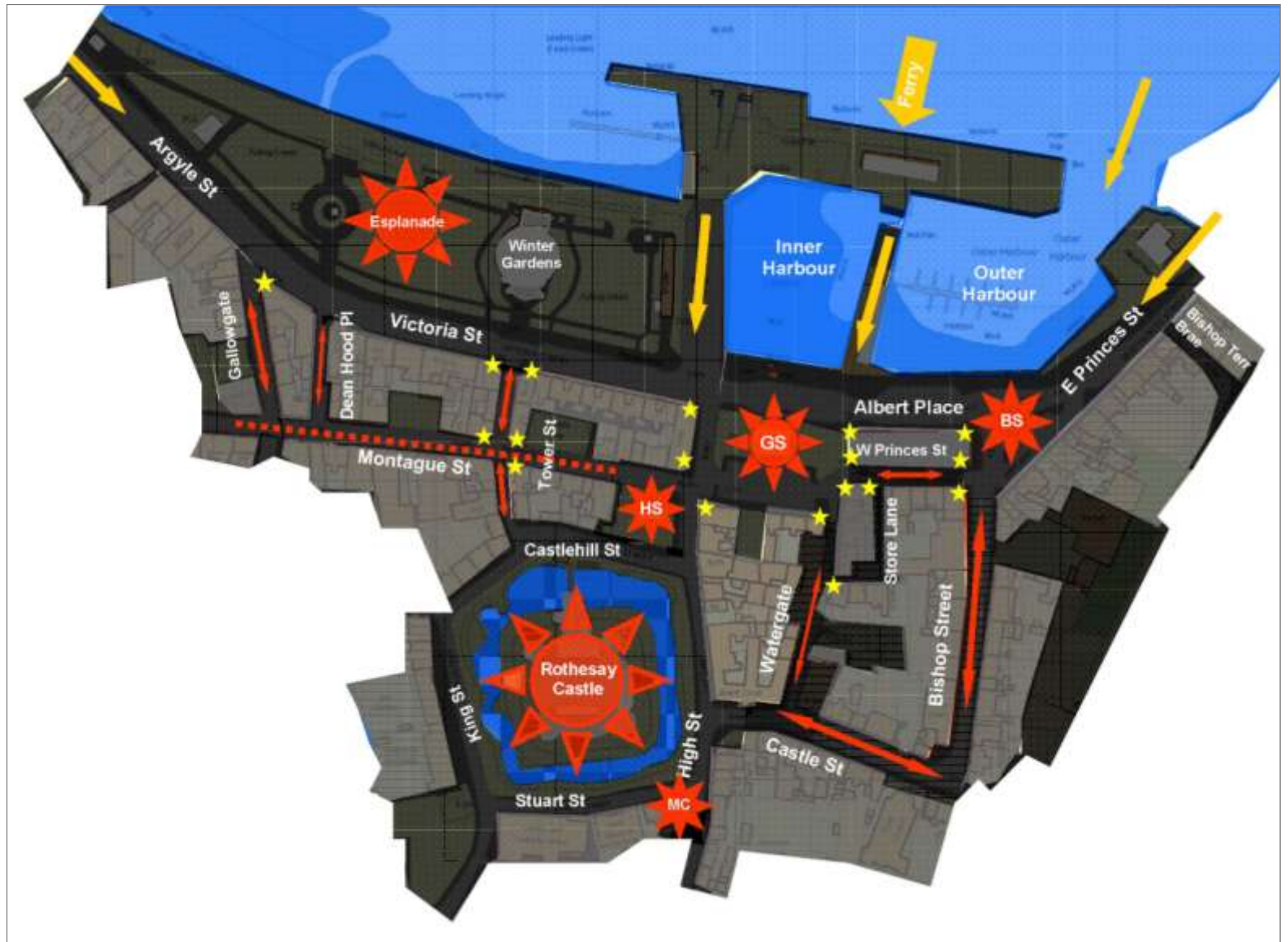# SECTION 3
TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

This section analyses the interplay of topography and street pattern of the Character Area. It considers the relationship with its surrounding landscape and describes its townscape features including urban form, streets, buildings, important landmarks, open space and views.

This 'character and appearance' of the Character Area will be described through the following sections:

- *Landscape setting*
- *Urban form*
- *Building analysis*

KEY *Figure 13*

- ▦ Buildings
- ▦ Spaces
- ▮ Water
- → Arrival
- ✹ Open Space
- ★ Splayed Corners
- ⋯ Principle Shopping St
- ↔ Linking Street

N

Esplanade

Winter Gardens

Inner Harbour

Outer Harbour

Ferry

Argyle St

Gallowgate

Dean Hood Pl

Victoria St

Tower St

Montague St

Albert Place

E Princes St

Bishop Terr Brae

BS

GS

W Princes St

Store Lane

HS

Castlehill St

Watergate

Bishop Street

Rothesay Castle

King St

High St

Castle St

Stuart St

MC

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

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3.1 Landscape setting

Setting

Rothesay town centre stands at the head of a wide bay on the east coast of the Isle of Bute, facing north to north east into the Firth of Clyde estuary where the coast of North Ayrshire and Inverclyde forms a distant backdrop. To the north, the Cowal Peninsula cradles the island and provides a unique setting for the town (fig 11).

Rothesay Bay forms a wide sweeping seafront backed by wooded hills and open farmland. The low hills enclose inland views from the town, and provide the backdrop to the long vistas of Montague Street and Victoria Street (fig 11). The cliffside to the south-east of the town centre is particularly steep and clearly defines the edge of the Character Area and offers panoramic views of the town centre, seafront and Rothesay Bay from above (fig 11 & 12).

The Esplanade and seafront development as far back as Montague Street sits on flat land reclaimed from the sea. Raised above this on higher ground stands Rothesay Castle which was the focus for the medieval Royal Burgh.

The Water of Fad, straightened to form a mill lade, runs below King Street to the west of the castle, its final route culverted via Dean Hood Place to the sea. The Balskyte Burn, to the east, runs under Castle Street and Watergate and is no longer visible (fig 5).

