

Whitstable Harbour

Strategic Plan

January 2010



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Appendix

Plan of the Harbour

1 Introduction

This Strategic Plan provides a vision and a framework for the development of the Harbour. Conventional thinking has been to see towns such as Whitstable only in terms of their past, exploiting this for tourism. This plan seeks to establish a more progressive framework for the development of the Harbour for the benefit of the local community, stakeholders and visitors.

The plan has been prepared by the Whitstable Harbour Board in consultation with interested representative groups within Whitstable and the general public. As the Board is a committee of Canterbury City Council, the plan has also been discussed with the Council's Local Development Framework team and with members of the Council's Executive. The Board will continue discussions with interested groups and relevant Council departments.

The Strategic Plan addresses both the longer term vision and the short and medium-term development options. Based on this Strategic Plan, detailed business development plans will be produced for individual projects. These business development plans will be assessed to see how they fit with this Strategic Plan and will, where appropriate, be the subject of further consultation with interested groups and the wider public.

The Strategic Plan starts, in section 2, with an assessment of the current position of the Harbour, identifying its various strengths and weaknesses. An important distinction is drawn between harbour-dependent activities (those activities which can only take place within a harbour), harbour-beneficial activities (those activities which benefit from being in a harbour or indeed benefit the harbour) and those which fall into neither of these categories.

From this assessment, an outline of the longer-term vision for the Harbour is set out in section 3 and certain short and medium term development options are identified in section 4. These are not exclusive or limiting but show the direction in which the Board would wish to see the development of the Harbour. The Board is also interested to hear of initiatives of individuals or corporate entities who may wish to promote and develop activities in the Harbour provided that these fall within the strategic framework outlined in this plan.

The financial implications of the plan are set out in section 5. These note that the Board intends to finance longer term capital developments rather than dispose of long leasehold interest. It also demonstrates that the Harbour remains self-sufficient in its financing arrangements.

Section 6 notes how this Strategic Plan fits with the Council's wider planning framework and policies.

This Strategic Plan will be the subject of review every five years. It will also be subject to review in the event that there is a material change in circumstances such as, but not necessarily limited to, those considered in section 3.3. In the event of any significant change to the Board's strategy, this will be the subject of consultation with representative groups within Whitstable and, where appropriate, by further public consultation.



Michael Dixey
Chairman
Whitstable Harbour Board

November 20, 2009

2 Current position

The objectives and constraints of the Board, as set out in its constitution, are summarised here. The position of the Harbour, as it is today, and its significance to Whitstable, is assessed and its main strengths and weaknesses are identified.

2.1 The Board's objectives and constraints

The Board's objectives are:

- To meet the ambitions of the local community

Whitstable Harbour is a public asset directed by a Board of elected and appointed independent members. The Board will retain a position of being responsive, through public consultation where appropriate and through direct consultation with interested groups, to the ambitions of the local Whitstable community. Maintaining the Harbour as a working facility with active shipping is seen as a key ambition.

- To maintain and develop the Harbour's environs

The infrastructure of the harbour, its land, quays, buildings and premises, represent the basis from which all the harbour's operations are conducted. The Board will maintain and develop these for the long-term use of current and future stakeholders. The highest practical environmental standards will be sought.

- To support the local community

The Board recognises the importance of the harbour to the local economy in terms of both direct and indirect employment as well as the total level of economic activity in the community associated with the harbour's activities as a whole. Whitstable is an attractive town both for residents and incoming tourists and the harbour and surrounding area represent its focal point. The Board will support the activities of the harbour to enhance these local economic benefits.

The constraints under which it operates are:

- To be financially self-sufficient

The Board reached agreement with the Council, in accordance with the Department for Transport's Review of Municipal Ports, to establish 'ring-fenced' accounts such that any net surpluses will be retained within the harbour account. The net trading result of the harbour's operations has to be sufficient to allow for costs both of a revenue and capital nature to be met within these ring-fenced arrangements. The Board has access, subject to viable financial projections and Council approval, to long-term borrowing facilities to meet certain of its capital requirements.

- To comply with applicable legal and regulatory requirements

The nature and extent of legal and regulatory requirements for port operations continues to expand. It is the Board's priority to ensure full and proper compliance with all such requirements.

- To adhere to the best practice of open and transparent governance

The Harbour Board seeks to adhere to the highest principles of governance in accordance with its status and as set out in the publication 'A Guide to Good Governance' issued by the then DETR in January 2000 and the 'Municipal Ports Review' issued in June 2007.

2.2 The significance of the Harbour to Whitstable

The Harbour is an intrinsic component of Whitstable. In many respects it represents a focal point in the town, contributing to its character and uniqueness both from a tourist perspective and, more importantly, for members of the local community. It is a traditional working harbour that has become a popular destination for both residents and visitors. The importance of the Harbour needs to be considered in perspective: the physical environment created by the Harbour and the social function that the Harbour plays are as important as the Harbour's economic function.

[a] Physical environment

The physical environment of the Harbour encapsulates much of the character of the town. It is varied and quirky. It is industrious rather than pretty. The Harbour has not suffered from commercial over-development. It remains unspoilt though it is under-developed. The Harbour has evolved progressively over time without having been subject to wholesale change.

[b] Social function

The Harbour provides an accessible space for both the local community and visitors to enjoy the environment and the Harbour's facilities at their leisure. It provides interest for individuals, families and larger groups with facilities to sit (albeit limited at present), eat and drink, buy goods and produce from local suppliers and access the water-front and beach areas.

It is a site for annual festivities and provides a base for a range of water-based recreational activities.

[c] Economic function

The Harbour does not directly provide a large amount of employment. It supports some 100 to 150 FTE (full time equivalent) employees. However, and more significantly, the Harbour positively contributes to indirect employment and the economy of the town.

The Harbour is a major tourist attraction. Tourism in Whitstable brings consumer expenditure for the benefit not only of Harbour businesses but also for the town as a whole. It also adds to the feeling of well-being for the local community such that they choose to stay within the town to shop and support local businesses.

For several years, the Harbour has been financially self-sufficient, requiring no financial contribution from the tax payer. Surpluses arising from the Harbour's business activities are available for reinvestment in both income generating projects and non-income generating community facilities.

2.3 The Harbour land

The Harbour land comprises both quayside areas (shaded in yellow) and non-quayside areas (shaded in purple).



Certain activities within the Harbour are dependent on the Harbour to the extent that these activities could not be carried out other than with access to a navigable waterway. Such 'harbour-dependent' activities currently include the handling of aggregate cargo, the berthing of fishing vessels and the accommodation of both operational and pleasure craft. These need to be located on quayside land and may also require some ancillary non-quayside land.

