Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey

Historic characterisation for regeneration

PENZANCE

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Nick Cahill
  with
Stef Russell

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CORNWALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
A service of the Historic Environment Service, Planning Transportation and Estates,
Cornwall County Council
Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3AY
tel (01872) 323603 fax (01872) 323811 E-mail cau@cornwall.gov.uk
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Maps

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Cover illustration

Penzance harbour, Promenade, Chapel Street and Barbican areas from the south, 2001 (CCC Historic Environment Service, ACS 5381).

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Abbreviations

CCC            Cornwall County Council
CSUS           Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey
DCMS           Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DTLR           Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
GIS            Geographical Information Systems
HERS           Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme
IAP            Integrated Area Plan
LOTS           Living Over The Shop scheme
SMBR           Sites, Monuments and Buildings Record
South West RDA  South West of England Regional Development Agency
THI            Townscape Heritage Initiative
Summary

Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey
The Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey is a pioneering initiative aimed at harnessing the quality and distinctive character of the historic environment to successful and sustainable regeneration. The Survey is investigating 19 historic towns and creating for each an information base and character assessment which will contribute positively to regeneration planning. The project is based within Cornwall County Council’s Historic Environment Service and funded by English Heritage, Objective One and the South West RDA.

Penzance
The Objective One Single Programming Document provides the following overview of Penzance:

‘With a population of 18,300 in 1996, Penzance is one of Cornwall’s biggest towns but it has grown by only 3% since 1971. It enjoys a strategic location on Mounts Bay, at the end of the main line railway. It is also the home of the ferry service to the Isles of Scilly and the heliport for flights to the Islands is on the outskirts of the town. The built-up area includes the major fishing port of Newlyn. Activity rates are below the County average and unemployment is very high.’

Character-based principles for regeneration
- Respect for the fundamental importance of Penzance’s natural setting and topography, particularly the sloping townscape, highly visible urban skyline and views to the shoreline and out across Mount’s Bay
- Recognition of the superior quality and particular distinctiveness of Penzance’s historic environment.

- Commitment to achieving comparable quality and character in new buildings and evolving townsapes.
- Promoting a continuing diversity of functions and activities in the town.
- Respect for the different character areas within the town and a commitment to acknowledging and reinforcing the urban hierarchy and diversity they represent.

Regeneration and the historic environment: key themes for Penzance
- Understanding the asset
- Maintaining and promoting diversity
- Natural setting and topography
- Respecting character
- Integrating conservation approaches to regeneration
- Enhancing townscape
- Strategic review of traffic issues
- Improving connectivity
- Presentation and promotion
- Coordinating change

Character areas and regeneration opportunities
Nine distinct Character Areas have been identified within the historic urban area, some of which are subdivided (see table following). These are differentiated by their varied historic origins, functions and resultant urban topography, the processes of change which have affected each subsequently and the extent to which these elements and processes are evident in the current townscape.

These character areas are a means of understanding the past and the present. In turn, that understanding provides the basis for a positive approach to planning future change which will maintain and reinforce the historic character and individuality of each area - sustainable local distinctiveness.
1a. Market core
The busy historic commercial and market focus and the meeting and crossing point of the town’s main streets. It is made up of several linked strongly enclosed spaces with a diverse collection of important historic commercial and public buildings.
- Reassert role as urban hub.
- Enhance permeability and the public realm
- Maintain historic fabric

1b. Market Jew Street
A late medieval expansion from the market core, this is now Penzance’s main shopping street, close to the main car park and bus and railway stations. It has striking townscape qualities dominated by the porticoed façade of the Market House at the head of the rising street.
- Reinstate character and quality
- Increase evening and Sunday activity
- Resolve vehicle – pedestrian conflict

1c. Chapel Street
An extraordinarily fine historic streetscape, with an assemblage of historic buildings of very high distinction and charm. Formerly one of the main axes of the medieval town, it now presents an air of quiet gentility, underpinned by a range of predominantly ‘quality’ uses.
- Review promotion and visitor access
- Maintain quality uses

1d. Causewayhead
A lively pedestrianised shopping street with some of the best surviving historic shopfronts in Penzance. There is a diverse range of building styles and heights, but the street overall offers a strong sense of enclosure.
- Maintain the historic fabric
- Increase use of ancillary buildings and spaces
- Enhance the public realm
- Improve access and connectivity

1e. The back streets
Secondary streets around the historic core, mostly narrow and strongly enclosed, with buildings reflecting mixed residential, commercial and small industrial origins and current uses.
- Improve pedestrian links and activity
- Promote appropriate development / conversion
- Increase occupation of underused buildings

2a. Transport interchange
A busy, diverse area, dominated by large structures, traffic movement, street furniture and signage, and the functional hard landscaped spaces of the railway, bus station and car park.
- Reduce vehicle – pedestrian conflict
- Improve pedestrian access and connectivity with Market Jew Street
- Enhance the public realm and review signage
- Review opportunities for harbour car park

2b. Tidal harbour
The large expanses of tidal water in the outer harbour and inner basin give this area an open, expansive character, framed on the landward side by historic buildings mounting the coastal slope.
- View the harbour in a wider context
- Seek opportunities from the historic environment
- Enhance public access and facilities

2c. Working harbour
A busy, strongly enclosed area, dominated by large buildings and engineered structures and a mix of industrial, commercial, maritime and tourist and leisure uses.
- Recognise the area’s significance
- Create an integrated master plan for the area
- Reinstate character and quality

3. The Barbican
The earliest focus of activity in Penzance. Although subject to major changes in the 20th century, important traces of its former tight-grained and small-scale industrial and residential character survive.
- Recognise the area’s significance
- Create an integrated master plan for the area
- Reinstate character and quality
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>4. The Promenade</strong></th>
<th><strong>5. Wherry Town</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This area is unified by the broad, elegant, linear engineering of the Promenade itself, with a range of leisure, tourism and residential uses fringing its landward side. It offers striking views across the Bay and into the town.</td>
<td>Historically an industrial area, Wherry Town retains a predominantly commercial and edge-of-settlement character despite loss of most of its historic topography and fabric.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Seek enhancements in the short term</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. Chyandour</strong></td>
<td><strong>7. Lescudjack and the Battlefields</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formerly a self-contained industrial area and settlement created by the Bolitho family along a stream valley on the eastern fringe of Penzance. Despite demolition of much of the industrial historic fabric, and the presence of main roads and the railway line, it retains a distinct sense of its former industrial and ‘estate village’ character.</td>
<td>An extensive zone of 19th century housing, predominantly terraces and rows, with accompanying institutional buildings, set tightly on a grid of streets laid across sloping terrain north of the core of Penzance.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Enhance as a gateway</td>
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<td>• Ensure quality in redevelopment</td>
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<td>• Sustain the green element</td>
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<td>• Promote beneficial reuse for historic buildings</td>
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<td>• Enhance the primary through route</td>
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<td>• Restore links with the centre</td>
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<td>• Enhance the ‘gateway’ area</td>
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<td>• Reinstate character and quality on the Chyandour Cliff</td>
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<td>• Maintain community facilities</td>
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<td><strong>8. Alverton and Morrab</strong></td>
<td><strong>9. St Clare’s and Penalverne</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A large and diverse suburban area, predominantly of genteel villas and terraces, with a significant presence of professional, recreational and institutional uses. Trees and green spaces are an important element in its character.</td>
<td>A green, low-density suburban area with a concentration of large-scale public and institutional uses, including hospital, cemetery, schools and cricket ground. It forms a gateway for traffic approaching Penzance from the north.</td>
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<td>• Ensure long-term sustainability of the ‘green’ element</td>
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<td>• Review promotion and visitor access</td>
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<td>• Ensure quality and character in development</td>
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<td>• Sustain and enhance the green element</td>
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<td>• Improve and develop pedestrian access</td>
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1 Introduction

Regeneration and the historic towns of Cornwall and Scilly

In July 1999 Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were designated as an Objective 1 area, bringing potential investment from European funds of more than £300m over the nine-year spending period. Economic regeneration schemes and development projects within the region’s towns are likely to form a major element of the Objective 1 Programme.

Regeneration on this scale offers an unparalleled opportunity for contemporary contributions in urban design and architecture to the built environment of Cornwall and Scilly’s towns. At the same time, the Objective 1 programme emphasises environmental sustainability (including the historic environment) and regional distinctiveness as key considerations in regeneration planning. The process of change launched by current regeneration initiatives could, if not carefully managed, have a negative impact on the historic environment and the unique character and sense of place of each of these settlements. The pressure to achieve rapid change could in itself result in severe erosion and dilution of their individuality and particular distinctiveness and, at worst, their transformation into ‘anywhere’ towns.

