass protection at street level – this will achieve an **enhanced level of safety for pedestrians** with the loss of only mid-20<sup>th</sup> century glazing material that does not contribute to the significance of the building. The retention of the circular steel columns from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century will assist in the interpretation of an earlier phase of development.
- At roof level an arrangement of **solar panels** is proposed, none of which can be viewed from street level; their location on the north east flat roof **will not therefore harm the appreciation of the Conservation Area by the public, whilst contributing to the sustainability of the development.**
- Along the rear edges of the flat roof glazed balustrading is proposed for safety reasons whilst avoiding the incorporation of solid barriers that would otherwise have the visual effect of raising eaves levels. As a conservation principle, **new additions should always be ‘of their time’, as in this case.** However, as a new modern material would be introduced into the view of the adjoining Waverley Hotel, there would be some minor harm to the appreciation of this listed building from Tangiers Street.
- Internally, none of the internal partitions and fabric proposed for removal hold any historic merit and date principally from the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century; as all the remaining features that attract significance will be retained, it can be concluded that **the proposed internal works will not harm the heritage significance of the property.**

## **5. Justification**

It is contended that the development proposals for change of use and alteration of this heritage asset conform to the requirement of paragraph 195 of The National Planning Policy Framework (as revised 20th July 2021) in that the proposals minimise negative impacts on the significance of the heritage asset.

Additionally, in accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF, the public benefits of the proposals include:

- Enhancement of the aesthetic appreciation of the listed building, its group of neighbouring listed buildings and the immediate Conservation Area, and
- Safeguarding the building fabric for the appreciation of future generations, and
- Securing its optimum viable use.

It is contended that the value of these public benefits outweigh significantly any minor harm that can be attributed to the use of modern materials in some areas.

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