Some activities within the Harbour are enhanced by being within the Harbour to the extent that they benefit from, but are not dependent on, being adjacent to water and also enhance the Harbour in physical, social and economic terms. Such 'harbour-beneficial' activities currently include the processing and retail sale of fish and shellfish, marine products, local produce as well as restaurant facilities focused on fish and locally sourced ingredients. During periods of favourable weather significant numbers of people visit the Harbour.

Whilst the South and West Quays of the Harbour are accessible to the public, the buildings which front Harbour Street and Tower Parade are unattractive and off-putting. This creates a break in the townscape so that there is little to link the Harbour, the town centre, the beaches and the Castle.

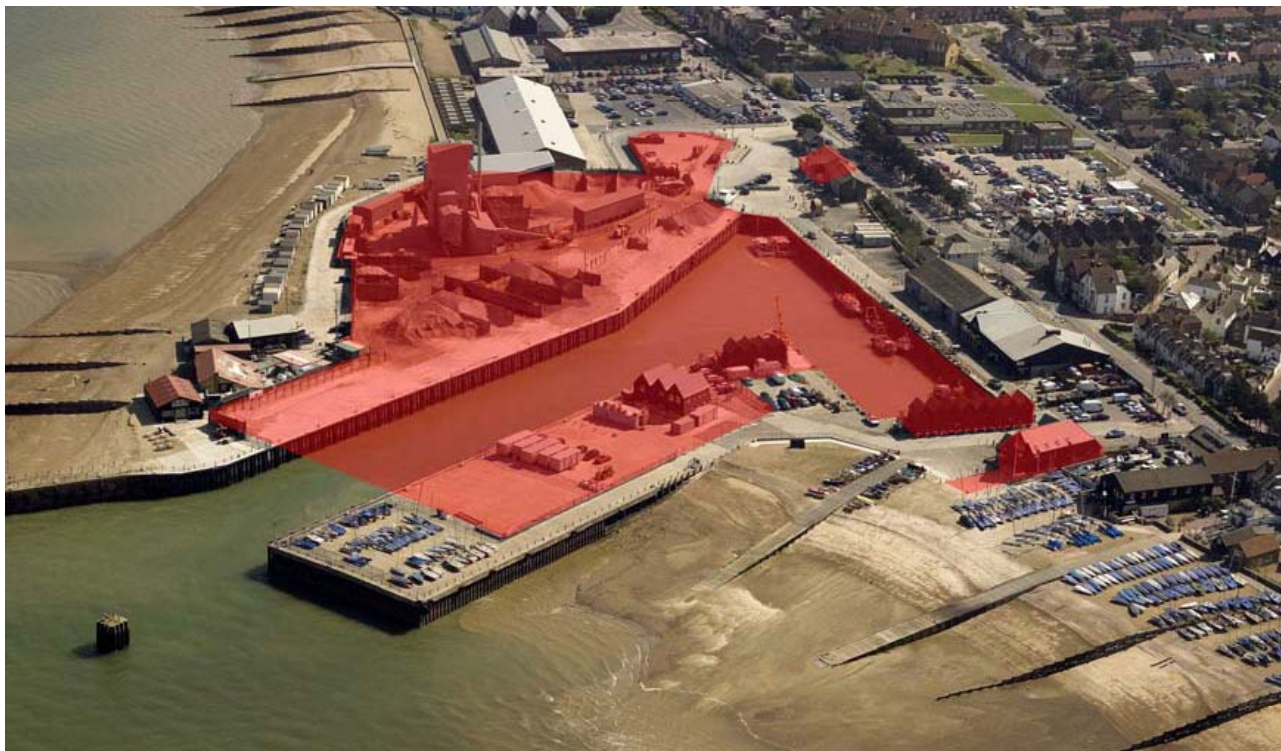
There are few pedestrian routes from Harbour Street and Tower Parade through to the quayside itself and whilst the west gate has some townscape merit, the east gate and the pedestrian access by the Angling Club are particularly uninviting.

The route between the Brett Aggregates operational area and the Oyster Indoor Bowling Club is unattractive and does not encourage pedestrian access to Long Beach. This beach is visually and physically separated from the town by the Bowling Club, the Harbour Garage and Brett Aggregates. There is no landscaping beyond the sea path skirting the coast.

2.4 Harbour and quayside land

Harbour-dependent activities

Harbour-dependent activities take place on both the West and East Quays and also involve parts of the South Quay. These are shaded in red on the following aerial view.



The physical attributes of the operating capability of the Harbour have certain limitations as described below.

[a] Location

The Harbour lies between the operational ports of Sheerness/Ridham to the west and Ramsgate to the east. It is adjacent to the Kentish Flats wind-farm and to the shell-fishing grounds in the Thames Estuary and the fishing grounds within the estuarial waters and off the north Foreland and northeast Spit. Its immediate hinterland extends to a radial area of some 15 miles. The Harbour's historic significance of serving the populous of Canterbury as a trading route is no longer relevant.

[b] Physical characteristics

The approach channel and berths are tidally restricted with minimum dredged depths at low water of 0.26 metres. The tidal range provides a minimum channel and berth depth of 4.26 metres at high water. Spring tides provide an additional dredged depth of approximately one metre. Vessels may, however safely ground once berthed. The Harbour can safely receive vessels up to a maximum of some 95 metres overall length.

Road access is poor, as the Harbour is located in the centre of the town which suffers from traffic congestion.

Most of the Harbour is freely accessible to the public and its operations provide an attraction to both residents and visitors. Its working nature is a key element of Whitstable's attractiveness.

[c] East Quay

The East Quay provides some 275 metres of vertical quay wall. The land area adjacent to the East Quay provides some 0.40 ha of workable quay frontage and 1.13 ha of further land for storage and processing. Brett Aggregates operates an asphalt plant on the East Quay, on a medium-term lease, importing aggregate and supplying the local hinterland. Vehicular access is poor, certain environmental issues exist and the site is visually unattractive. This operation, which is the subject of a designated use provision, is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

[d] West Quay

The West Quay provides some 173 metres of quay within the Harbour and 114 metres of quay on its western side. The load-bearing capability of the north section of the West Quay is restricted to 27 kilonewtons per square metre due to its piled construction. The West Quay has limited adjacent land facilities.

[e] Inner harbour and South Quay

The inner harbour area and South Quay provide berthing and certain storage and processing facilities for fishing vessels and for pleasure craft. There are limited cold storage facilities for fish currently comprising a 20 foot converted container containing a small ice making machine. Much of the fish caught locally is exported to the north continent.

