

CAUK - Whitehaven

Client:

Cash Access UK

Date of Issue:

1st June 2026

Job Number:

E8016

Client Address:

27 Old Gloucester Street,
London, WC1N 3AX

Revision Record:

A01



HUB No.:

0253

Site Address:

22 King Street,
Whitehaven,
Cumbria, CA28 7JN

INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany a planning consent application for proposed upgrade works to the former Santander Bank, located at 22 King Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 7JN. The building is not designated as listed but is located within the Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area.

This statement aims to demonstrate how the proposed works have been designed to preserve, and where possible, enhance the character of the area, in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the NPPF (2023), and local conservation policies.

The proposal is to keep the same use class and turn the Santander Bank at ground floor in a Cash Access UK community Banking Hub.

LOCATION

Statutory Address

SANTANDER BANK, 22 KING STREET, WHITEHAVEN, CUMBRIA

District

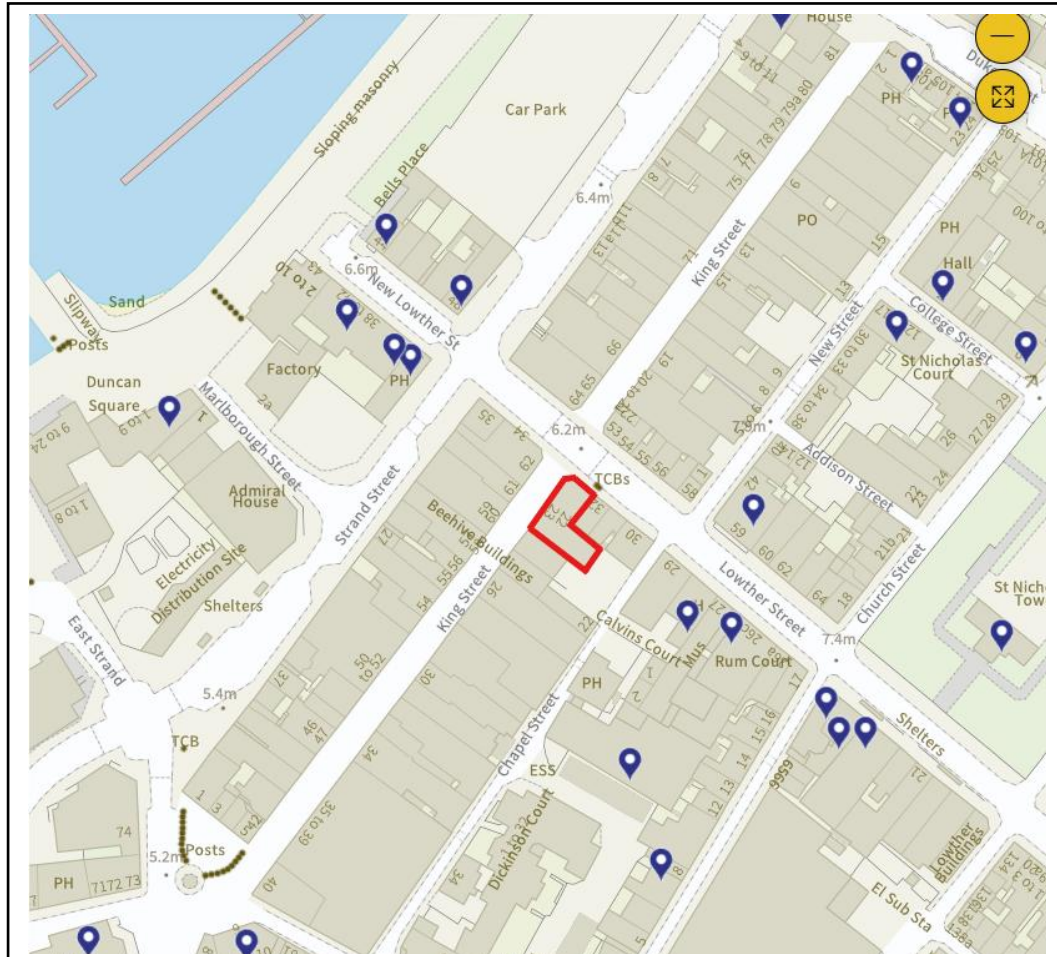
Cumberland (Unitary Authority)

Parish

Whitehaven (Civil Parish)

National Grid Reference:

NX 97291 18168



WHITEHAVEN: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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 gridiron streets, its harbour and marina and for its connections with the formative years of the United States of America.

