

# **Draft Devizes Wharf Planning Brief**

## **Prepared for Cabinet**

### **May 2011**

**NB. This version of the planning brief has been prepared to support a report to Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2011. It is an emerging plan and will be amended in light of comments made during the cabinet meeting before being published for consultation.**

**NB. Throughout the document plans and photographs are provided for illustrative purposes only to demonstrate one way the principles in the brief could be applied. They are not intended to suggest other solutions are not possible.**

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## **Forward** (to be developed further)

The future use and purpose of Devizes Wharf has been under discussion for several years but as yet no proposals have been implemented, partly due to fragmented ownership.

The creation of Wiltshire Council has brought about the opportunity to re-invigorate the project by bringing together services which were previously carried out by either the District or County Council.

The development potential of Devizes Wharf and neighbouring sites has also focused local concerns about the areas future.

Your views are invited on the contents of this draft Devizes Wharf Planning Brief over the period 13th June to 5th August 2011. In particular your views are invited on the following issues:

- Do the 10 objectives for the brief, set out in Chapters 2 and 3 of the planning brief, identify the correct elements of the Wharf to protect and enhance?
- Do the 6 design principles (Chapter 4, 1 of the planning brief) which seek to influence the appearance of development at the Wharf, accurately reflect the objectives and promote a greater sense of place for the Wharf?
- Do the 4 design principles (Chapter 4, 2 of the planning brief) which seek to introduce vitality at the Wharf reflect local aspirations for the nature of uses to be encouraged at the Wharf?
- Will the 3 design principles (Chapter 4, 3 planning brief) which seek to improve pedestrian and vehicular movements to and through the Wharf enhance the use of the area?

Copies of the draft planning brief are available online at [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planningpolicy) or can be sent to you directly if you e-mail [spatialplanning@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:spatialplanning@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Comments can be submitted

directly on the council's on-line consultation portal (add link)

via e-mail to [spatialplanning@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:spatialplanning@wiltshire.gov.uk), or

by writing to Spatial Planning, Economy and Enterprise, Wiltshire Council, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge,

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## Executive Summary

The prospect from Wharf Bridge (front cover ) captures the essence of Devizes Wharf and the neighbouring canalside ; the distinctive topography with a pre-eminence of public open space and unassuming historic buildings for leisure orientated activity that collectively make this a special place within the community. This panorama highlights the significant impact development could have on the character of this dramatic setting.

### Chapter 1 Introduction

This outlines the nature of this Planning Brief and its purpose to guide development proposals for Devizes Wharf and the adjacent canal corridor.

The constant theme of the brief is the recognition of the value of the cultural and historic assets at the Wharf. The brief includes measures that both **protect** and **enhance** these to help ensure the long term sustainability of Devizes Wharf as a prime community, leisure and tourism attraction within the town. Safeguarding the assets is essential to help attract appropriate development, and for the contribution that development can then bring to their viability and maintenance through greater recognition, footfall and custom for Devizes Wharf and the canalside.

The area encompassed by the Planning Brief is identified. Parameters for development on Devizes Wharf and neighbouring sites are incorporated within chapters of the brief that should both complement the setting of Devizes Wharf and the adjacent canal side and not compromise the ability to achieve a cohesive and integrated overall development for the area. This coordinated approach reflects that development may come forward on an incremental rather than comprehensive basis given economic conditions and the numerous and varied landholdings.

### Chapter 2 Appraisal of context and setting of Devizes Wharf

Provides an appraisal of the significance and value attached to Devizes Wharf and the adjacent canal corridor by outlining:

- a) The unique and specific functions and uses that Devizes Wharf provides within the town and the important service function to the canal;
- b) The completeness of the canalside buildings and spaces that gives a good appreciation and understanding of its original historical purpose and function, and ;
- c) The particular drama of the complex and distinctive topography of the wharfside and adjacent canal corridor, and the heightened interest and enjoyment this provides.

Key components are identified from the above from which are drawn a number of objectives for the **protection** of this attraction.

Opportunities for improvement to sustain this attraction in the longer term are identified which point to the poor physical condition of the area, and general lack of activity across Devizes Wharf.

### Chapter 3 Review of relevant policies

Outlines planning policy and guidance prepared in recent years, generally in recognition of this vulnerability. A number of objectives for the **enhancement** of this attraction are drawn from this.

### Chapter 4 Design principles

Provides thirteen design principles that embody the objectives arising from Chapter 2: the area appraisal and Chapter 3: review of planning policy and guidance. The design principles are explained under three headings and the essence of these is summarised below. The collective application of this guidance to development will help achieve a greater sense of place.

- 1) Appearance of development - covers the layout, form and scale of new buildings and their corresponding relationship with the canalside, streets and spaces:
  - a) New building should reflect the character of the historic town: the overall and detailed scale of buildings and layout following the urban grain. In this regard the historic small town warehouses are an appropriate precedent for canalside development, and being suitably distinctive provide a suitable basis for enhancement to celebrate the special setting while reflecting their specific function without resort to pastiche.
  - b) The canal itself with its panoramic views over lively boating activity is the essential ingredient of Devizes Wharf. Paramount to maintaining this attraction is a suitable 'activity space' fronting and including the adjacent canal. The extent of this is defined on plan and referred to throughout this chapter. Emphasis is placed on the management and uses of the water space itself and defined limits on the size and location of building extensions and new building within the activity space within which a feature pavilion is suggested.
  - c) Building frontages facing primary public spaces should be continuous or closely spaced in order to suitably define and contain these spaces, and be suitably active and accessible (such as shopfronts) to engage with and animate these spaces. In this regard ground floor residential on Devizes Wharf and on the key approach along Wharf Street is largely discouraged.
  - d) The potential overbearing effect of building height and mass is highlighted particularly where development will be exaggerated by the topography of the study area: elevated above Devizes Wharf and the canal, and seen from the numerous and wide vantage points. Appropriate limits on building height and mass are defined to suitably respect the character and setting of Devizes Wharf and the canal corridor.
  - e) In recognition that the quality of the secondary detailing is crucial to the overall aesthetic success of a development, which often hinges on this, the inherent expressive qualities of traditional materials and detailing is encouraged, with considered visual, 'weight', 'depth,' proportions and placing of elements emphasised in order to suitably reflect the historic quality of the Conservation area
  - f) Development that demonstrates a high standard of sustainability is encouraged through a creative design approach integral to the design process from the outset, and with the application of recognised quality standards.

2) Introducing Vitality - focuses on how the activity and attraction of public space can be increased through:

- a) Significant but sensitive 'opening up' of the public faces of the canal museum and Wharf Theatre (or any future community and leisure related use for these) to convey and capitalise on the attractions within. This should create a more obvious, accessible and welcoming draw from the public space and approaches while maintaining an appreciation of the buildings historic past.
- b) Recognising the potential for a range of cultural, leisure and tourism uses and activities that can complement, contribute to, and benefit from the waterside and water borne activity including a high quality café or similar facility as a catalyst.
- c) The corresponding improvement to the design of these spaces, benefitting existing uses and recognising the attraction of the landscape setting including the potential offered by the site levels.
- d) The creative integration of public art within the design of buildings and spaces to reinforce the qualities and significance of Devizes Wharf.

3) Vehicle and pedestrian movement – recognises its success as a leisure and tourism destination as part of the overall visitor attraction of the historic town centre is equally dependant on providing suitably attractive, convenient and practical pedestrian access, vehicle parking and servicing:

- a) It establishes the importance of bringing Wharf Street and Couch Lane up to a suitable standard ideally concurrent with the enhancement of Devizes Wharf if this is not to have a negative effect on the lasting impression made by the attraction. This will involve upgrading street surfaces and boundaries, with new building frontage reconnecting Wharf Street to the urban fabric of the town.

The significance of the proposed footpath link promoted by planning policy along the canal between Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf is conveyed : its form and stature to suitably reflect the leisure and tourism potential of these spaces and the connection onwards to the famous Caen Hill locks.

A potential future link with the town centre arising from any future development of the adjacent area highlights the relatively obscured and restricted access to this stretch of canalside.

- b) The importance of maintaining a suitable presence for public car parking and coach drop off for visitors to the prime uses and activities on Devizes Wharf is outlined while its future capacity will be conditioned by local factors.
- c) The ability of design proposals to accommodate servicing for existing uses /activities on Devizes Wharf and new development while not unduly impacting on the attraction, accessibility and safety of public spaces .

Within the wider study area the need to incorporate car parking and vehicle servicing in an efficient and discrete manner is emphasised in order to release prime public spaces and frontages for attractive and more valuable uses and activities.

### **Chapter 5 Delivering the strategy**

This identifies the approach to planning obligations for development. This is in the context of the significant area of public realm, notably Devizes Wharf and the likely expenditure necessary to suitably enhance this to a high quality. Consequently development may be required to contribute to this and should benefit from the amenity and value this brings to the area.

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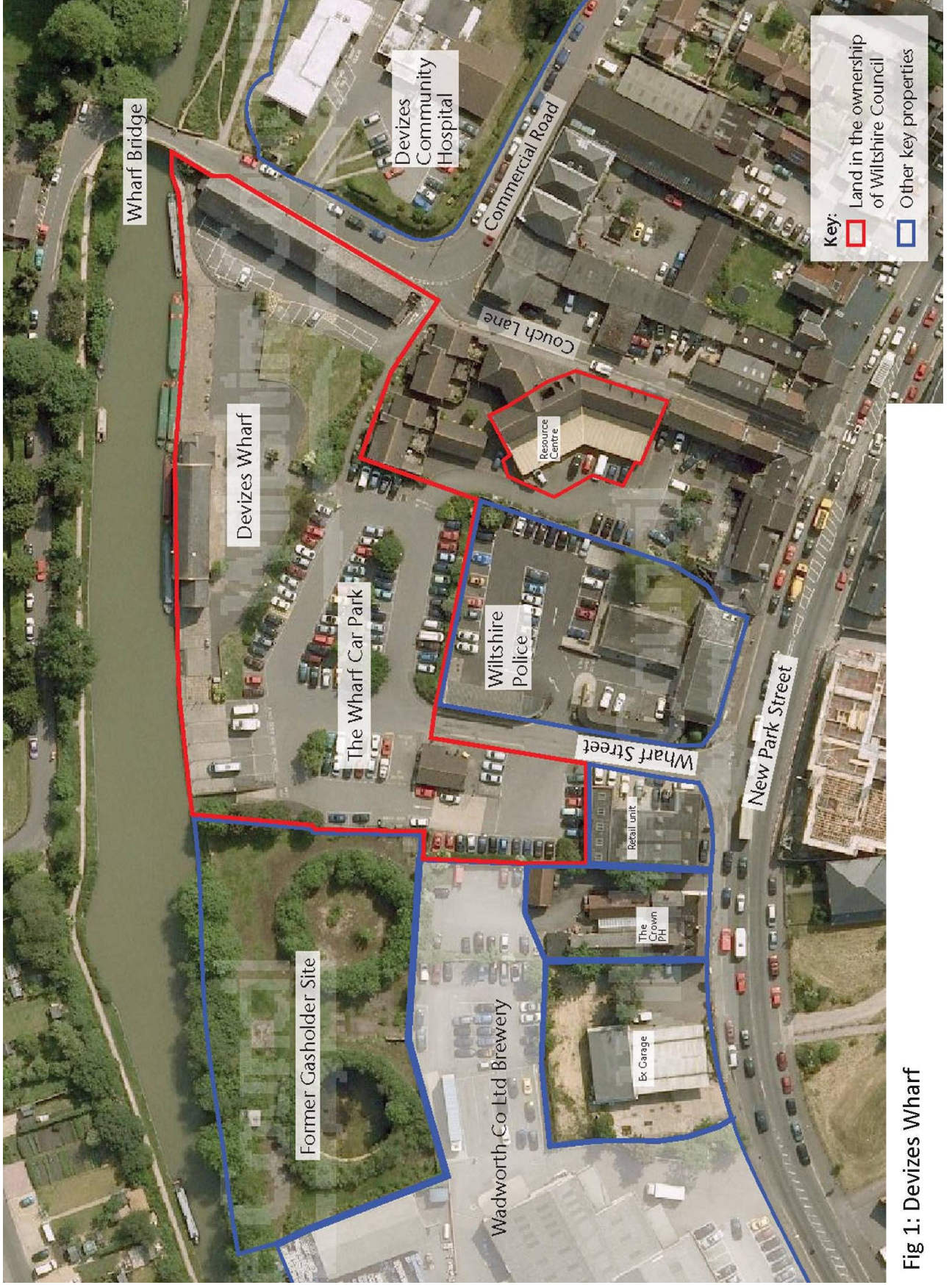