Harbour-beneficial activities

The harbour-beneficial activities within the quayside land largely take place on the South Quay and the seaward end of the West and East Quays. These are shaded in blue in the following aerial view.



[a] Location

The Harbour lies within the centre of Whitstable and is a focal point for residents and visitors. It is within walking distance of the railway station and adjacent to other attractions such as Harbour Street, beaches, Yacht Club, Horsebridge and Castle.

[b] Physical characteristics

The Harbour is directly accessible to the public. Modest parking facilities exist within the Harbour with additional spaces at the adjacent Gorrell Tank. It has access at both its eastern and western ends although, at the former, there is conflict between operational and non-operational activities. The external road-side appearance of the Harbour is visually unattractive. A number of existing buildings are unsuited to modern business and nearing the end of their useful life.

Within the Harbour buildings are of a wooden weather-boarded construction some of which are temporary in nature. There remain areas of undeveloped land and facilities for families are limited. The relatively undeveloped and random nature of the environment does, however, give an unspoilt if ramshackle character to the Harbour.

[c] The South Quay

The South Quay currently represents the focal point of the harbour-beneficial activities within the quayside land and, as it is the most accessible, is its most visited section. The South Quay development to date has been led by the fishing industry in the harbour basin and its related processing and retail businesses.

The quay includes an award-winning fish market and restaurant and number of smaller quayside fish and shellfish retailers. Whitstable oysters are nationally, if not indeed internationally, renowned. The quay also has a café and a market, which includes a number of retailers, some of which sell locally produced food and drinks.

This quay is underutilised and the existing buildings are fragmented with no frontage to Harbour Street and Tower Parade. There is good access at the western end of the quay but with limited parking facilities. The access at the eastern end of the quay combines industrial vehicle movements, vehicle access to the north section of the East Quay and pedestrian access to the South Quay. Additional pedestrian access is provided to the west of the Angling Club adjacent to the Gorrell Tank car park.

[d] The seaward areas of the West and East Quays

The West Quay provides pedestrian access throughout its length and seaward end. The remaining area is used for boat storage for members of the Whitstable Yacht Club. The quay has a prominent position but its load-bearing capabilities are limited.

Access to the seaward end of the East Quay is by way of a surfaced road area to Long Beach and to the East Quay restaurant and the Whitstable Brewery Bar. The access to this otherwise attractive area is severely limited by the Indoor Bowling Club, the Harbour Garage, the bowling alley and swimming pool.

2.5 Non-quayside land

The eastern area of the Harbour land is currently occupied by the Oyster Indoor Bowls Club, the Harbour Garage and sporting and leisure activities on Long Beach.

The seaward end of the western area houses the RNLI station and provides dinghy storage facilities for Whitstable Yacht Club together with a public launching ramp. The landward end is occupied by Whitstable Marine which retails marine goods. There is an adjacent small public car park.

These are highlighted in purple on the aerial view below.



[a] The Long Beach area

The Long Beach area provides direct beach access for beach hut and recreational purposes. Although adjacent to the Brett Aggregates' operation, it is an attractive section of the coastline with potential for development for recreational and leisure activities to link this area with the Harbour and the rest of the coastline. A launching ramp has recently been constructed for recreational users which also forms part of the sea defences. The current activities are considered to be harbour-beneficial.

[b] The Oyster Indoor Bowls Club

The indoor bowls club, which occupies a converted warehouse, occupies a total area of some 5,275 square metres and has the benefit of a lease extending to 2038. The building has accessible beach frontage though no use is made of this attribute and its function is not related to the club's proximity to the Harbour. It has a membership of some 900 people.

[c] The Harbour Garage

Harbour Garage, established since 1973, operates as Kia's main dealership in Kent and provides both sales and after sales services. It occupies a total area of some 1,641 square metres and has the benefit of a lease extending to 2060. Its operations are not directly linked to the Harbour.

[d] RLNI station

The Whitstable lifeboat station was one of the first ten inshore stations in the UK. It is served by an Atlantic 75 rigid inflatable with a speed capability of 30 knots. Its activities are very much harbour-beneficial.

3 Longer-term vision

The longer-term vision envisages evolution at a pace in keeping with the ambitions and aspirations of the local community.

The tidally restricted vessel access and limited operational and storage areas indicate that the direction of future developments may relate less to cargo-handling activities and more to marine related business, leisure activities and locally based harbour-beneficial enterprise.

Any longer-term vision necessarily has to be based on a series of underlying assumptions. These are set out below. On the basis of these assumptions, the Board's objectives and constraints and the analysis of the current position of the Harbour, the key elements of a longer-term vision have been set out.

3.1 Key elements

[a] To develop on the basis of interests that are harbour-dependent or harbour-beneficial

The Harbour's key attribute is that it is adjacent to a navigable waterway that allows for sea-going vessels to berth, load and discharge. This attribute should govern the direction and nature of future developments such that the Board will give preference to any new development in the Harbour which results in a greater level of 'harbour-dependent' activities.

The Board will also encourage new development which results in a greater level of 'harbour-beneficial' activity within the Harbour. As described in section 2.3, a harbour-beneficial activity is one which benefits from, but is not dependent on, being adjacent to water and also which enhances the Harbour in physical, social and economic terms.

Developments of harbour-beneficial activities should either support the maritime nature of the Harbour's environment or be based on appropriate local activities or products which reflect the character and traditions of Whitstable and the local area. They can be located on quayside or non-quayside land.

Developments which are neither harbour-dependent nor harbour-beneficial will not be pursued.

[b] To maintain the operating capability of the Harbour

The Harbour is an operational port and should remain so. Its operating capability is dependent on the maintenance of its quay walls, an appropriate dredged depth for both its approach channel and berths, the provision of pilotage and navigational aids and necessary land-side facilities to support shipping activity. Additional, non-operating activities of the Harbour should not jeopardise its operational capability.

[c] To maintain a balance of operational and non-operational activities

The longer-term vision anticipates the Harbour remaining as a working facility with aggregate handling, lay-by activities, a lifeboat station, a wind-farm maintenance base and a viable fishing industry as well as a number of pleasure craft operations.

Much of the future development will, however, be directed towards non-operational but harbour-beneficial activities.

It is considered important to retain an appropriate balance between these various activities. Such a balance will need to ensure appropriate procedures to resolve any conflicts of interest which arise.

[d] To maintain a balance of community and tourist interests

The Harbour will continue to satisfy an important social and economic function within the community. In many cases there may not be a conflict between community and tourist interests; what is attractive to the community may also be attractive to visitors.