It is clear from recent research that a high-quality historic urban environment and the distinctiveness and sense of place integral to it are themselves primary assets in promoting regeneration. The effect may be direct, through heritage tourism, for example, but there is a more powerful and decisive impact in prompting a strong sense of identity and pride of place which in turn creates a positive and confident climate for investment and growth.

This synergy between the historic environment and economic regeneration was recognised and strongly advocated in the Power of Place review of policies on the historic environment carried out by English Heritage in 2000, and its value clearly highlighted in the government’s response, The Historic Environment: A Force for the Future (2001). The tool by which the two may be linked to create a framework for sustainable development in historic settlements is characterisation.

Characterisation and regeneration

‘The government . . . wants to see more regeneration projects, large and small, going forward on the basis of a clear understanding of the existing historic environment, how this has developed over time and how it can be used creatively to meet contemporary needs.’

(DCMS / DTLR 2001, The Historic Environment: A Force for the Future, 5.2)

‘Characterisation’ provides a means of understanding the diverse range of factors which combine to create ‘distinctiveness’ and ‘sense of place’. It involves the creation of a comprehensive knowledge base on the historic environment. This includes what is known of a settlement’s historic development and urban topography (that is, the basic components which have contributed to the physical shaping of the historic settlement, such as market places, church enclosures, turnpike roads, railways, etc.), together with an overview of the surviving historic fabric, distinctive architectural forms, materials and treatments and the significant elements of town and streetscapes. Characterisation may also provide the basis for assessing the potential for buried and standing archaeological remains and their likely significance, reducing uncertainty for regeneration interests by providing an indication of potential constraints.
Characterisation is also a means whereby the historic environment can itself provide an inspirational matrix for regeneration. It emphasises the historic continuum which provides the context for current change and into which the regeneration measures of the present must fit if the distinctive and special qualities of each historic town are to be maintained and enhanced. It both highlights the ‘tears in the urban fabric’ wrought by a lack of care in the past and offers an indication of appropriate approaches to their repair.

Characterisation is not intended to encourage or to provide a basis for imitation or pastiche; rather, it offers a sound basis on which the 21st century can make its own distinct and high-quality contribution to places of abiding value.

Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey

The Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey (CSUS) was set up – funded by both English Heritage and the Objective One Partnership for Cornwall and Scilly (European Regional Development Fund) – as a key contributor to regeneration in the region. Additional funding has been provided by the South West of England Regional Development Agency. The project is investigating 19 historic towns and creating for each the information base and character assessment which will provide a framework for sustainable action within these historic settlements.

These towns have been identified, in consultation with planning, conservation and economic regeneration officers within the seven district, borough and unitary authorities in the region, as those which are likely to be the focus for regeneration. The project’s ‘target’ settlements are:

- Penryn
- Newquay
- Bodmin
- Launceston
- Saltash
- Hugh Town
- Truro
- St Ives
- Hayle
- Camborne
- Falmouth
- Newlyn
- Camelford
- Liskeard
- Torpoint
- Penryn
- St Ives
- Helston
- Redruth
- Launceston
- Saltash
- Hugh Town

CSUS is a pioneering initiative aimed directly at cutting across the boundary that traditionally divides conservation and economic development. Nationally, it is the first such project carrying out a characterisation-based assessment of the historic urban environment specifically to inform and support a regional economic regeneration programme. Future regeneration initiatives in other historic settlements, in Cornwall and Scilly and further afield, will benefit from the new approach developed by the project.

CSUS reports

CSUS reports present the major findings and recommendations arising from the project’s work on each town. They are complemented by computer-based digital mapping and data recorded using ArcView Geographical Information System (GIS) software, and together the two sources provide comprehensive information on historic development, urban topography, significant components of the historic environment, archaeological potential and historic character.

Importantly, the reports also identify opportunities for heritage-led regeneration and positive management of the historic environment. However, they are not intended to be prescriptive design guides, but should rather be used by architects, town planners and regeneration officers to inform future development and planning strategies.
The reports and associated digital resources are shared with the appropriate local authorities; economic regeneration, planning and conservation officers therefore have immediate access to the detailed information generated by the project. Additional information is held in the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record, maintained by the Historic Environment Service of Cornwall County Council.

Public access to the report and to the associated mapping is available via the project’s website - [www.historic-cornwall.org.uk](http://www.historic-cornwall.org.uk) - or by appointment at the offices of Cornwall County Council's Historic Environment Service, Old County Hall, Truro.

### Extent of the study area

The history and historic development of each town are investigated and mapped for the whole of the area defined for the settlement by the current Local Plan. However, the detailed characterisation and analysis of urban topography, which together form the primary elements of the study, are closely focused on the historic urban extent of the settlement. For the purposes of the project this area is defined as that which is recognisably ‘urban’ in character on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, c. 1907 (Figs. 1 and 2).
2 Penzance: the context

Penzance lies in Penwith District in the extreme west of Cornwall, 10 miles from Land’s End, the most south-westerly town not only of Cornwall, but of Britain as a whole. It sits on the north-west shore of the spectacular sweep of Mount's Bay. With the most temperate climate in Britain, the town is particularly noted for its sub-tropical trees and plants, as well as fine 18th and 19th century buildings, high quality streetscapes and spectacular views.

Penzance railway station.

Penzance is a port, rail and coach route terminus, and also the major interchange for local rail, road and bus networks. Sea links with the Isles of Scilly operate from Penzance harbour and air routes from the heliport and nearby Land's End airport. The town is on the A30, the major spinal route through Cornwall linking to the M5 at Exeter. This ceases to be a national trunk road on the eastern edge of Penzance. The harbour is the most westerly major port in the English Channel, the first reached from the Atlantic and the principal commercial port west of Falmouth.

These connections give Penzance a strategic importance that outweighs its remote location – approximately 300 miles from London – and, in the wider regional context, small size. It is one of the larger towns in Cornwall, with a population in the wider urban area (including Newlyn) of about 21,000. The dominant influence of Truro, however, means that Penzance occupies the second tier in the county’s urban hierarchy.

Within Penwith and a wider area of west Cornwall, however, Penzance is the dominant centre, unrivalled by the neighbouring towns of St Ives, Hayle, Newlyn and St Just. It presents a remarkably self-contained character, with a much greater range of facilities and services than might be expected for its size. It is the main local shopping and service centre for a wide area, with multiples, supermarkets, specialist and local shops and a wide range of commercial and business services. There is limited light manufacturing and industrial capacity, mostly based at Long Rock to the east of the town and serving local needs. Penwith District Council, Penzance Town Council, Government offices, Penwith College (tertiary) and West Cornwall Hospital are all based in Penzance.

Flags created by Golowan Community Arts at the Jubilee Pool. The strong and visible presence of the arts and cultural industries make a crucial contribution to the distinctive character of Penzance.

(Difficulty: Photograph: Charles Wimpenny, Cornwall CAM)

Diversity and quality also typify Penzance’s role as a cultural, artistic, entertainment and tourism centre, with a more than locally significant selection of public and private galleries and museums, a School of Art, clubs, trusts and societies, libraries, performance venues, a cinema, restaurants and cafés. Golowan is a major annual arts and cultural festival. Penzance is also a focus for sports (with cricket,
football and rugby grounds) and has extensive ornamental parks and gardens, playgrounds and informal recreation areas. Penzance Promenade is Cornwall's only seaside esplanade.

The town is significant for tourism, with a range of hotels, guesthouses and hostels. It is a sought-after residential town, with pressure on housing from both local demand and in-migration.

Commercial dry dock and repair facilities are an important aspect of the harbour, as is the link with the Isles of Scilly (below).

Photographs: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

The regeneration context

From its heyday in the early 20th century (see Section 3), there was a marked decline in Penzance's fortunes in the second half of the century, exacerbated by its geographical isolation. Service industries, especially tourism, retailing, public service and local government, have been major employment sectors in the town but are now more prominent with the decline of traditional employment sectors.

The harbour remains a vital strategic link to the Isles of Scilly and produces a modest income, but the infrastructure is in need of major investment. Important operators like the dry dock are assured of only short-term stability. Other major local industries such as agriculture, horticulture and tourism declined significantly in the 1980-90s. While there has been some recovery, jobs in these sectors remain seasonal and low-paid.

