

# A new vision for Wick





<b>Key Themes</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Town Analysis</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>The Inner Town</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Illustrative Town Centre Masterplan</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Harbour Quay &amp; Pulteneytown</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>The Town Centre and River Edge</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>The Wider Town</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>The Movement Network</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Regeneration of Key Buildings and Brownfield Sites</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Potential Greenfield Expansion Areas</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Potential Future Development Sites</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Renewables Sector</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Regeneration Mechanism</b>	<b>53</b>

# A new vision for Wick

## 1. SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

Wick is an attractive, historic harbour town set in the stunning lowland landscape of Caithness. However, with the decline of the old industries Wick has suffered with unemployment, population decline, a struggling town centre and deteriorating and empty buildings around the harbour. Participants were positive about development in Wick and were keen to focus on regenerating the town's heart and investing in the harbour to revitalise the local economy and strengthen the local community.

**“ People are positive about Wick and positive about themselves. ”**



## 2. CONSERVE AND CELEBRATE LOCAL HERITAGE

Local people are proud of their cultural and built heritage, which includes the herring fishing History, Carnegie Library, Caithness flagstones, Thomas Telford's legacy and the Old Pulteney Distillery. The conservation and promotion of the history and heritage of the town and surrounding area could help create a positive image for the town and attract more visitors.

**“ This was a town of artisans and craftsmen and that was how the town was built up. ”**



## Key Themes

### 3. REGENERATION IN THE HEART OF TOWN

Participants felt that the regeneration of key sites on both sides of the river is vital to keep the heart of the town beating. With the forthcoming relocation of the swimming pool and the library to the new school campus to the south of the town, there is a need and an opportunity to enhance the “experience economy” in the heart of town. This would include sensitive regeneration of the built environment, mixed-uses including residential, creative industry and cultural uses, cafes and restaurants and an accessible, vibrant waterfront. The possibility of creating an urban regeneration trust to hold assets and drive the regeneration process should be considered.

**“There is a niche market for the right businesses with the right management.”**



### 4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE HARBOUR AND AIRPORT

Participants expressed the desire to attract new industries and create local jobs - the harbour and the airport are key to achieving this. People welcomed the idea of utilising the harbour and airport for the potential of off-shore renewable energy related opportunities.

**“The harbour and the airport is the key to the future.”**



# A new vision for Wick

## 5. TRAINING AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Participants were concerned about future training and employment opportunities locally. The renewable energy industries coming into Wick could help to grow the currently declining population as well as retain and attract young people to the town. Establishing links and relationships between business, including the renewables sector, and local schools is important to ensure that the local workforce is equipped with the appropriate skills and training.

**“ We’ve got to get our school kids ready to take up the baton! ”**



## 6. TRANSPORT AND GETTING AROUND

Wick benefits from being served by buses, a railway station and an airport. However it was felt that improvements to service frequency and timing, especially at the beginning and end of the day, and lower prices would help meet local needs, attract investment and bring more visitors. Participants also wanted to see improvements to pedestrian paths within town including better accessibility for all and investment in continuous coastal paths and inland routes. Opportunities to use the railway for heritage rides between Wick and Thurso could be explored.

**“ We’ve got a harbour, an airport and a railway - how many towns can say that? ”**



## Key Themes

### 7. A PLACE TO BE IN CAITHNESS

It was felt that despite the outstanding coastal beauty, richness of the local history, heritage and archaeology, the region of Caithness is undersold and under-promoted. Participants agreed that the growth and regeneration of the town should be linked with that of the wider area. Wick should work to articulate, coordinate and promote its many natural and cultural assets as part of an enhanced offer to visitors across Caithness.

**“ There are so many things in Caithness visitors leave without ever seeing! ”**



### 8. CONTINUING THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

Participants were keen to continue their involvement in the development, regeneration and improvement of Wick. Issues to be considered carefully include preservation and new uses for historic buildings, sites for housing development, area tourism strategy, the involvement of young people and development of the harbour and local economy. In response to this it was suggested that a new or existing forum meet later in the spring with responsibility for discussing how the community and the Local Development Plan will progress the outcomes of the Charrette.

**“ We need to unite our forces! ”**



# A new vision for Wick



Aerial view over Wick from the East



Wick harbour

“ Wick is a town of fish! ”



Typical coastline near Wick



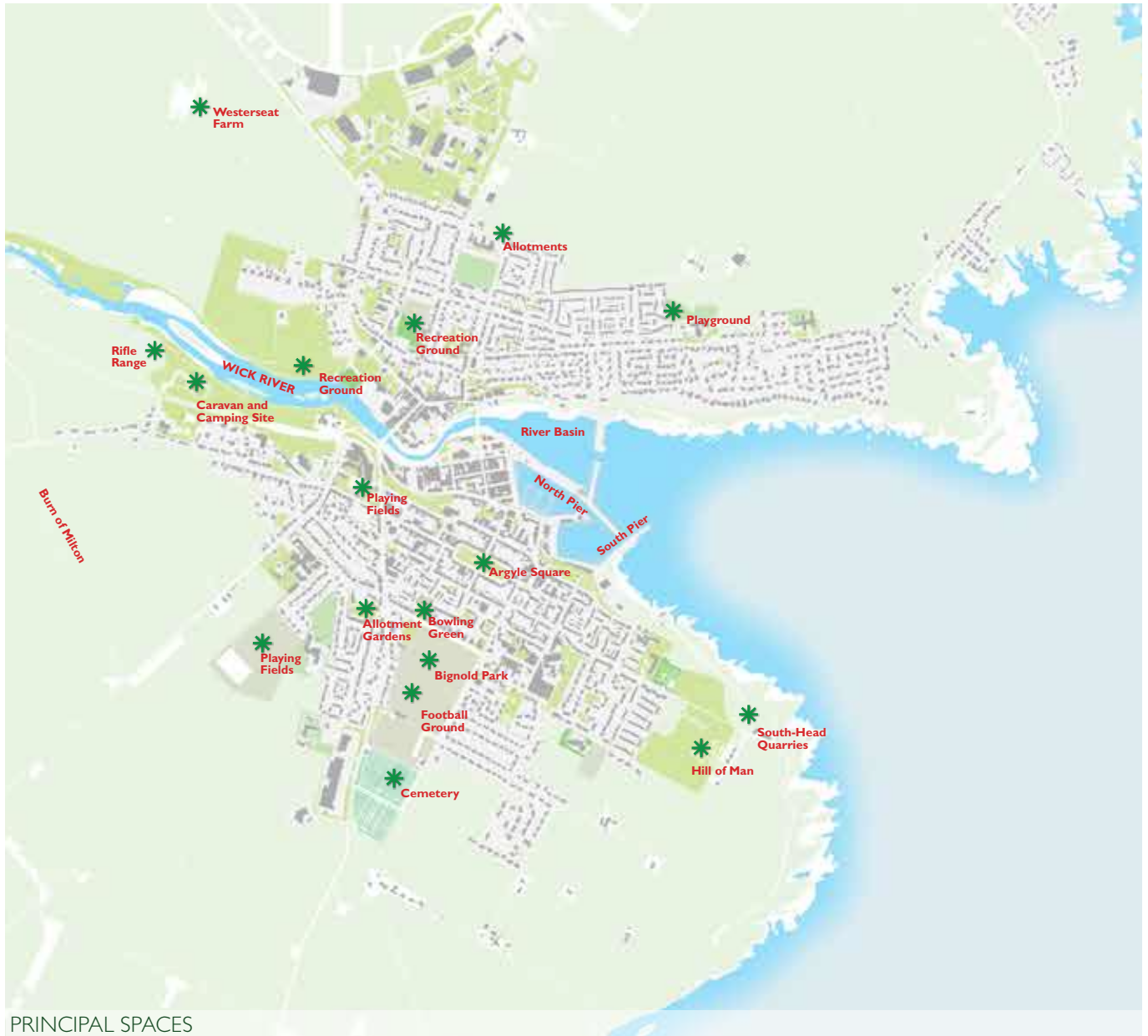
PRINCIPAL ROADS



PRINCIPAL FLOOD AREA (INDICATIVE)

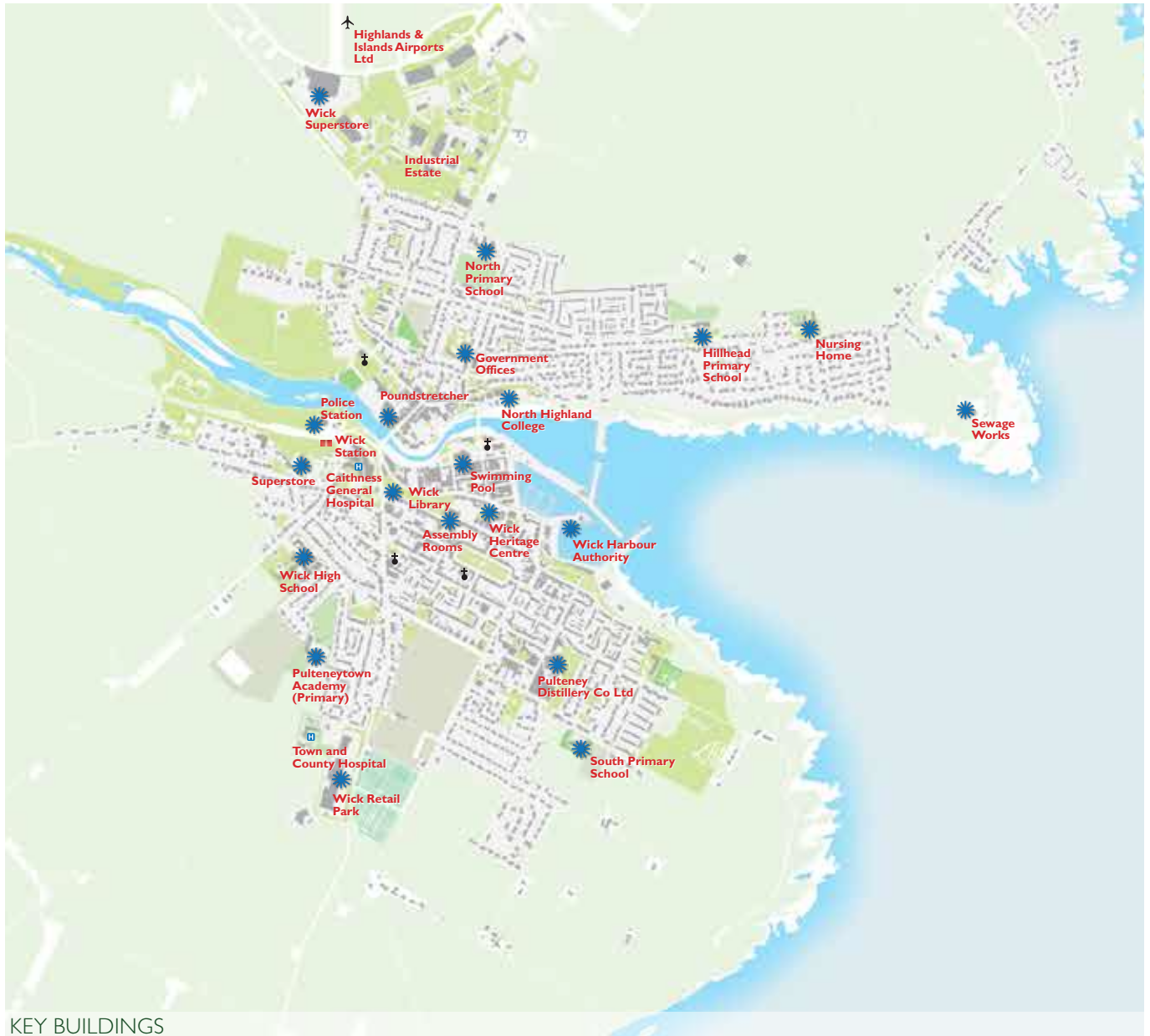


# A new vision for Wick



PRINCIPAL SPACES

# Town Analysis



KEY BUILDINGS

# A new vision for Wick



Wick town centre has been weakened by edge of town development



The vision for Wick should focus on development in the central area

## The Inner Town

The Charrette process highlighted the pressures that have influenced the pattern of the town's development over recent years, and which have resulted in the dispersal of new facilities and activities away from the town centre towards more peripheral edge of town locations.