Figure 11: Top: the Hills of Cowal; Centre: Bute's hills provide the backdrop to Victoria Street (left) and Montague Street (right); Below: view west across Rothesay Bay; note the end block of Albert Place in the foreground.

KEY *Figure 12*

Height at 10m
Intervals

Water of Fad

(culverted)

N

LANDSCAPE SETTING

Views

The urban structure of streets and spaces creates dynamic views within and outwith the Character Area, confirming the importance of the setting of Rothesay to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (fig 13).

Views within the Town Centre Character Area

There are a number of special set-piece views:

- the former Winter Gardens from Tower Street;
- the drinking fountain from Dean Hood Place;
- the curve of Tower Street as it leads down to Montague Street;
- over the town from Bishops Terrace Brae;
- High Street and Bishop Street to the ferry terminal;
- the Castle approach from High Street; Guildford Square.

Views Linking the Character Areas

Rothesay Town Centre is only one of nine character areas within the Rothesay Conservation Area. There are some significant visual links between this and the adjoining character areas, in particular:

- to the West Bay and Ardbeg;
- to the East Bay;
- to Chapelhill past the West Church;
- the Serpentine;
- links with the Industrial part of town from the Castle area;
- into the Castle area to and from Queen Street.

Distant views from the Conservation Area

The natural landscape setting of Rothesay offers stunning sea views of the Scottish mainland, to the tip of the Cowal Peninsula, across the Firth of Clyde, and south towards Cumbrae.
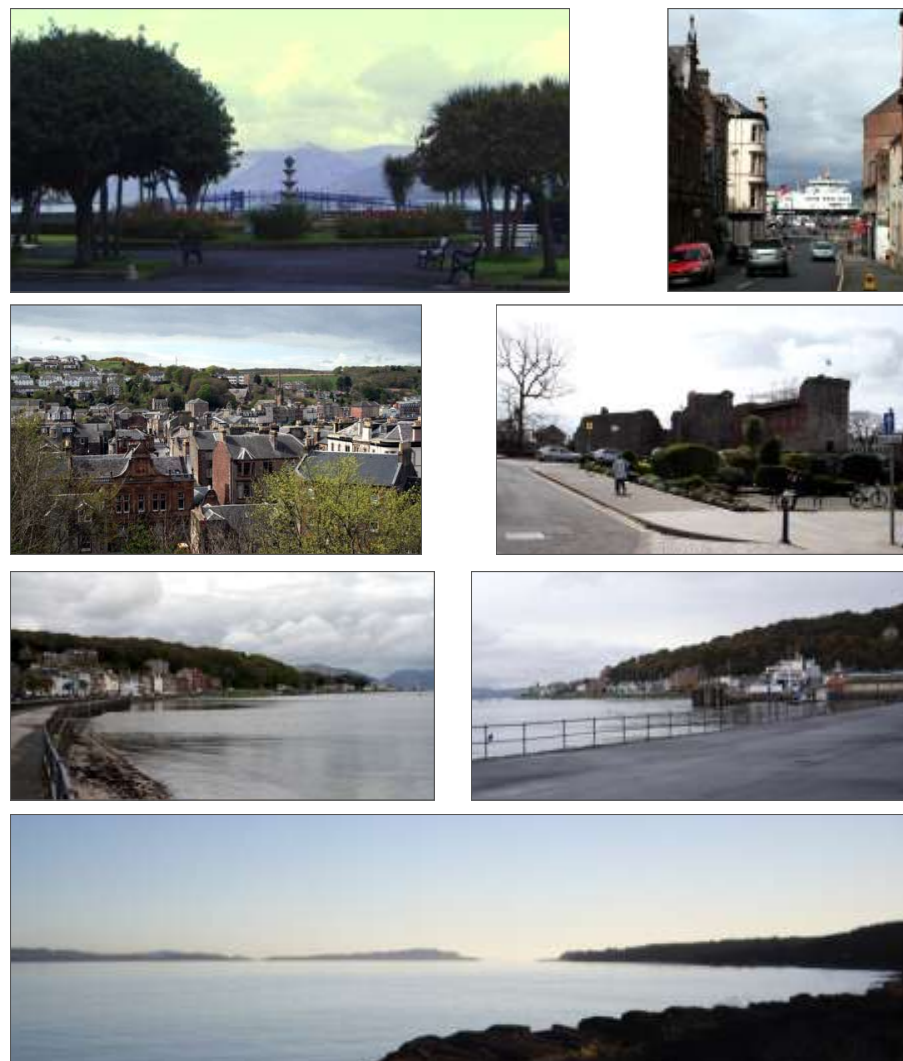

Figure 13: Top: views within the Character Area (left) fountain from Dean Hood Place (right) the ferry from Bishop Street; Centre: across the town from Bishops Brae; (right) the castle from the foot of High St; Below: views linking the Character Areas (left) the West Bay and Ardbeg; (right) to East Bay; Bottom: distant views from the Character Area: south towards Cumbrae.

Approach and Arrival

Arriving at a place by sea is always an adventure and Rothesay is no exception. Rothesay is the island's principle port and anyone sailing into Rothesay, whether to tie up at the pontoons in the Harbour or by ferry, enters a sheltered harbour lined with elegant buildings, set in a curve around the bay.

The harbour is at the heart of the town centre. On exiting the terminal building, foot passengers have a view left (east) across boats anchored in the Harbour, towards the seafront buildings at the foot of Bishop Street, notably the impressive Duncan Halls on East Princes Street and the imposing block of Albert Place anchored by the former Royal Hotel (fig 14). Large villas on the wooded hillside form an attractive backdrop. To the right, looking west across the Harbour, is the long vista of the tall, pastel coloured facades of Victoria Street.

Passengers walk down Mid Pier through the decorative cast iron Cabbies' Rest (1930; relocated) directly onto Guildford Square, the town's principle public space. Straight ahead the view up Watergate provides a glimpse of the castellated clock tower of the former County Buildings (fig 14). Looking across the square, Rothesay's medieval castle can be viewed through the gap in its south-west corner.