The population of the three wards making up the immediate urban area is about 12,100, an increase of less than three per cent on the 1991 figure. The proportion of the population aged 60 and over is substantially higher than the national average, while numbers in the 20-29 age group are significantly lower: many younger people leave the area to seek employment. The number of one person households is well above the district and national averages and more than one in four residents report that they suffer from a limiting long-term illness. Local levels of unemployment and deprivation are amongst the highest in Cornwall and England. The Multiple Deprivation Index places Penzance East and Penzance West wards in the worst ten per cent of deprived wards in England and all Penzance wards within the poorest 25 per cent. Unemployment rates in Penwith are high even compared to the general figure for Cornwall and there are associated problems of a low skills base, low levels of
adult literacy, numeracy and general social exclusion.

There is in place a range of proposals and strategies to manage change and regeneration in Penzance. Based on the Local Plan (incorporating the County Structure Plan) and IAP objectives, these are complementary rather than explicitly co-ordinated. The Objective One Single Programming Document identifies Penzance as an Employment Growth Centre eligible for financial support through measure 2.2 of the Programme. The draft Local Plan and County Structure Plan identify Penzance, with the other principal towns in the District, as the focus for most new retail, commercial, industrial, housing and tourist development, particularly utilising small sites, derelict or underused buildings, vacant and brownfield land.

![The view from the Prom: Penzance’s spectacular natural setting is recognised as a major asset for regeneration.](image)

Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

Emphasis is placed on the very high quality scenic and historic environment of Penzance and the need for environmentally and culturally sustainable development. The Integrated Area Plan (IAP) is supportive of projects which focus on or are strongly associated with local distinctiveness, character, heritage-based regeneration and improving the public product, particularly in broad environmental terms, and which recognise the high quality built and natural environment.

Given this context and a general lack of available greenfield sites, regeneration in Penzance is peculiarly closely linked with broad conservation and heritage aims. Development and change will necessarily take place within the historic settlement itself, utilising and affecting the historic fabric, which thus itself becomes a critical economic, social and cultural asset.

Major industrial investment is unlikely – Penzance is too remote from important markets, and available land is limited to relatively small opportunity sites and modest extension to the Long Rock trading estate. Similarly, retail development, already significantly improved within the town by the Wharfside development, is unlikely to require new sites outside the town centre.

There is an identified need for improved sports facilities (in the harbour area, for instance), provision of skateboard parks and playgrounds close to some of the larger housing estates, and an indoor sports centre and swimming pool.

There is a substantial need for affordable housing in the face of rising house prices and demand for second and retirement homes. Development opportunities are largely limited to infill sites, subdivision and conversion, and through making full use of underused commercial properties (through a LOTS initiative).

Penzance is a resort town. Diversification may be desirable to provide a more secure economic base but tourism remains a principal local industry. Protection of existing accommodation has been identified as desirable within existing strategies and increased investment in facilities is needed. It is also pointed out, however, that this should not be at the expense of the cultural or environmental quality of the area through, for instance, inappropriate theme-park style developments.
Transport and traffic related issues are very significant and there has been consideration of a transportation and traffic strategy for the town. Identified priorities are to safeguard strategic rail and air and sea links, improve the so-called transport interchange (the adjacent bus and rail stations, taxi ranks and car park) and implement changes in traffic circulation based on a strategic traffic review of the town.

Parking, traffic congestion and vehicle - pedestrian conflict are major issues in many areas. Photograph: Charles Wimpenny, Cornwall CAM.

On-street parking and rear servicing to the major shops in Market Jew Street are particular issues, as is vehicle - pedestrian conflict at the harbour. Long-term objectives are to implement park and ride schemes, especially utilising land at Long Rock, east of Penzance, and investigate the possibilities of trans-shipment centres. Heavy traffic to both Newlyn and Penzance harbours passes through the built-up area, creating severe traffic management problems.

A significant issue is the perceived isolation of the town centre from the harbour area, although the building of the Wharfside shopping centre (opened 1999) on part of the former gas works site has been successful in linking the main car park on the Wharfside with the commercial centre of town.

The annual Golowan festival in late June has had an important regeneration influence in the last decade, attracting many visitors. The Golowan Trust and other local organisations have been influential in a series of community, arts and heritage-based activities focused on developing community identity. These include a town trail. There is also substantial local community interest in achieving enhancement works to the Promenade.

Regeneration planning for Penzance has been spearheaded by proposals to develop the harbour, with an associated range of
other potential schemes. These were detailed in consultants W S Atkins’ Penzance Harbour and Town Regeneration Action Plan, published in August 2001. There have been similar proposals for Newlyn, with significant overlaps in the type and scale of developments proposed. A resource review of the proposals for both settlements was undertaken by Cornwall Enterprise for Penwith District Council in November 2002 to develop a co-ordinated approach.

The Wharf Road entrance to the Wharfside shopping centre, opened in 1999.

Among the priorities identified for Penzance by this study is major investment in harbour facilities, especially for the Scillies link, with development of marina facilities once the harbour has been secured. Resolution of traffic problems in Market Jew Street and further development of the transport interchange are also highlighted.

A number of feasibility studies and technical assessments have been and are to be commissioned to establish the broad context for regeneration in the Mount’s Bay area, including hydrographic and environmental surveys and technical studies of the Promenade.

There are several other initiatives proposed for Penzance. These include a THI scheme covering the historic area of the town, re-use of the Abbey Warehouse, a restoration project for the Princess May Recreation Ground, reuse of the former BT telephone exchange building (with extension of the Newlyn Gallery’s facilities), a new leisure centre at St Clare and South West RDA commitments to Long Rock business park, including proposals for a conference – hotel centre.

Landscape and setting

The sense of being the ‘end of the line’ dominates Penzance’s wider physical context and the town’s distinctive sense of place is emphasised by its unique approach. Both rail and road provide views of the great skies and sweeping vistas of Mount’s Bay, with sudden glimpses of the looming presence of St Michael’s Mount. At night, the dramatic sweep of the Bay and the rising ground around it are picked out by lights.

Penzance is sited in the sheltered north-western angle of the Bay, with the rising ground of the west Penwith peninsula to the north and west and the lower lying ‘neck’ of the peninsula to the east. The surrounding countryside has been defined in the Cornwall Historic Landscape Characterisation as predominantly...
Anciently Enclosed Land (that is, medieval or earlier), to some extent altered during the 18th and 19th centuries. Cultivation of early flowers and vegetables is prevalent in the immediate area of the town.

The town itself is dramatically centred on a north-south spur – the ‘pen sans’ or holy headland – which runs down from higher ground north of the town to the Battery Rocks at its southern tip. The early harbour and settlement developed in the lee of the headland and the medieval town (Chapel Street) along the spine of the ridge. Subsequent development has extended over the sloping ground to east, west and north, with the flat, low-lying land along the shore to the east now occupied by rail yards, industrial and retail parks, some housing and commercial development. To the west, only a narrow undeveloped strip separates the town from Newlyn.

The line of the ridge is dominant in this landscape, a cherished local scene and landmark. The skyline with its twin markers of St Mary’s Church tower and the dome of the old Market House is, literally, picturesque, a scene painted time and again by artists from the 18th to the 21st centuries.

**Historic environment designations**

The current historic environment designations in the pre-1907 historic urban core of Penzance are shown on Figures 5 and are listed below.

- 2 Scheduled Monuments (Lescudjack hillfort and the former market cross).
- More than 100 Listed Buildings; a number of buildings around the harbour area have recently been added.
- A Registered Historic Garden: Morrab Gardens.
- A Conservation Area covers most of the historic town, in which an Article Four Direction is in operation restricting some forms of permitted development rights. The Conservation Area boundary could beneficially be adjusted to encompass some additional significant historic elements and areas of special interest.
- Penzance is designated a Historic Settlement in the Cornwall County Council Structure Plan. The boundaries of the designated area do not reflect the historic area as identified in this study and review and appropriate revision is recommended.
3 Historic and topographic development

(Figures 3 and 4 provide an overview of the historic development and historic topography of Penzance.)

The Land’s End peninsula is well known for its prehistoric remains, surviving especially on the high moors and in wilder corners. Many of those areas have always been marginal land, however, and prehistoric settlement was clearly densest in the sheltered and fertile coastal plains and the lowlands east of the hills, not least around the site of modern Penzance. The wider setting of the town contains substantial evidence of occupation in the Iron Age and Roman period. ‘Rounds’ (defended farmsteads) are known at Tolcarne, Lesingey, St Clare (Penzance Cricket Club) and Alverton (Mount Misery), and there is a large hillfort within the urban area at Lescudjack.

