



Kendal Castle

## 1.1 KENDAL

Kendal is a traditional market town situated between the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Park and acts as the commercial and administrative centre for South Lakeland. It is the largest town in the South Lakeland District and occupies a key position at the threshold of the Lake District - lying just outside the National Park's south-eastern boundary. It benefits from close proximity to the M6 motorway which can be accessed via junction 36 to the south of the town and junction 37 to the east of the town.

The town has a unique character and identity. It is colloquially known as 'the Auld Grey Town' due to the predominant use of grey granites and slate. Although it sits outside the boundary of the National Park it is an intrinsic part of the Lake District brand and has recognised appeal as a home for outdoor adventure and leisure pursuits, culture and the arts, quality home grown products and of course Kendal mint cake.

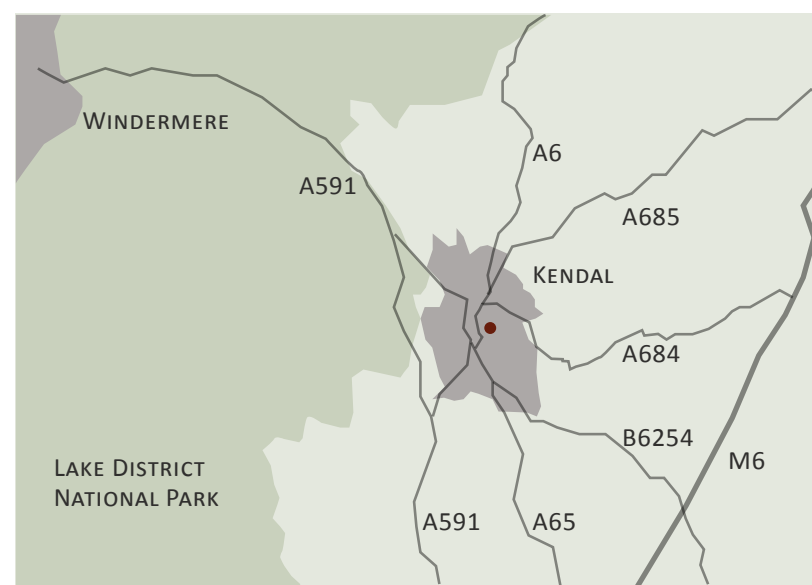
Building on these strengths, Kendal has established a dominant role for itself – as a regional tourism and cultural destination at the 'gateway to the Lakes' – reinforced through the growth and development of tourism, leisure and retailing facilities within the town which now boasts a range of notable facilities and attractions including Kendal Castle (a late 12th Century ruin).

A wide range of factors – from global to local – shape Kendal's economy. Despite the perception of the town being affluent and benefiting from a strong local economy, parts of Kendal have experienced or are experiencing serious economic difficulties. Trends on overall levels of employment, the loss of major local employers, the impact of changes in the agricultural sector, the affordability of local housing, the growth in service sector employment and the availability of a skilled and educated workforce all contribute to

defining Kendal's economic trajectory.

The regeneration of Kendal Canal Head will address a number of these issues by:

- Developing and regenerating a brownfield site
- Securing a major employer;
- Providing much needed new housing;
- Creating enterprise and employment opportunities for individuals and businesses alike;
- Augmenting and complementing existing town centre uses; and
- Adding to the overall strength and brand of Kendal.
- Bringing much-needed, additional town centre car parking





## 1.2 CANAL HEAD

The Canal Head area lies to the east of the town centre and has a distinctive grain and character all of its own. It has a rich history and heritage with a particularly strong connection with the Lancaster Canal and the associated engineering and manufacturing industries that evolved alongside it. This connection with the past continues to the modern day especially in the form of Gilbert Gilkes & Gordon (Gilkes) who have occupied the site for over 150 years and continue to be one of Kendal's most respected businesses and significant employers.