Passengers leaving the ferry in their vehicles drive across the West Pier arriving at the western end of Guildford Square and have a direct view up the High Street. To their right are the seafront buildings on Victoria Street and the Esplanade Gardens.

A second vehicle ferry sails from Colintraive on the Cowal Peninsula and arrives at Rhubodach in the north of the island. Driving south the coastal road meanders first through Kames Bay before entering Rothesay Conservation Area; it passes Port Bannatyne harbour and

Figure 14: Top: view from the ferry to Albert Place, the taxi shelter is visible on Mid Pier on the approach to Guildford Square; note the clock tower of the former County Buildings; Centre: (left) view from Mid Pier east across the Outer Harbour to East Princes Street (right): view to Guildford Square; Below: approach by sea.

Ardbeg before reaching the Skeoch Wood and Rothesay's seaside suburbs. At this point the whole seafront of Rothesay Bay comes into view: sheltered by the low island hills, the view is punctuated by church spires, cliff top villas and the hilltop tree lines (fig 15). The landmark Rothesay Pavilion (1938; fig 10) is passed on Argyle Street, as seafront apartments and guest houses give way to shops and restaurants.

Following the coastal approach from the south of the island the road enters the Rothesay Conservation Area at Ascog, before curving west at Craigmore to approach the town (fig 15). Arrival to the town centre is more sudden, the seaside suburbs immediately become urban waterfront. The road dips toward the junction at the foot of Bishop Street where the grouping of a number of landmark buildings form a distinctive termination to the long seafront vista (fig 15). These include the Post Office with its decorative gable, the Victorian grandeur of Duncan Halls, and the former Royal Hotel which occupies the full width of the urban block as it turns the corner of Albert Place into West Princes Street.

The inland approach from the south or west converge on one of the island's earliest routes along the High Street. The minor landmark of the former United Free Church is passed before the road enters the Character Area at the distinctive group of traditional buildings which include the former Stuarts' Townhouse opposite the Market Cross. The magnificent circular wall of Rothesay Castle comes into view as the road descends past the former County Buildings towards Guildford Square offering glimpses of the bay and the distant hills across the Firth.

Figure 15: Top: approach travelling south from the Colintraive ferry, the town centre comes into view; Below: approach travelling north, East Princes Street and the junction at the foot of Bishop Street create a sudden urban setting.

3.2 Urban Form

Rothesay Town Centre Character Area can be interpreted through a description of three basic elements (fig 16). These reflect the historic development of Rothesay and define the town's basic urban form:

1. The Castle: a strong circular element standing on raised ground;

2. The Principal Shopping Street: the linear form of Montague Street running behind and parallel to the seafront;

3. The Seafront: a linear and curving element comprising Argyle Street, Victoria Street, Albert Place and East Princes Street.

Rothesay's character and appearance can be further analysed according to the interaction between these principle elements:

4. Linking Streets: series of connecting streets forming urban blocks;

5. Open Spaces: role of open space, trees and landscaping.

Figure 16: Top: the three basic urban elements: the curving seafront; the linear principal shopping street and the circular form of the castle.

The Castle Area

Rothesay Castle remains the historic focus of the town. Its uniquely circular form, emphasised by its encircling moat and the enclosing boundary walls with cast iron railings, has generated an organic urban space comprising: High Street (E), Castlehill Street (NE), King Street (NW and W) and Stuart Street (S). The castle is of national importance (Scheduled Ancient Monument and Category A Listed) and is a major landmark. It is the focal point for a varied mixture of building styles and functions. Despite the architectural variety of the surrounding buildings, there is a general consistency of scale and materials.

The significance of this area, the original heart of the Royal Burgh, is reflected in a range of distinctive landmark buildings. Of particular importance is the former Stuarts' Townhouse (Category A Listed; 1681) with projecting stair and crow-stepped gables. As the only surviving 17th century dwelling in Argyll and Bute it is both exceptional and rare (Walker, 2000). The clock tower of the battlemented former County Buildings (Category B Listed; 1832-4) forms a prominent landmark. The two distinguished Georgian townhouses (both Category B Listed; No.4 King Street, c.1749; No.3 Stuart Street, c.1820) and the Classically styled Bute Museum (Category B Listed; 1925-6) are significant contributions. The adjacent houses and tenements form an important part of the background townscape to these special buildings. The horizontal form and materials of 20th century redevelopment are less sympathetic.

The area contains a mixture of uses, including residential, civic and commercial. A run of tenements on the High Street provides a mix of shops, banks, bars and restaurants at street level, completing the townscape ambiance.

Figure 17: Top (left) the circular curtain wall of the castle; (right): view east to the former County Buildings and a tall tenement on the corner of High Street and Castle Street. Centre (left): the castle's remaining drum tower, low domestic buildings on Castlehill Street beyond; (right): No.4 King Street an early townhouse (1749); Below: (left) former Stuarts' Townhouse and market cross; (right) Bute Museum and No.3 Stuart Street.

The Principle Shopping Street

Montague Street was laid out from the second half to the 18th century (fig 6) and remains the town's principle shopping street. It was complete by 1825 and extends from Gallowgate in the west to Watergate on the far side of Guildford Square in the east. Constructed on reclaimed foreshore, there is no change in level along its extent, its slight curve providing deflective streetscape views (fig 18).

Montague Street is lined predominantly with 3-storey stone buildings, with shops at street level and generally residential floors above. This provides a compact centre and an area protected from the seafront for commercial activity. Originally lined on both sides, a number of gap sites now interrupt the enclosed form. At the eastern end the loss of the northern block between High Street and Watergate has doubled the size of Guildford Square, and there is a open space at the foot of the High Street.