This settlement pattern was closely related to the stream valleys to the east and west of Penzance - Chyandour, Ponsandane, Lariggan and Newlyn - and to the sheltered porths and coves at their mouths. This pattern continued into the early medieval period, as revealed by place-names indicating farmsteads established at this period and the so-called ‘manorial’ sites such as Castle Horneck, Nancealverne and Trenere.

Somewhere in or near the valley of the Lariggan stream, west of the present urban core, was the site of Alverton, the main manorial centre of the area and indeed the largest manor of the whole Land’s End peninsula. Associated with it may have been an early Christian site: the name lariggan indicates a ‘lan’ (churchyard) site and another local name, mennaye, derives from the Cornish for ‘monks’ land’.

Lescudjack hillfort occupies a striking position overlooking Mount’s Bay. Now ringed by houses and with part of the interior under allotments, it remains one of Penwith’s most significant archaeological sites. Lescudjack Hill, with its distinctive fringe of trees on the seaward side, forms an important element in Penzance’s natural setting. (CCC Historic Environment Service, ACS 5386.)
The Penzance Market Cross, recently dated by Professor Charles Thomas to the early 11th century, originally stood somewhere near the modern junction of Morrab Road, Alverton Road and Clarence Street and may have been associated with a cemetery and the manorial and ecclesiastical centre at Alverton. There are no known remains of an early settlement site here but, perhaps significantly, this was the location of fairs in the later medieval period. Before the medieval spread of the town, the cross would have been widely visible, its inscription and purpose widely known. It may be a more likely origin of the ‘Holy Headland’ place-name than the small medieval chapel down by the harbour area. In the later medieval period the cross was moved to the market place.

No other indications of early settlement are known within Penzance, but until very recently there has been little archaeological intervention within the urban core. The settlement history outlined here highlights some potential target areas for future investigation.

**Medieval market town**

Although occurring as early as 1284 in a personal name, the first certain reference to Penzance as a settlement is in a manorial survey of Alverton dated to 1322, which refers to 29 burgesses, eight boats and a number of ‘lodges’ (fish cellars) for ‘foreign’ fishermen. St Mary’s chapel, probably on the site of the present parish church, is first recorded in 1327 and rights to hold markets and fairs were granted in 1332. When Penzance first appears in the historic record, therefore, it is as a recognisably urban settlement, a market town and port. It was at this stage a so-called seignorial borough, almost certainly promoted by the proprietors of the manor of Alverton, the Le Tyes family, around 1320.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, Penzance developed as a clearing house for the important export trade in fish from Mount’s Bay. It was also involved in the ferrying of pilgrims from St Michael’s Mount to Santiago de Compostela, already well established by the early 15th century. By 1400 the town was becoming of a different order of size and importance from rival ports around Mount’s Bay. It was better placed than either Marazion or Mousehole in relation to the wider Penwith hinterland (including some highly productive agricultural land and developing tin-producing areas) and crucially had the deepest sheltered water in its harbour. The earliest record of Penzance’s quay is from 1512, but clearly refers to the repair of an existing 15th century structure; also noted are what
might be the earliest bulwarks or defences at the Barbican, principally against French warships and Breton pirates.

By the time of the Spanish raid of 1595, during which at least part of the town was burned, Penzance was well established as one of the principal towns in the west. It was an important market and also a fishing port and deep-water trading centre with significant coastal and foreign trade along the south coast and with Europe and south-west Ireland.

Historic and topographic evidence suggests the sequence outlined below for the spatial development of the medieval and early post medieval borough.

**The early harbour area**

There is likely to have been a small fishing settlement clustered around the sheltered cove to the east of Battery Rocks in the Barbican area predating the early 14th century ‘planting’ of a market centre at Penzance. Before wholesale demolition in the early 20th century, there was a small grid here based on two densely built-up parallel streets, Quay Street and Coinage Hall Street, representing this early focus.

An ancient chapel of St Anthony was located in the same area. Fishing boats and larger ships would have been pulled up in the shelter of the headland, while on the western side of the promontory were sand dunes and the net-drying grounds of the Western Green.

**The new borough**

Chapel Street represents one of a group of ‘planted’ medieval towns in Cornwall laid out along the spine of a sloping ridge above a quay or river crossing (Helston, Penryn, Tregony and Truro, for instance). There are indications of regularly laid out burgage plots north of Vounderveor Lane and Abbey Street and hints of a possible former market area in lower Chapel Street. That this settlement phase was distinct from the harbour-side cluster is suggested by the marked topographical distinctions between the two areas - the steep slope separating them, the non alignment of axial roads and the disparity in the size and orientation of the building plots - and their separate chapels.

Stonework, now in St Anthony’s Gardens, may have come from a medieval chapel situated close to the early harbour and settlement.

Below: Stepped building lines at the upper end of Queen Street represent piecemeal infilling of the former open market area. The building with a steeply-pitched roof at right is a rare survival in the town of a 17th century structure.
The market and fairgrounds

The later medieval market place was a wide, three-cornered plot at the upper end of Chapel Street and Market Jew Street, possibly dating to the early 15th century. It was originally a much bigger open area than it is today, including not only the present Market Place, but also parts of Queens Square and Green Market. The creation of the new space may be related to a major reform of markets and fairs in Penzance in 1404, when the number of annual fairs increased from one to four. Fairs were held both here and in Alverton Street.

The view down Market Jew Street. The street originated as a long triangular space forming the main route to the east
(Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM)

Market Jew Street

The creation of a new market area and built-up street along Market Jew Street was the final development stage for Penzance’s urban core. Market Jew Street is in essence an elongated triangle, reaching east to approximately the modern Albert Road, strongly sloping across its width (the present Terrace is an 1820s rationalisation of this slope across the street). The presence of a back lane (Bread Street) and the regular width and depth of the plots reveals a planned layout.

The addition of this third area gave Penzance the curiously imbalanced form it retained until virtually the early 19th century (see Fig. 3). It was broadly L-shaped around the shoreline, with access to the beach area by lanes and alleys, little development north of Bread Street or on the adjoining part of Causewayhead, a few straggling cottages westwards along Alverton Street and nothing of note on the southern track running into the town from Western Green (Vounderveor Lane).

‘A place of good business’ - the 17th and 18th centuries

A Charter of Incorporation granted to Penzance by the Crown in 1614 gave administrative, judicial, tax and status benefits and extended the rights to hold market and fairs. It enabled the corporation to own, lease or purchase property, most significantly the space used for markets and fairs (see above) and the quay, and stimulated both private and public property development and new economic activity. The Corporation was vigorous in its promotion of the town (indeed, the important role of the ‘public’ authority in shaping Penzance is a constant theme in its development, history and character over the next three centuries.) Penzance was already the customs port for the whole Mount’s Bay area, from Cape Cornwall to the Lizard, and in 1614 it gained the August fair from the then declining borough of Mousehole; the aggressive pursuit of coinage town status, achieved in 1663, was very much at the expense of Helston.

Throughout the 17th and early 18th centuries, Penzance’s principal trade was in imported timber, salt, iron and coal, with massive imports of grain in years of poor harvest. Much of this trade was geared to the burgeoning demands of an expanding tin industry, especially around
St Just. There were also exports of herring and pilchards to the Catholic countries of southern Europe and metropolitan markets in London and Bristol.

After 1663 when Penzance became the coinage town for the Stannary of Penwith and Kerrier (where all locally produced tin had to be assayed, taxed and sold), the processing and export of tin became a significant additional function. Coinage status was important for the trade it drew to the town and the volume of associated transactions, and for the ancillary industries that followed, principally tin smelting. The Michell family established a smelter at Treliske, west of Penzance, in about 1710, and the Bolitho family set up another at Chyandour (where there had been an earlier blowing house) in 1720. By the late 18th century copper ore was also being exported from Penzance.

“It is extremely commodious for trade, and has a strong and handsome quay, lately rebuilt at the expense of the Corporation; besides the advantages of being one of the Coinage Towns, of having the custom house, of carrying on the pilchard fishery, and a very beneficial traffic with the Islands of Scilly, it has a large market, and a great inland trade, and is one of the richest, most flourishing and best built towns in the County.’

‘Penzantiensis’, 1749.

None of these activities was on a grand scale, but here was already established an abiding characteristic of Penzance, that its economy was widely based and not dominated by a single trade or activity (not even the harbour), nor was there a distinct, concentrated ‘industrial' area.