The importance of ensuring that the Harbour provides the appropriate facilities for the community to access and use as well as providing opportunities for local business enterprise will be maintained.

Development plans will also focus on providing, as far as possible, for year-round activities rather than those which are only seasonally attractive.

[e] To develop in keeping with the character and heritage of the town

Whitstable has a significant and important heritage. Its character is different from many of its fellow North Kent coastal towns. This heritage should be reinforced and its character maintained. This should not, however, preclude appropriate progressive development.

[f] To retain control over Harbour land

The Board wishes to retain control over Harbour land. It will, therefore, not generally seek to dispose of long-term (more than 25 years) lease interests. Development projects requiring financing based on longer term arrangements will be funded by the Board on secure, pre-let terms with rental agreements being determined for periods generally within this 25 year horizon.

[g] To develop land areas suitable for Harbour related usage

The potential for longer-term development of the Harbour land, in line with the objectives, constraints and underlying principles of this Strategic Plan, involves primarily the redevelopment of the eastern area of the Harbour site. This area is currently occupied by the Oyster Indoor Bowling Club and the Harbour Garage.

These activities are neither harbour-dependent nor harbour-beneficial and restrict important beach-front access. The townscape element of this area, on one of the more important routes through Whitstable, is weak. The linkage between the social and leisure activities to the east of the Harbour (including the Castle), the Harbour itself, the Saxon Shore Way, beaches and the town centre is compromised. Significant opportunity exists to redevelop this area in a more integrated manner.

Each of the tenants has long-term lease arrangements. It may be worthwhile to explore with them whether each may have its and its stakeholder interests better served in alternative locations.

If it can be successfully released from its current uses, this area represents an opportunity to develop facilities with direct sea-front access and sufficient land to accommodate a variety of maritime, community and leisure related activities.

[h] To create an active frontage on the South Quay

Active street frontage to Harbour Street, Tower Parade and to the quayside itself, providing direct public access and any necessary access for delivery vehicles, will be a key objective for any new development.

[i] To support the fishing and shell-fishing activities and markets

Fishing and, in particular, shell-fishing are a key feature of Whitstable. These industries and their related markets (such as shellfish processing, retail and restaurant facilities) should, as far as possible, be protected and supported.

[j] To balance the commercial interests of the Harbour with those of the town

Local suppliers and businesses should be encouraged and accommodation for local interests and industries should be made available on economically viable terms. Developments should, however, have due regard to the commercial interests of existing businesses already established within the town.

[k] To contribute to the sustainability of the community

The Harbour will play a role in contributing to the sustainability of the community. In this context, sustainability is considered to have environmental, economic and social dimensions.

Environmentally, the importance of sea defence structures within the Harbour is recognised. Construction materials for any building development will be sourced, as far as possible, from sustainable sources. The Board will liaise with operators to ensure that procedures are in place to minimise the environmental impact of operational activities.

Economically, the plan will create opportunities for the development of local businesses attracting local employment. The plan's support of the tourist industry will contribute to the wider economy of the town. In itself, the Harbour will operate on a financially self-sufficient basis.

Socially, the plan seeks to create a place for people to congregate in safety and with unrestricted access, as far as this is operationally practical. It provides for access to water-based sporting and other activities for people of all ages.

[l] To make provision for rising sea levels and flood defences

The Harbour forms part of the sea defences for the Kent coast. In certain tidal and weather conditions, the area is susceptible to flooding. The medium and longer-term projections for sea levels in the local estuarial waters, although variable, indicate that average levels may rise by as much as one metre during the next 80 to 100 years. An annual sea level increase of 6 to 8 millimetres is assumed for planning purposes. Land to the seaward side of the existing defences will be prone to more regular flooding.

Any new structures will be required to take account of the anticipated sea level increases and flood defence requirements.

[m] To prohibit any form of residential accommodation

The Harbour exists to provide operational facilities to shipping and a source of attraction for both residents and visitors. It is a public asset. It is, therefore, not considered appropriate that its land area should be used for residential accommodation as this may compromise the Harbour's ability to provide operational capability.

3.2 Underlying assumptions

The following key underlying assumptions are made in the context of this Strategic Plan. These assumptions may necessarily change as a result of developments outside the Board's control.

The potential impact of and the Board's strategy towards alternative assumptions is addressed in section 3.3 below.

[a] Cargo handling

It is assumed that Brett Aggregates will remain in operation for the foreseeable future with the East Quay operations continuing in very much their existing state. It has been ascertained that there is long-term access to raw materials, continuing availability of appropriate vessels and an ongoing market for aggregate

products within the relevant hinterland. The existing East Quay site has been designated for aggregate handling by the national policy contained in the Mineral Planning Statement and locally in the Kent Mineral Development Framework.

Section 3.3 below, considers the implications for the Harbour if, contrary to the above assumption, cargo handling was not to continue.

[b] Proposed Haven Project development

The proposed Haven Project development involves the creation of a break-water to enhance the local sea defences combined with the development of a locked marina together with, potentially, residential and business units. These latter elements would be required if the project were to be self-financing. Nearly all the proposed land involved in the project is not Harbour land (although one of the two proposed access routes is). The responsibility and funding requirement for general sea defences rests with the Council rather than the Board.

It is considered that the operations of an aggregate quay in close proximity to residential accommodation would not be compatible. Much of the East Quay, currently occupied by Brett Aggregates, is a site, as described above, designated by both national and local government for aggregates handling. Whilst this designation may, at some stage in the future, be changed, such a change is not in the control of either the Board, the Council or Brett Aggregates.

The Board has not yet taken a view as to the merits or otherwise of the proposed project. Any decision for the project to be progressed is largely outside its control. For the purposes of this Strategic Plan, it is assumed that the proposed Haven Project development is unlikely to proceed in the foreseeable future. This assumption is based on the Board's view that difficulties may be experienced in changing the designated use of the East Quay and that, in the absence of residential accommodation, the financial case for such a development may not indicate viability. Furthermore, it is unclear as to whether the proposed development will attract funding as a result of any sea defence enhancements.

Section 3.3 below, considers the implications for the Harbour if, contrary to the above assumption, the Haven Project was to proceed.

[c] Financing for the reinforcement of the quay walls and sea defence requirements will be made available

The maintenance of the Harbour as an operational business and leisure facility is dependent on the integrity of its structures and its ability to accommodate rising tides and its propensity to flood. Maintenance of these structures requires ongoing capital expenditure. Whilst the Harbour may be able to meet the annual financing costs of such expenditure, through net operating surpluses, it remains reliant on local authority and governmental funds for the provision of capital funding. It is assumed that this funding will continue to be available and that the responsibility for sea defences will remain a national or local government issue.