On the north side of the street the majority of the surviving buildings are Georgian. At Tower Street the attractive splayed corner buildings are listed (forming a listed group with those of Victoria Street) and at the northern corner with Gallowgate a similar unlisted block adds to the urban form and coherence. The south side of Montague Street is more varied reflecting redevelopment which has not been consistent with the earlier Georgian scale. Of particular interest is the former Woolworth building (Nos 97-99; 1938). Montague Street forms the south side of Guildford Square. Anchoring the corner with High Street is another late Georgian block (Category C(S) Listed; 1832). Another early building (Nos 11-13) is of historic interest; to the rear of the main house is a turnpike stair and rolled skewput and a outbuilding incorporates a 17th century marriage stone (fig 19).

Figure 18: Top: view east along Montague Street from Gallowgate, the street gently curves; note the variation in building height as a result of redevelopment over time; Below: view west from Guildford Square.

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Glimpses of the seafront are offered by the linking streets which cross Montague Street at right angles. In particular the junction with Tower Street offers an attractive vista to the Winter Gardens, the splayed corners of the buildings helping to create a sense of space and movement within the linear street form (fig 19). This formal layout contrasts with the steeply curving form of the upper part of Tower Street, creating a sense of anticipation on route up to the castle.

There are some good historic shop fronts (with more possibly hidden under modern signage) which add character and vitality to the streetscape. Nos 5, 32 and 74 are of particular significance (Lennie, 2010).

Figure 19: Montague Street: Top: at Tower Street two listed buildings with splayed corners and bow windows; Centre: (left) Montague Street forms the south side of Guildford Square; (right) the former Woolworths building; Below: the rear of an early building at Nos 11-13 Montague St; its outbuilding contains a 17th century lintel.

The Seafront

Rothesay's long, linear seafront was developed during the course of the 19th century and marked an expansion of the reclamation commenced in Montague Street. The coastal road curves gently round the bay, defined on its southern edge by a 'façade' of tall, elegant stone buildings, and to the north by the open sea. The building façade comprises a number of continual streets (east to west): East Princes Street, Albert Place, Victoria Street (1840) and Argyle Street. The only break in this form occurs at Guildford Square, and at the entrances to the linking streets. The strength of the seafront façade derives from the continuity of its building form, in the majority at least 3-storey properties, many painted in light colours to enhance the seaside atmosphere. The tenements form the background, with churches, hotels and the former Duncan Halls (Category B Listed; 1876-9) adding variety and detail and acting as minor landmarks.

To the west of Guildford Square lie the formal gardens of the Esplanade; and to the east the harbour. Shops, restaurants and hotels line the seafront, with the leisure yachts and fishing boats of the harbour adding vitality to the waterfront. The Esplanade and harbour are dotted with a variety of individual structures: minor landmarks include the glazed cast iron Cabbies' Rest (1930); the winged victory WWI memorial (1922); the square, glazed-brick Weigh House (late 19C); and the highly decorative Victorian Public Convenience (1899) on West Pier. The central focus of the Esplanade is the dome roofed Winter Gardens (Category A Listed; 1923-4; now the Discovery Centre and cinema), a major landmark which defines Rothesay as a seaside resort.

Figure 20: Top: view west from Albert Pier, Guildford Square marks a break in the seafront façade but the 4-storey block of Albert Place anchors the seafront at its eastern end. Below: view of Victoria Street looking west at Guildford Square illustrating the strong continuity of form.

The high status and importance of Rothesay's seafront is indicated in the number of listed buildings. The entire seafront block between Tower Street and Dean Hood Place is listed and includes the Victoria Hotel (Category B Listed; mid 19C; 1879), and St Paul's Episcopal Church (Category B Listed; 1854;1893).

The building height rises to 4-storeys to the east of Guildford Square; this important urban block is anchored by the former Royal Hotel (Category B Listed; c.1850) to the west and the Guildford Court Hotel (Category C(S) Listed) to the east.

A number of unlisted buildings contribute positively to the townscape value of Rothesay's seafront. Solid stone buildings with symmetrical facades, bay windows, decorative window surrounds and contrasting quoins all reflecting features that are typical of the Character Area.

The most prominent unlisted building is the former Cooperative Bakery set back behind East Princes Street, its unusual red brick facade picked out in white brick quoins and window surrounds. A number of other, smaller individual buildings are also of interest: the little glazed-brick building in the same style as the listed Weigh House; the former public convenience on Albert Quay with its early 20th century Moderne Style (fig 21).

Figure 21: Top: view of Victoria Street from Dean Hood Place, all the buildings are listed; Below: (left) view of Argyle Street, solid stone built tenements; (right) the former Co-op Bakery; (below) former public convenience Albert Quay.

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Linking Streets

The three principle elements that make up the basic urban form of the town centre (fig 16) are connected by a series of linking streets which form urban blocks. This informal urban grid of solid and void is reflective of the organic growth and phased development of the town. Architectural features such as the use of splayed corners, bays and turrets, are expertly handled creating movement and a sense of invitation. This is most effective at encouraging visual links between the seafront and the principle shopping street. The linking streets vary from some of the earliest routes (Store Lane, Watergate, Bishop Street) to the newer Dean Hood Place. The linking streets are described below from west to east.

Gallowgate

Gallowgate connects the western end of Montague Street to the seafront and marks the western boundary of the Character Area. It probably indicates the line of the earlier seafront. The buildings are predominantly solid, symmetrical stone buildings; the earliest being 2-storeys high. The block at Montague Street has refined architectural detail and contributes to the coherence on the principle shopping street (fig 22). The lower scale creates an open and welcoming aspect to this public thoroughfare.

Dean Hood Place

Dean Hood Place marks the route of the culverted Water of Fad (completed by 1863) and connects Montague Street to Victoria Street. There is less continuity in the built form with the section of low single storey development on its west side lacking definition. Its eastern side is distinguished by St Paul's Episcopal Church (1854; 1893), a landmark on the seafront, and the later Edwardian Church Hall is set back on the corner with Montague Street (fig 22).

Figure 22: Top: Gallowgate corner with Montague St, this 3-storey block continues the cohesive urban form; (left) an interesting bow front turns the corner with Victoria St; Centre: (left) Gallowgate the corner building bears a painted date 1780; (right) Dean Hood Place West, modern single storey infill is unsympathetic; Below: St Paul's Church hall bears a date stone 1834 earlier than the current building.