Fig 1: Devizes Wharf

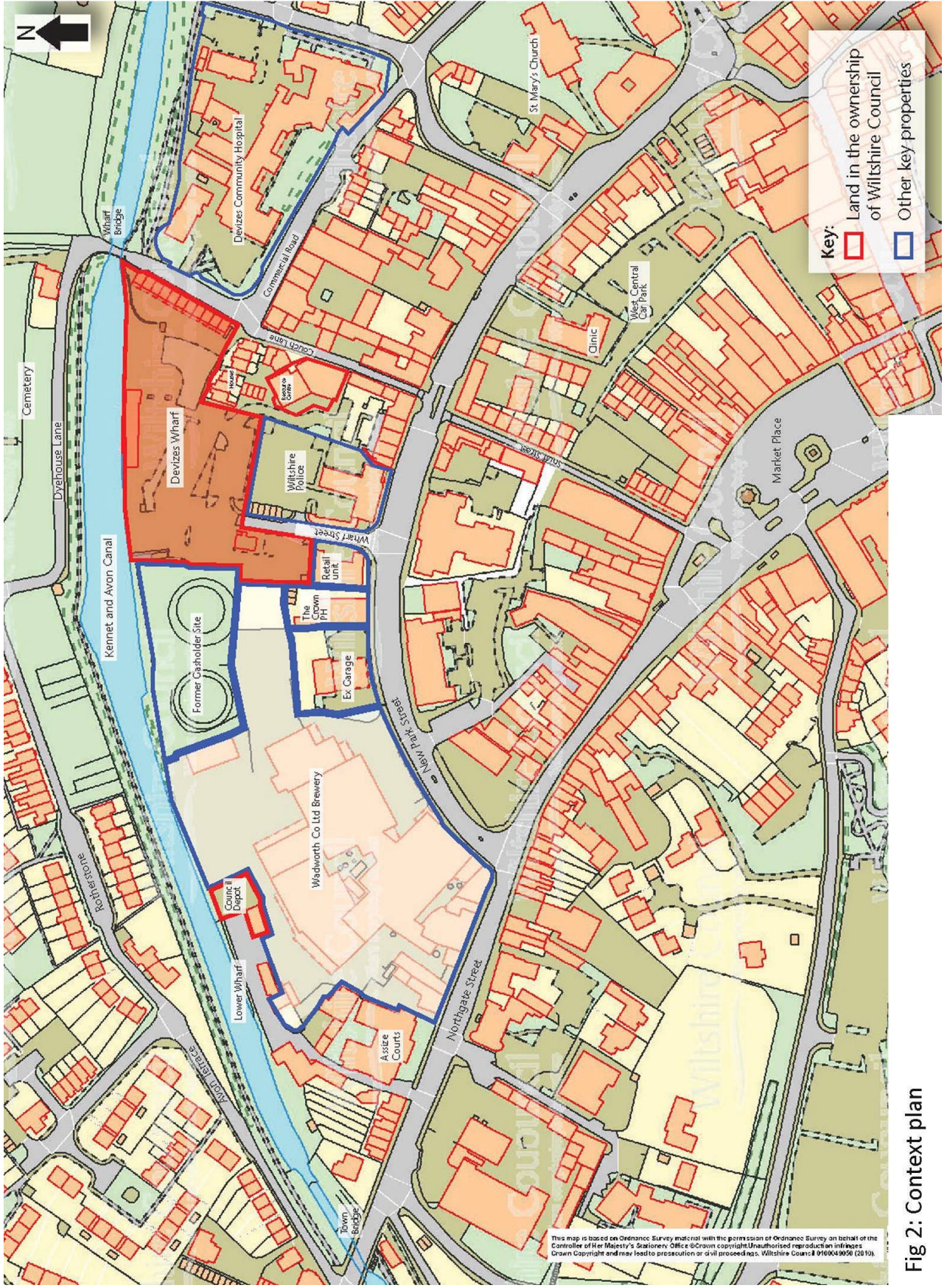


Fig 2: Context plan

## 1. Chapter 1 - Introduction

- 1.1. The restoration and reopening of the Kennet and Avon Canal provided a new leisure attraction for Devizes and placed a new emphasis on the potential of Devizes Wharf and its historic importance. The canal corridor/towpath, canal side activity space, Canal Museum, and the Wharf Theatre collectively form a key community and visitor attraction. The local community attach considerable value to protecting these assets and ensuring their long term sustainability.
- 1.2. The **purpose** of this planning brief is to help promote local ambitions for leisure and tourism based regeneration and growth at Devizes Wharf which has the potential to add to the vitality and viability of Devizes town centre.
- 1.3. The **objective** of this planning brief is to inform the community and provide guidance to prospective developers with the **aim** of helping to protect and enhance Devizes Wharf for the benefit of the community and visitors. It forms a material consideration of any planning application.
- 1.4. By analysing the nature and setting of Devizes Wharf and with a review of planning policy and guidance it establishes specific design objectives and design principles to be taken into account. This is the focus of the document.
- 1.5. This study focuses on Devizes Wharf and the constituent Wharf Car Park **Fig 1. (site aerial view)** In consideration of the approach to and setting of Devizes Wharf and to encourage a coordinated and integrated development of the wider area it incorporates guidance for neighbouring sites, principally the police station, hospital, Lower Wharf and site of the former gasholders. **Fig 2 (context plan)**
- 1.6. Individual development proposals should therefore be set in this context so that **incremental development** will complement and not diminish or prevent suitable development on remaining areas in the future, in order to realise a cohesive and coherent whole.
- 1.7. Devizes Wharf must adapt to changing economic pressures and leisure patterns in order to help retain the current attractions, and provide for their upkeep and maintenance. A realistic level of development to suitably upgrade the standard and quality of the study area and contribute to achieving efficient and attractive development will almost certainly require a significant element of commercial uses. A creative and crafted approach to the design of buildings and spaces is necessary to realise commercial value while achieving a high quality of design that will protect and enhance the valued character, setting, uses and activities of Devizes Wharf and the adjoining canal corridor.
- 1.8. Developers should explain and illustrate how their proposals respond to the design principles of this planning brief both in pre application consultation with Wiltshire Council and in any planning application. This should include the relationship of the proposal to its site and the wider setting encompassed by this planning brief on the basis of CABI guidance referred to in paragraphs 3 & 4 on page 31 of the Devizes Town Centre Conservation Area Statement, September 2005.

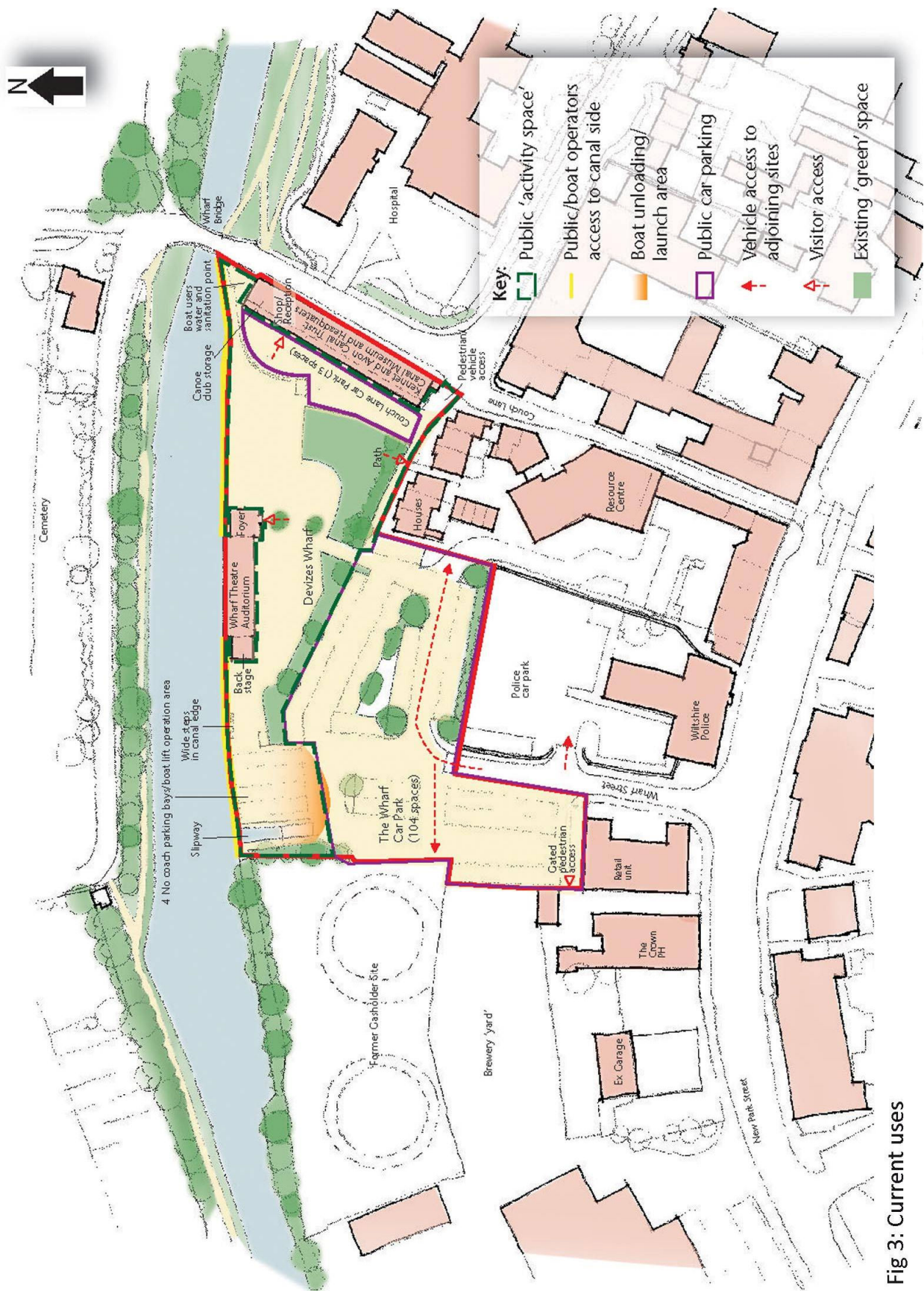


Fig 3: Current uses

## Chapter 2: Appraisal of context and setting of Devizes Wharf

2.1. To appreciate the value of Devizes Wharf and the adjoining area requires an understanding of the various uses and activities and how these relate to and complement each other.

### a) Current uses

2.2. Devizes Wharf in its current form was laid out in the early 1980s and comprises a pedestrian orientated public open space with direct frontage to the canal, converted bonded warehouses housing the complimentary attractions of the Canal Museum / Headquarters of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust, and the Wharf Theatre, and two public car parks. **(Fig 3).**

### Activity space

2.3. The extent of this general area is identified on Fig 3. and realistically includes the Coach Parking and slipway area over which there is also generally unrestricted public access. In size the overall space is comparable with and second only to the Market Place as an area of hardstanding. The activity space provides for:

- Public relaxation and strolling. The landscaped grass areas provide a sitting out area popular in summer with lunchtime workers and at weekends.
- Public access to the canalside, Canal museum and Wharf Theatre.
- The staging of public events and official canal boat gatherings: Key annual current attractions are The Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race with a staged start over one weekend in the spring, and the one day Devizes Beer Festival in the early summer with the erection of a large marquee, other associated stalls and an external music stage.

2.4. The activity space facilitates the operational requirements for:

- Victual ling, general cleaning and basic upkeep of canal boats moored alongside the Wharf including hire boats, hotel boats (including those for special needs groups) and the passenger day trip boat, fresh water and sanitary waste disposal point for boat users is located against the side wall of the canal museum.
- Unloading, launch and retrieval of small boats from the slipway and wharfside, temporary standing of boats/boat trailers using the slipway, canoes, rowing skiffs and other 'small' craft:
- Boat lift operation adjacent to the slipway using mobile crane and canal boat transporter/trailer;
- Servicing to the Canal Museum, Wharf Theatre, and boat users sanitation/waste disposal point;

Official access and limited parking for operators over the activity space and unloading adjacent to 'premises' is by agreement with Wiltshire Council.

### Canalside buildings

2.5. Both former canal warehouses are not statutory listed buildings, and while relatively unassuming as individual examples of their type have in their setting with the adjoining open space and canal a group value of considerable 'historical significance'.

- 2.6. The building occupied by the Canal Trust has Bath Stone external walls on three sides which are listed with the adjoining stone canal bridge. The museum documenting the history of the canal and its restoration occupies the majority of this building which incorporates an associated gift shop and administration offices for the Trust. Parts of the building are specifically used by the Devizes Canoe Club for equipment storage and improvised club gatherings and meeting facilities for the Devizes Angling Club. The continued, improved or new provision of facilities for these important canal based uses is encouraged with any development on Devizes Wharf.
- 2.7. The building occupied by the Wharf Theatre has undergone considerable internal alteration to accommodate an auditorium and extension at both ends for front and back of house facilities but its original function is externally still readily discernable. Regular evening and matinee stage performances and theatre workshops are provided. A small refreshment area used during performances is incorporated with the foyer /reception space.

#### **Boat launch**

- 2.8. The Wharf provides a suitable area of hard standing and access for the craning of larger vessels into and out of the water and maintenance plant and equipment onto and off craft. ie excavators and pumps.
- 2.9. The boat lift operation generally comprises a mobile crane and boat trailer which are parked alongside within the coach parking bays and end on to the canal. The surrounding area is coned off and boats are then swung through 90 degrees from the canal. This operation is generally relatively infrequent and carried out in the early morning when the Wharf is quiet.
- 2.10. The retention of this capability is valued by British Waterways as there are currently no suitable alternative facilities nearby and very few other areas along the canal where this can be practically undertaken. It also enables the transfer of maintenance craft by road from other sections of the canal nearer to the work being undertaken rather than navigate to the work site solely by water.
- 2.11. The localized stepping in the canal wall and nearby slipway provides a practical facility for the launch of small craft. The slip is capable of launching 'smaller' narrowboats up to around 23ft in length. Note that the canal wall alongside the canoe club equipment store is not particularly suitable for getting canoes into and out of the water and the store is furthest away from the slipway and steps in the canal wall where this can be more easily achieved.

#### **Coach parking area**

- 2.12. Marked out on the wharftside are 4 coach parking bays. In this location coaches will dominate and restrict views to and from the activity space and the attraction of the Wharf generally. However the bays are generally underused as coaches defer from setting down and laying over here due to the lack of neighbouring toilet facilities for drivers and passengers. The space is informally used for the parking of minibuses bringing frequent school parties to the Canal Museum and for boat trips, for the offloading of small craft such as kayaks and rowing skiffs and the occasional parking of motor homes.

## **Public Car Parking**

- 2.13. There are two separate areas of public car parking at Devizes Wharf. In the Couch Lane Car Park 13 spaces are provided directly across the frontage of the Canal Museum. The location and access to this car park is not obvious to visitors. In the Wharf Car Park fronting the activity space and accessed off Wharf Street 104 spaces are provided. This car park appears to be underused for the vast majority of time apart from a few hours round midday when the weekly market (Thursday) displaces cars from the Market Place but even then full capacity is not often reached. This is borne out by previous parking studies undertaken for Kennet District Council.

## **Adjoining sites**

- 2.14. A terrace of six private houses fronts onto and has pedestrian access directly from Devizes Wharf. There is a gated vehicle access from the Wharf Car Park into the adjoining derelict former gasholder site, and open access to a 'yard' servicing the rear of the houses, commercial premises on Couch Lane and New Park Street and the Devizes Community Resource Centre. This is a day centre for adults with disabilities and health difficulties for which the public car park provides convenient additional parking. A gate provides pedestrian access from the corner of the car park into the rear customer courtyard and sitting out area of The Crown public house behind which is a limb of the brewery yard fenced off from the car park. Adjoining the public car park on the south side is the walled car park of the Police Station and blank side of a retail unit within a former car showroom. Commercial road forms the eastern boundary of Devizes Wharf with the Devizes Community Hospital complex on the raised plateau opposite.