[d] Fishing and shellfish activities

It is assumed that both the fishing and shellfish industries will continue in operation in the long term. These industries face many challenges including economic viability, fishing quotas, stock disease and market limitations.

[e] Development of local tourism

It is assumed that local tourism will continue to develop in popularity within the Whitstable area and that the Harbour will be an important attraction. Tourism will not only involve day visitors to the town but will also show a demand for longer-stay visitors.

3.3 Alternative assumptions and their implication

[a] Cargo handling

Brett Aggregates has indicated its intention to remain operational in Whitstable Harbour for the foreseeable future. The quay is considered to be a valuable facility for aggregate handling. In the event that Brett Aggregates chose to terminate or not renew its existing lease arrangements, other aggregate suppliers may find the site attractive as an opportunity to break into the Kent market which is largely supplied by the existing tenant.

If no aggregate suppliers wish to use the site and the site was re-designated as not being required for aggregate handling, alternative cargo handling opportunities would be sought. As noted in the introduction to this section, however, there are limited opportunities for other cargo handling operations.

In the absence of other cargo handling activities, alternative harbour-beneficial activities would be sought at the time. This would necessitate a renewed consideration of the strategic options open to the Harbour taking into account the prevailing circumstances.

[b] Proposed Haven Project development

As noted in section 3.2, any decision as to the development of the Haven Project is not directly within the control or authority of the Board. As such, strategic planning as to this issue is limited. Decisions taken by the Council may result in the Haven Project being developed. Such development may or may not include residential accommodation.

If the development includes residential accommodation, it is most likely that the East Quay will have to have been re-designated by national and county regulatory authorities as no longer a site required for aggregate handling. As a result, aggregate handling will no longer take place within the Harbour. As noted above, the opportunities to attract alternative shipping movements (more so by being restricted by their proximity to residential accommodation) are limited. It is considered likely, therefore, that, as a working harbour, only a small fishing fleet and certain pleasure craft will remain in operation. Any financial implications of this are dependent on the alternative (potentially non-operating) activities to which the East Quay may be put.

If the development does not include residential accommodation, it is envisaged that the Haven Project is likely to have a positive impact on the Harbour, providing yachting facilities for residents, attracting additional visitors and increasing consumer expenditure locally. The sea defence capability of the project may also limit, in part, the requirement for more extensive sea walls within the Harbour area.

[c] Council financing sources are not available

Both section 3.2(c) (Financing for sea defence requirements and quay wall reinforcement) and section 3.1(f) (Retention of control of Harbour land) are predicated on the availability of funding by the Council and, ultimately, by national government.

It is assumed that funding for sea defences and quay wall reinforcement will be made available by local and national government as the failure to do so will materially jeopardise the infrastructure of the Harbour and the safety of the immediate vicinity.

Funds for development projects may be assumed to be less certain in view of both local and national spending constraints.

In the absence of such funding for development projects, the Board will not be in a position to develop the Harbour to the extent and within the timescale that it anticipates. It is considered unlikely that, if the Council cannot raise funding through governmental sources, it will, equally, not be in a position to access external capital markets. The Board is not in a position to raise funding independently of the Council.

Funding from prospective developers on the basis of the disposal of long leasehold arrangements provides an alternative source of funding. This entails loss of control of Harbour land and a divestment of the Harbour's assets. Such funding arrangements are contrary to the key elements of the longer-term vision and will, therefore, not be pursued. A slower development plan will therefore be adopted in keeping with the principles of this Strategic Plan, reliant on the ongoing results of the Harbour's financial performance.

[d] Fishing and shellfish activities

It is noted earlier in this section that, whilst fishing and shell-fishing are a key feature of the Whitstable attractiveness, these industries face many challenges. The Board has indicated its commitment to support these activities and the markets they serve.

Many of the issues facing these industries are not within the Board's control. In the event of any termination of either fishing or shell-fishing activities, the Board will continue to market and promote Whitstable on the basis of its rich heritage.

4 Short and medium-term development

The Strategic Plan seeks to address certain short-term (one to three year horizon) development issues and more medium-term (three to ten year) issues.

There exists obvious potential and opportunity to develop the Harbour in line with the Board's objectives and the key elements of the longer-term vision established in this plan. Key areas of land and buildings remain underutilised.

A series of general issues are set out as well as more specific activities which are harbour-dependent or harbour-beneficial.

The development options set out here are not exclusive or limiting but indicate the direction in which the Board would wish to see the development of the Harbour. Rather than being prescriptive, the Board also remains responsive to the initiatives of individuals or corporate entities who may wish to promote and develop activities in the Harbour provided that these fall within the strategic framework outlined in this plan.

4.1 General

[a] Marketing

Whitstable is unique. It is an unspoilt seaside town with a significant heritage and an important fishing and shell-fishing community. It is a gastronomic centre of excellence and has a thriving artists' community. The Harbour has the potential to be more effectively marketed.

A defined and co-ordinated marketing approach will be developed for the Harbour. This will be separate from the Council's general marketing effort and be specific to the Harbour. A separate Harbour brand will be established as will its own website and promotional activities. These may be co-ordinated, where appropriate, with other parties operating within the Harbour and with other parties developing the profile of the town in its entirety.

[b] Links between the Harbour and the town

The poor quality of the Harbour buildings along Harbour Street and Tower Parade creates a break in the townscape so that there is little to link the Harbour, the town centre, the sea-front and the Castle. There is an opportunity to provide a high quality public realm along Harbour Street and Tower Parade, linking these key elements of Whitstable. Re-development of the windowless sheds on the South Quay will be encouraged to provide buildings with active and attractive street frontage to enliven Harbour Street and Tower Parade and to bring greater year-round vibrancy to the area.

[c] Traffic and parking

The traffic congestion in Whitstable, sourced largely from an intake of vehicles from Borstal Hill and exacerbated by a narrow High Street, and its local limited peak-time parking facilities, is not a matter that the Harbour Board has authority to address. This is a wider issue to be considered by the Council. The Council has already established a park and ride initiative to assist access to the town.

The Harbour provides parking facilities for the fishing community and other key tenants. Additional, short-term, parking facilities are provided for public use. The Gorrell Tank provides significant parking space adjacent to the Harbour.

The Board is seeking to agree arrangements with the Indoor Bowling Club to optimise the use of its surfaced parking area at times which are less needed by the Bowling Club and more usefully deployed by other users, in particular, visiting parties contributing to the activities of the Harbour area.