Tower Street

A significant connection, Tower Street curves as it descends steeply from the raised ground of King Street to Montague Street and then continues to the seafront lining up directly with the entrance to the former Winter Gardens. There is considerable consistency in the scale and design of the lower section recognised by the group listing of all four corner buildings to Montague Street and Victoria Place (fig 19 & 23). There are some important historic shops at Nos 3 and 5, and at Nos 39-41 Victoria Street (Lennie, 2010). The section rising up towards the castle contrasts in its variety of building heights, the tall tenement marking the entrance to King Street.

Watergate

This street forms part of Rothesay's medieval layout recorded on Roy's survey (fig 7). It has suffered a significant loss of buildings; the few remaining buildings are concentrated at the northern end of the block which projects onto Guildford Square. The Bute House Hotel (Category C(S) Listed; mid 19C) turns the corner of West Princes Street and stands prominent with a decorative roof line of half-dormered windows surmounted by pediments and finials. The curve of the street adds interest, moving south from the square, a 2-storey public house marks the corner of Store Lane, before progressing to Watergate's southern end formed by part of the former County Buildings.

Store Lane

This L-plan lane links West Princes Street to Watergate and retains some historic qualities in its narrow form and low buildings. It was also part of the earliest development of the burgh and possibly lies on the original waterfront quay.

Figure 23: Top: Tower Street: (left) splayed corners at Victoria St; (right) looking south from Montague St; Centre: Tower Street curving and descending from the castle area; (centre) view of Watergate from Guildford Square; (right) view of Store Lane from Watergate; Below: (left) a low building in Store Lane; (right) 2-storey buildings at the foot of Watergate.

West Princes Street

Associated with the development of the harbour this street now makes the connection between Guildford Square and the foot of Bishop Street and forms the rear of the seafront block of Albert Place. With the exception of an earlier low 2-storey inn, West Princes Street is defined by 4-storey tenements and substantial hotel premises. The high eaves line is punctuated along the street by tall chimney forestacks. The former Royal Hotel forms a 'book-end' at the street's eastern end, occupying the full depth of the urban block onto Bishop Street and returning onto Albert Place. The Guildford Court Hotel performs a similar function addressing Guildford Square, and on the southern side of West Princes Street the Bute House Hotel extends from Watergate to Shore Lane.

Castle Street

This street formed part of the early burgh and may have been the location of the market in medieval times extending from the Castle to the Serpentine route (McLagan, 2002) . It maintains a sense of civic enclosure (Walker, 2000) with two landmark buildings marking its extent: in the east the slender spire of Trinity Parish Church (Category B Listed; 1843-5), and in the west the dominating castellated roofline of the former County Buildings (Category B Listed; 1832-4). A number of early 19th century houses remain on the south side (Nos 8-22), their 2-storey height and continual eaves line creating a strong terraced frontage. At Nos. 7 and 9 (Category B Listed) refined architectural detail includes an Ionic porch and raised 3rd storey with pediment and obelisk (fig 24).

Figure 24: Top :(left) West Princes St view east from Guildford Square, note the prominent hotel buildings (left) Guildford Court Hotel and (right) Bute House Hotel; (right) Black Bull on West Princes Street; Centre: (left) Castle Street looking west from the junction with Bishop Street which is marked by the spire of Trinity Parish Church (right); Below: (left) 2-storey buildings on Castle St; (right) listed houses at Nos 7-9 with refinement, beyond the former County Buildings mark the corner with High Street.

Bishop Street

Bishop Street was laid out in the gardens of the former 'Bishop's House' at the turn of the 18th century. A row of low single storey and attic terraced cottages date from this period and provide an important example of the expansion of the town. Their scale and simple design contrasts with the tall 4-storey Victorian and Edwardian tenements and the highly decorative Post Office (Category B Listed; 1895-7). Bishop Street rises from its junction with East Princes Street towards Castle Street offering an attractive view back downhill towards the ferry port.

Bishops Terrace Brae

At the eastern edge of the Character Area this steeply rising and gently curving path is guarded by a grandly turreted splay and imposing 4-storey tenement. The cliff path offers good views of the town below and links the seafront to the grand villas of Bishops Terrace and the Serpentine.

Figure 25: Top: Bishop Street: (left) looking south a mixture of earlier single and 2-storey terraced cottages sit alongside tall tenements; (right) the decorative style of the Post Office; Centre: Bishop Street cottages are listed; (right) the bay dormers are a later Victorian addition but add interest and detail to this house; Below: (left) bay window turret on the corner of Bishops Terrace Brae; (right) early house on the Brae.

Open Spaces

A further component in the pattern of the urban form is the role of open space, trees and landscaping. This includes the contribution made by both public and private green space; natural or cultivated elements; individual trees; and other landscaping. The principle open spaces are described below.

The Castle grounds

Rothesay Castle was formally partially enclosed by buildings (fig 7) and in the late 19th century the castle grounds and moat were reconstructed by the Marquess of Bute. Today the castle is enclosed by landscaped grounds with a deep water filled moat surrounded by manicured grass banks enhanced with trees and shrubs. This attractively landscaped area is enclosed by a stone boundary wall and cast iron railings.

The Esplanade and Beach

The Esplanade gardens were laid out in 1869-72 and retain much of their formal grandeur with well tended flower beds, palms trees and other ornamental trees. This expansive open space forms a buffer between sea and town; the gardens add distinction to the seafront buildings whilst providing a key recreational function. The seafront promenade is wide and bracing, defended by a system of walls, kerbs and changes of level (fig 29). The foreshore for the most part is rocky, although at the extreme north western edge of the Character Area there is a small beach (fig 26).

Figure 26: Top: Rothesay Castle (left) view of the landscaped lawns and (right) the entrance bridge crosses the moat; Centre: the Esplanade Gardens form an important and attractive buffer to the seafront buildings and retain formal planting and ornamental trees; Below: (right) a small area of beach lies at the western end of the Esplanade.