The historical and architectural interest of Whitehaven is recognised by the volume of statutorily listed buildings and features and the existence of two conservation areas, Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area and High Street Conservation Area, within its town centre.

Whitehaven is located on the Cumbrian coast approximately 10 miles west of the Lake District National Park and immediately north of St Bees Head, the principal headland between Morecambe Bay and the Solway Firth. The town's centre is flanked by two steep and predominantly wooded hillsides. The hillside to the north of the town rises above Brackenthwaite and extends between Bransty and Harras Park, whilst the southern hillside rises from Mount Pleasant towards Kells and Arrowthwaite. Together they provide excellent elevated views and give the town a dramatic green backdrop.

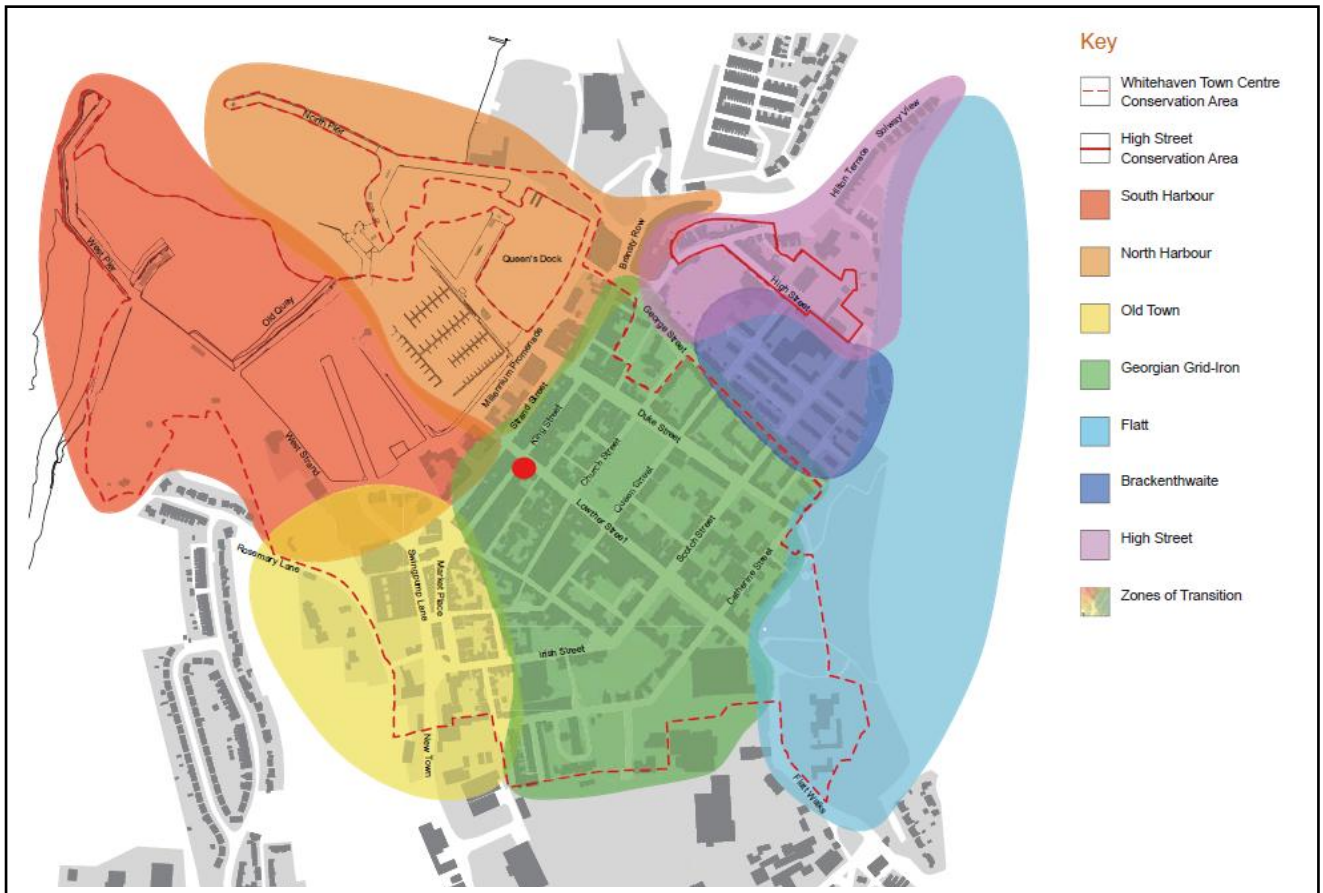
Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and incorporates much of the town's centre and harbour. Its northern boundary is formed by the North Pier, the North Harbour, North Road, Bransty Row and George Street, whilst its eastern boundary is defined by Catherine Street, a line of 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.