The business park being located at the airport, the Tesco Store on the north side of town, and the retail park on South Road have all contributed to the perceived de-centralisation of Wick, and the siting of the proposed new high school campus in an edge of town location, as well as the Nuclear Archive facility was felt by some to be an unwelcome continuation of this trend.

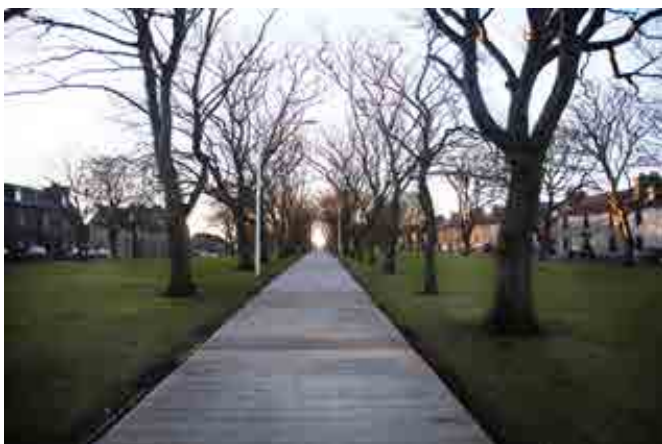
This 'hollowing out' of the town was seen by many as a negative aspect of Wick's recent history, which along with broader economic factors was contributing to a decline in the activity, vibrancy and attractiveness of the historic town centre. There seemed to be strong support amongst local people towards redressing the recent imbalance between central and peripheral development, and making sure that the High Street area and Lower Pulteneytown were the focus of future life and activity.

**“ There is a danger that the heart of Wick will die out if further retail and shops are being built outside! ”**

Local people are rightly passionate about the rich built and cultural heritage that the town possesses, and there is a strong desire to ensure that local landmarks such as the Carnegie Library and the Old Bakery can be preserved and utilised productively in advance of perhaps new development in less central locations. This could suggest that a policy of sequential testing of sites be developed to direct development towards the central area, and to adapt and re-use existing building structures wherever possible.

Throughout the Charrette process, the various hands on planning groups looked holistically at many facets of the town and suggested options for potential improvements or future developments in diverse areas such as enhancing the public realm, bringing old properties back to life, creating better walking and cycling routes, enhancing the opportunity for town centre employment, making best use of the town's natural and built assets, and improving the cultural and leisure offer of the town.

**“ The retail park on the edge of town was a self inflicted wound. ”**

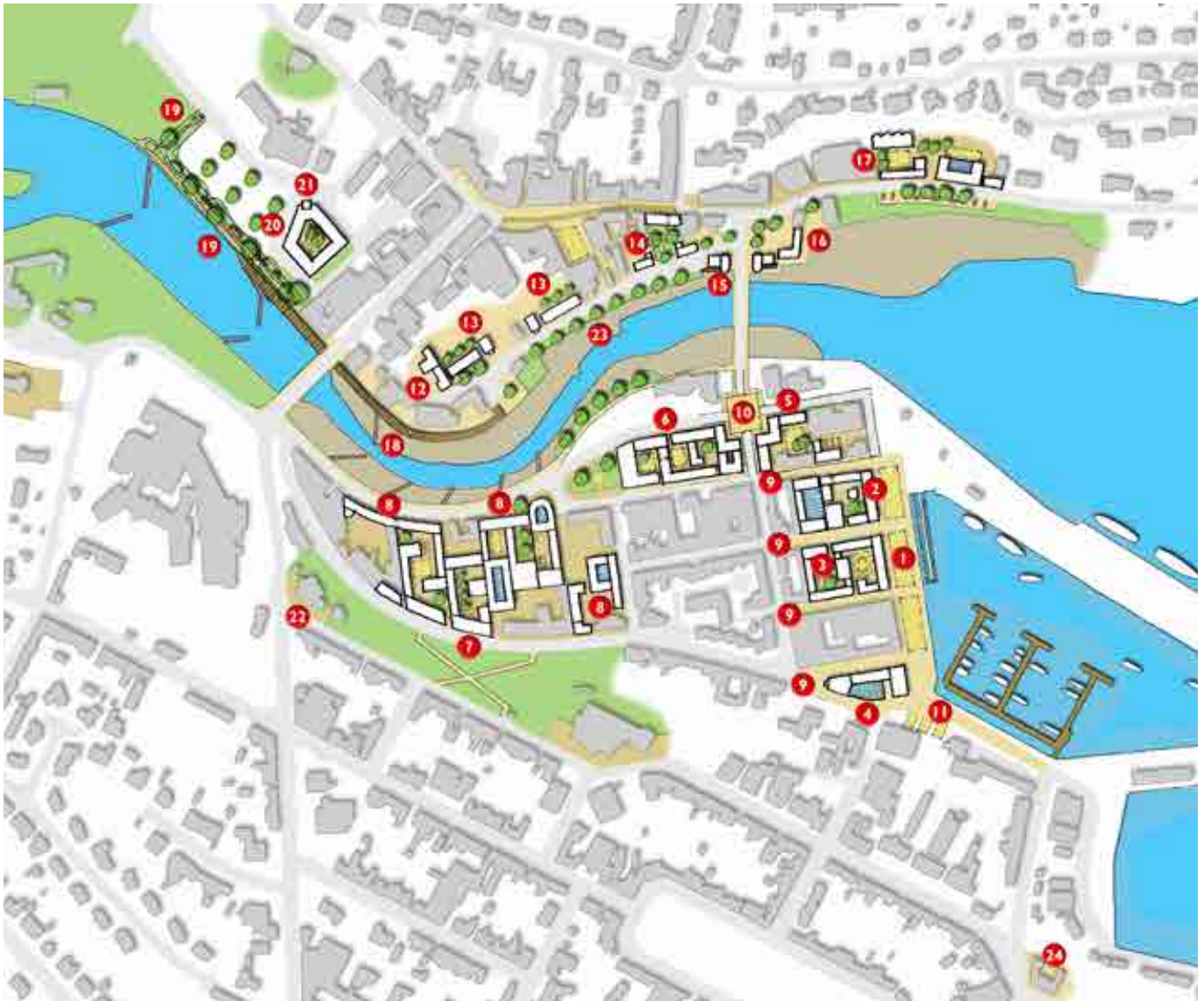


Argyle Square environmental improvements



# A new vision for Wick

## ILLUSTRATIVE TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN



“ Right place, right time, right people ”

## MASTERPLAN KEY

- 1 Quayside festival and market space
- 2 Redevelopment for Wick Visual Arts Centre
- 3 Mixed use arts, crafts and leisure redevelopment
- 4 Office development for renewables companies
- 5 Mixed use river view development
- 6 Mixed use studio and workshop development
- 7 Residential redevelopment along Union Street
- 8 Residential live/work and workspace development
- 9 Eastern pedestrianisation of Lower Pulteneytown
- 10 New Pulteneytown arrival square formed
- 11 Existing caves redeveloped as retail kiosks
- 12 Redevelopment of old police station as a youth hostel
- 13 Retail/ leisure infill development overlooking river
- 14 Retail/ leisure gap site development connecting to High Street
- 15 Tollhouse restaurant/café/ bar with south facing terrace
- 16 Retail/ leisure infill development
- 17 Hotel/ tourist accommodation in historic conversion
- 18 Riverside walkway with link below Bridge Street
- 19 New landscaped bund along river edge to mitigate flooding
- 20 Retail redevelopment with housing/ offices above
- 21 Tourist information point
- 22 Carnegie Arts Centre with Johnson Collection
- 23 Environmental improvements to Victoria Place
- 24 Old Bakery refurbished for residential use

The consultant team then sought to synthesize the outputs from the hands on planning groups and workshops, and integrate these with the various opportunity sites that had been identified through the process, to arrive at an illustrative masterplan for Wick that could be used in helping shape the town's future. The illustrative masterplan shown here is a 'snapshot' in time, based on the discussions with local people and key stakeholders during the charrette, and which rather than purport to be a fixed plan for development, instead could be seen as the preferred emerging option. However, it is flexible and various ideas generated during the charrette could be selected and combined helping to form alternative options.

The illustrative masterplan developed for Wick is in two parts, the first of which records potential development options within the inner town area focusing on the town centre, the river edge, the harbour and historic Lower Pulteneytown, the second of which looks at options for the wider town.