Guildford Square

Guildford Square is the town's principle public space and is the first point of arrival by sea (fig 13 ref: GS). The space forms an important pause and extension to the seafront façade of buildings and draws the public into the heart of the town centre, connecting both Montague Street and the castle. Enlarged from its original form due to the loss of a full urban block the space functions as the principal transport interchange for the island with buses, taxis and parking zones.

The central pedestrian area of the square is raised. Bus shelters line the seafront footway while seats and young trees define the raised area and partially screen the car parking which is provided in the wide street on the southside of the square.

The space is enclosed to east and west by 'bookend' buildings: the Guildford Court Hotel and the Esplanade Hotel respectively. The south -side is a mixture of 2– to 4- storey buildings each side of a large gap site. Splayed corners to the end buildings lead the eye effectively beyond the square into the surrounding streets.

High Street / Montague Street

Adjacent to Guildford Square is the landscaped corner where High Street meets Montague Street (fig 13 ref: HS). This space, once occupied by an urban block (fig 7), functions as an urban 'garden' with shrubberies and seating placed informally around the Thomson Memorial Fountain (relocated from the Esplanade). The space flows into Montague Street and High Street. This break in the urban form offers a view to the Castle from Guildford Square.

Figure 27: Top: Guildford Square: view on arrival from the Mid Pier; Centre: the square is the transport hub and the central area is raised to create a pedestrian space with trees and seats; (right) view across the foot of High Street towards the castle; Below: book-end buildings: (left) Esplanade Hotel and (right) Guildford Court Hotel.

Bishop Street junction

This irregular shaped space is a pivotal intersection, located at the foot of Bishop Street (fig 13 ref:B). Some of Rothesay's most significant buildings address this space including the 'book-end' of the former Royal Hotel, the Golfer's Bar, the Post Office and Duncan Halls. The space is divided into two by safety barriers, providing an enclosed area for parking next to the shops in East Princes Street.

The Market Cross

The position of the burgh's original market place is uncertain, the Market Cross (20C) now stands in a small open space where High Street meets Stuart Street (fig 13 ref:MC). The area has modern paving and some landscape trees, the space is shaped by the form of the road junction and the gable at No.3 Stuart Street.

Other open spaces

Other contributions to open space are made by smaller 'accidental' public spaces such as that on King Street (next to the library), and on the corner of High Street/Castle Street. The tight urban grain of the Character Area is balanced by the private rear gardens and backcourts which play an important role in adding green open space and trees to the conservation area.

Trees

In addition to the protection of trees in a conservation area, a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) can be placed on any individual tree within or outwith the conservation area. Established trees are an important element and play a key role in both the setting of the historic castle and by adding interest on the Esplanade. New trees such as those in Guildford Square offer the potential to form a buffer to parking and to soften this large urban space.

Figure 28 Top: the informal open space at the corner of High Street and Montague Street providing views to the castle; Below: (left) the Bishop Street junction; (right) the Market Cross with seat and trees.

Public Realm

In addition to the qualities provided by open space, the treatment of external surfaces, street furniture and lighting is important and contributes to the overall impression of the built environment of the Character Area.

Few original stone surfaces survive, but examples can be found such as the granite setts in East Princes Street and on the slipways. Natural stone surfaces have been successfully reintroduced in a number of locations including at the Inner Harbour and in Montague Street. The principle shopping street has been the subject of traffic calming, and the new natural stone setts and flagstones enhancing the streetscape (fig 29).

In other areas, modern paved finishes and tarmacadam lack the quality and detail of these traditional and natural finishes.

Street furniture is also a combination of traditional and modern. Traditional decorative lamp standards line the Esplanade with decorative town shields adding vital character in comparison to the more functional modern handrails and bollards. The Victoria Hotel retains its original cast iron standard lamps at its entrance (fig 29).
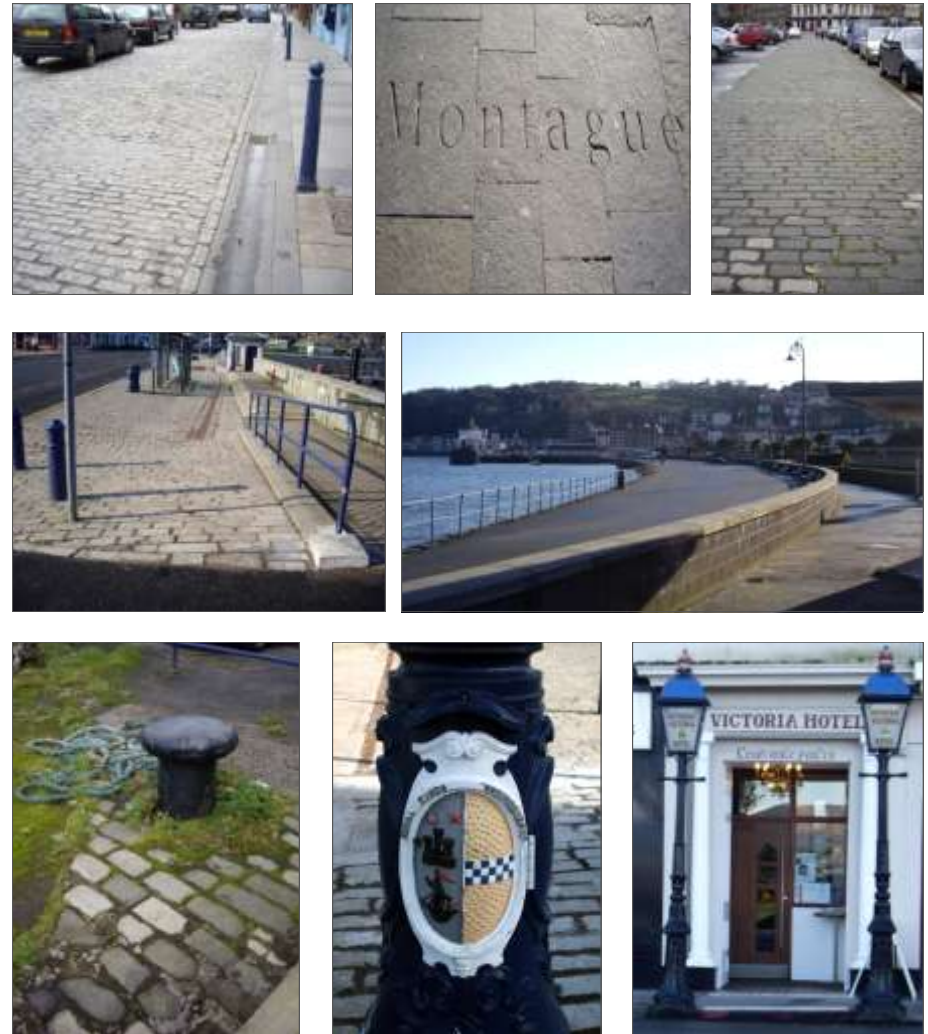