The status of the town and its high value trade made it attractive not only for merchants and businessmen but also for the local gentry, and it became the social and cultural centre of the far west. By the late 18th century, Penzance could boast both Ladies and Gentlemen’s Book Clubs (c.1770), a theatre (1787), Grammar School (refounded 1789) and Assembly Rooms (rebuilt on larger scale in 1791). Western Green and the beach road to Newlyn was already a favoured walk with the townsfolk in the 1780s.

The expanding trade and prosperity of the 17th and 18th centuries were reflected both in changes to the topography and new building. After acquiring the market area in 1614-15, the newly incorporated Borough built a guildhall and market buildings, including a shambles (meat market) on the site of the present Simpson’s arcade. Shops were located along the outer edges of the space. In 1663 a Coinage Hall was added to the old guildhall; almshouses were provided in Market Jew Street in 1660. Most significantly, St Mary’s Chapel was rebuilt in 1672 and its burial ground finally

During the 18th century, a wide variety of other manufactures, trades and industries were established in and around Penzance. These included boat-building, sail making, ropewalks and tallow-chandlers; tanning and leather-making (particularly Bolitho’s large tannery at Chyandour); Bodilly’s flour mills, established in 1740; Wherry Mine (1778) and Borough Arms iron foundry (1772). Throughout the period, however, the dominant economic activity remained trade, markets, shops, inns and services; the latter included law, medicine and, from 1797, banking.

‘Penzance is . . . a place of good business . . . well built and prosperous, has a good trade, and a great many ships belonging to it . . . Here are also a great many good families of gentlemen . . .’

Daniel Defoe, 1724.
consecrated on a permanent basis in 1680, although formally it remained a chapelry of the parish of Madron, within which the town lay.

‘The old town was comparatively all new built of brick and stone, and augmented with greater number of houses than before.’

William Hals, c. 1730.

Queen Street (originally New Road) is 17th or early 18th century in date, cut through the rear plots of Chapel Street to give a more direct access to the market area for traffic from Newlyn and the south west than the ancient Vounderveor. Access to the sheltered foreshore was provided via New Street, Jennings Lane and New Town Lane. These are all post medieval in date and the series of landing places and slips they served substantially expanded the facilities of the port. The grant of the quay and harbour dues enabled the Corporation to effectively maintain the pier, culminating in a major reconstruction in 1765-85 of what contemporary commentators claimed was already the largest pier in Cornwall. Secondary services and industries developed primarily along the foreshore areas and on the outer edges of the Borough (particularly Chyandour, Alverton and Tolcarne), especially the ‘dirty’ industries like foundries, tanneries, tin smelters and mills.

Eighteenth-century commercial prosperity reflected in high-quality buildings in Chapel Street.

In 1740 a new battery was constructed on the rocky outcrop still known as Battery Rocks, now the site of the War Memorial. Many high status residential buildings were built in Chapel Street in the mid 18th century, creating one of the finest streets in the county. The earliest of the large houses west of the market area (in Parade Street and Alverton) are also of this period. Public improvements included street paving (as early as the 17th century in New Street and Causewayhead) and the building of a reservoir (1757) and public water shutes.

‘Few places are more prosperous’ - the early 19th century

Penzance was an important naval, postal and victualling station during the long French wars of 1793-1815. As with many other south coast ports, the effective closure of Europe to travellers during this period also stimulated a nascent tourist industry. ‘The mildness of the air, the agreeableness of the situation, and the respectability of its inhabitants render Penzance particularly inviting to residence;
and, with regard to invalids, it may justly be considered as the Montpelier of England,’ noted Dr W G Maton in 1794 and a highly influential Guide to Mount’s Bay published in 1816 by a local physician gave Penzance a national reputation for its healthy situation.

Before the mid 19th century, however, numbers of visitors were small and tourism had relatively little effect on the wealth, economy and development of the town. The creation of the Promenade in 1843 and the development of sea-bathing and leisure boating marked a significant change in Penzance’s relationship with the sea.

‘The mildness of the air, the agreeableness of the situation . . .’ (Dr Maton, 1794).

Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

Much more significant was the post-war recovery in Penzance’s two major areas of economic activity: the local tin and copper industry grew spectacularly and markets in southern Europe re-opened to pilchard exports. The same period saw an increase in the number, scale and variety of the small manufacturing, industrial and processing trades that typified Penzance. These included shipbuilding and associated industries (including the Matthews Dry Dock built in 1815), Penzance gas works (1830), Holman’s iron foundry (1839), Chyandour foundry (complementing the existing smelting works and tannery on the site), woollen manufacturies, ropewalks, candleworks, timberyards and mills.

There was a particular focus of industrial activity at Wherry Town, around the mouth of the Lariggan River. The much-illustrated Wherry mine with its offshore shaft reached by a timber pier was active from 1778 to 1840 but there were a variety of other industries in the area. These included grain mills, saw mills and ropewalks, with accompanying rows of workers’ cottages. Several serpentine works were established from the mid-century.

As always, however, the principal activity lay in trade through the port and markets, shops and services. As the population grew – it more than doubled between 1815 and 1841 – and the wealth and status of the town increased, the range, quality and number of these shops and services increased; in 1797 there was one bank, by 1844 there were five.

In the 1820s and 30s, the area around Penzance grew as a market gardening centre, producing early potatoes and broccoli, a consequence in part of steam ship links to distant markets, particularly London and Dublin.

Pigot’s Directory of 1841 summarised the wide ranging trade of the town:

In proportion to size and population, few places are more prosperous. Its maritime trade comprises the export of tin, in blocks, ingots and bars, to foreign countries—and coastwise of copper, tin, leather, &c. to London, Liverpool, Bristol and Wales; of oil to Ireland, and pilchards to the Mediterranean. It imports, from St. Petersburgh, tallow, hemp and iron, and timber from Norway, Prussia and America; and coastwise, iron and coal from Wales—corn and flour from Norfolk, Sussex, Hampshire and London—salt and bale-goods from Liverpool—groceries, bale-goods, wines, spirits and porter, by regular traders, from London, Bristol and Plymouth. Nearly two-thirds of the tin
furnished by the mines are exported from hence.’

Penzance Market House, 1838. The west elevation was altered substantially in the 1920s. Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

This period also saw a series of major projects which began to alter the physical shape and character of the town. Around 1811, a new bullock market was built at the northern end of Causewayhead, with a new access route, Clarence Street, created in 1826-7 to provide access. The harbour was extended by 150ft.

The Baptist Chapel, Clarence Street, 1844, designed by the Truro architect Philip Sambell.

A new St Mary’s church was built in 1832, followed in 1838 by the massive Market House. The two iconic buildings which still dominate and define the town’s skyline therefore both date from this critical period, as do other important structures like the Chapel Street Wesleyan Chapel (1814), the Clarence Street Baptist Chapel (1844), St Paul’s church (1843) and the Roman Catholic church (1847). A particularly significant addition for Penzance’s later character was the Promenade and sea wall built in 1843.

St Mary’s Church, 1832.

The commercial core of the town around Green Market, Market Place and Queen’s Square, was largely rebuilt at about this time, with a marked increase in better quality shops. The stuccoed buildings of the period still dominate the area, but it is the contemporary buildings in and around Chapel Street which are best known, particularly the Egyptian House (1835-6) and the front elevation of the Union Hotel (c1835). There were other hotels: the Western Hotel in Clarence Street and Marine Hotel on what would become the Promenade were both in existence by 1841. The town leats were reconstructed and decorative pumps and fountains placed around the town; the granite slab paving of the streets was begun about 1826 or 1827.
While successful merchants built large houses and country estates in the fields around the town (for example York House, Penare House, Ponsandane and Larigan), Regency-style stuccoed terraces and squares were constructed on the fringes of the built-up area, particularly west of Chapel Street, to house the burgeoning middle classes. There were also fashionable visitors hoping to improve their health, although the influence of tourism at this period has sometimes been exaggerated. Marine Terrace was built close behind the shore and initially occupied by masons, carpenters and small tradesmen rather than visitors; a local resident recalled in 1878 that ‘the idea of lodging houses in such a locality would at that time have been considered absurd.’

Penzance continued to be prominent as a centre of learning and literature, with the founding of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall (1814), Penzance (now Morrab) Library (1818), Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society (1839) and the Penzance School of Art (1852).