Any proposed development within the Harbour, requiring planning permission, would also involve a transport assessment. This assessment would necessarily address traffic issues specific to the nature and extent of the development.

[d] Access within the Harbour

Development of the South Quay opportunity sites will enable improvements to the east gate access and the pedestrian access by the Angling Club, as well as potentially providing further pedestrian access from Harbour Street and Tower Parade, through any new development on the South Quay, directly to the quayside.

[e] Physical attractiveness of buildings

Few of the buildings in the Harbour have any particular architectural merit. The industrious work-a-day character of the harbour is, however, an important part of its charm and any new development must respect this. Redevelopment of the unused buildings along the South Quay offers a significant opportunity and there are opportunities to improve the visual appearance of the Brett site along its eastern boundary, the beach huts on Long Beach and the hinterland from Long Beach to Tower Parade.

Development proposals, particularly for the South Quay, will enable considerable improvements to the townscape around the Harbour, in particular along Harbour Street and Tower Parade, and to the physical appearance of buildings in the Harbour itself, whilst retaining their working and functional characteristics. Active street frontage to Harbour Street, Tower Parade and to the quayside itself will be a key objective for any new development.

In addition, improvements will be pursued to the appearance of existing buildings in the Harbour, such as the buildings on the Brett Aggregates site and the beach huts on Long Beach. The Angling Club currently has plans to regenerate its building and surrounding land which, subject to the club's financing arrangements, will be encouraged.

Basic amenities such as toilet facilities and waste disposal arrangements will be given high priority. Safety of pedestrians will be improved, while ensuring that the full working capabilities of the harbour are not compromised. Parking for cyclists will be introduced.

[f] Financing arrangements

Whilst the Harbour has been able to be financially self-sufficient in respect of its annual requirements and obligations, it remains dependent on Council loan facilities for larger capital works. The continuing availability of Council loan facilities will be confirmed.

Certain grant funding, both at a national and European level, is periodically available for the development of port infrastructure and facilities. Council resources facilitating grants for harbour development may need supplementing with private sector expertise.

4.2 Quayside land

Harbour-dependent activities

[a] Cargo handling

The Harbour's alongside depth, tidal range, restricted quay length and relative lack of adjacent land are limiting factors to ship handling. There are limited opportunities for expansion of the existing cargo handling operations.

The market served by Brett for aggregate products remains within the local hinterland of Whitstable and is anticipated to continue for the foreseeable future.

The buildings and landscaping will be considered in the short and medium term so that the overall attractiveness of the Harbour together with any environmental issues will be addressed.

[b] Fishing

Commercial fishing is difficult and economically precarious particularly on the scale of the existing Whitstable fleet. Fishing provides little economic activity in terms of direct employment and national and European regulations place limits on catch sizes.

The fishing industry contributes significantly to Whitstable's attractiveness and is an integral part of the Harbour experience. Better support facilities can be provided to help maintain an ongoing viable industry. The industry requires appropriate cold storage facilities, ice making equipment, water and fuel supplies and marketing support. Arrangements for the provision of cold storage and ice-making equipment will be pursued by the Board in conjunction with the fishing community. Water and fuel supplies will be maintained. Grant funding and favourable loan terms will be sought to minimise the capital costs to be borne by the fishermen.

[c] Wind-farm operations

Attention continues to be focussed on the use of off-shore estuarial waters for the development of wind-farm operations. National government policy continues to promote such sources of renewable energy. Further wind-farm developments are planned for the Thames and Swale estuaries. Whilst land-side construction sites, heavy-lift equipment and water depth are not available at Whitstable, the Harbour does have the capability to provide, as it does for Vestas (who provide maintenance services for the Kentish Flats wind-farm), ancillary and support services to future developments such as the proposed London Array.

Key decision makers, responsible for the allocation of contracted support services, will be identified and a focussed marketing approach developed to promote the Harbour's attributes. Ongoing liaison with Vestas, the existing maintenance engineers for the Kentish Flats operation, should be maintained as a potential candidate for the supply of further maintenance services to new wind-farm developments.

[d] Vessel lay-by activities

The western side of the West Quay, as a result of its five metre tidal range and mud/shingle base, provides an opportunity for vessels up to 95 metres capable of grounding to undergo repair and maintenance work. These facilities will be actively marketed to relevant ship owners and operators.

[e] Pleasure craft activities

Pleasure craft activities are an important attraction for both the local community and visitors. The Thames barge Greta, the powered inflatables of Bayblast and occasional cruise vessels currently use the Harbour's facilities.

These attractions can be the subject of greater co-ordinated marketing effort and improved embarkation / disembarkation facilities. Safe and reliable access facilities need to be provided and support given for the marketing of these activities.

Harbour-beneficial activities

Significant areas of land exist, particularly on the South Quay, for potential development. These are the subject of an invitation to interested parties to submit proposals for short, medium and longer-term arrangements. Expressions of interest have been sought and the Board will actively encourage and support sustainable development proposals which will be assessed against the stated objectives and the key elements set out in this Strategic Plan. It is anticipated that the activities outlined below might be included in sustainable development proposals

[a] Retail activities

[i] Fish and shellfish retailing

The Harbour has an established market for the sale of fish and, in particular, shellfish. These activities compare favourably with the relatively poor quality of fish retailing offered by local supermarkets.

Fishing is a core activity of Whitstable. Existing operations will be encouraged to continue and develop. Marketing support will be provided. Licences, on commercial terms, will be granted to local fishermen selling locally caught product.

[ii] Other retail activities

In addition to fish and shellfish retail activities, the Harbour Market currently provides a successful retail outlet for a number of suppliers of local produce and products. This is considered to be a harbour-beneficial activity to the extent that it promotes local producers in a location that attracts significant numbers of residents and visitors, particularly during periods of fine weather. The current retail operations have been developed from the initiatives of Kentish Traders and comprise a series of temporary wooden huts set out on a shingle base and let to small local businesses.

The success of the Harbour Market indicates the demand for this type and scale of local retail use within the Harbour and the Board will encourage more permanent weather-resistant accommodation in an appropriate location, which could also provide an outlet for some the activities listed below in paragraphs [b], [c] and possibly [d].

[b] Small business and business start-up units

The Board is receptive to the development of workshop and office accommodation for small business and business start-up units within the Harbour. In particular, maritime related activities would be encouraged. The Board envisage that accommodation would be provided by way of 'business centre' facilities and will investigate enabling the supply of support services for this type of user through the Local Economy Team, the new Kent University Innovation Centre and other private sector providers.