Figure 29: Top (left to right): new natural stone setts and flagstones in Montague Street; setts in East Princes Street; Centre: new floorspace at the Inner Harbour; the tarmacadam finish to the Promenade, concrete retaining walls and functional handrails; Below: Albert Pier capstan & setts; Rothesay's crest on a traditional lamp standard; decorative lamps at the Victoria Hotel.

3.3 Building analysis

Function and Type

Much of the character and appearance of an area and its buildings is generated by their function or use. As a typical 'town centre' the Character Area comprises of a mixture of commercial, residential, leisure and public facilities. Rothesay's secondary function as a holiday resort also impacts on its architecture in particular the number of significant hotels on the seafront.

Building types vary from single storey terraced houses to 5-storey hotels, and one-off structures such as the Winter Gardens. Mixed use flatted properties predominate with retail or service premises on street level and residential above. Large hotels have followed this pattern often with a bar and shops at street level.

In Bishop Street, Castle Street and Castlehill Street residential character predominates with few commercial premises at street level. Most public and administrative buildings are centred around the castle. In some instances buildings have changed from their original use, such as the Council Buildings, converted to residential flats.

Figure 30: Top: mixed use flatted buildings are typical of the Character Area, such as the tenements on High Street with residential accommodation above and a mixture of retail uses at street level; (right) hotels follow this pattern, the Victoria Hotel has its entrance and shops at street level. Centre: (left) sole residential use for example a flatted house in Stuart Street and tenements in Bishop Street; Below: the former County Buildings being converted to residential use.

Scale

Building scale, its height and breadth and their relationship, has a fundamental influence of the townscape. Scale often reflects the building period. The earliest remaining buildings are 2-storey, a significant majority of the early 19th century development is 3-storey, and Victorian and Edwardian properties can rise to an imposing 5- or more storeys. With the exception of Rothesay Castle (13C) and the Stuart's Townhouse (17C) the earliest buildings in the Character Area date to the 18th century. Fewer earlier buildings remain, but examples can be found particularly at the periphery of the Character Area on Bishop Street and Castle Street, Store Lane and Watergate, and to the west on Gallowgate. These lower scale buildings provide streets with an open aspect. Development in the 19th century of the commercial area and seafront is dominated by buildings of 3- or 4-storeys, often with dormered attics (some original and others later additions). On the seafront, this tall uniform storey height gives strength to the seafront facade and creates an imposing backdrop to the open bay, their height also appreciated from a distance. Behind the seafront, in the narrower streets, this building scale presents an imposing appearance forming a protective enclosure to West Princes Street and Montague Street.

Historically in towns building widths would have derived from the medieval burgage plots, the long and narrow strips of land owned by the burgesses. Little of this pattern remains; many buildings from the later expansion of the town onto reclaimed land would have been set out on 19th century standards and individual feu plots. As a result the width of frontages varies, with a few being as narrow as 2-bays, but most tending to be 4 or 5-bays. This variety of width articulates the horizontality of the seafront and returns a verticality which is traditional in Scottish architecture. This is emphasised by vertically proportioned window patterns.

Building scale is most successful where it considers its relationship with neighbouring buildings and its contribution to streetscape as a whole. In some instances this will require consideration of the hierarchy of function and detail, for example on East Princes Street the later tenement vies for importance with the Duncan Halls (fig 31). In other instances the continuation of a singular eaves line strengthens plainer buildings creating a greater whole.

Figure 31: East Princes Street: a prominent seafront block comprising large scale buildings. The grandeur of the Duncan Halls (centre) dominate the simpler 4-storey tenements to the right; whilst the later Lady Mary Mansions (c1905) rises to 5-storeys and vies for stature with the Halls.

Architectural Detail

Architectural detail reflects both a building's function and the period of its construction. Rothesay displays a rich variety of architectural detail from the modest Classical detailing which predominated into the middle of the 19th century (late Georgian and early Victorian period), through the more elaborate late Victorian era and into the 20th century Art Nouveau and Moderne periods.

Georgian details

The first modern expansion of the town occurred is characterised by Classical restrain and refinement: raised stone surrounds, projecting lintels and cills, banding courses and cornices, elaborate what are otherwise plain buildings. Good examples of this period can be seen in Castle Street where houses display tripartite windows and columned door pieces (fig 32), and Tower Street (fig 19 & 23) which is a good example of the frequently used splayed corner detail. Despite the strong horizontal continuity of eaves lines, windows are always vertical in proportion often with the both sashes divided into six panes. Wallhead forestacks, sometimes dated and often quite decorative, feature on a number of buildings. Dormers were not typical of this period but many feature as a Victorian or later addition.

Victorian details

From the mid-19th century the architectural vocabulary is expanded and more elaborately detailed buildings appear. Good examples are the Victoria Hotel and Duncan Halls, with French-style pavilion roofs and the Flemish flare of the Post Office (fig 25). Decorative ironwork is used for brattishing and balconies. Windows continue the tradition of vertically hung timber sash and case, but the bay window and dormer window is introduced which strongly articulate building façades and roofscape.