The inner town



The wider town

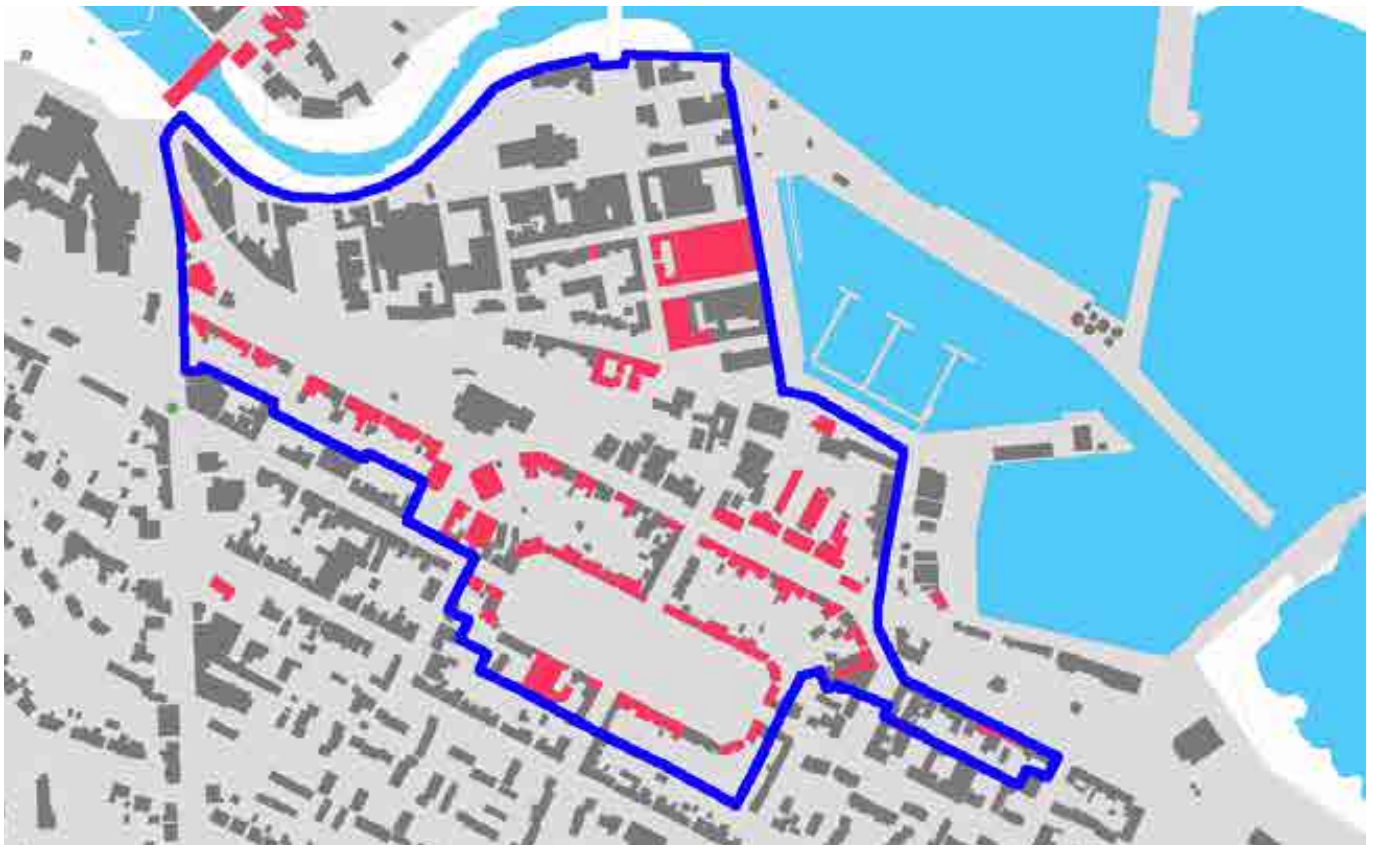
# A new vision for Wick

## HARBOUR QUAY & PULTENEYTOWN

Pulteneytown has a wealth of historical interest associated with it, and which is reflected in its streets and buildings. Conceived as one of the first planned industrial towns in Britain, it was laid out by Thomas Telford as a model township to serve the burgeoning herring industry, which was to thrive for over a hundred years.

It contains a significant number of listed buildings which are laid out on a simple urban grid at the edge of the harbour, and is characterized by an upper and lower town – the lower town being notable for the large herring curing yards within the centres of its urban blocks, and the upper town for its wide residential streets with the elongated Argyle Square as a centerpiece.

**“ Our harbour went completely down the bin when the fish industry had to close down. Now we need to develop future uses! ”**

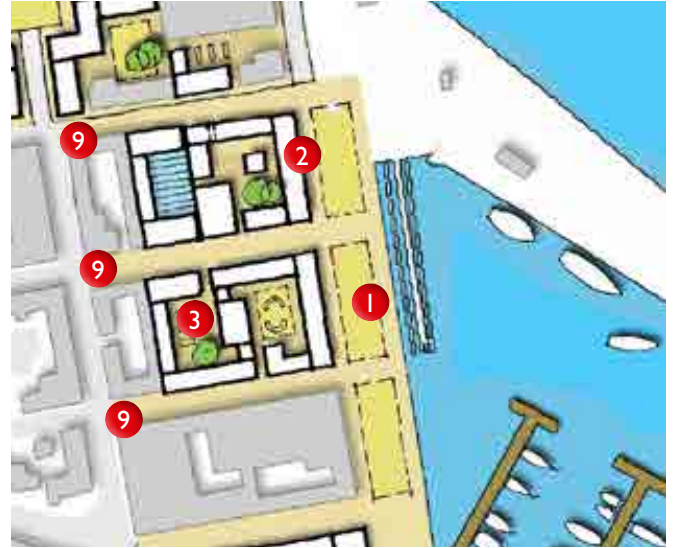


Listed buildings diagram of Pulteneytown - the dark blue line shows the extent of the conservation area

# Town Centre Strategy

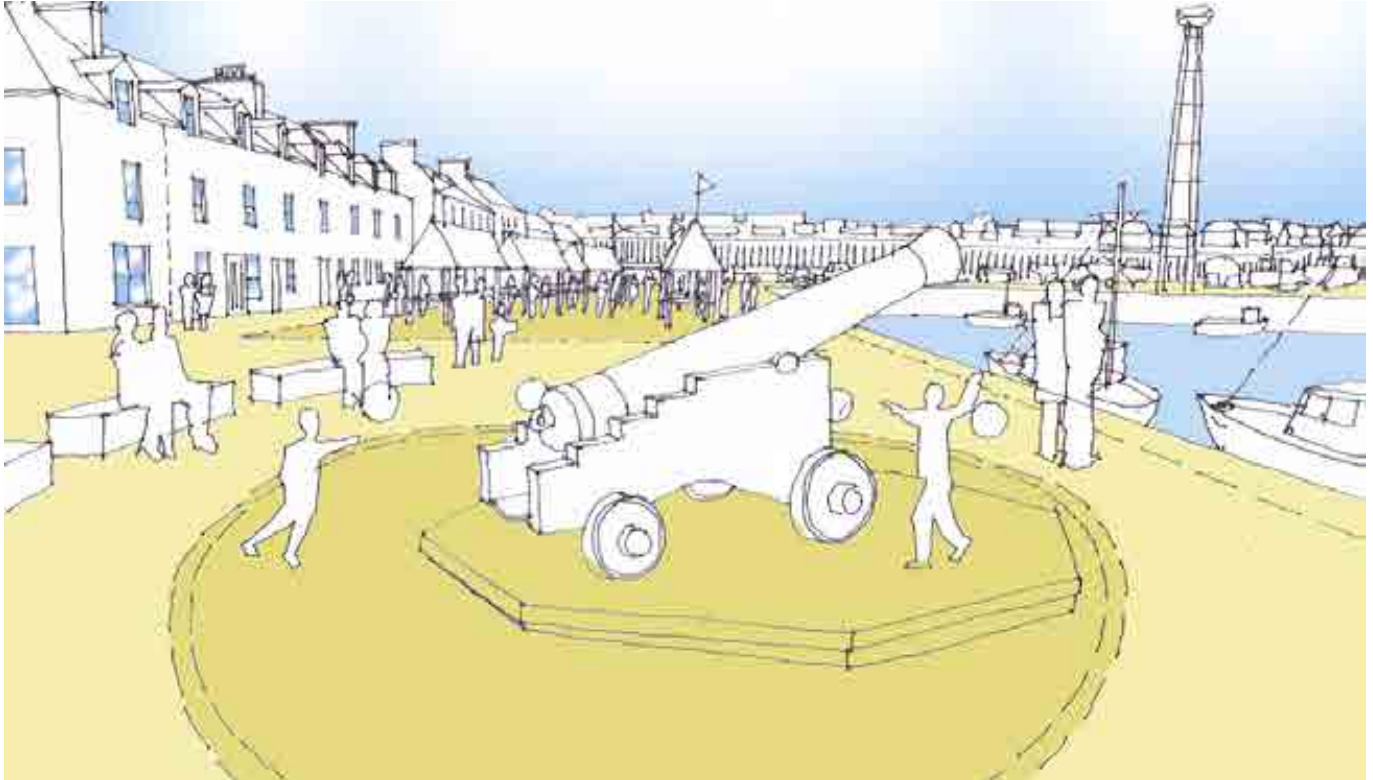
Fishing and marine life have been at the heart of Lower Pulteneytown's existence since its creation, and suggestions were made during the Charrette to enhance the harbourside experience for local people, visitors and businesses by developing Lower Pulteneytown as a focus for heritage led regeneration. It was felt that a variety of leisure, cultural, residential and business uses could co-exist in a vibrant attractive destination at the harbourside whilst still ensuring the functionality of existing harbour uses.

Streetscaping and environmental improvements are proposed to the historic quayside of Lower Pulteneytown, to create a pedestrian friendly public space **1** at the water's edge which could be used on occasion for local festivals or markets, or on a day to day basis for people simply to walk, cycle or sit and take in the atmosphere and the hustle and bustle of the harbour.





# A new vision for Wick



View north along Harbour Quay

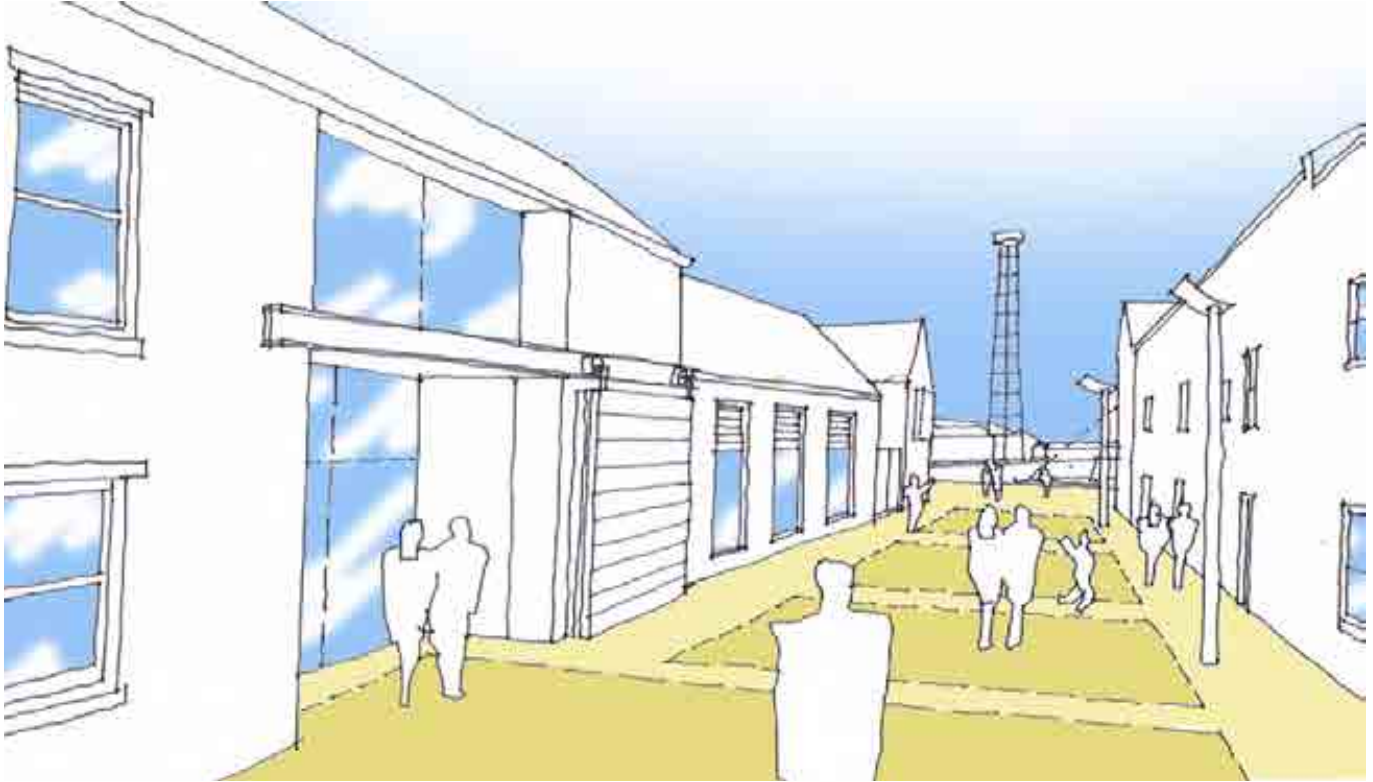
Upgrading the less heavily trafficked areas of the harbourfront streetscape using high quality, durable natural materials such as Caithness slab and stone cobbles would dramatically improve the visual environment, and subject to cost constraints could be extended in time to the eastern streets of Lower Pulteneytown **9** to create a unified harbour quarter.