This period of change culminated in a huge expansion of the harbour in 1845-8. This saw the building of the Albert Pier, extension of the South Pier and improvement or new provision of wharves, docks and warehousing, (including the prominent Abbey Warehouse). These developments were partly in anticipation of the arrival of the railway, which had been talked about since the 1830s but eventually arrived in 1852. The through link to London and the rest of the country was finished in 1859.
'The zenith of prosperity'

The opening of the railway acted as a catalyst for a new scale of tourism - the Queen’s Hotel, the first large hotel in the town, was built in 1861 - but also important was the trade in flowers, fruit and early vegetables, several thousand tons of which could now be shipped to lucrative markets in London and the industrial north each spring. The trade was vastly increased by the development of the early spring flower industry of Scilly from 1879 onwards. A new industry of basket making was also stimulated, with 16 basket manufacturers in and around Penzance producing some 100,000 baskets a year by 1883.

Industrial and commercial enterprise reached the greatest range of activities, number of establishments and scale of building at this time. Although still dominated by established industries - shipbuilding and associated trades, smelting (Trereife and Chyandour were the largest smelting works in Cornwall in the 1880s), tanneries, saw mills, flour milling, ropemaking, foundries - there were also some newer activities. Serpentine working, for example, started about 1851 and by the 1880s there were five separate works in Penzance.

Branwell’s Mill (in fact, a granary), built close to the railhead.

The sheer scale of many of these enterprises was something new to Penzance; the huge granaries still surviving close to Penzance station give some indication of the size of the complexes once also to be found at Wherry Town, the harbour front, Chyandour and Ponsandane. The harbour itself continued to grow: the Albert Pier was extended in 1853 to accommodate railway sidings; in 1861 Trinity House leased a depot (now the National Lighthouse Centre) from where they built Wolf Rock Lighthouse (completed 1871).

Penzance South Pier; the stonework on the seaward side reveals several phases of building and rebuilding.

The final stages of the harbour reconstruction in the 1880s included an extension of Wharf Road to the south - the new quays were created by back filling with mine dirt from the old Wheal Bolton...
near Ludgvan - and the building of the Ross Bridge in 1881, thus forming the Abbey Basin as it is today. A new wet dock was completed in 1884; the dry dock was realigned, also by 1884, and a new Lifeboat Station built on Wharf Road the following year.

The Abbey Basin and warehouse and (left) buildings associated with the dry dock. Photograph: Charles Wimpenny, Cornwall CAM.

The second half of the 19th century saw a wholesale change in the scale and nature of development in Penzance. Private owners had laid out most of the early 19th century stucco terraces, but now a major re-structuring took place under the aegis of the Corporation, particularly the first Borough Surveyor, John Mathews. A new road pattern developed, including the Promenade (1843), Alexandra Road (1865), Taroveor Road (upgraded in the 1860s), Wharf Road and Morrab Road (both 1880).

Distinctive, high quality housing in Morrab Road, laid out in the 1880s.

In some cases these new roads cut brutally across the older topography (bisecting an earlier stucco terrace in the case of North Parade). They provided new areas for development, however, and this was in a markedly different architectural style, dominated by rock-cut granite rather than stucco. The major area of expansion, and a major new element in the town’s morphology, was in the form of grids of tightly packed streets north of Market Jew Street and Taroveor Road (including the area known locally as ‘the Battlefields’) and rising up the slope of Lescudjack Hill to the north east. The west of the town, in contrast, with the exception of Alexandra and Morrab Roads, remained for the most part an area of large houses in large grounds.

Taroveor Road, an improved inner distribution route of the 1860s.
Below: imposing Italianate design and granite ashlar on new municipal and public buildings of the late 1860s (St John’s Hall).
This period also saw large-scale provision and refurbishment of public buildings, schools and churches, including the Municipal Buildings, now St John’s Hall, the rebuilt Wesleyan Chapel in Chapel Street and Penlee House (all by John Matthews), St John’s church, the Art School and Library and the Grammar Schools (now Humphrey Davy School). The former workhouse was transformed into a hospital in 1873 and the railway station rebuilt in 1880. Public parks and gardens were laid out (in part through private patronage by locally prominent families, especially the Bolithos), and a new cemetery created (1854/1886). Penzance became a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1871, with St Mary’s as the parish church.

Population statistics reflect Penzance’s rise during the 19th century to what local historian P A S Pool called the ‘zenith of prosperity’. In 1801 the town had had a population of 3,380 living in 694 houses (already larger than many Cornish towns of the day). By 1831 this had almost doubled, reaching 6,550. By 1881 it had near doubled again to 12,400 and reached a peak of 13,300 in 1911.

The 20th century

Some development continued beyond 1900 (including extensions to the Battlefields), but by the early 20th century many of the industries built up and flourishing in the previous 100 years were going into rapid decline. Servicing tin and copper mining had long been a linch-pin of the Penzance economy, but with the progressive closure of Penwith mines in the years up to 1900, associated industries such as foundries and banking, as well as much of the trade of the port, also declined. The great flour mills that had dominated the eastern and western approaches to Penzance closed in the 1900s and the tin smelter at Chyandour, the last working smelter in Cornwall, closed in 1912.

At the same time, Penzance remained a market centre for a large hinterland; wealthy citizens continued to build large
houses and some shops were rebuilt on a larger scale in the town centre. The harbour experienced an important (although ultimately temporary) revitalisation between about 1900 and the 1930s based on exports of china clay and granite and the development of the Coast Lines steamer company. The dry dock (acquired by Holman’s in 1900) prospered, with new sheds built about 1934. Decline was in many ways scarcely apparent, but population in the town had started to decrease and the total of 11,300 in 1931 was smaller than it had been 50 years earlier.

In 1934 the borough of Penzance was enlarged to take in Gulval Churchtown, Heamoor, Tolcarne, Paul Churchtown, Newlyn and Mousehole. The new ‘Greater Penzance’ had almost double the population of the old town, and began a massive programme of slum clearance and municipal housing provision. Estates were constructed at The Weeths, Parc Wartha, Penalverne, Treneere and Alverton. The clearance of disused industrial buildings, several lime kilns and a shipyard around the Barbican allowed the creation of the formal St Anthony’s Gardens to accompany the early 20th century Sailors Mission. This period also saw development of substantial estates of private housing west of the town, around Lariggan.

Other areas close to the Promenade also developed as leisure and tourism facilities. The Alexandra Grounds, donated by the Bolitho family, were opened in 1903, with the ornate Pavilion added in 1911. Further west, the Bedford Bolitho and Richard Bolitho gardens were created in 1916.

The inter-war period brought a major surge in tourism, based on both rail travel and rising private car ownership. The topographical writer J H Wade described Penzance in 1928 as the ‘Cannes of the Cornish Riviera . . . the one place in the Duchy which approximates to the typical seaside resort’. The revamped sea-front area was one of the delights that Penzance offered, parts of it taking on the somewhat rakish character of the 1930s Riviera depicted in Great Western Railway posters and symbolised in the flowing concrete lines of the Jubilee Pool of 1935 and nearby art deco Yacht Inn.
The striking triangular plan and European-inspired, Art Deco design of the Jubilee Pool (1935) make it a major landmark. Claimed as the largest open-air seawater tidal swimming pool still in use in the UK, it is certainly one of the finest surviving structures of its type.

Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

The later 20th century saw the development of existing public services within the town, including further expansion of West Cornwall Hospital, the creation of Penwith District Council offices at York House and the building of large government offices. A large car park was created on the northern portion of the former harbour basin, infilled in the 1950s. In 1964 a heliport was opened on Eastern Green, the first to be located outside London, and trading estates developed east of the town at Eastern Green and Long Rock. Extensive new railway yards were built in the 1970s. A very significant change to the topography and setting of the town came with the creation of the by-pass A30 distributor road in the 1980s.

Within the town there was considerable demolition and rebuilding on the south side of Market Jew Street and clearance of the gasworks and other structures along Wharf Road. Part of the gasworks site was redeveloped in the late 1990s as the substantial Wharfside Shopping Centre, creating a significant increase in retail space and making a direct link between the harbour car park and Market Jew Street.
4 Archaeological potential

Archaeology is potentially a rich asset for Penzance. There is much about the town’s history which is obscure and archaeology is the only way in which certain key aspects of its historic development and character can be better understood. Archaeology can also make a significant contribution in cultural and economic terms: remains of the past have important potential for education, tourism and leisure, as well as in terms of local pride and sense of place.

It should be emphasised that ‘archaeology’ does not refer solely to buried remains. Information on the historical sequences embodied in standing buildings and other ‘above ground’ features could be extremely valuable and a building survey of the town would be likely to yield significant new information.

Quay Street: this area has potential for archaeological remains ranging from the earliest fishing settlement to 19th century industrial activity and housing.

Opportunities for investigation and recording should be sought when buildings are refurbished or undergo substantial alteration. Figure 5 indicates the survival of historic fabric which may offer potential for archaeological investigation. In the particular context of Penzance, there is also significant archaeological potential in foreshore and intertidal structures and palaeoenvironmental deposits.