Figure 32: Top: Georgian refinement in the Ionic porch in Castle Street; (right) bay dormers are a strong feature of the Victorian era; Centre Victorian flamboyancy: French Pavilion Roofs: (left) Victoria Hotel; (right) the Duncan Halls; Below: Classic refinement displayed on a carved chimney head in High Street; (right) decorative Art Nouveau iron work on the Winter Gardens,

Historic Shops

One of the Character Area's prime functions over the centuries has been as a commercial centre. From the time of its expansion into Montague Street this activity has created shops primarily at street level which contribute greatly to the character, appearance and vitality of the town centre.

A Historic Shop Appraisal (Lennie, 2010) found that Rothesay retains a significant number of historic retail buildings. The style and materials of surviving examples reflect the town's economic and architectural history dating back to the late 19th century with two notable periods of expansion represented: the late 19th century and the 1930s. The historic shops contribute to the Character Area in a number of specific ways:

- some fine shop interiors;
- use of historically fashionable materials e.g. chrome and Vitrolite;
- use of glazed brick tiles on many shopfronts;
- use of mosaics (particularly good examples at 3 & 5 Tower Street and 39 Victoria Street);
- use of bookend console brackets: heavy decorative timber brackets from late 19th century;

There are many other small individual details in historic shop fronts which contribute to the variety of the streetscape including stained glass, curved glass and ironwork used for a number of purposes in particular decorative grilles and shop front pilasters.
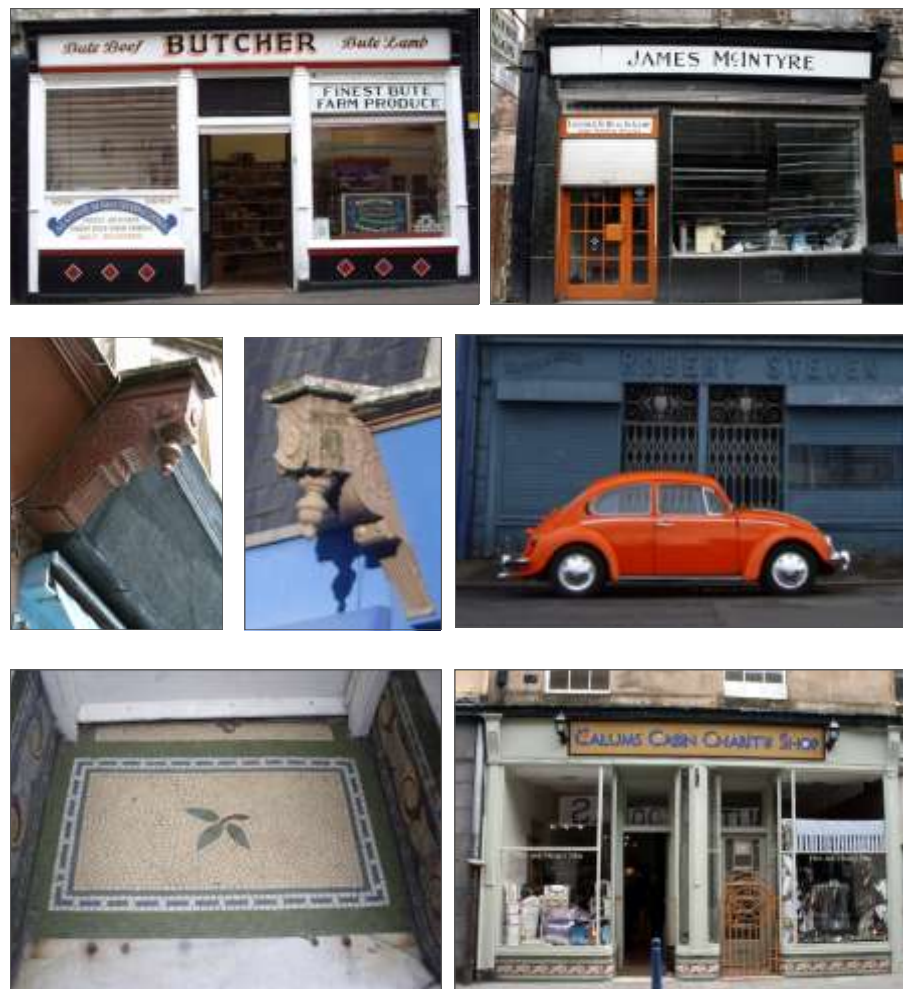

Figure 33: Top: (left) No 1 Bishop Street has good ironwork details; (right) No 74 Montague Street displays 1930s chrome blind box and vent grille; Centre: console brackets typical of the late 19C in timber or stone; (right) decorative ironwork security gates; Below: Nos 3 & 5 Tower Street is a good example of matching mosaic tiled lobbies and stallrisers.

Building Materials

The buildings of the Character Area are predominantly of traditional masonry wall construction with pitched slate roofs. Earlier buildings display rubble stone work construction, often designed to be lime harled or rendered and limewashed (now often exposed). Later buildings are generally built of regularly coursed dressed ashlar.

A variety of building stone is displayed throughout the town centre: grey and buff sandstones predominate, but there are a number of red sandstones on later Edwardian buildings; dark grey whinstone also appears exposed in rubble walls. Earlier buildings tend to have their window surrounds and quoins picked out in a contrasting stone.

Whilst a number of Georgian buildings have lost their render finish others, especially on the seafront, have been rendered and painted in light colours. Later Victorian buildings have been painted, which is unlikely to have been the original intention.

Other traditional materials contribute to this palette which provides quality and detail to the buildings: Scottish slate, timber windows and shopfronts, clay chimney cans, leadwork, cast iron rainwater goods, decorative ironwork, brick (rear elevations), tile (shopfronts). Many modern materials which are not appropriate for use on traditional buildings have been introduced and will be discussed in Section 4.

Figure 34: Top: a view over the town illustrates the predominance of traditional pitched and slated roofs; the variety of stone colour intermingles with lightly coloured painted facades; Centre & Below: (left) stonework with contrasting use of sandstones & whinstone with dressed window surrounds and corner quoins, these may have originally been lime rendered; (right) others have finer dressed sandstone which with no margins was not designed for render. Some of these buildings have now been painted.