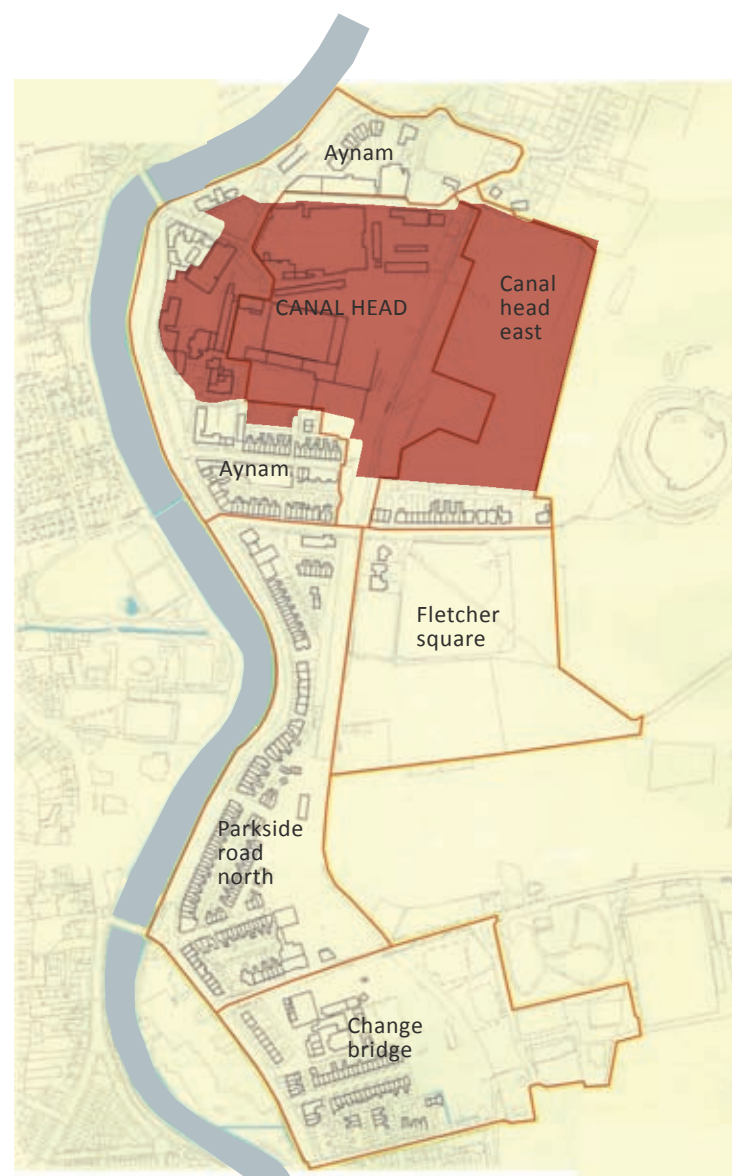
The Canal Head regeneration site extends to 20 acres and incorporates a number of key land holdings (most notably Gilkes, Mealbank Properties Ltd (formerly Goodacres), Canal Head Properties, Kendal Ski Club, South Lakeland Council and Cumbria County Council). The redevelopment of this site provides a unique opportunity to achieve a truly sustainable future for the Canal Head area and the town of Kendal. This will be achieved through the delivery of high quality and commercially successful mixed-use urban regeneration which will add to the facilities, image, economy and environment of the Lake District.

Canal Head will play a significant role in facilitating regenerative change across a number of key sectors. These include:

- Knowledge industries (including the manufacturing sector) and enterprise support;
- Energy & renewables;
- Infrastructure;
- Tourism, image and the environment;
- Cultural and creative industries;
- Education & Skills

All of this will be provided within a unique development that reflects best practice in urban design, sets the highest environmental standards and is carefully knitted into the unique urban fabric of the town.

N.B. It should be noted that this document only relates to the Canal Head, Canal Head East and a small section of the Aynam area of the South Lakeland Local Development Framework Area Action Plan. It excludes the Fletcher Square, Parkside Road North and Change Bridge areas as identified in the Area Action Plan Boundary and Character Area Locations drawing.



Kendal Canal Head Area Action Plan Boundary and Character Area Location



CANAL HEAD  
SITE

## 1.3 GILKES & THE KENDAL CANAL HEAD

Gilkes has been an integral part of Kendal for almost 200 years and forms the keystone for the regeneration of the Canal Head. It is intrinsically linked with the history and heritage of the area and provides a meaningful connection with the past, present and future of Canal Head and the wider Kendal area. The following bullet points provide an historical synopsis of the relationship with Kendal and more specifically Canal Head (greater detail can be found in section 4.1 of this document).

- The Kendal to Lancaster Canal reached its most northerly point in Kendal in 1819 and terminated at the foot of Castle Hill. A broad basin was constructed in a westerly direction from the main canal section, culminating in a symmetrically planned block of two warehouses into which barges could float to be loaded and unloaded under cover;
- In 1856 the two warehouses were let to the local engineering firm of Henry, William & Benjamin Williamson who were mainly involved in the production of agricultural machinery but who had established a relationship with Professor James Thompson of Queen's College, Belfast. Professor Thompson had designed a Vortex turbine and gave a license to the Williamson Brothers to manufacture it;
- Sir William Armstrong, the eminent industrialist from the North East was in the midst of designing and building a country estate at Cragside in Northumberland. He was irritated by the lack of town gas or electricity and bought a turbine from Williamson Brothers to prove the principle of charging batteries and subsequently built a series of lakes and waterways on the Estate to provide a constant source of water for hydro electric power;
- Henry Williamson, who was the driving force behind the business, died in 1871 and in 1881 Williamson Brothers was acquired by Gilbert Gilkes, an Irish engineer and quaker who had married a local woman called Rachel Wilson;
- Gilkes renamed the company Gilbert Gilkes & Co and decided to concentrate exclusively on the development and manufacture of turbines and this specialist business began to thrive. By the start of the First World War the firm was exporting turbines all over the world;
- By 1907 the flourishing Gilkes factory had developed as far as it could on the canal warehouses site and began to expand along Canal Head South;
- By now the firm had now adopted the longer title of Gilbert Gilkes and Gordon following their take-over of the London turbine dealers James Gordon & Co Ltd in 1928;
- Up until the late 1940's the canal was still used by barges bringing coal to the Kendal Gas Works but during the Second World War the canal sprang a leak and the northern section was drained and never re-filled;
- This presented the Gilkes factory with an ideal opportunity to enlarge their core premises even further and immediately after the war the basin was filled in allowing room for both the Gilkes factory and the Corporation depot to expand;
- The last significant change to the structure of the area was the extinction of the Mill Race to Castle Hills at some point in the late 1950's or early 1960's. The bridge over the in-filled Mill Race was widened to become part of the normal roadway but its northern parapet was retained;
- As a consequence of this complex sequence of development very little now remains of the canal, which mostly only registers in the local street names.