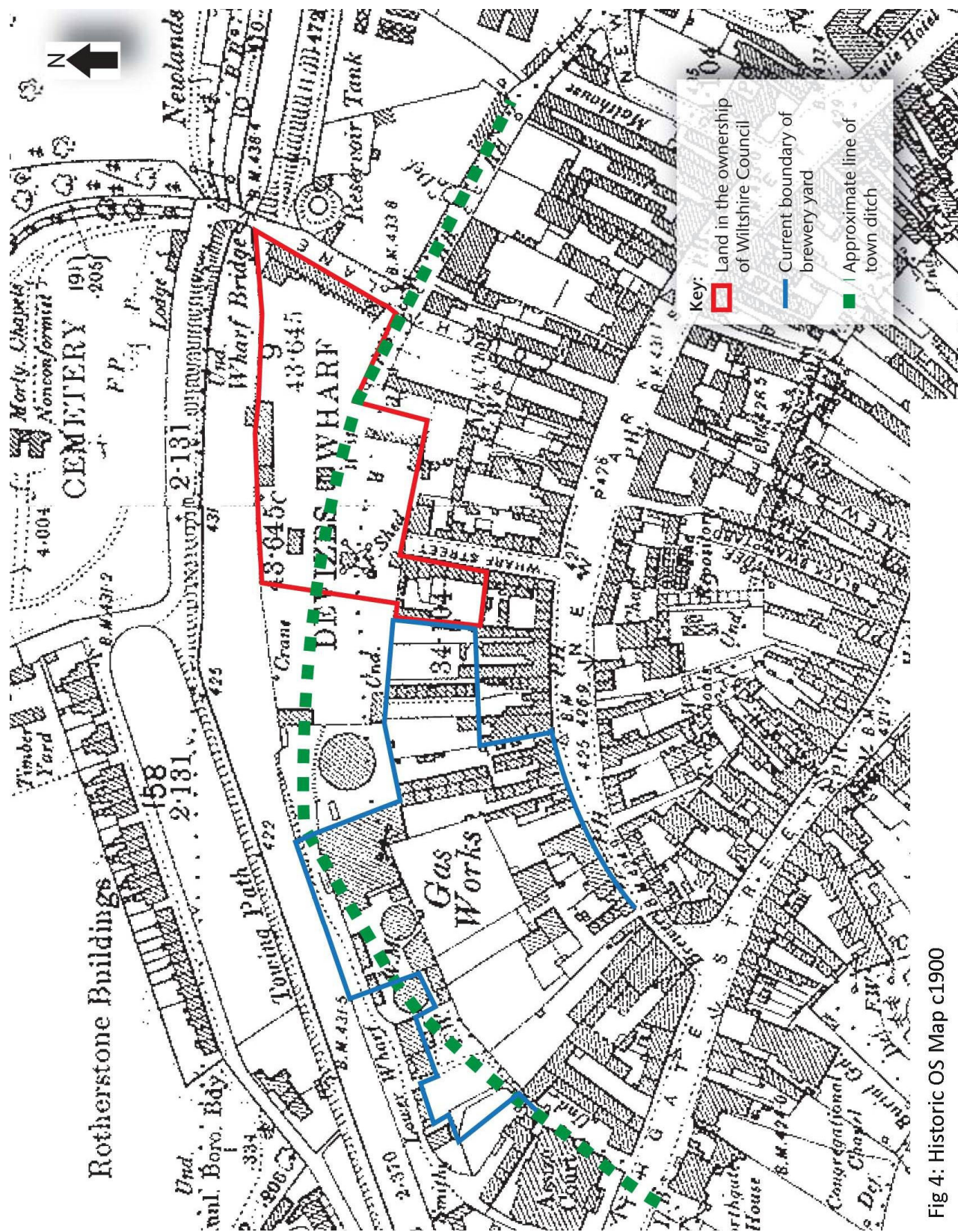


Fig 4: Historic OS Map c1900



## **b) Historical context**

- 2.15. The greenery and vegetation lining the canal corridor through this area of the town forms an attractive backcloth much of which has grown up with the demise of the canals function for the carrying of goods and materials. With the restoration of the canal this has become a valued part of the canals growing leisure and tourism use. Historical maps (Fig 4) reveal that this valued 'green' corridor between Town Bridge and the Wharf once took on a rather more urban character with 'industrial' uses forming a largely continuous fringe on the south bank of the canal contrasting with the relatively green undeveloped north bank.
- 2.16. Lower Wharf was once longer to facilitate the shipment of coal and to serve the gas works complex dating from 1827. Up the mid 1970s this occupied a significant canal side frontage and depth on part of the area now comprising the Wadworth Brewery yard and may be considered a precedent for reinstating a similar degree and scale of built frontage to the canal in this general area.
- 2.17. The original extent of Devizes Wharf comprising an open 'yard' used for the transfer and storage of goods and materials to and from the canal has remained largely intact. Only a portion at the western end beyond the warehouses has been encroached upon by later development of the gasholders. The original relationship and setting of the open space with the warehouses would appear to have been maintained and not affected by smaller incidental buildings appearing within the yard over time and since removed.
- 2.18. The gasholder site was further extended eastwards in the 1920s to provide the second gasholder and later to include a small portion of land now returned to the wharf and accommodating the slipway. The gas works closed in 1955 but the gas holders survived into the 1990s and this land has since remained derelict.
- 2.19. The definition of the Wharf has been weakened on its southern side with the loss of buildings on what is now part of the rear yard to the brewery and the Police Station staff car park and particularly the demolition of terraces which once formed a strong edge and sense of enclosure to both sides of Wharf Street.
- 2.20. The line of the buried medieval town ditch can be readily traced across Devizes Wharf and neighbouring sites where it has not been encroached upon by later development. By the late 17th century the ditch had been filled forming a track some of which was later incorporated in town streets. The approximate line of the ditch is shown on Fig 4. (Ref: 'The Archaeology of Wiltshire's Towns – An Extensive Urban Survey: Devizes' Prepared by Wiltshire County Archaeology Service, Libraries and Heritage, Wiltshire County Council, August 2004.esp item 5.510 (DE003))

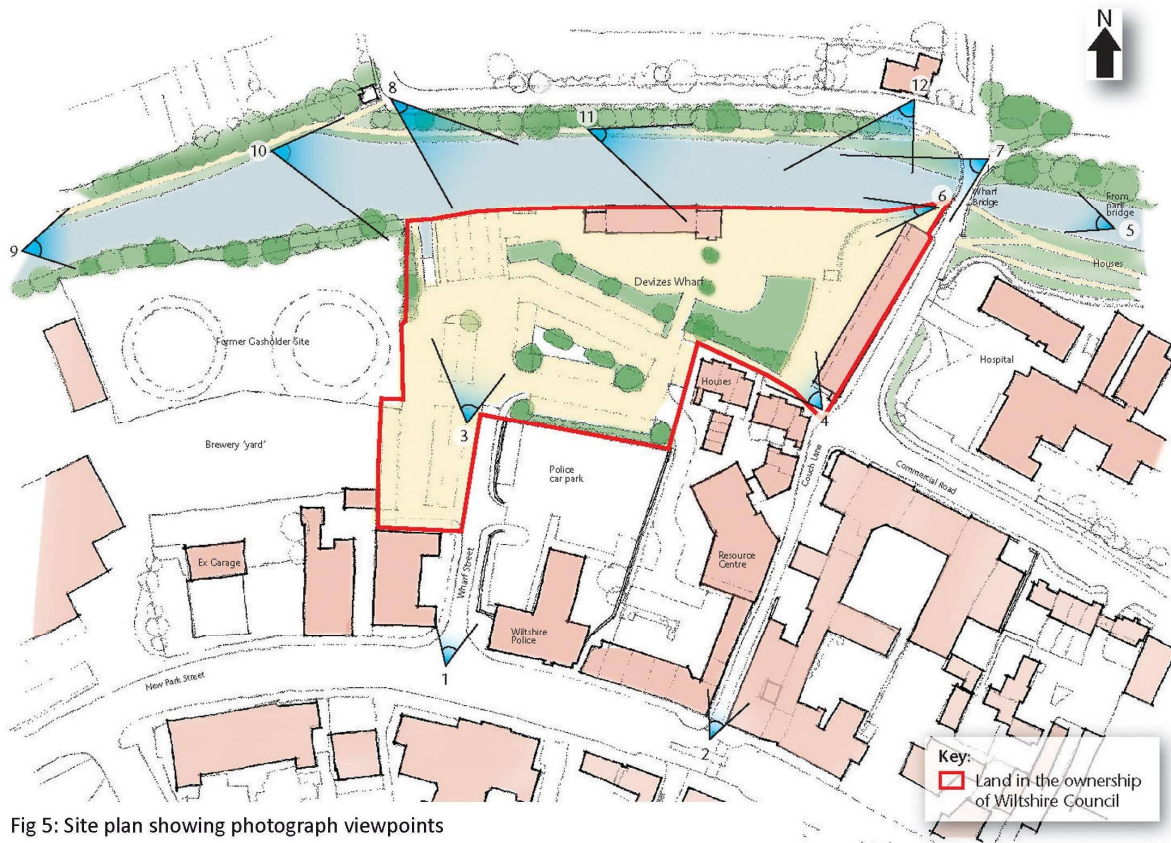


Fig 5: Site plan showing photograph viewpoints

### c) Visual Appraisal

2.21. The viewpoint of the photographs shown in this chapter are referenced on **Fig 5**

#### Access

2.22. The two key land approaches to Devizes Wharf are both off New Park Street: along Wharf Street (**photo 1**) and Couch Lane (**photo 2**). Both streets rise gradually up towards the Wharf with the trees beyond (rising above the north bank of the canal) forming a backdrop visible from New Park Street. The canal itself cannot be readily appreciated until the crown of the slope is reached at the entrance to the Wharf proper and the land slopes back down to the canal edge revealing dramatic views over the activity space (**Photo 3**). (The crown of the site is very approximately about 1.5 metres above New Park Street and the canal edge of the wharf. The slope is most pronounced alongside the Wharf Theatre) This is a unique and dramatic feature of Devizes Wharf most pronounced at the entrance to the activity space from Couch Lane with a similar fall down alongside the canal museum and transverse slope down across the site to the west following the line of path and car park edge. This



provides a panorama over virtually the whole activity space and Wharfside, the canal seen either side of the Wharf Theatre building (**Photo 4**).

- 2.23. The nature and significance of the attraction on Devizes Wharf is only partly conveyed by these routes given it is relatively distanced from major arteries through the town. Historically, attention has been focused on developing a connection between the

Market Place and the east end of the Wharf via Snuff Street and Couch Lane. This link to the heart of the town has a defined and signalled pedestrian crossing of New Park Street; overhead decorative metal signage spanning the entrance to Couch Lane and more recent redevelopment along the west side of Snuff Street to define the space. The demolition of terraces in Wharf Street has led to fragmentation and has created a secondary nature to the streetscape beyond New Park Street which contrasts with the relatively dense and enclosed form of the town centre. This creates the perception of Devizes Wharf as being relatively isolated and tucked away from this lively commercial and community heart.



### The Canal

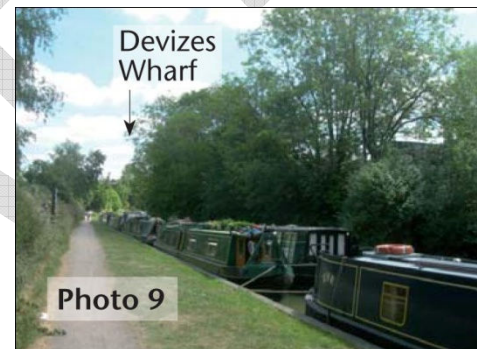
- 2.24. The canal corridor through this area of the town is generally set in a cutting lined by trees and undergrowth. The canal approach to Devizes Wharf from the east is contained in a deep cutting with a rural feel: heavily tree lined on the north bank and revealing little of the significant complex of Devizes Community Hospital high above the grass embankment on the south side or the close proximity of Devizes Wharf ahead (**photo 5**).



Immediately passing under Wharf Bridge the canalside provides dramatic surprise and contrast with a view opening up towards the town across a large area of the Wharf open space (**photo 6**). A panoramic view in this direction over the Wharf and car park is seen from the Wharf Bridge over the canal (**photo 7/front cover**) and glimpsed from Dyehouse Lane through the trees and undergrowth lining the canal bank (**photo 8**).



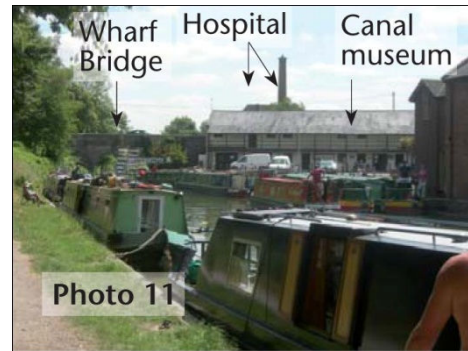
- 2.25. The topography of the canal approach from the west provides selective views over the canal side and Wharf space towards the town through breaks in the vegetation. The view highlights individual and grouped buildings raised above or set back from the canal (**photos 9 and 10**). These are generally of not more than two storeys and of domestic scale so that open space or greenery predominates creating a perceived 'soft' fragmented edge to the town. This contrasts to the relatively contained, dense built form of the historic town centre beyond. The tree cover over the Wharf and adjacent ex gasholder site generally obscures the town skyline with the brewery and St. Mary's Church tower standing proud. The Church tower is also prominent on this approach together with the chimney and three storey building within the Devizes Community Hospital forming a distant backdrop rising above the roofline of the Canal Museum building (**Photo 11**).