Several urban blocks in a front line position adjacent to the harbour were identified during the Charrette as being ripe for renovation or sensitive redevelopment, which if implemented would reinforce the harbour area as an attractive destination.

Several properties on the north side of Telford Street are currently vacant, and there are outline plans to create a new Visual Arts Centre for Wick here which could inhabit some or all of the existing curing yard **2**. Whilst funding could be challenging for this type of project in the current economic climate, this could either be a longer term aspiration or else another use considered which didn't rely on public subsidy.

The Stevens Yard building cluster between Telford Street and Saltoun Street was another urban block that was identified as having the potential, in time, to contribute to the regeneration of lower Pulteneytown, through the sensitive renovation of the listed buildings



Eastern pedestrianisation of Lower Pulteneytown

and possibly the careful integration of some new infill development within a courtyard setting **3**. Suggestions for arts and crafts workshops, with perhaps small scale gallery spaces and some leisure uses such as a tearoom or restaurant could greatly assist in bringing back a real buzz to the area.

**“ This was a town of artisans and craftsmen and that was how the town was built up. ”**



# A new vision for Wick

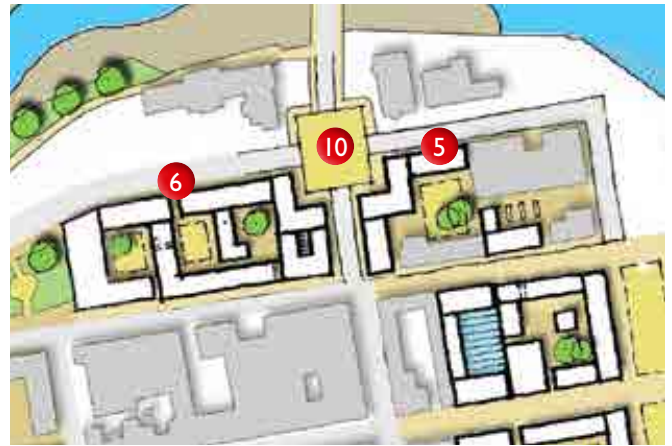
Further south in Lower Pulteneytown another opportunity site was identified, the boat builders shed between Rose Street and Bank Row and fronting the harbour. We have provisionally identified this site as being a renewables sector engineering firm's local base. ④ During the course of the Charrette it was suggested that an engineering company associated with the offshore wind industry was potentially seeking office accommodation in the harbour area for up to 80 staff. Whilst this particular operator's demand may or may not come to fruition, it is highly likely that good quality office space at the harbour would be a viable proposition to service a growing offshore renewables industry in the near future.



At the south end of the Harbour Quay some attractive new metalwork gates have been installed to the existing harbourside caves, which subject to some further investigation could perhaps be brought into the life of town by providing space for summer retail kiosks serving the marina users and tourists. ⑪



Existing caves



The illustrative masterplan indicates a proposal to improve the sense of arrival into lower Pulteneytown from Wick Harbour Bridge, by the potential formation of a small public square ⑩ formed from the redevelopment of adjacent derelict or redundant properties on Martha Terrace. The purpose here is to create a more welcoming entrance to historic Pulteneytown, whilst accepting that the existing Medical Centre, Fire Station and Mission Hall will each likely remain in their present locations for the foreseeable future.

To either side of the new arrival square, opportunities for future infill redevelopment are evident between Martha Terrace and Burn Street, where harbour/ marine related workshops, studios and offices could be well placed in close proximity to the main harbour access ⑤ ⑥.

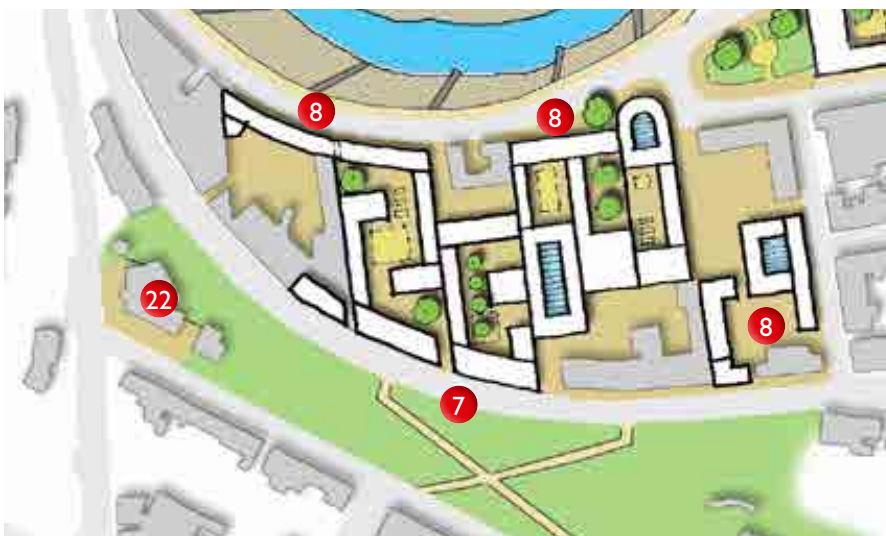


Views from Wick Harbour Bridge to Martha Terrace

In the interim period however, with the proposed relocation of the swimming pool to the new high school campus, the existing facility **6** will be surplus to requirements, and there may be the potential for the building to be converted for an alternative use – there are precedents from elsewhere of infilling the pool cavity to create space for new uses such as a dance studio, or even some low cost office space which could well be attractive to a renewables business in this location.



The swimming pool on Martha Terrace

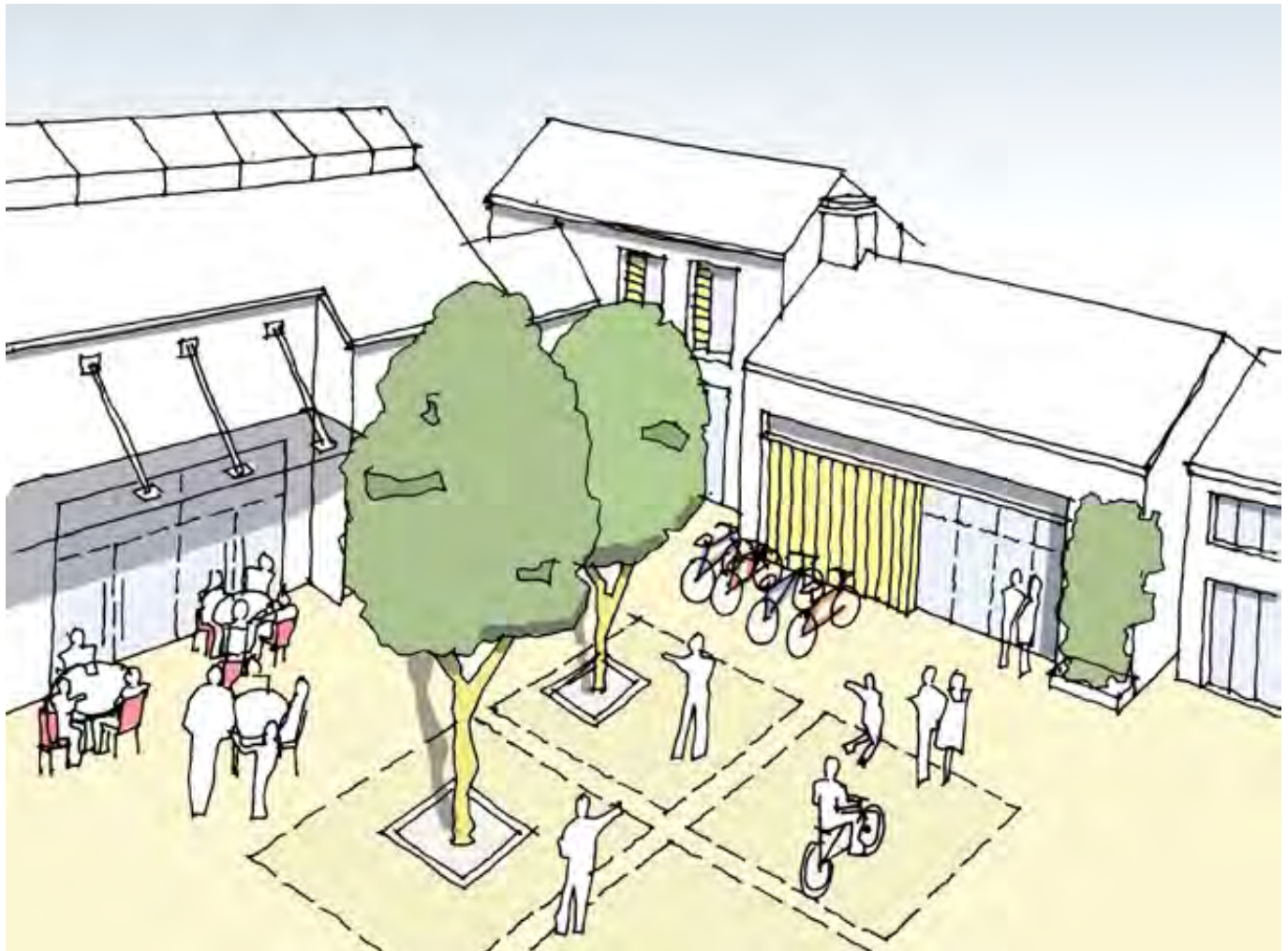


**“ We have so many grey houses and grey people here. We could need much more colour! ”**

Further west in Lower Pulteneytown, there are a significant number of derelict properties fronting Union Street, which create a high degree of blight in what would otherwise be an attractive location fronting onto the wooded embankment to the south. It is understood that there are structural issues with many of the derelict properties which were built here without adequate foundations on the line of the old river bed – the course of the river having been restricted during the construction of the fishing town to its present day course. The proposals here envisage the re-creation of the residential frontage with views over the embankment, but constructed with deeper and stronger foundations. **7**

It is believed that there is currently little demand for new private or social housing in the town, and indeed there may currently be an oversupply of housing in Wick, with some blocks presently being demolished as a result. Nevertheless, in hopefully better global economic times ahead, and if perhaps Wick were to share in some of the anticipated offshore renewables boom then that situation could well reverse in future years, which could unlock some investment in high quality central housing sites such as at Union Street.