The hillsides which flank the town's centre are formed from carboniferous Whitehaven sandstone and boulder clay, whilst the centre itself lies on a marine alluvial deposit. Thin coal seams also run beneath the town. The underlying rock of St Bees Head, to the immediate south of the town, is red permo-triassic sandstone. Known as St Bees New Red Sandstone, it has been quarried as a building material since the medieval period and is evident within Whitehaven's town centre.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Detailed study and assessment has revealed that, like many towns, Whitehaven's town centre contains small sub-areas, or 'character areas', which have their own identifiable character. Buildings, features and streets within each of these character areas are typically united by a common history, layout, form or function and together these features form a distinct character that is noticeably different from other subareas. Seven distinct character areas are evident within Whitehaven's town centre:

- South Harbour
- North Harbour
- Old Town
- Georgian Grid-Iron
- Flatt
- Brackenthwaite
- High Street



It should be noted that these seven character areas all have a natural affinity with each other and, rather than being exact, their boundaries are blurred and overlap. These overlapped areas are known as 'zones of transition' and often contain characteristics from each of the adjoining character areas.

Collectively, these character areas shape Whitehaven's unique historical and architectural interest.

22 King Street is located within the Georgian Iron Grid character area. This character area is the largest of those identified within Whitehaven's town centre. It incorporates much of the town's retail, commercial and municipal core and contains a fine collection of Georgian buildings which are set within the grid-iron pattern of streets deliberately planned by the Lowther family during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Although most of the streets within this character area had been laid out, and to an extent partially developed, by the time of Sir John Lowther's death in 1706, it was not until his son Sir James took ownership of the estate that the building plots along these streets truly began to develop. By the mid eighteenth century and the death of Sir James in 1755, all the streets within the character area had been laid out and the town centre had reached the edge of its physical limits.