### On Devizes Wharf

- 2.26. With direct building frontage on the Wharfside limited to the Wharf Theatre building, the full extent of Devizes Wharf can be readily appreciated. Tree planting and shrubbery across the open space and on the abandoned gas holder site now draws the eye well into the space from the canal and opposite bank. It gives the perception of a green lung into the town, which is seen and sensed beyond (**Photo 12**). The expanse of the open space on Devizes Wharf is accentuated by the length of exposed canal frontage, lack of built enclosure on its south and west sides and the relatively long and lower linear form and simple unadorned appearance of

the two original Wharf warehouses. In relation to the overall size of the space and with their ground floor level being generally set at the lowest point of the sloping site they appear a relatively unassuming and integral part of the space.



#### d) Opportunities

2.27. This appraisal identifies the following key components of the Wharf which should be protected:

- The extent of public open 'activity' space and perceived openness of the space in contrast to the enclosure and containment of the town centre.
- The use of Devizes Wharf for community events;
- The canal side setting including important views over the canal, to the historic Wharf buildings and to the green backdrop provided by the canal; Public access to the canal including use of the slipway;
- The heritage value of the site and its appreciation and understanding in context with its surroundings;
- The collective group value of leisure based activities and uses and canal related attractions within the area such as the canal museum and theatre.

2.28. The following opportunities for improvement are identified. These require particular attention in any development proposals if Devizes Wharf is to be sustained as a key leisure and tourism asset:

- The relatively large size of Devizes Wharf open space in relation to the custom generated from limited uses fronting the open space. These are generally unable to generate sufficient level of activity to create and sustain a suitable vitality and vibrancy in the absence of large and frequent special events on the space;
- The physical condition of the open space showing considerable wear and tear of surfaces and fixtures and dated design.
- Lack of permeability with adjacent sites and suitably active and engaging compatible uses on these. This includes the lack of direct canal side access between Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf / Assize Courts
- Limited range and nature of uses and facilities to retain interest and encourage extended stay;
- Limited 'active' and accessible frontage. The theatre and canal museum by their nature can be inward looking i.e. limited glazed frontages and use of outdoor area to promote attractions;
- Limited opening hours of the theatre lacks the necessary draw at the heart of the Wharf. Use times for the theatre and Canal Museum do not coincide with each other limiting the possible joint attraction;
- Lack of supporting public facilities;
- Poorly defined and unattractive approach along Wharf Street and over the expanse of the car park. No definition on the access from New Park Street.

2.29. While being within close proximity of the town centre the above collectively give Devizes Wharf the feel of being a quiet backwater in comparison with the bustle and activity of New Park Street and the Market Place. This can lead to a mismatch between expectation and overall experience.

#### **e) Conclusions**

2.30. There are a number of specific objectives arising from the appraisal that should be applied to the design of any scheme to retain the attractiveness of the area.

#### **Objective 1: Retain the current uses and operational requirements (identified in section 2a)**

Maintain at least the current size, accessibility and flexibility of the activity space.

#### **Objective 2: Ensure there is no significant new building directly on the Wharfside**

Maintain dramatic views over Devizes Wharf from the crown of the site, through the canal corridor, from Wharf bridge and the opposite bank and general visibility across the space to the Wharf Theatre, canal museum and wharfside.



#### **Objective 3: Retain the perception of a green lung into the town**

Maintain at least a similar extent of landscaped green space on Devizes Wharf for sitting out (shown on Fig 3). Maintain the current extent of planting on the north bank of the canal screening the rear of properties and a similar extent of planting on the south bank screening the former gasholder site and the brewery yard.



#### **Objective 4: Respect the industrial and archaeological heritage**

Retain the two existing canal warehouses; stone edging and steps to the Wharfside and Recognise the historic significance in terms of their group value and open setting with the original wharf 'yard'. Recognise the significance of the Town Ditch.

#### **Objective 5: Retain existing access rights across Devizes Wharf**

Maintain vehicle and pedestrian access to Devizes Wharf from Wharf Street and Couch Lane and across the Wharf for servicing the above uses and activities; Maintain the existing or an

equivalent agreed vehicle and pedestrian access from Wharf Street (currently through the Wharf Car Park) to the adjoining sites identified.

## **Chapter 3: Review of Relevant Policies**

### **a) National and strategic policy**

- 3.1. There is a whole range of national policy guidance contained in planning policy guidance notes and statements, within which there will be pertinent policy for Devizes Wharf for example on sustainable location, transport and regeneration opportunities. Highlighted below are two areas of national policy which do have a specific bearing on Devizes Wharf.

#### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1: Delivering Sustainable Development**

- 3.2. Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It states that planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development. It encourages authorities to develop design policies that concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. (paragraph 38) Quality design is the key to a successful regeneration of the wharf.

#### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth**

- 3.3. As PPS's provide the current national policy it is worth acknowledging some of the expectations on local planning authorities that may influence the design of development at the wharf. Policy EC3.1 of PPS4 encourages local authorities to identify sites or buildings within existing centres suitable for development, conversion or change of use and to encourage residential or office development above ground floor retail, leisure or other facilities within centres.

### **b) Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016, April 2006**

- 3.4. The Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan contains the strategic planning policy for Wiltshire until 2016. Planning applications for development at Devizes Wharf will be considered against the saved policies within this plan. The objectives of the plan include to encourage the regeneration of small towns through new investment and community improvements and to secure the effective and appropriate re-use of developed land and buildings, including land which is derelict or has been previously contaminated, for economic and/or community purposes. There are also relevant detailed policies such as policy DP1 which refers to improving the amenity of settlements in the pursuit of sustainable development and policy HE7 requires that development should preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. (The equivalent conservation policy in the KLP, HH5, was not saved.)

### **c) Local policies and plans**

3.5. As mentioned earlier there have been discussions about the future of Devizes Wharf for many years. Some objectives have been established through adopted planning policy whilst others have been prepared through local community plans and published research. Information relevant to the Wharf from each document is summarised below and in Appendix 1. Essentially they all support a leisure and tourism led regeneration of the wharf and some provide insight into local community aspirations for the area.

**Kennet Local Plan 2011 (add extract from plan)**

3.6. The Kennet Local Plan (KLP), adopted in April 2004, contains the adopted planning policy for Devizes ie the policies against which any application for development on Devizes Wharf will be considered unless there has been a material change in circumstances since the plan was adopted. Clearly some time has passed since these policies were adopted but they do form a benchmark against which later guidance can be tested. One of the fundamental aims of the plan is to 'create or enhance places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look well' (KLP para 1.08). The space, buildings and activities at Devizes Wharf provide an opportunity to fulfil this aim for this part of Devizes.

3.7. The Kennet Local Plan contains specific policies in relation to Devizes Wharf, namely policies ED21 (The North gate, Wharf and Devizes Hospital), ED22 (Lower Wharf) and HC10 (The North gate, Wharf and Devizes Hospital). Other relevant policies which need to be considered are:

- PD1 on design, (See section 5 & 6)
- HC28 /HC30 if housing is proposed ,
- HC34/35 on provision of recreational space if housing is proposed,
- AT19, AT20 and AT12 on cycling provision, and
- AT9 in relation to car parking

All of these policies are 'saved' policies until subsequent policies are adopted and should influence how a scheme is delivered.

3.8. Policy HC10 states that the wider area of North gate, the Wharf and Devizes Hospital is suitable for mixed redevelopment including residential, leisure, recreation, retail and employment development. Policy ED21 provides some contextual criteria to make the development site integrate into the wider area including improvements to pedestrian links to the town centre and the Lower Wharf. Other criteria cover design quality, retention of listed buildings and good quality buildings and scale and pattern of development. The main objective for the Wharf was to develop visitor based attractions and improve the vitality and diversity of the town centre. Leisure and tourism was the focus with some complementary uses. The development was to respond architecturally to the canal side setting and provide opportunities for water related business to develop. There was also mention of an events space and the plan clearly states housing should not be the predominant use.

3.9. Policy PD1 is also an important policy for the Wharf as it sets out the parameters to be considered to deliver good design. The individual elements of policy PD1 are considered in more detail in section 4, below. Fundamentally the policy seeks to ensure development respects local distinctiveness by respecting:



- distinctive patterns of building layout, plot and street patterns
- relationships to existing features and key structural elements of a site
- local building character which is often dominated by the use of local materials

3.10. It is also worth considering requirements in the Kennet Local Plan in relation to car parking and cycling. The Kennet and Avon Canal towpath is identified as part of the Devizes town centre cycle network (policy AT20) and development should not be permitted that would prejudice the implementation of this network. It may also be appropriate given the location of the wharf on the cycle network to provide facilities for cyclists within the overall scheme (policy AT19). In relation to car parking it is important to remember that new development will bring with it expectations of car parking which will need to be accommodated (policy AT9). The KLP previously accepted that it could be appropriate to reduce public car parking provision in Devizes to enhance the character of the town (unsaved policy AT5) although this would need to be seen within the wider context of managing public parking provision across the town centre.

**d) Emerging Wiltshire Core Strategy**

3.11. Since the formation of Wiltshire Council in 2009 work has been progressing on a Wiltshire Core Strategy. In October 2009 a document called ‘Wiltshire 2026: Planning for Wiltshire’s Future’ was published for consultation which drew together information about each of the market towns. In this document the wharf and the landmark building of the Assize Courts were seen as priority redevelopment sites. Consultation responses supported the need for improvements to this area but strongly indicated this should not be solely for housing rather for tourism, leisure and recreation uses. Comments suggested that future development should relate to the waterway and its history. The site was seen as having a short, level walking route to and from town. A proposal comprising all housing on the site was seen as damaging to the character of the town.

**e) Summary of other local documents**

**\*Strategic Action Plan 2007-2012:  
Shortcomings of Devizes Wharf and development potential recognised**



limited activity and focus

‘the untapped potential of the Wharf’ \*



parking dominates



‘a bit of a backwater’ \*

no draw to the attraction beyond

3.12. Historically the future of Devizes Wharf has been debated in many forums. The main documents to provide guidance about the space are the Devizes Town Centre Design Code (adopted for the purposes of development control by Kennet District Council in 2007); the Devizes Community Area – Strategic Action Plan 2007-2012, (adopted by Devizes Community Area Planning Partnership (DCAPP) in 2006); the Devizes Town Centre: Baseline Review and Analysis (commissioned by Kennet District Council and South West Development Agency in July 2005); the Devizes Community Area Plan 2003 -2015, (prepared by Devizes Community Area Planning Partnership in 2003); the North Gate and the Wharf Planning Brief (prepared by Kennet District Council in April 1999); Devizes Conservation Area Designation Statement (prepared in 2005 by Kennet District Council) and the Kennet and Avon Conservation Plan (prepared in 2000 by the Kennet & Avon canal Partnership). A more detailed appraisal of the objectives of these documents is contained in Appendix 1. The principle objectives for the Wharf promoted by these documents can be summarised as:

- Conserve the historic character of the area **1a**
- Protect important views and vistas **1a**
- Protect the open character of the canal **1a**
- Ensure local distinctiveness is maintained **1a+d**
- A visitor orientated development **2b**
- Maintain a healthy mixed use development **2b**
- Provide additional leisure and cultural uses **2b**
- Create an attractive and active waterfront **2c**
- Create a new public space around the Theatre **2c**
- New buildings should enclose and define spaces **2b**
- Greater integration with the town centre **3a**
- Enhance access vehicular and pedestrian routes within and to the site **3a**
- Clearly defined entrances and gateways **3a**
- Recreate Wharf Street **3a**

*(Figures in red indicate where these plan objectives are discussed further in chapter 4 Design Principles)*

## Conclusions

3.13. There are a number of specific objectives arising from the review of policies and plans (additional to those identified in Chapter 2) that should be applied to the design of any scheme to retain the attractiveness of the area.

### **Objective 6: Create an active and attractive waterfront**

With visitor based attractions that relate to the canalside setting to enhance the vitality and diversity of the town centre.

### **Objective 7: Enable the projected link path between Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf**

To provide convenient access between Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf with the potential to improve this area and as part of the 'tourist trail' along the canalside to Caen Hill Locks.

### **Objective 8: Create distinctive patterns of building layouts and street patterns**

Deliver an attractive environment that creates defined spaces, including the enhancement of vehicular and pedestrian movements to the site (eg recreation of Wharf Street), and responds to the architectural heritage of the area.

### **Objective 9: Encourage a healthy mixed use development**

The main focus of the scheme should be for cultural and leisure uses but the use of upper floors for complimentary uses should also be encouraged. Housing should not be a predominant use.

### **Objective 10: Enable appropriate management of car, coach and cycle parking**

As a revitalised destination in Devizes, opportunities for parking should be integrated into any proposals.

## Chapter 4: Design Principles

- 4.1. The objectives arising from the site appraisal (Chapter 2) and review of planning policy and guidance (Chapter 3) are embodied in these guiding principles that will help achieve appropriate development on Devises Wharf and within its wider setting. Overall development on this basis could convey an identifiable 'canal quarter' within the town while maintaining the local distinctiveness of the town centre and forming a visually integrated part of it. An indicative possible form of development combining Devises Wharf with the adjacent area leading back to New Park Street (ie: Wharf Street and the Police Station) is illustrated on **Fig 10** at the end of this chapter.

### 1) Appearance of development

#### a) Layout and Building form within the study area

**The general form, scale and character of proposals should be conditioned by local planning policy and informed by the historic tradition and character of the waterway**

- 4.2. The requirements of Kennet Local Plan Policy PD1 and guidance in the Devises Town Centre Design Code to conserve the historic character of the area should be followed.
- 4.3. The orientation of new development extending back from the canal corridor towards New Park Street should generally reflect the towns underlying historic grain of linear burgage plots and routes radiating out from the town centre, the generalised north/south and east/west orientation of plots and buildings and the irregular and relatively informal nature of open spaces and degree of enclosure.
- 4.4. This northern part of the town retains some semblance of its past as the focus of major commerce and trade in the town. In addition to Devises Wharf the former Ansties Factory on New Park Street and warehouses on Commercial Road are lasting examples of this.
- 4.5. These buildings are typically robust and workmanlike under a simple pitched roof with constant ridgeline, repetitive well proportioned spacing and size of uniform openings in the classical architectural tradition using a limited palette of materials.
- 4.6. As examples of this building type, typical provincial small town canal warehouses display these characteristics. Relatively 'long, low and narrow' their distinctive form is consistent with the historic grain and particularly complementary to general scale of buildings and spaces within the historic town centre. They can form a suitable precedent for new buildings particularly where these address Devises Wharf.
- 4.7. The distinctive character of canal architecture is generally derived from its function. The appearance of new buildings should similarly reflect their specific function and not overtly defer to the canals 'industrial and commercial past' or loosely replicate traditional features which could be interpreted as pastiche, confuse the historic understanding of Devises Wharf and devalue the significance of the two historic canal warehouses. In the context of the leisure activity focus of Devises Wharf, enhancement of the simple restrained appearance of this building type is therefore appropriate for example through bay windows and balconies to suitably animate the activity space and celebrate the canal setting.