[c] Creative enterprises

There is a thriving local arts and creative enterprises community within Whitstable. The Harbour Market currently provides a successful retail outlet for a number of these activities.

The Board is receptive to the development of studio facilities within the Harbour for the promotion of these enterprises. The new Print Works initiative at the end of the East Quay is seen as a welcome addition.

[d] Public amenity areas

Despite the public access to large parts of the Harbour generally, there are no dedicated public amenity areas within the Harbour. The Harbour is also an attraction for families, yet there are no dedicated children's activity areas within the Harbour. Such public areas could be developed and might include a communal seating area, a small performance facility and a structured children's play area.

[i] Community seating area and performance facility

In the short term, in partnership with the Whitstable Improvement Trust and with the benefit of certain grant funding, it is proposed to construct a seating area adjacent to the south east corner of the Harbour basin.

The project creates a new public space offering sheltered seating and opportunities for gatherings and events. A key feature of the design is a substantial gabion wall that will incorporate elements and artefacts contributed by local people and harbour users. It has been designed through a process of consultation across a wide range of Whitstable's local community groups and in its implementation will spawn a number of community events and actions.

[ii] Children's play area

Outline proposals have been prepared for the creation of a children's play area on the West Quay foreshore. These proposals are being discussed with the Council in the context of its strategy on playground development. The Board has confirmed its support in principle to the proposed project and will continue to promote its development which is subject to necessary funding arrangements.

[e] Heritage related exhibition and information services

Whilst few of the original heritage assets remain in the Harbour, it has nonetheless a rich history which is not fully recognised or demonstrated. The provision of information boards throughout the Harbour provides a basic outline of important elements of the Harbour.

Dependent on the Harbour's financing capability and the projected viability of such a project, consideration will be given to the development of a heritage and information centre which is lacking within the Harbour complementing those that already exist in the town.

The centre could address a range of topics such as Whitstable's oyster and fishing activities, the history of the Crab and Winkle Line, renewable energy generation, climate change and sea defences and also provide a focal point for educational visits for schools and colleges as well as information services to visitors.

The economics of providing such facilities will require detailed assessment as they are unlikely, in themselves, to generate any net revenues. Certain grant arrangements may be available for initial construction costs, but the success of any development will depend on its ability to meet ongoing costs and expenses to ensure its continued existence.

[f] Gastronomy

The gastronomy of Whitstable receives widespread coverage, largely based around its reputation for shellfish. The Harbour already plays a part in this area of the economy and there is an opportunity to expand its role. At present, restaurants and cafés are offered as is a local beer.

The Board will promote the marketing of Whitstable's fish and shellfish industries as well as local Kentish produce. The Board is also receptive to the development of retail and educational facilities within the Harbour for the promotion of these enterprises.

[g] Development of Angling Club

The Angling Club occupies a building of historic significance. The club has formulated plans for the renovation of part of the building. This will be supported by the Board subject to planning approvals and funding sources.

4.3 Non-quayside land

[a] Oyster Indoor Bowling Club

As noted in section 2.5, the activities of the Indoor Bowling Club are neither harbour-dependent nor harbour-beneficial. The Club occupies significant beach frontage with the benefit of long-term lease arrangements so that it has security of tenure in the short and medium term.

If an alternative site for the Club was to be available on economically justifiable terms, the Board would seek to enter into discussions with the Club to allow the present site to be used for harbour-beneficial activities.

[b] Harbour Garage

As noted in section 2.5, the activities of the Harbour Garage are neither harbour-dependent nor harbour-beneficial. The Garage occupies a significant area of Harbour land with the benefit of long-term lease arrangements so that it has security of tenure in the short and medium term.

If an alternative site for the Garage was to be available on economically justifiable terms, the Board would seek to enter into discussions with the Garage to allow the present site to be used for harbour-beneficial activities.

[c] Water-based recreational facilities

A number of water-based recreational activities currently use areas within the Harbour, particularly in the Long Beach area. Various local participating clubs have formed a 'Recreational Water Users Group' (WRWUG) to co-ordinate their activities.

Ongoing discussions will be held with WRWUG to ensure the use of the land is optimised and appropriate facilities are in place for the benefit of recreational users.

[d] Beach huts

Space in the Long Beach area exists for further development of beach hut units. The site has a good sea frontage and access to adjacent parking facilities. Existing huts lack an attractive physical appearance and are not in keeping with the privately-owned huts that front the rest of the beaches in and around the town. When further maintenance of the existing huts is required, the units may be painted in colours consistent with other huts in the area.

Dependent on demand and alternative supply terms from Council arrangements, further beach huts may be developed adjacent to the existing units. Both annual and shorter-term letting terms will be considered with no provision for assignment of the lease.

5 Financial implications

One of the constraints under which the Harbour operates is the requirement to be financially self-sufficient. The objective of the Harbour is not to maximise its net profit but to ensure that it generates sufficient funds to meet its ongoing trading and operating expenses and to meet its financing requirements for capital works. At times, the Harbour may, however, engage in activities which do not generate a financial surplus.

It is the intention of the Board to finance development projects. These projects will need to demonstrate that the Harbour can remain in a position to satisfy its financial constraint. Most (but not necessarily all) projects will therefore need to show a positive financial return on the basis of an assessment of the risks and returns involved.

Significant capital works are scheduled for the period 2015 to 2017 for reinforcement of the Harbour's quay walls. This will require the Harbour to be generating sufficient funds to meet the future financial obligations for these capital works.

5.1 Financing of development projects

It is the intention of the Board that future development projects will be financed through direct funding by the Board of the development with annual rental arrangements for the tenants over a defined period.

These arrangements will allow the Board to retain control over Harbour land which would otherwise be relinquished through any disposal of long-term leasehold interests and retain the profitability of the project which may otherwise be ceded to a developer.

The availability of funding for development projects will be subject to (a) ongoing access to Council loan facilities, (b) detailed project appraisals including assessment of risks and returns and (c) the approval of the Council.

5.2 Existing and planned capital expenditure requirements

The Harbour's infrastructure (its quay walls and sea defences) requires periodic capital maintenance. The quay walls are largely sheet-piled into a base of London clay and ongoing maintenance is necessary. Essential capital works will be required on the Harbour's quay walls during the period 2009 to 2018 to maintain their integrity. This expenditure has been estimated on the basis of current estimates and assumed cost increases of 2.5% annually as £350,000 within the period to 2011 and some £3,500,000 in the period 2015 to 2018.

5.3 Availability of funding

For historic and current capital expenditure, loan facilities have been made available to the Board from Council sourced borrowings from central government funding. It has been assumed that this funding source will continue to be available for capital expenditure.