# A new vision for Wick



Residential live/work and workspace development



“There’s been a lot of talking - there needs to be a lot of doing!”

The western parcel of Lower Pulteneytown is currently given over to mostly industrial uses, several of which occupy key frontages facing onto the river and do little to improve the visual setting of the riverbank. There may be opportunity in the future as perhaps industrial users need to grow and relocate, for a more sensitive finely grained form of development to take root here, with a mix of business uses/ workshops and homes. **8**



River Street - western parcel of Lower Pulteneytown

Whilst Upper Pulteneytown possesses generally intact and attractive street frontages arranged along wide streets, the Old Bakery on Harbour Terrace stands out as being an attractive historic building for which a new use should be sought to bring it back to life. Its form, scale and location would make it appropriate for residential conversion, with great views across the adjacent harbour. **24**



Old Bakery on Harbour Terrace

The Charrette revealed considerable local concern as to the fate of the listed Carnegie Library **22** in Upper Pulteneytown, when the new school will effectively render it redundant for its intended use. Suggestions were made for alternative uses such as for housing the Johnson Collection of photographs, and also the creation of studio spaces for local artists. There were strong views expressed that an appropriate and viable new use for the building needs to be considered in conjunction with the plans for the new school.



Carnegie Library

# A new vision for Wick

## THE TOWN CENTRE AND THE RIVER EDGE

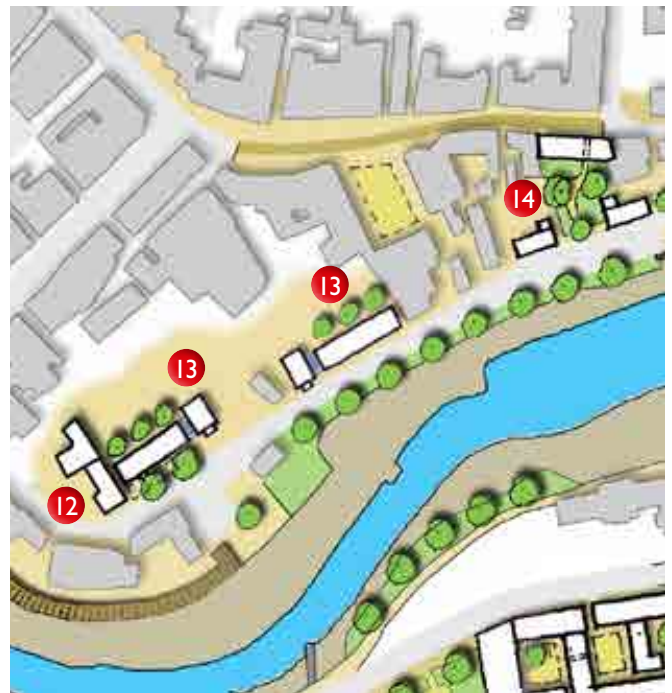
Wick town centre is defined principally by the High Street and Bridge Street, both of which possess several listed buildings of note, and which have a strong local identity as befits a sub-regional centre. Environmental improvements have taken place successfully in recent years to the High Street and some of its adjoining lanes, and it is understood that new Council offices are planned for the High Street which should help to retain footfall and sustain economic activity in the town centre.



High Street



Bridge Street



**“There are no high margin shops!”**

The town however appears to have mostly turned its back on one of its principal assets, the river. The river edge on its north bank is presently characterized by gap sites, car parks, a pumping station, a sub station and a low cost supermarket, and presents an unwelcoming face to the town which could be substantially improved.

The Charrette explored with local people the potential opportunities that exist to significantly improve this aspect of the town, which for people arriving by rail is likely to be one of the first impressions of the town on making their way across the bridge to the town centre.

An idea was aired to convert the old Police Station building on Victoria Place into a low cost hostel for visitors to the area, which would perhaps be well positioned just a couple of minutes walk to the station, and which could contribute to the regeneration of this rather forgotten street. **12**



Environmental improvements to Victoria Place and proposed infill developments overlooking the river

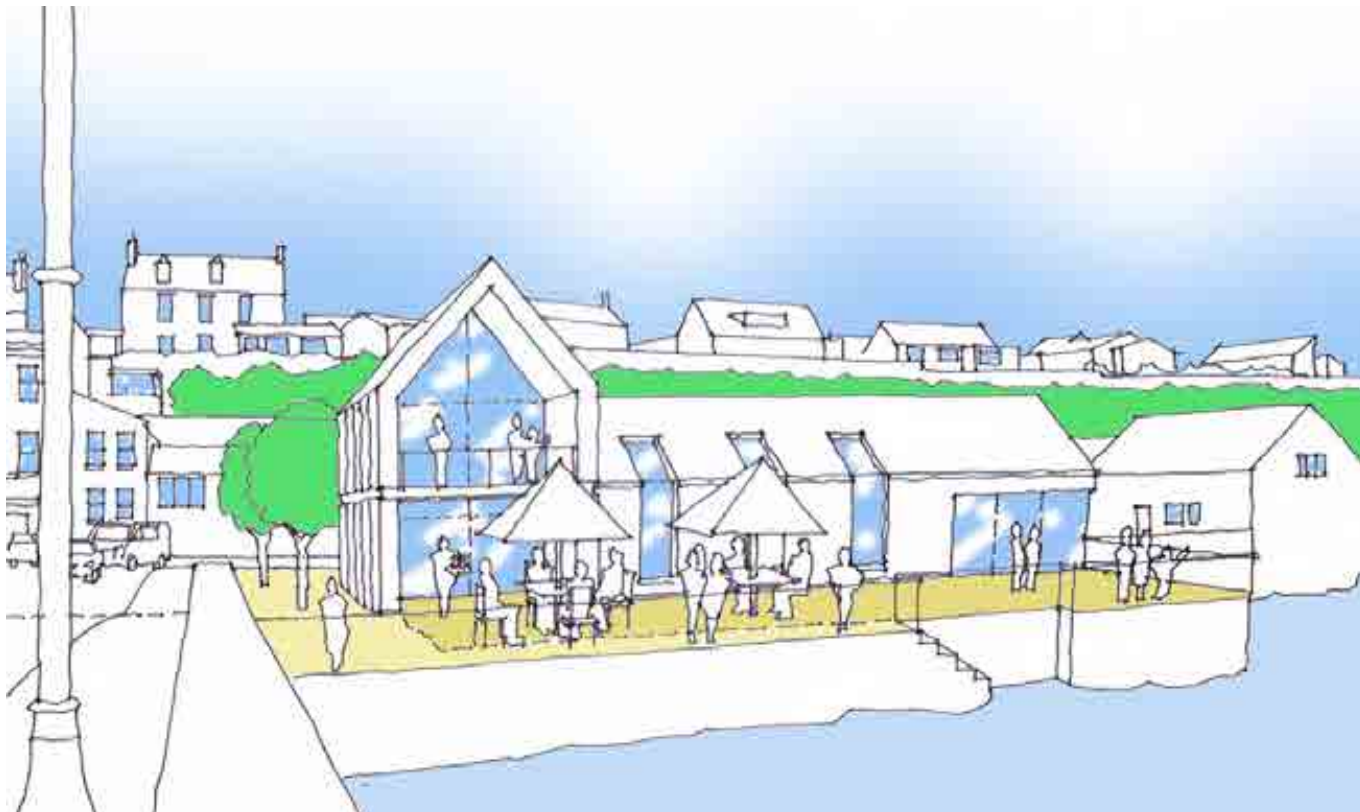
The fragmented quality of Victoria Place when viewed from the river could be significantly improved with some modest gap site infill development in several places along its length, possibly to provide additional retail space close to the High Street or leisure uses which could have an attractive southerly aspect overlooking the river. **13**

A more sizeable development opportunity exists further east along Victoria Place, **14** where a gap site extends north from the river edge to the High Street. Here a mixed use retail/leisure development could be formed with perhaps a lane linking between the two streets in a layout reminiscent of other locations in the High Street.





# A new vision for Wick



Tollhouse restaurant/café/ bar with south facing terrace

A pair of tollbooth style leisure buildings on either side of the Wick Harbour Bridge are shown on the illustrated masterplan, with potential south facing terraces overlooking the river. These structures could potentially be small cafes, restaurants or bars, and would help to encourage the flow of pedestrians between the High Street and the harbour, by creating places of interest and activity en route. **15**

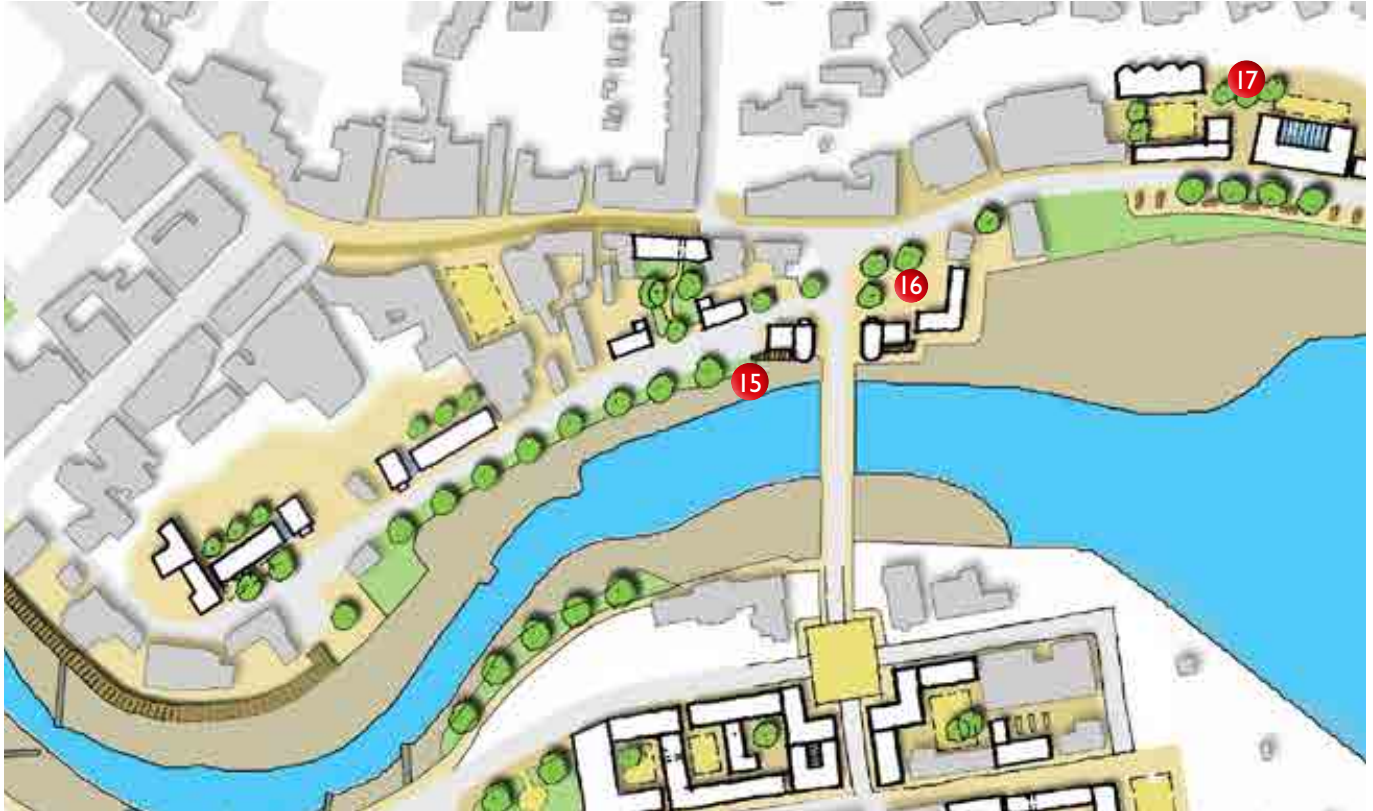
A portion of the adjacent car park could potentially also be developed for leisure or perhaps business use adjacent to the eastern most tollbooth building, to help create a strong edge to the town centre and improve its relationship with the river. **16**