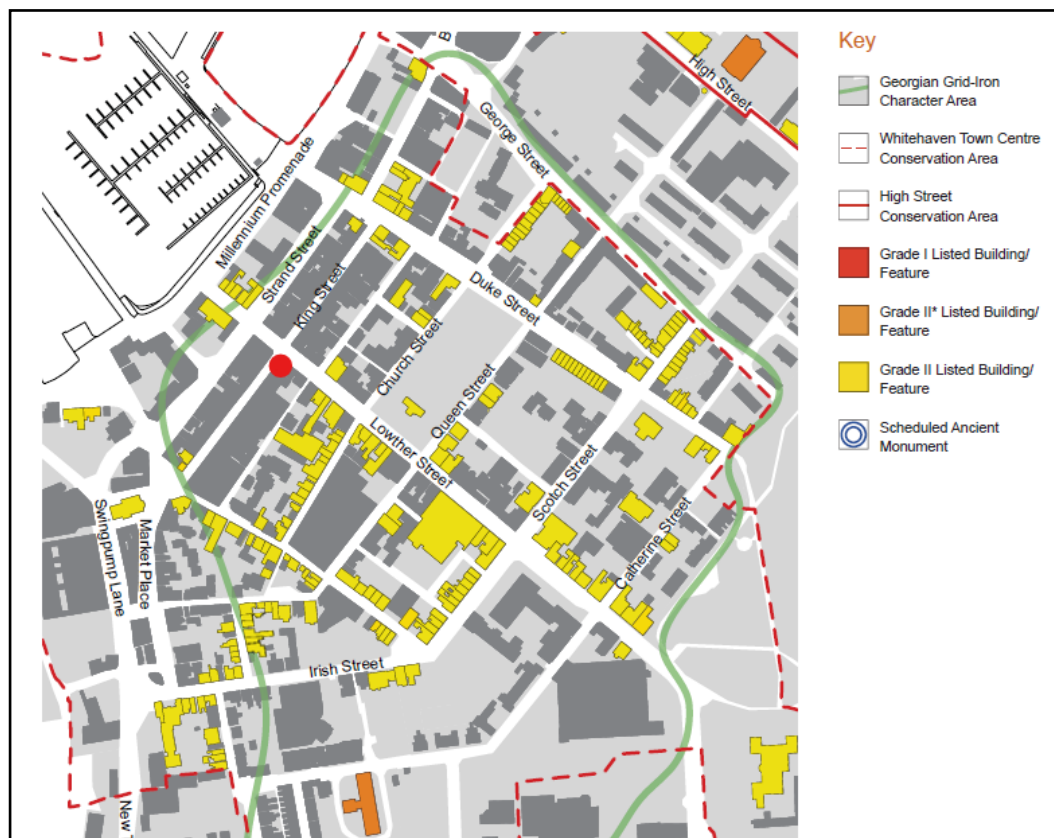
A number of the streets within the eastern section of this character area were substantially redeveloped during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to create the town's municipal quarter. This involved the demolition of 17th and 18th century buildings and the erection of a number of municipal buildings, including the former Fire Brigade Station (now Whitehaven Record Office and Local Studies Library), the police station on Scotch Street, the Telephone Exchange and Magistrates' Court on Catherine Street and the Civic Hall and library extension on Lowther Street.

Although the character area is relatively flat and low-lying, the grid-iron pattern enables numerous views into and through the area. Lowther Street formed the central axis of Sir John Lowther's design and was intended, as it still does today, to visually link The Flatt (now Whitehaven Castle) and the harbour – this view is now terminated by the Crows Nest mast at the end of Lime Tongue. Extended southeast-northwest views towards the harbour are also possible along Duke Street.

Elongated and enclosed north-easterly vistas are possible along Scotch Street, Queen Street and Catherine Street from their junctions with Lowther Street. The vista along Catherine Street is closed by the impressive façade of Somerset House at 52 Duke Street, whilst Queen Street's vista is closed by the elevated church of St James on High Street.

Excellent elevated views across the character area are provided from the two hillsides which flank the town centre. From these hillsides, the towers of the former Methodist Church on the corner of Lowther Street and Scotch Street and St Nicholas on Lowther Street are both clearly visible above the rooftops.

The buildings within this character area provide a physical record of the town's historical evolution and development. Many of the buildings accord with some or all of Sir John Lowther's design regulations and for the most part form continuous rows and occupy the front of their building plots. Notable exceptions, however, are 11 – 15 Tangier Street (including the Waverley Hotel) and the Cupola (formerly the Town Hall) at 24 Duke Street which are both set back from the street. The majority of buildings within this character area reach at least three storeys and again this is reflective of Sir John's design regulations. However, although Sir John regulated storey numbers, he did not stipulate how tall each individual storey should be. As a consequence, there is considerable height and roofline variation between buildings with the same number of storeys within this area.



A significant number of the buildings within this character area are statutorily listed and therefore of individual special historical and/or architectural interest. Some of the most significant include: the surviving tower of St Nicholas Church on Lowther Street; the former Methodist Church on the corner of Lowther Street and Scotch Street; Catherine Mill on Catherine Street which was constructed in 1809 and is now grade II* listed, and; 151 Queen Street which was once occupied by the town's prominent Gale family.

Prevalent and Traditional Building Materials

Although there are some noticeable exceptions, the majority of buildings within this character area are constructed from locally quarried Whitehaven sandstone. During the seventeenth century, Sir John Lowther attempted to encourage the use of brick as a construction material. Although he had aspirations to develop brickworks on his estate, it is thought that Sir John's motives were principally altruistic as he was concerned that the continuous quarrying of sandstone at Tom Hurd Rock to the south west of the town would erode the headland and prejudice the town's harbour. Although Sir John provided monetary incentives to encourage its use, brick never became popular and the use of sandstone continued to prevail. The majority of buildings within the area are roofed in slate.