- 4.8. Individual buildings should be differentiated through a change in building height, limited set backs of the building line, variation in external detailing and finishes. Selective skyline views to St. Mary's Church and the brewery should be maintained and where possible consciously framed through the enclosure of spaces and steps in building height.



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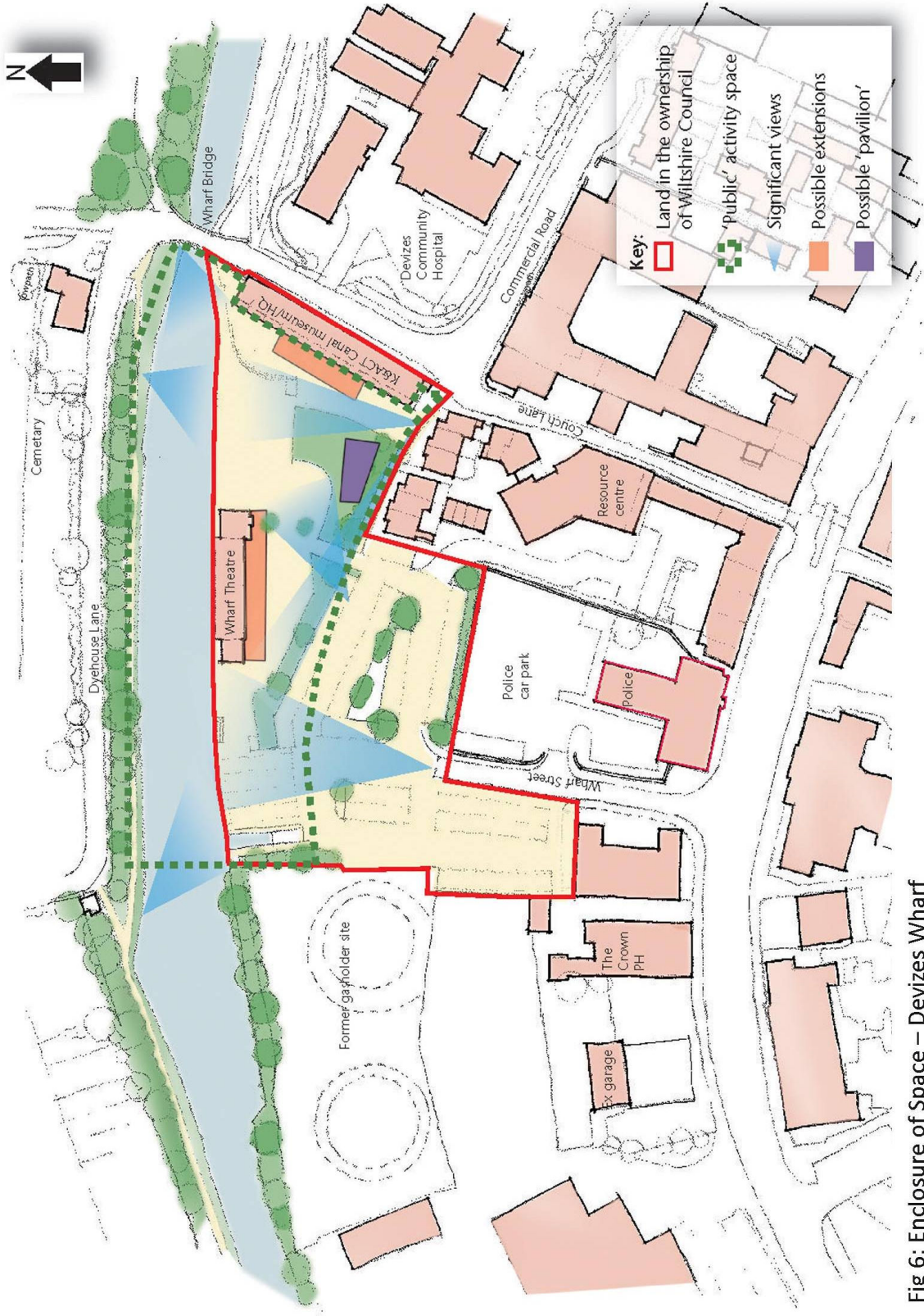


Fig 6: Enclosure of Space – Devizes Wharf

## b) Enclosure of space-Devizes Wharf

### Proposals should respect the continuity, accessibility and advantageous views over Devizes Wharf –Fig 6

- 4.9. The very essence of Devizes Wharf as a valued community leisure and tourism destination is the nature and attraction of the canal itself as an animated space, both clearly visible and readily accessible throughout from within the depth of Devizes Wharf. Vital components of this are:
- The frequent coming and going of ‘colourful’ canal craft and watersports activity and the attraction of a visible significant body of open water: management of the waterway should continue to ensure these qualities in this location.
  - The unique and dramatic panorama over the activity space and canal obtained across the site identified in the site appraisal: new development should maintain the views across the activity space shown.
- 4.10. The canal itself must be seen as an integral part of the overall open ‘activity space’ at Devizes Wharf. The general extent of this space together with the significant views across it and access to the waters edge which should be maintained is defined on **Fig 6**.

To enhance these views and access:

- Short stay moorings for visitors and other more permanent moorings should be located away from the immediate wharfside where the side of boats could unduly obscure views and restrict access to the water. A concentration of permanent moorings along the canal corridor within the study area should be avoided. Similarly commercial operations trading from the waters edge such as floating cafes and retail barges can extend use and activity onto the water but should not become permanently moored fixtures at the wharfside;
- New building should not be located directly along the wharfside where it could sterilize the canalside and isolate the canal from the town behind;
- Any new extensions, building or structures within the defined activity space should be strictly limited in number and size as shown to maintain the continuity of the overall space, historic presence of the two warehouse buildings and retain significant views over the canal and activity space. Within these parameters a creative building form within the landscaped slope is promoted ie a stand alone glass ‘pavilion’ or similar public attraction that will help to achieve a continuity of ‘active’ public frontage along the perimeter and draw the canal museum into greater focus within the overall space. This would otherwise appear distanced by the landscaped area from the potential concentration of building frontage and associated activity on the western half of the activity space.



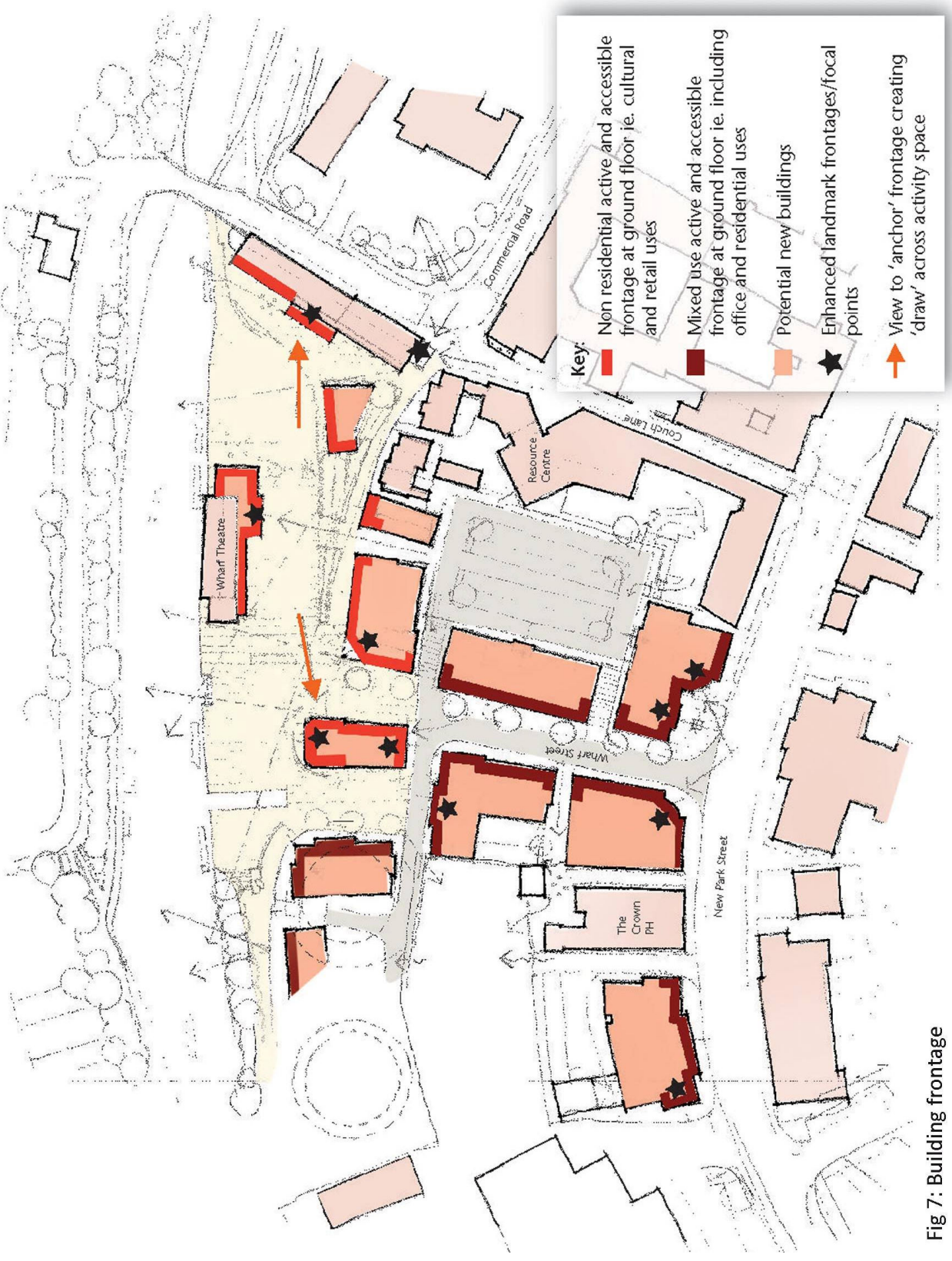


Fig 7: Building frontage



### c) Building frontage

**Public streets and spaces should be enclosed by suitably 'active' and accessible frontages to encourage activity and movement and generate footfall-Fig 7.**

4.11. For new frontages facing onto the Devizes Wharf activity space, Wharf Street, New Park Street, and Lower Wharf:

- Buildings should generally form a continuous or closely spaced built frontage facing onto the Devizes Wharf activity space, Wharf Street, New Park Street, and Lower Wharf. This should generally follow the edge of the space or street although some set back could help define the entrance from New Park Street and enable Wharf Street to be modelled as a wider tree lined avenue (see item 3a 'Wharf Street' of this chapter). Any resident's gardens should be placed at the rear and externally accessible. Any occupier's car parking should also be placed at the rear and served from a single common vehicle access point along the street.
- Housing should not become the predominant use facing onto the Devizes Wharf activity space resulting from incremental development.
- Residential should not occupy the ground floor of new development facing onto the east and south sides of the Devizes Wharf activity space, or facing onto Lower Wharf (with the exception of limited frontage for communal residents' entrances to any flats above).

This is unlikely to generate a suitable level of public attraction, accessibility and activity to these primary spaces and along these primary routes. 'Active' frontages include: glazed shop fronts and enhanced reception areas to commercial, cultural and public facilities.

- Residential should ideally not be the predominant ground floor frontage along the west side of Wharf Street although its inclusion here is not discounted: page 23 of the 'Devizes Design Code, September 2007' encourages a 'Mix of residential with potential for craft/business uses on ground floor' to reform the west side of the street.
- Similarly an alternative more active ground floor frontage is encouraged on the east side of the street currently forming the Police Station site and facing onto New Park Street.
- Frontages should be suitably enhanced to celebrate their setting and prominence for example through building elements such as bay windows to frame key waterside views and help define 'landmark' frontages on key approaches to Devizes Wharf.
- All ancillary requirements to new development, i.e. refuse, storage, plantrooms, utility service cupboards and service risers should not be accessed from or occupy primary frontages.
- Substantial leisure orientated building uses should 'anchor' each end of Devizes Wharf activity space with prominent 'active' frontages at ground floor. These could provide a lively 'draw' over the activity space so that no areas appear underused or feel secondary. An enhanced frontage to the canal museum could fulfil this at the east end while a

restaurant with outdoor seating would provide a suitably animated focus across the west end of the activity space.

4.12. For potential new frontage onto the canal from the former gasholder site local planning policy requires new development along this perimeter to help facilitate the future provision of a canalside footpath link between Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf. In this context:

- The fronts of new properties should face the footpath and canal. These frontages should be suitably active with windows taking advantage of the attractive setting. Some direct access from buildings to the footpath is encouraged.
- The path should be readily overlooked by new development and not unduly hemmed in by high walls or hedges. Boundaries should be brick walls (limited to 1.1 metres high) and/or railings. The rear or side of residential back gardens should not front onto the footpath.
- Built frontages should be aligned to follow the curvature of the canal and suitably set back from the boundary with the footpath to avoid the effect of the path feeling constricted or running in a narrow defile between building face and canal bank recognising the considerable length of this frontage. (see item 3a of this chapter).

4.13. To complete the link a strip of the brewery yard which currently abuts the canal bank would be required unless an alternative solution can be found.

4.14. It is recognised that at the moment health facilities are being retained at Devizes Hospital. However, in case of future changes, new frontages from the grounds of Devizes Community Hospital onto the canal corridor and facing Commercial Road (up to Wharf Bridge):

- The hedge along the canal perimeter should be retained. The grass embankment to Commercial Road (up to Wharf Bridge) should be retained with selective regarding to achieve additional pedestrian /cycle access into new development from the road.
- High fences and walls along or set back from the top of the embankment fronting Commercial Road and the canal cutting are discouraged in favour of accessible communal open space i.e. any residential gardens should not face or side onto the perimeter of the hospital site. The front of new buildings should face the perimeter. These should be suitably active with windows and other openings from which direct access to the perimeter open space is encouraged.