5.4 Revenue and profit projections

For illustrative purposes, the existing (2008/09) revenue and profit results and the budget projections for 2009/10 are extrapolated on the basis of a 2.5% increase in revenues and a 3.0% increase in costs for the ten year period to 2018. Current rent reviews are taken into account but no additional activities beyond the existing ones are assumed. The planned capital expenditure for the quay wall reinforcement works referred to above are included in capital charges on the basis of a 5.0% annuity over the economic life of the works involved. Capital charges include depreciation and are stated net of interest income.

The data presented below are for each of the years commencing April 1.

| £'ooo | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Revenue | 558 | 623 | 639 | 647 | 654 | 670 | 687 | 703 | 720 | 738 |
| Net profit | 143 | 197 | 202 | 198 | 193 | 195 | 197 | 199 | 201 | 203 |
| Charges | (28) | (46) | (41) | (32) | (26) | (25) | (121) | (121) | (221) | (221) |
| Net result | 115 | 151 | 161 | 166 | 167 | 170 | 76 | 78 | (20) | (18) |

The existing base of revenues and profits (based on the assumptions set out above) indicate that the Harbour requires additional annual net income of some £20,000 by 2017/18 to finance its existing and planned capital requirements.

6 Connection with other council plans and national policy

6.1 Liaison with Council

The Board is a sub-committee of Canterbury City Council. This Strategic Plan will be formally adopted by the Council as one of its corporate strategies. The Board will work closely with the Council's Executive and relevant officers within the Council in the development of the Strategic Plan throughout its preparation and adoption.

6.2 Sustainability Appraisal

A Sustainability Appraisal incorporates requirements of the European Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive and is a legal requirement for all plans and strategies that are adopted by local authorities. A Sustainability Appraisal will therefore be prepared for the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan and its Sustainability Appraisal will then be afforded considerable weight in any future considerations regarding Town and Country Planning decisions within the Harbour.

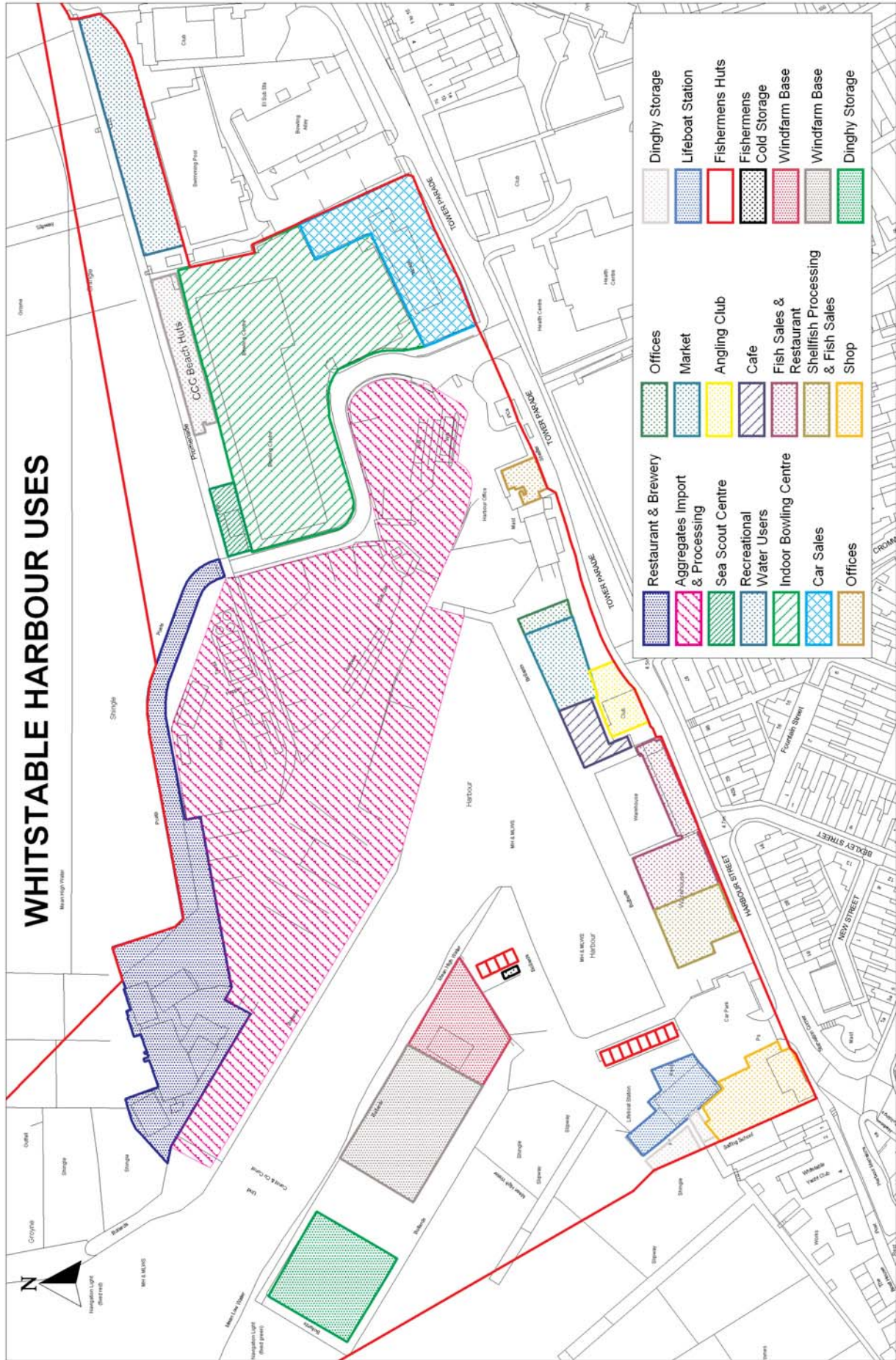
6.3 Reference to the Local Development Framework

The Strategic Plan will form part of the body of evidence on which the emerging Local Development Framework will be based. The Local Development Framework will therefore refer to and reflect as appropriate the policies and proposals of the Strategic Plan, in the same way that the Strategic Plan is considered to be in conformity with the current Local Plan. Whilst the Strategic Plan will not be a Local Development Document within the Local Development Framework, it will be an important material consideration in the determination of any future planning application for development within the Harbour.

6.4 Alignment with national policy direction

The Strategic Plan has been assessed to ensure it conforms to the 'Municipal Ports Review' issued by the Department for Transport in June 2007. Any future national policy initiatives will also be taken into consideration.

WHITSTABLE HARBOUR USES



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