Red sandstone is also evident within this character area. Likely to have been quarried at St Bees Head, this stone is distinctive within the conservation area as it acutely contrasts with the pallor of Whitehaven sandstone. The former Methodist Church on the corner of Lowther Street and Scotch Street, the former Sunday School to its rear and original library building on Catherine Street are constructed from red sandstone and are highly distinctive buildings. However, as a combined result of the material's characteristics and the town's maritime location, much of the red sandstone within this character area suffers substantially from erosion.

Whitehaven is famous for its colourfully painted buildings and such buildings are very much evident within this character area. Building walls are typically rendered and painted using subtle pastel shades, whilst contrasting, yet sympathetic, colours are often used to define window and door headers and footers and drainage goods and to visually enhance other architectural details, such as cornices and quoins. Individual buildings within the same street are often painted using different colour-ways, however rather than being visually inappropriate, this method emphasises building individuality and gives significant character to the town centre's conservation area.

The majority of this character area is surfaced in modern materials including tarmac, concrete paving slabs and kerbstones. However, smoothed stone setts do survive in isolated areas, including within several rear courtyards, whilst sandstone kerbs survive on Catherine Street opposite its junction with Mill Street.

Open Space and Greenery

This character area contains two of the largest open green spaces within the town centre conservation area, both of which are historically affiliated with churches.

St Nicholas Gardens is located within the centre of the character area and is defined by Lowther Street, Queen Street, Church Street and Duke Street. Historically the space was occupied by two churches dedicated to St Nicholas – the first was constructed by Sir John Lowther in 1693 and its replacement was constructed of red sandstone from the Beggarghyll Quarry near Egremont during the 1880s. The nave and sanctuary of the nineteenth century church were entirely destroyed by a fire in August 1971. After the fire, consideration was given to rebuilding the nave, but in 1973 it was decided that the surviving tower should become a chapel and the rest of the site, including the churchyard, should be redeveloped to form a public garden. Today St Nicholas Gardens forms an attractive green oasis within the heart of the town centre and is also uniquely linked with the formative years of the United States of America as Mildred Warner Washington, the grandmother of George Washington, the first President of the United States of America, is buried within the churchyard.

The second open green space is located at the junction of Irish Street and Roper Street and is known as Trinity Gardens. Historically the space was occupied by Holy Trinity Church which was strategically built at the eastern end of Roper Street by Sir James Lowther, however this church was demolished in 1948 and its site and churchyard were redeveloped to form a public garden.

Washington Square, a pocket park located within the western section of this character area, was created in the mid twentieth century following the demolition of a number of buildings which previously occupied the eastern side of the junction of Queen Street and Coates Lane. Today the square is one of the town's most recognised spaces and provides an attractive and tranquil open area in what is otherwise a relatively densely developed part of the town centre.

PROPOSED WORKS

The proposed upgrades include:

- Upgrades to internal lighting and data infrastructure to meet modern standards
- Upgrades to existing MEP where required.

The existing shopfront currently has boxed fascias with external illumination to all 3 sides of this corner premises. As the premises is also within a Conservation area and reviewing the Local Development Framework it specifically mentions that “unsympathetic standard corporate signage is inappropriate for the town centre and signage should be hand painted onto fascia using lettering of a size and style which makes good use of the available space”.

Looking at the street scene there is a mixture of flat fascia signs with printed lettering and individual applied lettering. The proposals is to install heritage lettering on a fascia backboard and external illumination, and 2 no projecting externally illuminated signs due to the dual frontage this corner premises benefits from.

All proposed works have been carefully designed to minimise harm to the existing fabric and to ensure reversibility where possible.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The proposals have been developed with a conservation-led approach, aiming to preserve the character of the Whitehaven Town Centre conservation area.

CONCLUSION

The proposed upgrades represent a sensitive and justified intervention to ensure the ongoing use and preservation of this building. The works will support the building's future without compromising its architectural surroundings, aligning with national and local heritage policies.