Further east along Shore Road from Wick Harbour Bridge, another significant gap site with some derelict historic structures is evident, which could be developed in time for a number of uses. It is understood that there



Current view from Wick Harbour Bridge

have been plans by the site owner in the past for a hotel here. Alternatively this site could sustain marine related offices or workshops, or possibly even housing development with views across to the harbour. **17**



Sensitive joining of old and new buildings



Gap site on Shore Road

# A new vision for Wick



Lack of connectivity along the riverfront



Vision of a riverside walkway with link below Bridge Street

One of the walkabout groups at the Charrette suggested an option to extend the existing riverside walkway east from its present termination point at the Poundstretcher car park site under the Bridge Street bridge and thus improve the connectivity along the river edge. 18 The arched structure of the bridge would seem to allow this, and if implemented could create a welcome addition to the available town centre walking routes.

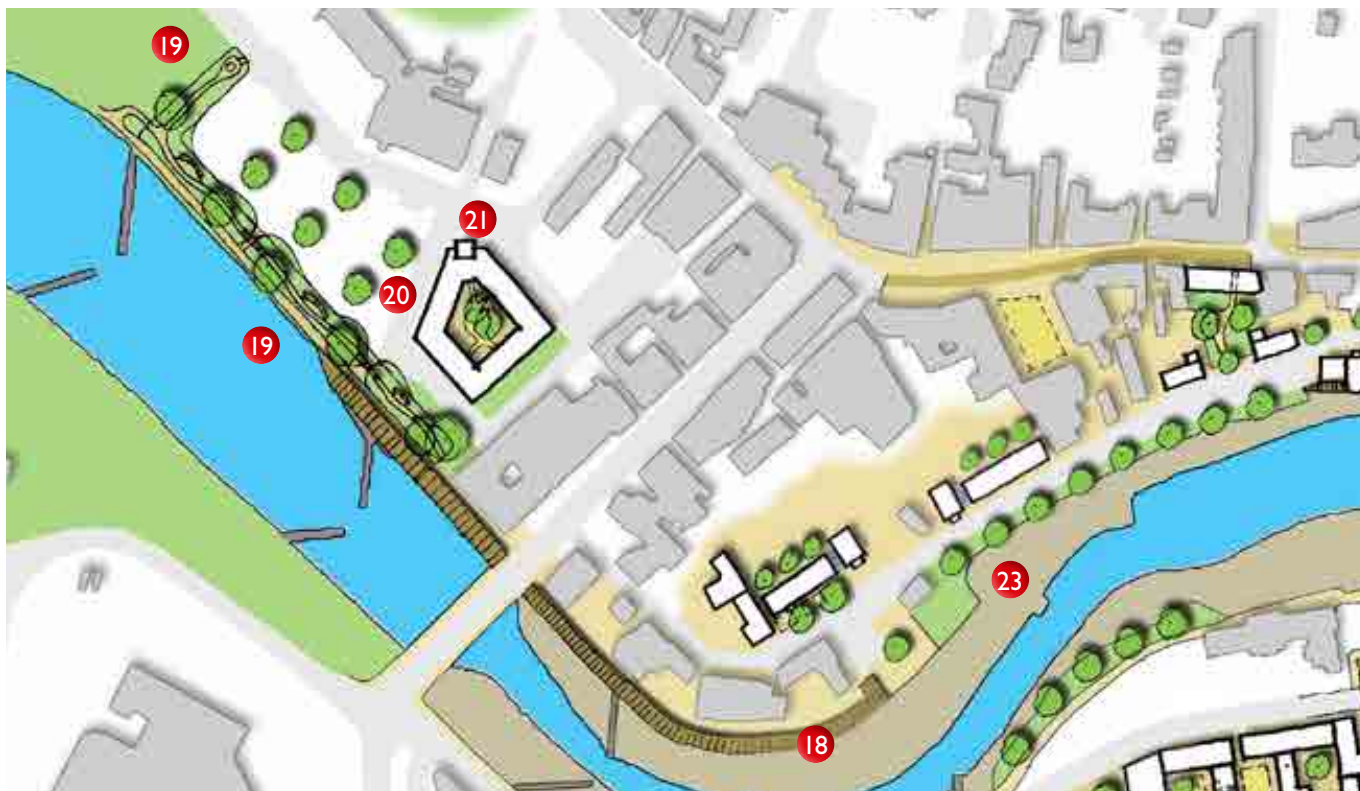


**“ There are a lot of facilities which could be much more integrated just by better designed pedestrian access. ”**



**“ I particularly love the people in Wick. There is a warmth and a friendliness. Everybody will stop and talk with you. Come to Wick – it smiles better!! ”**

# A new vision for Wick



It is understood that the Poundstretcher site is prone to flooding at times, which will affect its investment and development potential considerably. To tackle this and to better connect the existing riverside walk with the town centre, it is proposed to extend the parkland south along the river edge in the form of a landscaped bund at the edge of the existing car park. **19**

The single storey supermarket structure presently occupied by Poundstretcher sits in a key location within the town centre and is served by one of the town centre's principal car parks. The single storey structure sits uncomfortably against the tall adjacent historic church and other buildings which front onto Bridge Street, and could be seen as a future mixed use development site with retail use at the ground floor but with perhaps 2 or 3 storeys of accommodation on upper floors, consisting of apartments, offices or even sheltered housing. **20**



Riverside walk looking east over the car park towards Poundstretcher

Many people at the Charrette were disappointed at the loss of the stand alone tourist office that once existed, with that function now relegated to an upper floor of another use. People feel that Wick's potential for tourism is restricted with the current arrangement.



Vision of the new landscaped bund along the river edge to mitigate flooding,

Were a new tourist office site to be considered then an appropriate location could likely be found in the car park at the rear of Bridge Street, as this is the one most visible to visitors and tourists on arrival into the centre of Wick. **21**

The extension of the existing riverside walk through the town **18** & **19** could create an improved walking loop as far as Wick Harbour Bridge, and beyond to the North Head. Along with the potential gap site infills along Victoria Place to improve the aspect over this key frontage, environmental improvements such as tree planting, streetscaping and railing treatments could be considered to further enhance the experience. **23**

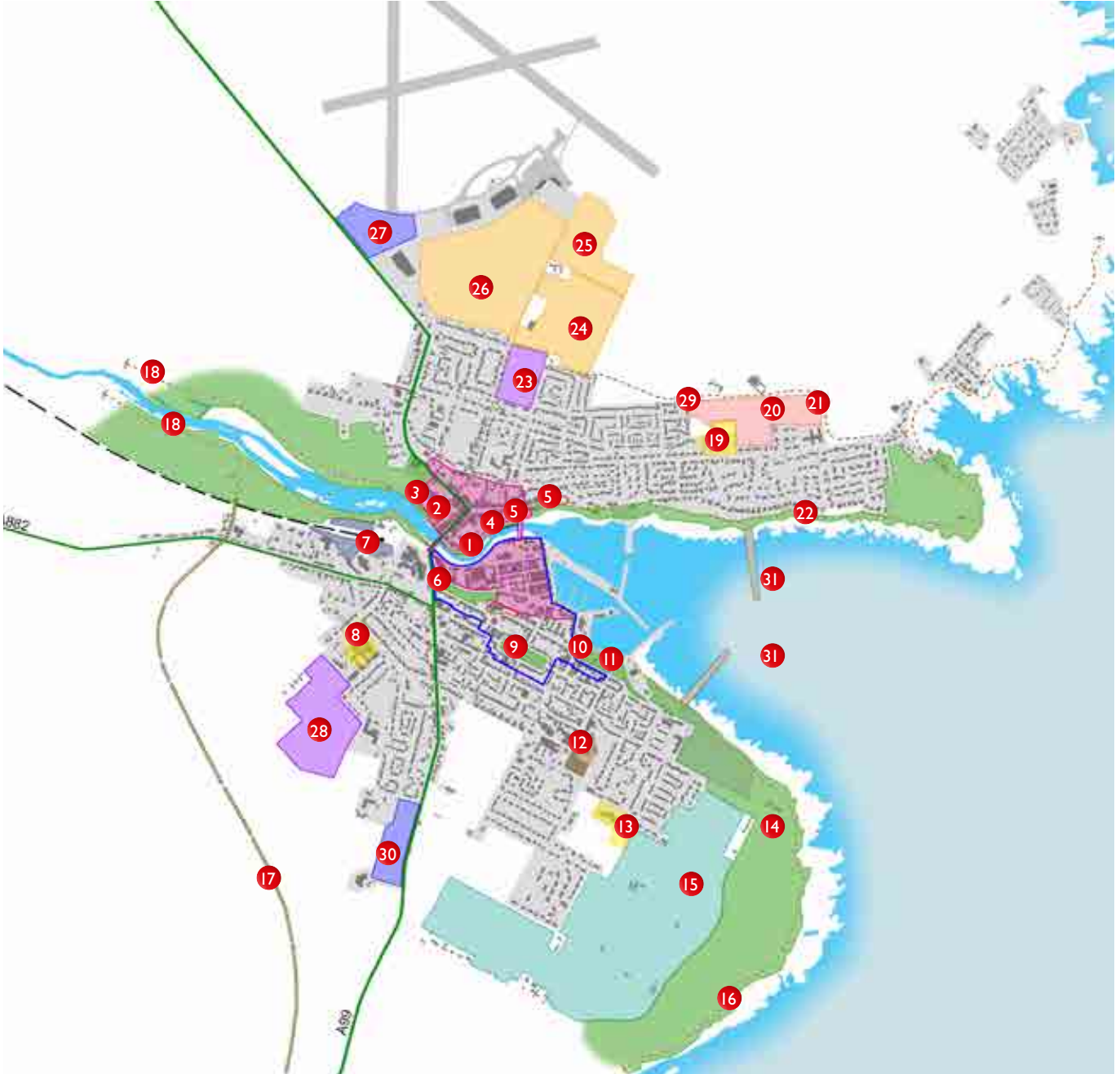
**“The tourist business need to be professionalised! There was a great tourist office but that’s been closed...”**