4.15. The architectural quality and heritage of the earlier hospital buildings facing Commercial Road and New Park Road is recognised by their inclusion within the 'Devizes: Victoria Road Quarter Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals, September 2007' with a presumption in favour of conserving these in any development.

#### **d) Building height and mass**

**New development facing Devizes Wharf and the canal corridor should respect the overall scale of the existing canal buildings and the canalside -Fig 8:**

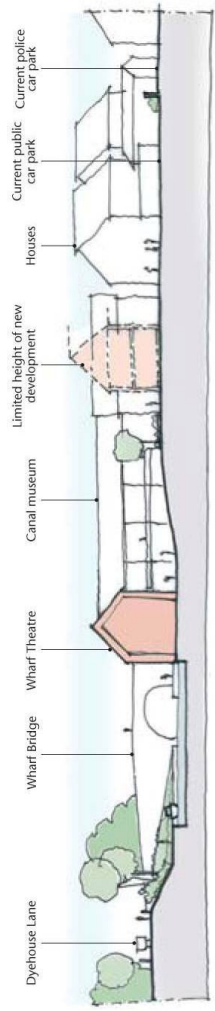
- 4.16. It is inevitable that any significant development adjoining the activity space or set within it will have an appreciable visual bearing on the character of Devizes Wharf and setting of the two historic canal side buildings. This effect is exaggerated by the perimeter of the activity space being generally set at or near the crown of the site approximately 1.5 metres and well above the wharfside, and the juxtaposition with the unassuming modest size and form of the two canal buildings set at the lowest point, particularly the Wharf Theatre. This is a natural focus at the centre of the overall space and nearest to the 'open' south and west perimeter.
- 4.17. Any sizable development above the canal embankment on the adjoining former gasholder site, hospital site and on The Wharf Car Park will form a prominent backcloth to Devizes Wharf and the canal approaches to it. This could have the unfortunate effect of unduly closing in the perceived generosity of the space and drawing attention away from the canal buildings and wharfside. New buildings have the potential to appear overly dominant and overbearing in this setting unless clear limits are placed on their mass and height as identified below.
- 4.18. Greater localised building height and larger building mass may be justified where the function of the building has a special significance in the cultural life and identity of the community. Its design and outward appearance should convey the civic importance attached. i.e. a theatre.
- 4.19. The size (span & pitch) of sloping roofs to new development should generally reflect the typical limited main building depth and roof span lining the town's historic streets with internal valleys and return pitches where necessary to accommodate larger building footprints. High level monopitch/flat roofs should be avoided. Large expanses of flat roof should also be avoided at lower level unless consciously designed as green roofs/readily accessible 'garden' terraces.
- 4.20. Fronting the canal corridor, Devizes Wharf activity space, Lower Wharf and adjoining sites
- The apparent perceived mass of building should not be significantly larger than that of the Wharf theatre. Buildings of greater unbroken length should be differentiated through a change in building height and limited set back of building line. Some variation in external detailing and finishes may also assist.
  - Building heights should generally be limited to two storeys and two and a half storeys (i.e. generally not more than typical commercial floor heights for small premises around 6 metres to eaves and around 10 metres to ridge).
  - Localised and limited three storey elements may be possible where the building is well set back from the wharfside to help create a variation in building height. For example along the southern side of the Devizes Wharf activity space defining landmark corners at the entrance to Wharf Street, or to the long frontage along Lower Wharf following the current building line. These higher frontages should be of limited length and roof spans generally not more than 7 metres in depth so that building height and mass is suitably constrained in this setting. This relates to the traditional roof span of the former canal warehouses on Devizes Wharf and typifies building frontage on neighbouring streets.
- 4.21. Fronting Wharf Street and New Park Street:

- A greater extent of two and a half and three storey frontages should be appropriate (i.e. around 8 metres to eaves and around 12 metres to ridge) to reflect the generally more enclosed and higher built form towards the town centre.

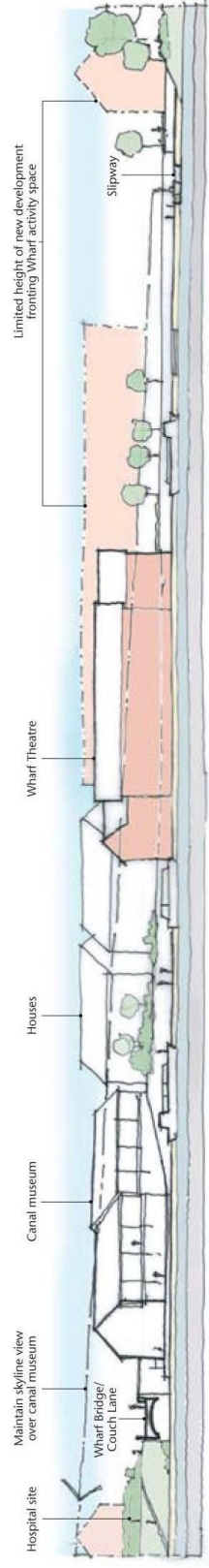
4.22. The hospital site fronting Commercial Road and the canal cutting:

- The hospital site is unusually raised above a grass perimeter embankment on a plateau around 2 metres above Commercial Road running across the rear of the canal museum which again is set at a lower level down from the road. See Fig 8. The site is relatively undeveloped at this end consisting of car parking and single storey buildings set well back from the top of the bank and not readily apparent from the road. The buildings cannot therefore be seen from Devizes Wharf where the sky forms a singular and attractive backcloth over the roof of the canal museum. This importantly contributes to the open and 'green' setting of Devizes Wharf. Any sizable development at this end of the hospital site has the potential to detract from the clarity of this setting, rising at close quarters above the roof of the canal museum, and having an overbearing effect on Commercial Road and the canal cutting.
- Similarly the height of new buildings on the hospital site should generally maintain the apparent skyline seen above the perimeter hedge when viewed from canal level.

4.23. Any future development on the hospital site should therefore have particular regard to the location form, massing and height of new buildings in order to maintain the setting with Devizes Wharf and the canal corridor and not unduly impact on Commercial Road. Significant landscaping along the top of the embankment to Commercial road could provide some screening in conjunction with the above measures and to any car parking at the fronts of properties.



a) Cross section through Devises Wharf (looking east)



b) Devises Wharf elevation from canal (looking south)

Fig 8: Building height



## e) Detailing

**Building and spaces should be suitably robust and expressive, characteristic of the traditional canal side vernacular.**

- 4.24. This would appear to be well suited to a restrained contemporary approach to external design exemplified by the contextual development on the west side of Snuff Street. Detailing should reflect its public setting and avoid appearing overly suburban or domestic.
- 4.25. Materials, techniques and detailing should enhance the Conservation Area. Detailing that may be deemed crude or heavy handed by comparison with its traditional counterparts should be avoided including : UPVC windows, doors and heavy box fascias/soffits; plastic gutters and downpipes; dry cloak ridge and verge systems; 'bolt on' GRP and similar prefabricated turrets , dormers, porches, bays, and exposed steel box framing to balconies; visibly bracketed/bolted panels and fixings; concrete roof tiles; straight solder course brickwork banding and heads to windows; and pencil thin reveals in walls and mouldings.
- 4.26. There is considerable variety in the external finishes of historic buildings in the area; natural stock brick and stone would appear the characteristic wall finishes with roofs of plain clay tiles or natural slate. These materials should predominate. The use of render, timber cladding, and high quality metal roofs in zinc or lead should generally only be used selectively.
- 4.27. The proportions of openings and primary subdivision of fenestration within wider openings should have a vertical emphasis. Heads to openings should generally comprise traditional gauged brickwork and natural or high quality reconstituted stone. Similarly cills should be in 'stone'.
- 4.28. Shop fronts should be suitably detailed to reflect the traditional shop fronts in the town avoiding overlarge fascias and internally illuminated signage panels.( further guidance is provided on page 24 of the Devizes Conservation Area Statement, September 2005).
- 4.29. External elements such as Juliette balconies should project significantly from the wall face having visual 'weight and depth' with a deck and side return faces rather than simply comprise rails/panels applied directly across the opening. Similarly bay windows should include glazed side returns.
- 4.30. The selective incorporation of Chimneys or turrets/ ventilation cowls (a feature of traditional industrial buildings) along roof ridgelines are encouraged to enliven and complement the town centre skyline. The provision of some south facing roof slopes will facilitate solar and photovoltaic panels. Panels should be incorporated within roof slopes obscured from public view where possible including the use of small photovoltaic tile modules.
- 4.31. A comprehensive overall approach to townscape design is required:
- A co-ordinated range of robust street furniture, signage and external lighting which should avoid being unduly fussy or traditional. Careful location of fixtures will avoid unnecessary 'structures' and clutter that could otherwise detract from key vistas. The subtle lighting of the canal buildings as part of an overall lighting strategy should provide a sense of drama to the activity space.

- A consistent approach throughout for external surfaces. This should avoid complex patterns or abrupt colour changes. Tarmacadam should predominate in trafficked areas including the activity space to provide a suitably robust surface. The extensive use of unrelieved block paving should be avoided. Small gridded blue/grey brick pavements and granite sett rumble strips within the Devizes Market Place are an attractive example and use for parking bays and pedestrian areas. Pavements to streets should comprise stone flagstones/artificial stone pavings. Granite setts should demarcate crossing points and define access to vehicle restricted areas while minimising the use of bollards.
- All public boundaries should be contained by a combination of railings and brick walling (a minimum 214mm thick). All walls should generally be finished with traditional bullnose or half round cappings and with plain tile creasings to deter staining of wall faces.

**f) Established quality and performance standards**

**Development is promoted which takes a lead on sustainability.**

- 4.32. A commitment beyond the scope of specific Building Regulation amenity and energy performance requirements is encouraged. Where applicable, specific targets, in relation to established quality and performance standards should be achieved. For specific non residential building types this could include Building Research Establishment Energy Assessment Methods (BREEAM) and for residential buildings: Building for Life, Code for Sustainable Homes, Lifetime Homes and the Homes and Communities Agency Design Development Standards. All residential (ie both affordable and open market) should be to the same standard and design quality. 'Secured by Design' principles should be applied to all proposals.
- 4.33. The contribution of waterside development towards sustainability is highlighted on page 33 of 'England's Historic Waterways: A working heritage' ( British Waterways and English Heritage 2009) in which consultation with British waterways is encouraged on the possible use of canal water for the heating and cooling of buildings and wildlife habitat creation and enhancement opportunities.
- 4.34. The above aspects should be addressed in pre- planning application discussions with Wiltshire Council. Planning applications should clearly set out and explain how the relevant standards and targets are specifically met by the development proposals in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

## **2) Introducing vitality**

**a) Existing canal warehouses**

**The historic canal buildings should be enhanced to present a more lively and exciting visual presence and animation of the Wharf activity space.**

- 4.35. Sensitive alteration, rebuilding and extension could achieve a more transparent 'active' and accessible frontage to both the Canal Museum and Wharf Theatre, for example, generous glazing and an expressed entrance to provide a greater sense of the attractions within.

Openings at both ground and first floor could also exploit exciting views over the Wharf and canal and reinforce this connection from within.

**Any changes to the structure, fabric and use of these buildings should maintain a clear understanding and appreciation of their historic use and significance.**

- 4.36. The dominance of the original building should be retained. Building work may be necessary to maintain the integrity of the structure and fabric. Extending the use of these buildings could include: leisure related activities, eating and drinking areas and art and craft galleries.



#### **b) Uses and activities**

**A range of leisure and tourism orientated uses and activities that promote attractive activity over the wharves throughout the day and into the evening are encouraged.**

- 4.37. Passenger trip boats, holiday hire and hotel boats, special boats serving disabled groups and availability for organised boating activities and events should form the prime uses fronting both Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf to promote a suitable degree of variety, interest and activity.
- 4.38. There is a widely recognised need for both a Café on Devizes Wharf and Public Toilets close by to complement the existing uses and activities, help attract greater custom and increase the length of stay. Significant and high quality provision is required which is readily accessible and open for extended periods during the day.
- 4.39. An active glazed frontage to the Café should directly overlook the activity space, provide views to the canal and open onto an associated seating area or raised terrace. Public toilets should be well overlooked but not located within the activity space or occupy prime frontage onto it. The details of any scheme should be agreed with Wiltshire Council to enable their possible adoption.
- 4.40. New buildings should enable the practical incorporation of a wide range of active and appealing community leisure and tourism orientated businesses and facilities to support and complement existing uses and activities on Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf. For example this may include: a family and evening restaurant, chandlery, canoe, boat, cycle sales and hire, angling and hiking/outdoor recreation shops, art and craft gallery & studios, boutique hotel, environment/'eco centre and related business operations.



- 4.41. Consideration should be given to extending active leisure uses to the upper floors facing the activity space taking advantage of dramatic views over the canal with for example the provision of bay windows, balconies and terraces to further animate the space. This should include the potential for enabling changing and storage facilities to serve combined water based activities with for example a club lounge at first floor overlooking the canal.
- 4.42. The continued operation of The Forge blacksmith and the possible addition of other complementary craft based workshops on Lower Wharf as publicly accessible visitor attractions and services to the canal are promoted. Any redevelopment of the derelict builders yard at the west end should address the possibility of retaining an open space at its centre as an attractive feature courtyard providing direct public access from the rear of the adjoining former Assize Courts and the brewery. This could bring potential complementary uses within these buildings 'through' to the wharfside and form a future destination from Devizes Wharf.



**c) Public realm**

**Create an attractive and practical waterfront and public spaces**

- 4.43. Creative redesign of the Devizes Wharf activity space and adjacent areas should:
- Where possible in incremental or comprehensive development facilitate the seamless visual and physical integration of adjoining sites through the removal of existing boundaries, extension of open areas, creation of new building frontages, access points and linkages. This may also enable a more practical and efficient use of space. For example the integration of the rear service yard access next to the resource centre as indicated on the development model Fig 10;
  - Consider the subtle differentiation of areas to incorporate related outdoor areas to the building uses (while maintaining the connectivity of the overall space) making imaginative use of the site slope and levels. For example: a forecourt displaying artefacts to the canal museum, stepped viewing terraces to the Wharf Theatre for outdoor performances, a more level standing area within the overall space to help improve the approach to the Wharf Theatre entrance and to assist the practical operation of the Beer Festival, and definition to signify the specific boat launch /watercraft area;
  - Provide a distinctive structural planting scheme with sizable planting beds, a variety of 'colourful' specimens (including the retention or relocation of the palm trees), and promote biodiversity. The growth and density of planting should retain the identified

principal views to, from and over the activity space. Areas of lawn should be suitably designed to deter overrun by vehicles and wear from pedestrian desire lines;

- Address with the resurfacing and re-grading of ground levels and design of foundations the possible disturbance of the buried 'town ditch', the possible reconstruction of the foul water chamber and buried pipeline in the slope fronting the Wharf Theatre and the potential flood risk, surface water run off and prevention of contaminants into the canal;
- Safeguard the potential for the creation of a canal basin between the Wharf Theatre and Canal Museum;
- Construct all hard standing to highway standards, suitably robust to prevent damage or undue wear and tear in normal use by heavy vehicles;
- Provide a discrete but well overlooked cycle parking facility on the activity space. This should be conveniently placed to serve the Wharf Theatre;
- Provide external electrical points to assist existing boat operations and established events and help facilitate the greater scope and type of events. Provide surface mounting points to assist the staying/securing of the Beer Festival Marquee. Upgrade the appearance and provision of the fresh water, sanitation and waste disposal point for canal boat users;
- Along the south bank of the canal retain the appearance of a visual foil that the planting provides to the former gasholder site and brewery yard. Selective thinning and tree removal may be required to remove 'dead wood' and maintain a stable canal bank/revetment while allowing limited framed views onto the canal from the potential canal side link path along the top of the bank. Retain the level of tree and shrub planting to the north bank of the canal.
- Realise the opportunity to reinforce the immediacy and connectivity of the canal with the town in the provision of the footpath link from Devizes Wharf to Lower Wharf through: intermediate feature incidents / 'pause points' for viewing the canal and; possibly a combined wharfside /footpath link with additional visitor moorings alongside to the Brewery Yard perimeter. There would appear to be a precedent for this: the historic map (see Fig 4) indicates that Lower Wharf would appear to have originally extended along what is now the embankment to the Brewery Yard allowing mooring alongside to serve the former gas works. This wharf edge could be re-established by re-grading the levels, reclaiming the overgrown canal edge and forming a firm revetment.

#### **d) Public art**

**Public Art should be an integral part of the design for Devizes Wharf to reflect its historic context green setting, and express the vitality of the leisure uses and activities.**

- 4.44. Installations should be strong and bold. The creative incorporation within the external fabric of buildings and sculpturing of the site levels is encouraged for example relief lettering / motifs to advertise 'Devizes Wharf' on key landmark frontages and landscape forms / descriptive panels to celebrate the bicentenary of the canal, and convey the significance of the canoe race, and town ditch.

### 3) Vehicle and pedestrian movement-Fig 9.

4.45. The two principal approaches are along Wharf Street and Couch Lane. The following principles are cross referenced to Fig 9:

#### a) Access to Devizes Wharf and the canal

**Substantial enhancements of the approaches to Devizes Wharf are necessary to emphasise the attraction and create a welcoming first impression**

#### 4.46. Wharf Street:

- Recreate Wharf Street as an enclosed linear space with a distinctive architectural character for buildings along it. Maintain a direct axis and line of sight to Devizes Wharf (1);
- Incorporate a broad formal tree lined avenue that will help draw the eye from the 'green' canalside into the town and visa versa and reinforce the significant view from New Park Street of the backdrop of trees rising above the north bank of the canal (2);
- Create a clearly defined 'gateway' to Devizes Wharf with the potential redevelopment of the Police Station site and retail unit opposite at the entrance to Wharf Street from New Park Street (3). This should be readily apparent on the approaches along New Park Street sufficient to effectively draw the attention of passing vehicles. The distinctive rounded corner frontages on the west side of the Snuff Street redevelopment are an example of one approach to this. The continuation of some distinctive common ground or building features will help to reinforce the links with the Market Place;
- Possibly establish a suitable 'landmark' building frontage or feature at the entrance to Devizes Wharf from Wharf Street (4);
- Consider the possible emphasise on New Park Street of the two pedestrian links from Market Place; via Snuff Street (5) with a possible increased pavement width; and the less apparent route via the retail passage with a new pedestrian crossing (6).
- Any new approach into the rear yard of The Crown Public House should be welcoming, of generous width, well overlooked and linked to the highway (7).

#### 4.47. Couch Lane:

- Recognise Couch Lane as the continuation of the axis along Snuff Street from the Market Place. Incorporate some common surface materials to visually reinforce the connection with Snuff Street and Market Place (8). Redevelopment along the west side of Snuff Street has considerably enhanced this street and reflects the importance attached to this route as the primary access to Devizes Wharf from the heart of the town. Improvements to the appearance of the two yards off the west side of the street is encouraged with boundaries and surfaces following guidance in 1f of this chapter.

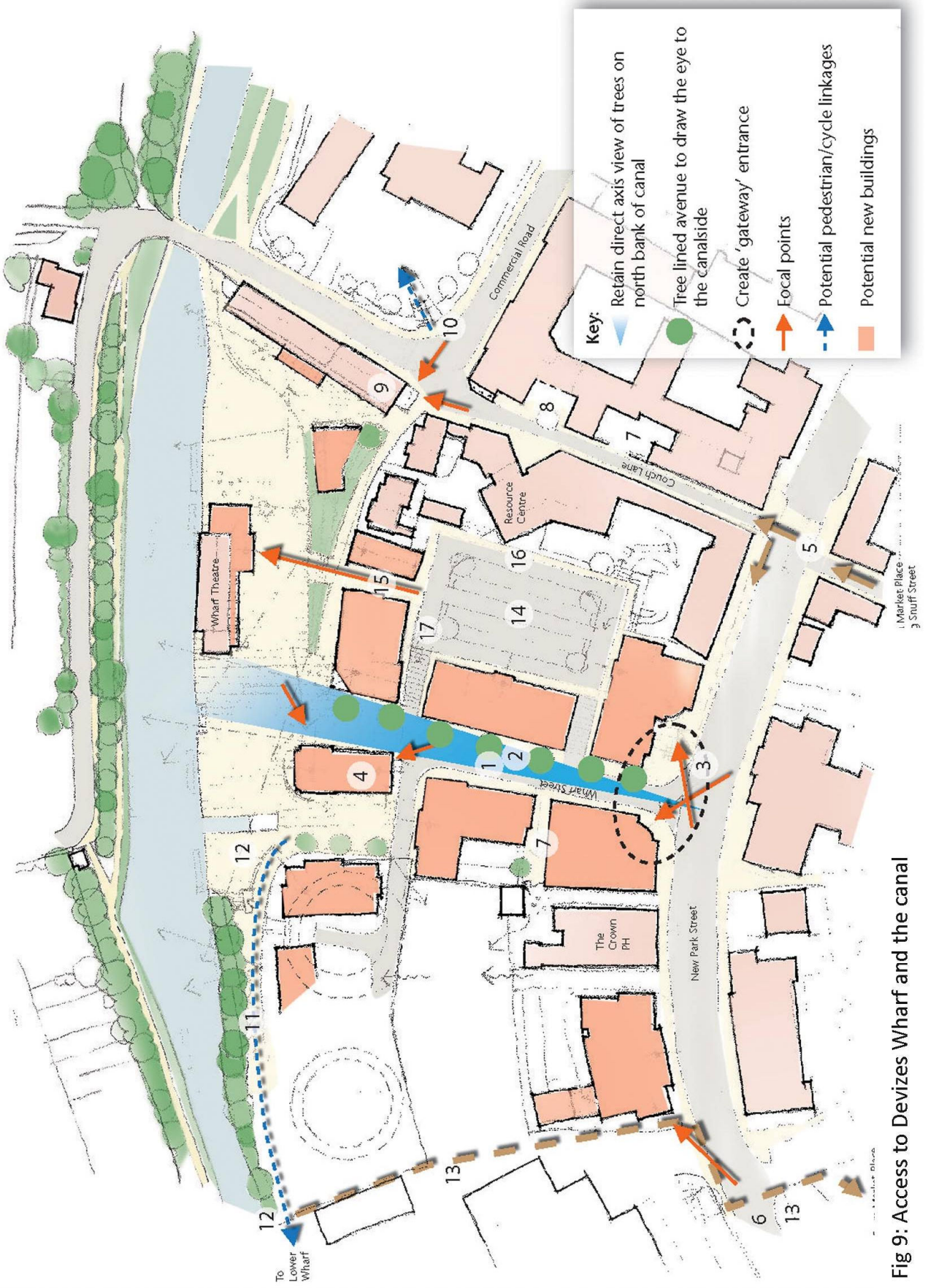


Fig 9: Access to Devises Wharf and the canal

- Enhance the signage on the gable end of the Canal Museum to advertise Devizes Wharf and this attraction (9);
- Reinforce the 'gateway' entrance to Devizes Wharf by improving the junction of Couch Lane with Commercial Road (10). Any future redevelopment of the hospital should create a prominent and easily accessible connection with Devizes Wharf at this corner for example by re-grading the embankment at this point to create a shallow pedestrian entrance ramp sloping back into the hospital site.

4.48. **Potential canal side link between Devizes Wharf to Lower Wharf and Town Bridge:**

- Access along the south bank from Devizes Wharf has long since been disengaged with the growth of the gas works requiring the canal to be crossed twice to regain the towpath along the opposite bank between Wharf Bridge and Town Bridge, and bypassing Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf. The towpath is part of the National Cycleway Network Route 4.
- The potential for a footpath link (11) along the south bank of the canal is mentioned in item 1c of this chapter in relation to adjoining frontage. The link should provide attractive and direct pedestrian access to the complimentary potential enhancement of Lower Wharf and the Assize Courts, encourage greater activity over both spaces, and strengthen the historic association experienced as part of the 'tourist trail' along the canalside between the canal museum and Caen Hill Locks. Reflecting this importance is suggestive of the path taking on the appearance of a 'broad walk' rather than a 'narrow lane'. The opportunity this presents to enhance the public realm is also emphasised in item 2c of this chapter. Upgrading the footpath alongside Dundas Court and securing its continuation over or around the waterway pump chamber is necessary to complete the connection with the towpath at Town Bridge.
- Access to the footpath from both Devizes Wharf and Lower Wharf should suitably express this importance so that access for walkers and cyclists is made obvious and movement along the route is straightforward and experienced as a natural continuation of the linear canal side (12). From Devizes Wharf the barrier presented by the brick retaining wall, change in level and slipway should be overcome by creating a broad swept ramped entry leading walkers and cyclists past the end of the slipway avoiding abrupt changes in direction and the need to use steps. The path should be experienced as a natural extension of the activity space. A reduction or removal of the brick retaining wall, extension of the activity space beyond the slipway and appropriate set back of building frontage at this point should achieve the visual and physical integration necessary.
- Boundaries to the footpath along the top of the embankment should be suitably set back to enable a minimum 2 metres wide path with clearance both sides for shared pedestrian /cycle use, from overhanging trees and access for canal bank maintenance (see also item 1c of this chapter).

4.49. **Other potential linkages:**

There is a considerable break in access to the canal from the town centre west of Wharf Street as this area is the brewery. A coordinated approach to any future incremental development of the former garage on New Park Street and neighbouring landholdings to

the rear may enable access to the canal. For example a link between the canalside and New Park Street along the west boundary of the former garage and gasholder sites (13). This could form a convenient continuation of the pedestrian access linking Market Place with New Park Street through the retail passage which has been the subject of improvement. Design proposals in this area should consider the possibility for future integration of adjoining sites.

## **b) Car and coach parking**

### **Address the balance between the location and provision of vehicle parking on Devizes Wharf and achieving a vibrant overall development**

4.50. In principle a reduction in public car parking is promoted on the basis that the current Devizes 'Wharf Car Park' (104 spaces) and Coach Parking are generally underutilised, dominate the approach to the Wharf and form a dull backdrop to the activity space. The current parking requires around half of the Wharf area. This balance should be addressed with the redesign of parking provision to accommodate more engaging and attractive uses focused on the approaches to Devizes Wharf and alongside the Wharf activity area. The extent of any reduction achievable in parking will be conditioned by local factors; Wiltshire Council's parking strategy and related surveys.

4.51. Redesign of public car parking should:

- Remove the Public Car Park (13 spaces) fronting the Canal Museum;
- Not occupy frontage onto the activity space or visually dominate, obscure and physically obstruct the access and approach(s) to the Wharf (14);
- Provide pedestrian access directly between the public car parking and the Devizes Wharf activity area (15). This should be readily apparent and accessible, welcoming and attractive;
- Provide public car parking within similar proximity to the Resource Centre (16).

4.52. Proposals for coach parking should:

- Remove the designated Coach Parking bays alongside the slipway. Where possible an alternative remote location should be sought for the extended lay-over of larger coaches.
- Provide a Coach and minibus drop off and pick up facility (17) within the close vicinity of the designated Devizes Wharf activity space to provide for organised parties to the Wharf Theatre, canal museum and passenger boat trips;
- Provide a sheltered waiting/seating area with public toilets easily accessible close by and within sight of the drop off point. Provide for limited minibus parking within the parking area.

### c) Servicing

**Servicing requirements should be efficiently and discretely accommodated and form an integral part of the design proposals**

4.53. Any development proposal for the redesign of Devizes Wharf should:

- Maintain the current limited and restricted council authorised access and temporary parking for vehicles over the activity space from Wharf Street and Couch Lane to service the Wharf Theatre, Canal Museum, canal boat operations, events and other official uses;
- Illustrate (through 'parking' plans and vehicle track plot/swept path analysis):the ability to effectively manoeuvre and park vehicles and trailers to enable boat launch and boat lift operations, and the operation of the principle events within the space i.e. offloading during the Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race and accommodation of the Beer Festival;
- Enable general unhindered pedestrian access and visibility along the activity space and wharf side. Subtle surface definition of the activity space should emphasis parking is set well back from the canal edge.