Tourist information now located on the upper floor of a clothes shop

# A new vision for Wick

## WICK STRATEGY PLAN



# Overall Strategy

## The Wider Town

Whilst the town centre and Lower Pulteneytown areas attracted a great deal of interest and input from local people at the Charrette, holistic discussions also took place within the workshops and the hands on planning groups related to the wider town, and potential mechanisms for promoting regeneration. The principal areas of examination were as follows:

- THE MOVEMENT NETWORK
- REGENERATION OF KEY BUILDINGS AND BROWNFIELD SITES
- POTENTIAL GREENFIELD EXPANSION AREAS
- THE RENEWABLES SECTOR
- REGENERATION MECHANISMS

### KEY

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Regeneration of historic riverfront buildings</li> <li>2 Potential redevelopment of riverfront supermarket site</li> <li>3 Extension of green space into town for flood defence</li> <li>4 Riverfront walkway</li> <li>5 Riverfront gap site infill to improve river edge</li> <li>6 Carnegies Library potentially redeveloped as Arts Centre</li> <li>7 Railhead development sites for renewables industry</li> <li>8 Retention of 1930's facade of school building; brownfield regeneration site for housing</li> <li>9 Argyle Square environmental improvements</li> <li>10 Bakery regeneration</li> <li>11 Pavillion improvements</li> <li>12 Pulteney Distillery</li> <li>13 South Primary School regeneration site for housing</li> <li>14 Amenity landscape preserved along coastline</li> <li>15 South Wick future greenfield housing / renewables business expansion area</li> <li>16 Improvements to and extension of coastal path</li> <li>17 Cycle Path along old railway</li> <li>18 Extend and improve paths to Loch Watten</li> <li>19 Hillhead Primary School brownfield regeneration site for housing</li> <li>20 Potential green belt housing allocation</li> <li>21 Pap Broch archaeological park</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22 Improvements to and extension of North Head coastal path</li> <li>23 New Wick North Primary School</li> <li>24 Wick Airport Business Park expansion site</li> <li>25 Archive site</li> <li>26 Regeneration of Wick Industrial Estate</li> <li>27 Superstore site</li> <li>28 New Wick Community Campus</li> <li>29 New link path route return to town</li> <li>30 Retail park</li> <li>31 Proposed new breakwaters to expand harbour</li> </ul> |
|--|---|



Historic centre      Conservation area



# A new vision for Wick

## THE MOVEMENT NETWORK

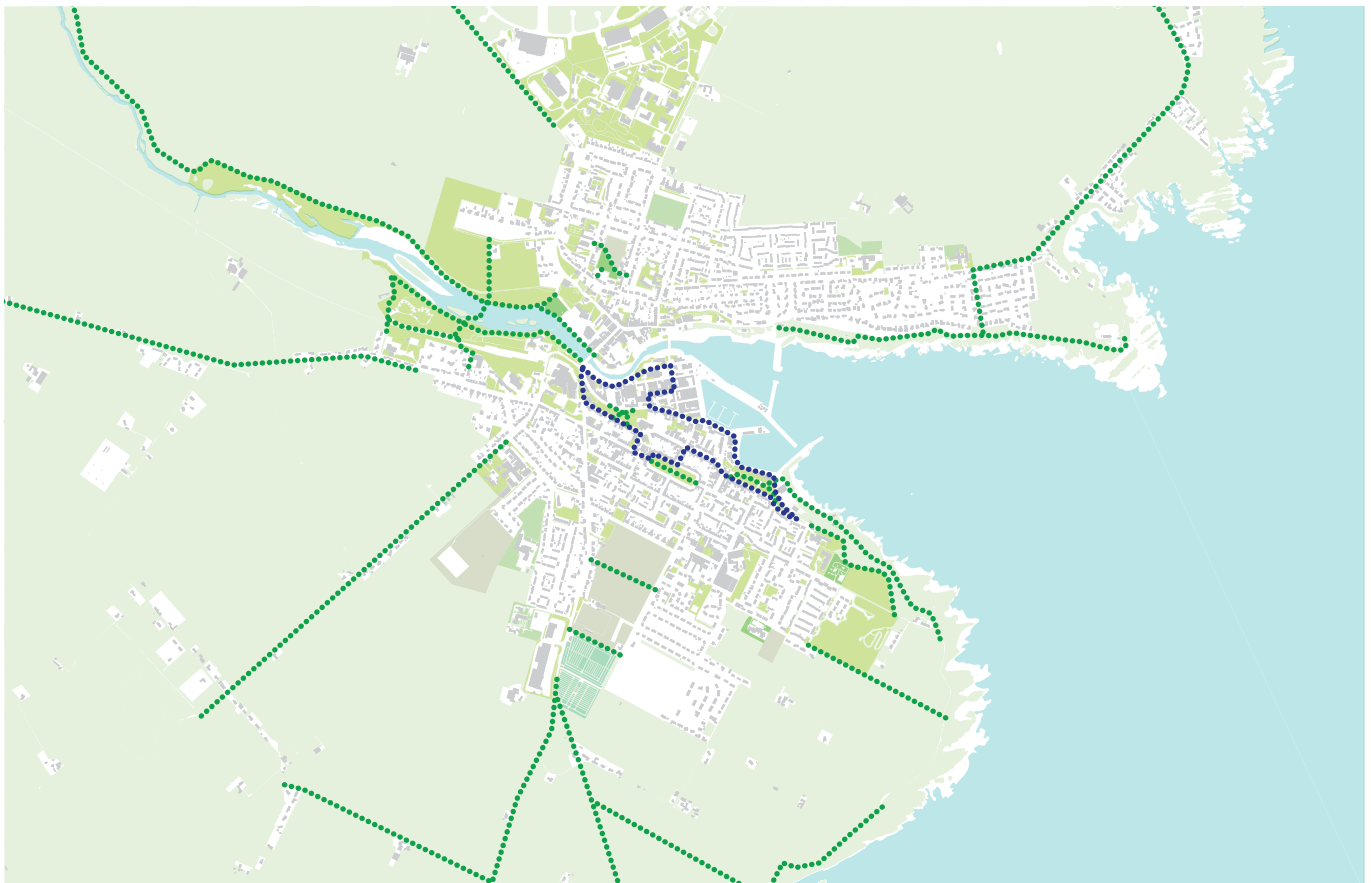
There was a strong desire expressed to preserve, enhance and expand on the available options for walking and cycling in and around Wick. Several walking routes are already well used such as the loop walk west from the town along the River Wick and back, the walk from the harbour area to the South Head and the Trinkie, and the well signed and fascinating Telford Trail in Pulteneytown.

Several people suggested expanding on the available routes, and improving and upgrading sections of existing routes which were of poorer quality.

An expanded coastal trail linking Wick both north and south was promoted by several locals, along

the principles of the Fife Coastal path which attracts significant numbers of visitors each year who then use local services and help boost the local economy. The dramatic, wild coastline around Wick was seen as one of its principle assets from which greater benefit could be gained by the local community.

A first phase of such a coastal route was suggested as being the creation of a 6 mile section to Ulbster to the south of Wick, which is a coastal destination in its own right with historic links to the herring industry. An alternative return route along the line of the old railway back to Wick was suggested as offering the option to complete a circuit for daywalkers, and also being a potential off road cycle route for residents and tourists.



Existing pedestrian and cyclepath network

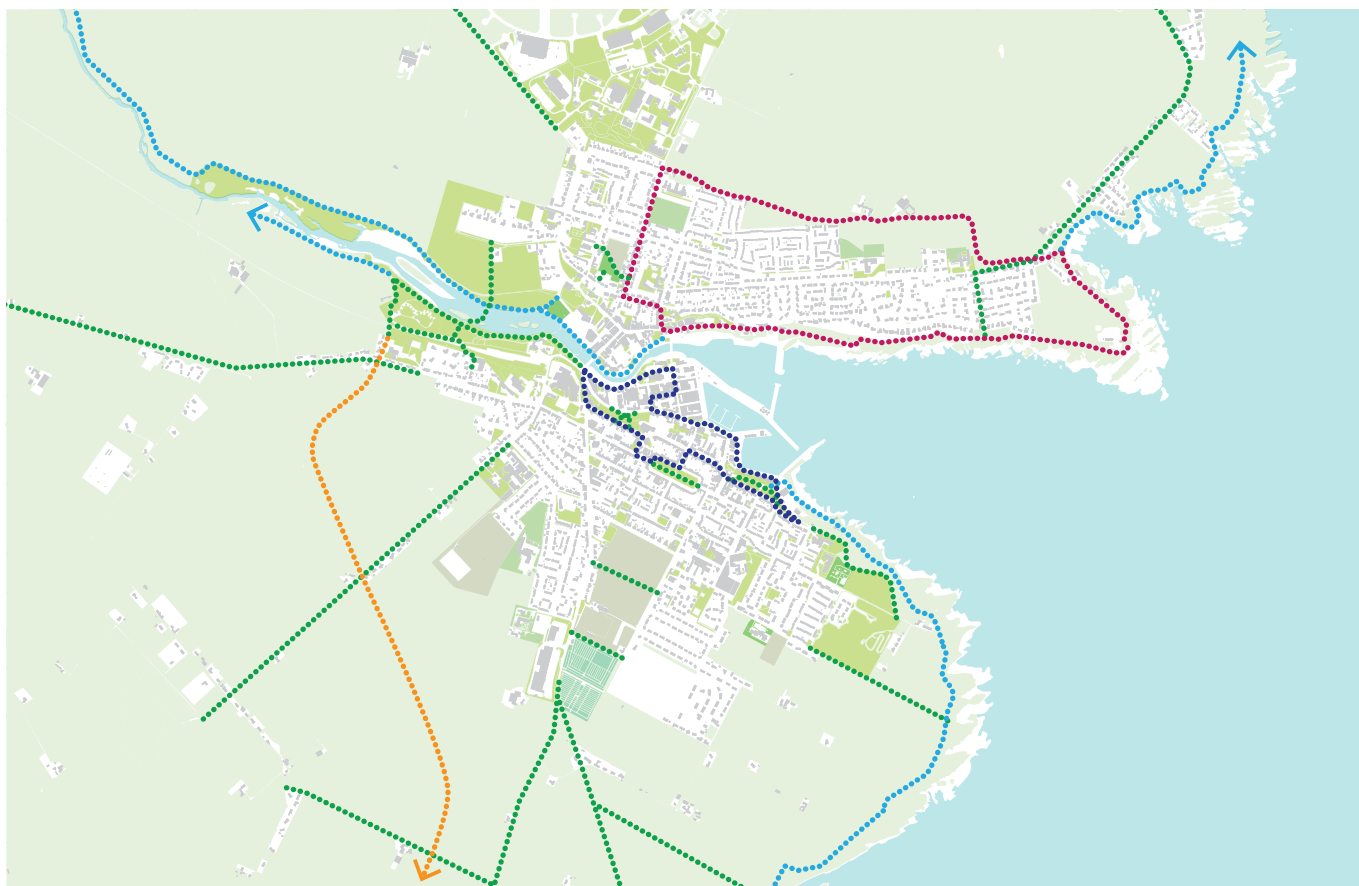
# Overall Strategy

Potential improvements to the walking network along North Head from the harbour area were also raised by locals, with the suggestion of a return loop from North Head being formed to take in the location of one of the principal local archaeological sites, the Pap Broch. This new return route along the north perimeter of the town would lead to the lane network north of the High Street, and give a pleasant return into town.