4.54. The heavy lifting operation and consequent movement of larger vehicles and trailers on the Wharf and through the town streets is perhaps not ideal and any potential future re-location off site for the lifting of larger boats is encouraged.

4.55. New development should not be serviced from the Devizes Wharf activity area (apart from the stand alone pavilion identified). To achieve an efficient use of space servicing to new development should consider the incorporation of dedicated shared lay-by and trolley routes to individual premises or front servicing on limited access highways.

4.56. Any proposals for the redevelopment of the retail unit (former garage) at the junction of Wharf Street and New Park Street should consider the potential rationalisation of servicing as part of a wider development to enable an active return frontage of significant length along Wharf Street.

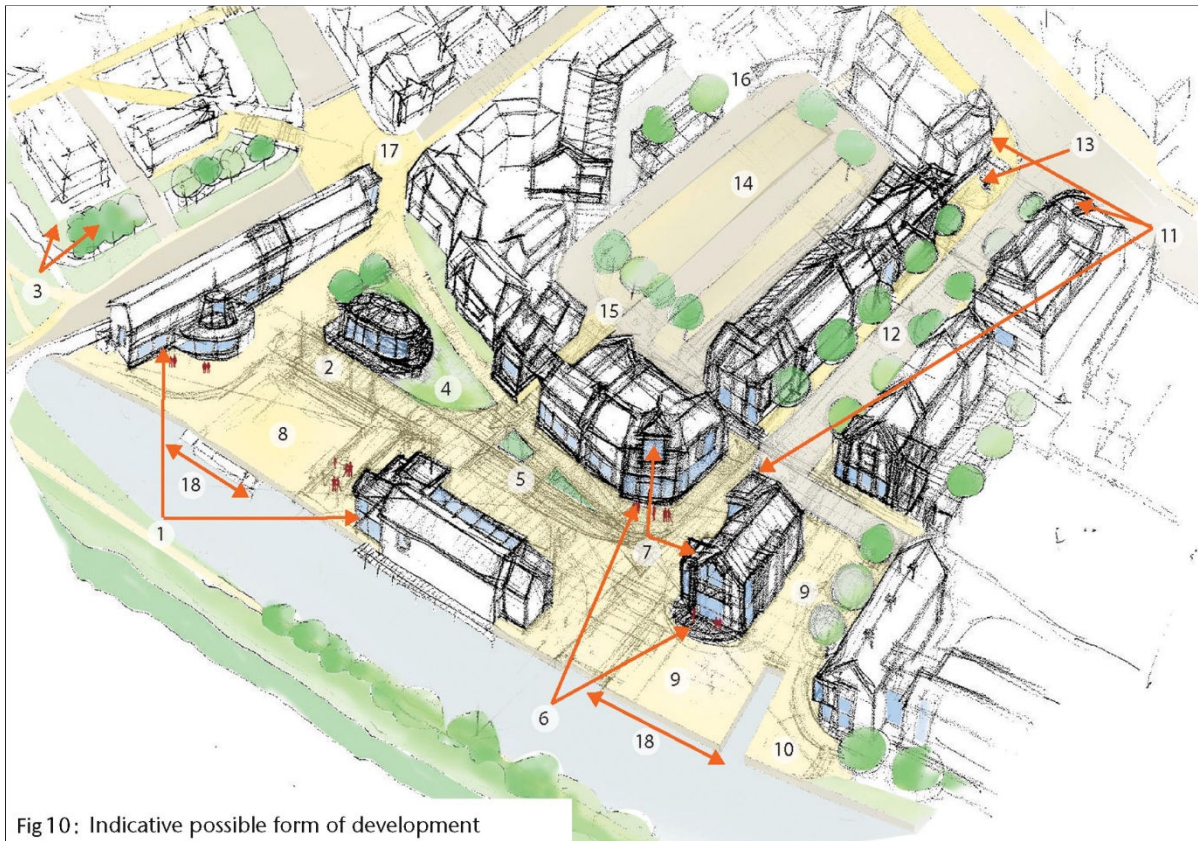


Fig 10: Indicative possible form of development

1. Enhanced existing frontage (4.36) and limited extension (4.11) to museum and theatre.
2. Possible pavilion type building (4.11).
3. Retain landscape embankment and perimeter hedge (4.15).
4. Distinctive structural landscaped sitting out area (4.44).
5. Stepped viewing terrace/performance area (4.44).
6. Leisure orientated uses at ground floor eg. Café (4.40/4.41).
7. Possibly extend leisure uses to upper floors overlooking activity space and canal (4.42).
8. Potential for future canal basin (4.44).
9. Defined boating activity/launch area around slipway (4.44).
10. Broad entry/extended wharf edge to new footpath link along canal bank (4.44).
11. Key landmark frontages (4.47).
12. Tree lined avenue draws eye to the wharf and town (4.46).
13. Defined entrance 'gateway' from New Park Street (eg possible set back feature square) (4.46).
14. Discretely located public car parking (4.47).
15. Direct access from car parking to wharf activity space (4.47)
16. Integrate adjoining sites for improved accessibility and efficient use of space (4.44).
17. Enhance 'gateway' to wharf from Couch Lane with feature to end of museum building. Upgrade Couch Lane and possible future access to hospital site (4.48).
18. Maintain a lively canal alongside Devizes Wharf (4.10/4.11).



## Chapter 5: Delivering Enhancements at Devizes Wharf

- 5.1 Previous plans and policies relating to Devizes Wharf have not resulted in development. It is therefore essential that the proposals in the planning brief are realistic and deliverable. This is true of both the introduction of buildings to define space and enhancements to the public realm. As landowner Wiltshire Council has the opportunity to be a catalyst for change on Devizes Wharf and the Wharf Car Park but will need to respond to private developers on other elements of the site.
- 5.2 There will be two delivery tools open to the Council to ensure public realm improvements take place:
- Capital receipts from small scale development on council owned land which can be reinvested in the project, and
  - Planning obligations that are reasonably related to the development being proposed.
- 5.3 Both depend on the proposed mix of activities at the Wharf being commercially viable. If they are not developers or developer partners will not come forward. (Add more information commercial viability)

### Approach to Planning Obligations at Devizes Wharf

- 5.4 Policies in the emerging Wiltshire Core Strategy will, in time, replace those within Kennet Local Plan. However, the core strategy is not timetabled for adoption until autumn 2012 and the Council remain committed to a consistent and effective policy towards section 106 obligations. Therefore until a replacement policy is in place the policies in the Kennet Local Plan remain relevant to the negotiation of planning obligations. In March 2004 Kennet District Council adopted the Devizes Strategic Development Brief to develop a co-ordinated approach to the negotiation of planning obligations in relation to allocated housing sites in Devizes in the Kennet Local Plan. The intention of the brief was to look at the implications arising from cumulative impact of housing in Devizes. The general area of North Gate/Wharf and Devizes Hospital was considered within this document. The general approach to pooling section 106 contributions to address the cumulative impact of development is still relevant provided there is a clear audit trail between the need for the contributions and use of the monies received.
- 5.5 One of the fundamental aims of the Kennet Local Plan is to 'create or enhance places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look well' whilst one of the objectives of the Devizes Wharf Planning Brief is to guide all development on Devizes Wharf to make sure the individual parts come together as a well designed, cohesive whole. Policy PD1 of the Kennet Local Plan is the tool to ensure both of these objectives are met.
- 5.6 The design principles described in Section 4 acknowledge that it is often the quality of spaces within and around buildings rather than the buildings themselves that define a space and create local character. In the case of Devizes Wharf 'creating a well used, attractive and safe public realm' (criterion 5, policy PD1, KLP) is a primary objective of the planning brief. Lack of attention to detail within this space will undermine the overall concept for the site. Delivering

the required improvements to the public realm will rely on limited public funding, community support and developer contributions.

Development in and around Devizes Wharf will impact on the amenity value of Devizes Wharf. Wiltshire Council will consider the cost of providing amenity, recreation and community areas within the Devizes Wharf area and develop a fair and reasonable process for the calculation of contributions towards delivering this element of the scheme.

### **Planning Obligations relating to housing**

- 5.7 As stated above the document 'Devizes Strategic Development Brief' was adopted to mitigate the impact of new housing in Devizes in March 2004. Since then, in March 2005, Kennet District Council also adopted supplementary planning guidance called 'Community Benefits from Planning' which provided supplementary information on how the council was seeking to deliver several policies in the Kennet Local Plan 2011 in relation to social and community infrastructure. This document extended the approach to mitigating the impact of housing development to the whole of Kennet. It established the conditions that would apply to any new large housing developments.

The potential impact of any housing development within the Devizes Wharf on existing education, recreation and community buildings will be assessed in accordance with adopted SPG on planning obligations. Where contributions towards mitigating the impact of development on recreation provision or community buildings are required it will be directed towards delivering the amenity, recreation and community elements of the Devizes Wharf Planning Brief.

**Add more on potential use of capital assets and viability**

## **Appendix 1 : Summary of Advice and Recommendations for Devizes Wharf**

The **Devizes Town Centre Design Code** was adopted for the purposes of development control by Kennet District Council in 2007 following initial consultation on a Devizes Town Centre Action Plan, and was itself subject to public consultation in Mar/Apr 2007. The Design Code indicates that key characteristics and features that are to be retained have to be identified, views and vistas into the site should be examined, new buildings should help enclose and define spaces and the impact of new development on the skyline should be assessed. Specific proposals included some mixed residential development, improvements to the space around the theatre to add interest, recreation of Wharf Street, additional leisure activities associated with canal centre buildings. The Design Code also highlights the need to maintain and improve public open space, enhance biodiversity, recognise the historical context of the site and enhance access routes within and to the site. Other opportunities to link to gap site of the former filling station and the Assize Court are identified.

The **Devizes Community Area – Strategic Action Plan 2007-2012**, was adopted by Devizes Community Area Planning Partnership (DCAPP) in 2006 to guide the work of the partnership in the short to medium term. The strategic plan concentrates on proposals which will help to progress DCAPPs priorities; priorities identified through consultation. The Wharf is seen as a priority project stating *'It is critically important that what takes place on the Wharf is in line with the community's aspirations and benefits both locals and visitors alike. Leisure and cultural uses need to play a key part in any development and it is likely that while the commercially profitable elements of any development will 'look after themselves', considerable effort and support will be needed to attract new leisure uses and champion the 'softer' existing cultural and leisure elements like the Wharf Theatre and Kennet & Avon Canal Trust Museum which are needed to maintain a healthy mixed use development.'*

The **Devizes Town Centre: Baseline Review and Analysis** (Gillespies study) was a study commissioned by Kennet DC and South West Development Agency in July 2005. The objectives of the study included to promote regeneration of Devizes town centre and boost investor confidence in the town. Shortly before the study was commissioned British Waterways had prepared a draft 'Town Wharf' master plan which included Devizes Wharf, the Lower Wharf and the site of Devizes Hospital (2003). This plan was reviewed by Gillespies. The objective of the master plan was to revitalise this part of the town and create an attractive and active waterfront with the added aim of creating more extended connections along the canal and to the town centre. The British Waterways Brief was consulted on but results of consultation were not analysed and the brief was never adopted. In relation to Devizes Wharf the British Waterways plan proposed a new public space around the theatre; restaurant, leisure and retail businesses associated with open space, residential to the west fronting the canal and a new 'boulevard' along Wharf Street.

The Gillespies report went on to identify Devizes Wharf as a principal space in the town which is a key location for arts and leisure with a highly active edge to the canal. There was concern that the space felt remote because of the non active ground floor uses between the Wharf and the town centre which doesn't encourage pedestrians to go there.

The **Devizes Community Area Plan 2003 -2015**, was a document prepared by Devizes Community Area Planning Partnership in 2003 in consultation with the Devizes community to identify the major issues facing the town and its community area. Objectives within the plan included to retain the theatre in Devizes (Culture and Leisure), to ensure local distinctiveness is maintained and that important local buildings are repaired and brought back into use e.g. the Assize courts (Housing & Built Environment), to provide jobs and facilities through development of brownfield sites, including the Wharf, the Northgate and the West Central area. (Economy)

The **North Gate and the Wharf Planning Brief** was prepared by Kennet District Council in April 1999 and was adopted as supplementary guidance to policies about the North gate and Wharf area in the Kennet Local Plan 2001 (Policy MC24, Area D The Wharf). The 2001 Kennet Local Plan contained an expectation that development at the wharf should be visitor orientated although housing and employment could complement the leisure and recreational uses. Proposal should not include a significant retail element. Development should respond architecturally to the canal side setting. Other objectives were: well defined spaces, spaces that allow activity within them rather than people just passing through, improved pedestrian connections to and from the town centre, clearly defined entrances and gateways, scope for some small retail units at the Wharf linked to craft workshops, relocation of the theatre considered to integrate with cinema, food outlets linked to locally sourced food, serviced small scale office space for start ups, canal side housing

The **Kennet & Avon Canal Conservation Plan** was prepared by the Kennet & Avon Canal Partnership in 2000. The conservation plan is based on 4 objectives – the canal to be preserved for the enjoyment of everyone, the canal to be conserved as a unique example of a working waterway, to protect and expand the existing habitat and wildlife of the water environment and to seek to conserve and enhance the character and setting of the canal and its environment. There are no specific policies aimed at Devizes Wharf but policies to conserve and enhance the historic significance and local character of the canal are relevant (K1), as are policies to ensure visitor activities are consistent with sustaining the water way (U1), new facilities are sustainable (U4), canalside furniture is relevant (U14), to use indigenous species for new planting schemes and conserve mature trees (LH5 and 6) and to conserve features of historic importance (LH8). Policy BH11 is perhaps most relevant stating ‘in planning and designing for new development, the retention, recovery and safeguarding of the historic character, fabric and spaces of the canal shall be the primary consideration’. There are also policies to protect the open character of the canal and its relationship to local landscape character (H2).

The **Devizes Conservation Area Designation Statement** was prepared by Kennet District Council in 2005. It identifies the Canal and Wharf as a character area within the conservation area. Key elements of the area are noted as the canal including the bridges and the lock, the vegetation providing a green ‘lung’ through the built up area, the tranquil atmosphere created by the canal and its setting together with the slow and quiet movement of the boats, the Wharf Theatre and Canal Trust Buildings.