The riverside walk to the west of Wick is currently an attractive local loop walk, which can be taken as far as the existing Iron Briggie. Local people suggested that this path should be extended up to Loch Watten to create a longer and more challenging route.

- ..... Caithness Core Paths
- ..... Telford Trail
- ..... Proposed path route return to town
- ..... Proposed cyclepath along old railway
- ..... Proposed improvements and extensions to existing paths



Existing and proposed pedestrian and cyclepath network

# A new vision for Wick

## REGENERATION OF KEY BUILDINGS AND BROWNFIELD SITES

The proposed rationalisation of the existing school sites and other council facilities into a single community campus will release several brownfield sites as potential development opportunities. Two of these sites have unique and attractive listed buildings which local people felt strongly should be retained and re-used, these being:

### **The original building/ façade of Wick High School 8**

A suggestion was made to convert the original building for residential use, and possibly to allow some new build development to the rear of the original buildings within the grounds. This would likely be a viable development option which would preserve the attractive listed structure of the 1930s building. Alternatively, a proposal was aired that the new nuclear archive facility could be housed in the old high school, rather than in another new building in an edge of town location.

### **Carnegie Library 6**

The Carnegie Library is an important building in the history and life of the town and many people felt that finding an alternative use for it was imperative in the strategic planning of the new school. Suggestions for artists' studios and workspaces were made, along with an idea to house the Johnson Photographic Collection here.

**“The number of schools is reducing. We are almost on a cycle, each reduction leads to the next reduction...”**

Other brownfield regeneration sites resulting from the schools programme include:

### **Hillhead Primary School 19**

This was seen as an appropriate location for any required new housing development

### **South Primary School 13**

This again was seen as an appropriate location for any required new housing development

A general principle was discussed at several points throughout the Charrette, which was that the retention and refurbishment of any historic buildings of character and quality should be a development priority, thereafter the creative redevelopment of brownfield opportunity sites, and thereafter the release of new greenfield sites for development.



Carnegie Library

# Overall Strategy



# A new vision for Wick

## POTENTIAL GREENFIELD EXPANSION AREAS

Time prior to and at the Charrette event was spent in understanding the existing Local Plan, the location of various derelict sites, and the implications of various potential development sites in and around the town which had been identified during recent 'calls for sites'. These potential opportunity sites were mapped during the Charrette and used to inform the discussions at several of the hands on planning groups.

Generally local people felt positive about future development and did not see development as a negative force, but were keen to ensure that future building was appropriate, well positioned, well designed and of a high quality – much of the recent development in and around the town was viewed as being mediocre at best, and in conflict with Wick's historic character.



It was again noted that present economic conditions meant little requirement at present for the town's growth, but that could clearly change with exciting new opportunities in the renewables sector. Some local people felt that Wick could be on the verge of another boom period if this opportunity could be capitalized upon.

With this positive vision for Wick's future to the fore, three potential greenfield sites in particular were identified for potential future expansion of the town as follows:

### **The Wick Airport Business Park expansion site 24**

In principle there were no objections or negative comments expressed about an expanded business park at the airport, but comments were made as to whether any redundant or underutilised properties could be brought back into use on the existing business park prior to new buildings being constructed

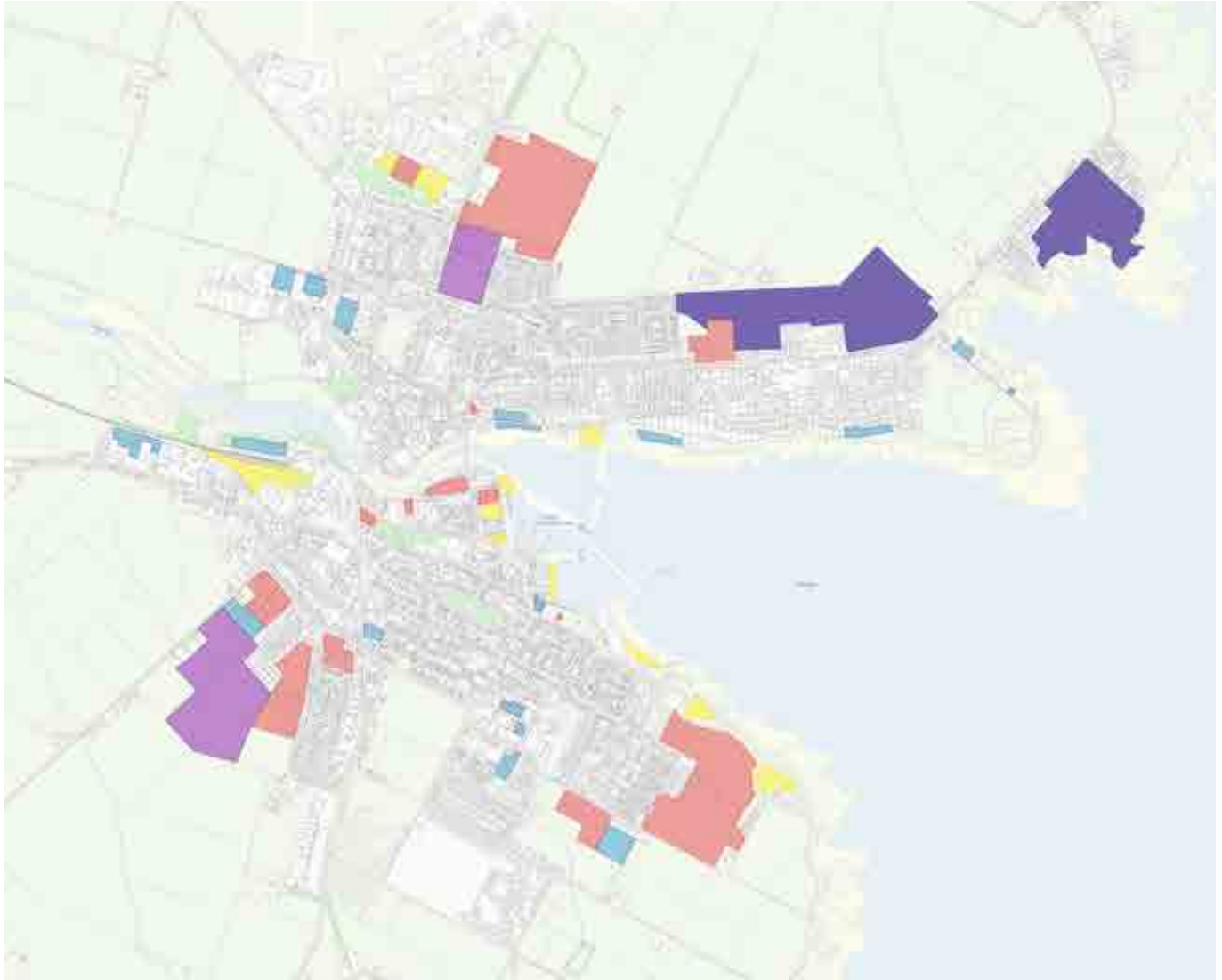
### **Land north and east of Hillhead primary school 20**






Rather than expand some of the small outlying settlements around Wick, it was felt during the Charrette that if greenfield land were required for housing for example, then this location to the rear of the soon to be redundant school could provide that whilst also helping to consolidate the boundary of the built up area. The primary school site itself could form the first phase of a new housing development here.

### **South Wick 15**

The previously zoned land for future expansion to the south and south east of the town was still seen to be appropriate for either housing development, if sufficient demand transpired, or potentially to service a growing renewables industry centred around an expanded harbour. A new access road from this area to the eastern harbour could likely be formed in future to reduce the numbers of heavy vehicles through the town centre. Great care was felt to be necessary in this high impact location in terms of the siting and design of any large structures, and the need to create a green buffer between the coastline and any development was raised.

## POTENTIAL FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SITES



-  Council land surplus to requirements
-  North Highland Onshore Vision call for sites
-  Local Development Plan (LDP) call for sites
-  LDP call for sites plots already allocated for development
-  Non-promoted vacant and/or derelict land

# A new vision for Wick

## THE RENEWABLES SECTOR

Significant investment has already taken place in Wick Harbour with the creation of an excellent new marina which is attracting the sailing community to stop and visit the town. Ambitious plans are well advanced for the construction of two new breakwaters beyond the existing harbour, which is seen as vital in positioning Wick as an attractive base for the potential growth in the offshore renewables sector, and potentially the decommissioning of oil platforms. It was noted at the Charrette that the latter industrial activity could have a significant visual impact on the town though which would require careful consideration.

Several opportunity sites at sea level on the south east side of the harbour were identified in the recent 'call for sites,' which could provide lay down space and yardage for renewables activities. It is understood that the Harbour Authority has plans to quarry into the adjacent cliffs in this location to provide the rock for the new breakwaters, and if this were to go ahead then a considerable additional area of land could in theory be formed for the renewables industry at sea level.

The proximity of the railhead to the harbour is a valuable resource for Wick in staking its claim to be a major offshore renewables hub, and two opportunity sites were identified during the Charrette adjacent to the station which could serve as important offload areas for machinery or equipment being transported by rail for the harbour:



Wick railhead



Example of offshore windfarm

# Overall Strategy

## REGENERATION MECHANISMS

The importance of developing a strategy which would allow the creative re-use of redundant council owned sites was discussed at several junctures during the Charrette, with the prospect raised of the formation of a community development trust (CDT) which could take over redundant facilities at little or no cost with a view to promoting their regeneration for the benefit of the community.

This was seen as a realistic alternative to a more traditional asset disposal which could in all likelihood simply result in existing buildings and sites lying vacant and derelict for many years to come, with the negative impact that would have on the life and appearance of the town.

**“ It’s not just about bricks and mortar – the whole attitude of people has to change here! ”**



Vision of sea water swimming pool 'Trinkie'