Further documentary research is likely to yield valuable data. This area of study, together with participation in building survey, could provide a challenging and worthwhile avenue for involvement by local people wishing to investigate aspects of their heritage.

Rained buildings at Chyandour. Sites such as this may provide detailed information on the activities which created Penzance’s past prosperity and shaped its present character.

Archaeological remains are an important and non-renewable resource and as such are protected by national and local planning legislation. One component of future investigation of both buried archaeological remains and standing buildings may be through more extensive targeted implementation of PPG 15 and PPG 16 legislation as part of the development control process.

Indicators of archaeological potential

Figure 6 indicates the potential extent of buried archaeological remains, although it must be emphasised that this depiction of potential is indicative, not definitive, and future archaeological investigation and research will test and refine its value.

An understanding of potential is broadly derived from the historic extent of the settlement itself. In simple terms, any location within the area developed up to the early 20th century (as represented on
the 2nd edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1908; Fig. 2) is regarded as having potential for standing or buried archaeological features. The historic core of the settlement is of particular archaeological interest and sensitivity in that deposits are likely to provide valuable information on its early form and development. Urban archaeological remains are likely to be more complex in such areas.

Traces of the former Wherry Mine are likely to survive offshore close to Larring Rocks. Buried peat deposits, potentially holding evidence of past environments, are known from various points around the shoreline of Mount's Bay.

Figure 6 identifies the limited number of archaeological interventions known to have taken place in Penzance. These are:

- 1995 Penzance cricket ground: archaeological evaluation (AC Archaeology)
- 1997 Penzance Gasworks: archaeological assessment & watching brief (Cornwall Archaeological Unit)
- 1999 Coinagehall Street: watching brief (Cornwall Archaeological Unit)

The investigations in the historic core of Penzance - the gasworks and laundry sites and Coinagehall Street - found almost no archaeological deposits predating extensive 19th and 20th century clearance and redevelopment of these areas. Work on the site of a proposed sports hall at the cricket ground, however, identified important archaeological deposits dating from the later prehistoric, early Roman and subsequent periods.

Figure 6 also shows sites and areas of known historic significance; that is, those where the former presence of a significant structure or feature can be identified from historic maps or documentary sources but where these do not now survive above ground. It also records the approximate location of several casual artefact finds.

NB. Overviews of the archaeological potential of the various ‘character areas’ within the town are presented in section 5.
5 Present settlement character

Overall settlement character

Physical topography and settlement form
From its original focus at the seaward end of the headland, Penzance grew in a series of planned developments from the harbour to a market-place higher on the ridge and out along the main eastern approach (Market Jew Street). As a result, all the principal roads of the town slope, either up to the central market area, or in the case of Causewayhead, down to it. The exceptions are the relatively late shoreline route along Wharf Road and the Promenade. Secondary roads have been laid out sometimes along contours, sometimes against them, often with many changes in direction, slope and width as development opportunities presented themselves in the 19th century expansion of the town.

The ridge followed by Chapel Street separates the town into two distinct halves, with the market developing at a level point between the two. To the north east is the commercial, working town, where the land slopes northwards and is covered with tight grids of streets, where the built environment and hard landscaping predominate, but culminating in a crowning ridge of ornamental trees, especially around Lescudjack Hill. To the south west is a leafy, genteel residential and resort area, more open and spacious, on a gently sloping valley side running down to the Lariggan stream and the sea. Here the built environment is seen from a distance as set within a dominant canopy of trees.

Penzance from the east, 2001. There is a clear contrast between the tight grain of the townscape in the north-eastern part of the town and the more open and leafy residential area to the south west (CCC Historic Environment Service ACS 5385).
Within the town the steep slopes down to the harbour exacerbate the sense of separation between the commercial core and the working harbour area, although at the same time creating substantial visual interest. The natural topography provides glimpses and views between buildings and along streets towards Mount’s Bay and also produces a ‘stepping’ of buildings down to the harbour, a strong characteristic of the town.

The overall shape of the core area is still that set by the medieval period - an offset, L-shape wrapped around the shoreline and later harbour area, with shorter and later-developed spurs to the west and north. Its lop-sided form has always been a characteristic of Penzance; as the ‘end of the line’ for roads, rail and ships, the major direction of movement has always been along the single route to the east; routes westward to its hinterland were more numerous but of less individual significance. There has been a continuous trend eastwards of much of the economic activity in the town – Market Jew Street is itself a medieval response to this pull. The creation of the enlarged harbour and the railway terminus moved activity in the harbour to the east end of town in the 1850s, and Chyandour – Ponsandane was the major late 19th century industrial area.

The principal alteration to the historic shape of the town since its final form in the 1880s (apart from the opportunistic siting of 1930s housing estates) has been the infilling of part of the harbour area. In the later 20th century the pull of the major car park here (particularly with the building of the Wharfside development) has emphasised the eastward drag of activity in the town, causing a shift of the retail focus down Market Jew Street. Development of supermarkets, garages, trading estates, railway yards and the heliport in Eastern Green and Long Rock have further emphasised this movement, a process that it may now be appropriate to manage and, in the particular case of retail development, perhaps reverse in order to maintain the vitality of the central area.

The form of the town is based on the loosely cruciform plan of its main roads. The central hub of the market area is connected by the four principal streets leading out of it to the ancient harbour to the south (Chapel Street), major routes to the east (Market Jew Street) and local markets and countryside to the north (Causewayhead) and west (Alverton.
Street). Around this historic core is the early 19th century development of an inner zone of neat, stuccoed terraces only incidentally related to the ancient street pattern, and sited more to take advantage of picturesque views.

The working harbour, now used for a mix of commercial and leisure marine activity.

Below: Morrab Gardens, a key element in the 'green' character of western Penzance. Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

Of the 'quadrants' or quarters around the core, the harbour area is the most distinct. This area has perhaps seen most change in the town and today has no clear focus. Even here, however, the wholesale demolition of much of the historic fabric has not altered the overall shape of the town, and, crucially, the working harbour is retained.

The main residential quarters to north-east and south-west shared similar patterns of development (fields turned into large houses and gardens, followed by piecemeal development of residential streets) but have turned out differently in detail. The eastern area, mid to late 19th century in date, has some of the character of a tightly-packed industrial town. In contrast, to the west, around Penlee House and Morrab Gardens, trees, gardens and parkland are more evident, giving a spacious and genteel feel to the area.

Robust 'industrial' housing in High Street.

The fourth quadrant, north-west of the market area, differs from other residential areas because here large houses, gardens and intervening fields restricted development up to the edge of the central core until the early 20th century. For this reason there is the apparent anomaly of a large 1930s housing estate virtually in the town centre. Here also are the hospital, schools, local authority offices, playing fields and other public facilities, which might otherwise have developed at more significant distances from the town centre.

The new road circulation system created over the course of the 19th century (Clarence Street, the Promenade,
Taroveor Road, Alexandra Road, Morrab Road, Wharf Road) to some extent ties these disparate areas together. It remains the principal distribution network within the town.

Outside the immediate scope of this report is an outer zone of greenery and leisure-based land-use (football and rugby grounds, boating lake, playing fields), mixed with early-mid 20th century schools and housing estates. Penzance was throughout much of the 20th century a vigorous and enlightened borough committed since 1916 to public housing (more especially after expansion in 1934), with an extensive slum clearance programme around the older harbour-side areas. Ringing the town centre on all sides, the early estates are spacious, well designed and well built, and compare very favourably (architecturally) with contemporary and more recent estates elsewhere.

**Survival of standing historic fabric**

Because of the limited impact of 20th century traffic engineering on Penzance, the effectiveness of the 19th century road system and in particular because the town was by-passed in the 1980s, the historic fabric and topography of the town has survived well, especially when compared with other large Cornish towns such as St Austell, Truro and Bodmin.

The greatest loss of historic fabric has been through 1930s slum clearance, concentrated in the small, ancient streets around Quay Street and the 17th and 18th century streets linking the town centre with the foreshore, especially New Town Lane and Jennings Lane; New Street and Queen Street have been affected to a lesser degree. The harbour side continued until the 1970s to have industrial and warehousing buildings hard against the quay line, the streets filled with the remnants of the 19th century courtyard housing. Virtually all of this north of the Ross Bridge was cleared apart from the old Lifeboat house and a single warehouse; Wharf Road and the streets leading off it have survived as topographical features, but have limited integrity as historic streetscape.

**Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.**

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**The Mount’s Bay Inn, Wherry Town, the only surviving pre-20th century building in what was formerly an important industrial area.**

The other principal areas of loss have been in the two main industrial areas, at Chyandour, where residential, service and office buildings survive, but no longer the smelter, foundry and tannery they served, and at Wherry Town, where commercial uses and forms survive, even though the mills and serpentine works have gone. Only the Mount’s Bay Inn survives of the workers’ cottage rows that stood here until swept away by storms in 1962.

The chronology of survival elsewhere in the town closely follows the pattern of...
historical development, with the major exception that, considering its origins and history as a fairly substantial medieval borough and market town, remarkably little survives in Penzance that is certainly older than the 17th century. This may in part be due to the effects of the Spanish raid of 1595, although the scale of destruction was almost certainly heartily exaggerated at the time. Little enough of this period survives in any Cornish town and, in Penzance, the paucity of surviving buildings is much more a reflection of ever growing wealth and continuous redevelopment. What early fabric does survive is a random scatter, both in the core areas and in the outer streets where old farms have been absorbed (Coombe Cottage, Hawks Farm).

Overall, the surviving fabric reflects Penzance’s historic diversity of economic and social activity and quality of built environment. There is still a vast range of buildings associated with the port and transport functions (the harbour structure itself with its fittings, such as capstans, bollards, lighthouse; the Custom House, weigh house, lighthouse depot and dry dock). Many historic railway structures survive, including the station and rails and sheds on Albert Pier. Throughout the town is a whole range of workshops, warehouses and storage buildings associated with small-scale manufacture, commercial warehousing, shops and trade. These are concentrated particularly in Wharf Road (for example, the so-called Branwells Mill, in fact a granary), Bread Street and the rear of Causewayhead.

Given the importance of shops, markets and commerce to the town, it is regrettable that relatively few good shop fronts survive in the key market area or Market Jew Street; the best groups (and these are very good) are mostly in the secondary commercial areas like Causewayhead and Chapel Street. Contrasting with the rather bland, plain stuccoed buildings in the core area (a result of the rebuilding of the boom years of 1820-50) is a good sequence of architecturally interesting late 19th century commercial buildings, especially the banks, the Post Office and various commercial premises in Causewayhead, and on the Terrace in Market Jew Street.

Tourism, recreational and cultural structures dominate the sea front - the Queen’s Hotel, Pavilion, Promenade, Yacht Inn, Jubilee Pool, for example - but are also prominent in other streets: the Union Hotel and theatre in Chapel Street, School of Art in Morrab Road and Savoy Cinema of 1912 in Causewayhead. Public parks and gardens of the 19th and early 20th centuries, with their attendant built structures, are a major feature of Penzance.

Religious and educational buildings are numerous, and are important as a group as
significant elements in the streetscape, the roofscape and the wider landscape of the town. Buildings from the mid 19th century boom predominate, whether the rebuilding of earlier structures (St Mary’s church, Chapel Street Methodist church) or the provision of new structures for Anglicans, Nonconformists and Roman Catholics. There are schools dating from the 1870s onwards at Queen Street, Redinnick, Taroveor Road, Chapel Street, and Coombe Road, while civic institutions are represented by the Municipal Buildings (St John’s Hall), Market House, West Cornwall Hospital and town cemetery.

Morrab Terrace: genteel stuccoed terraces are one of Penzance’s defining character elements . . .

Penzance is well known for its significant range and quality of historic residential buildings. Chapel Street, dominated as it is by grandly classical houses, is particularly important in this respect, but the wider presence of elegant, usually stuccoed terraces of middle class shopkeepers, ship’s captains and tradesmen symbolises Penzance for many people, visitors and residents alike. These contrast with humbler granite-built rows in tightly packed streets in other areas of the town.

Sometimes less easy to pinpoint in terms of social origins are the more substantial, granite-built late 19th century terraces, with bay windows and gables, which predominate in the outer grids of streets, and along Morrab and Alexandra Roads.

Scattered amongst all, and absorbed by the spreading town, are the suburban villas and gardens of the urban elite: Penlee House and Park and Morrab House and Gardens are now two of the greatest assets possessed by the town.

. . . as are the granite-fronted terraces which characterise later 19th century housing (Tolver Road).

Associated with the improvement of public facilities is a wide range of surviving street ephemera and small structures crucial to the character of the town. These include the cattle market, former reservoir, dated water spouts, boundary stones, the Promenade itself, statues and fountains, railings, paving and walls; the Terrace in Market Jew Street is one of the town’s most distinctive features.

Strikingly distinctive scored granite paving on the Terrace, Market Jew Street.
Architecture, materials and detail
The character of the best buildings in Penzance is rarely to do with outstanding intrinsic architectural qualities, but more with their landscape and topographical value, position in the streetscape and local attachment and sentiment. Even St Mary’s church and the old Market House came in for severe criticism by contemporaries when rebuilt in the 1830s.

There are certainly buildings of great individual style (the Egyptian House stands out), but by and large the architectural coinage of Penzance is the aggregate of streetscape, particularly the prevalence of the age of ‘good taste’ and architectural propriety over gaudy or gauche facades.

Fine townscapes: Chapel Street (above; photograph Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM); Green Market, south side (below).

One of the continuing themes is the quality of the building produced by local architects, very often working in conjunction with or directly for the municipal authorities. Men such as John Pope Vibert (who supervised the building of the Market House and much of the harbour), John Matthews (the first Borough Surveyor), F G Drewitt and Oliver Caldwell for the most part produced vaguely conformist buildings following stuccoed or granite classical models, turning to freer Italianate and Renaissance styles as the 19th century progressed and to neo-classical flatness in the early 20th century.

The result is a limited but locally distinctive range of styles and details. The major intrusions into this model in the late 19th century came from outsiders, particularly James Hicks of Redruth and Silvanus Trevail of Truro, but still with a recognisably Cornish and locally distinctive handling of materials and design.

The Post Office (1883), Market Jew Street, possibly by James Hicks.

From the mid 20th century most development was in the hands of large national companies or government agencies, using ‘in-house’ or commercial architects. For the most part, these designers and their clients failed to
understand or respond to local character. The results are evident in much of the redevelopment in Market Jew Street, in the Penlowarth ‘tower block’, the telephone exchange and elsewhere.

Later 20th century developments in Market Jew Street have not generally enhanced character.

None of the different available rocks in the immediate Penzance area make for easily dressed building stone. Many Penzance buildings are therefore built, at least in part, of rubble derived from the local Devonian sedimentary rocks or basaltic intrusions, coursed or randomly laid. This is often exposed in rear and flank elevations of buildings of all ages. Most of the granite used before the mid 19th century was moorstone, brought down from the Penwith uplands, which is easily identified by its rounded, smooth textures and pink-brown colour.

The brick ‘Rotterdam buildings’, Chapel Street.

Architectural propriety and impressiveness was achieved by the use of ‘imported’ materials (including granite) or the liberal application of stucco. Penzance thus shares with many other port towns of Cornwall a greater variety of building materials than its hinterland. Particularly striking is the series of very impressive early-mid 18th century brick-built buildings throughout the town; the striking group in Chapel Street was once known as ‘Rotterdam Buildings’, by tradition because built from the proceeds of privateering against Dutch ships, more probably because built with imported Dutch bricks. In the early-mid 18th century this was a high status building material, made even more so in Cornwall because of the difficulty in obtaining it. Even more appropriately, brick was only practicably available in port towns like Penzance, so that its use in this one restricted area is uniquely appropriate, a distinctive element in Penzance’s history and townscape, a unique symbol of its 18th century wealth and emergence as a mercantile, cultural and social centre. Dressed granite was used for quoins, lintels and other architectural details.

Regent Terrace.

Because it was an expensive, status material at the time, polite buildings in Penzance from at least the late 17th century were fronted in dressed granite or elvan (for example, Nancealverne). Many of the best individual buildings continued to be so fronted even when most contemporary buildings in the early 19th century were stuccoed, not least the Market House of 1836.
The stuccoed streets and terraces of early 19th century Penzance are one of its principal features – the prevalence of the style coinciding with the very time that Penzance saw one of its biggest building booms. At the same time, commercial quarrying and dressing of the locally available granite was not on a sufficient scale to meet the demands of the very rapidly expanding town.

Such architecture was considered at the time to be appropriately gay and seaside in character, as well as suitably classical and ‘elegant’. The recent taste for removing stucco was lamented by architectural historian Peter Laws as early as 1973: ‘Stucco is the proper external finish for buildings of this period, and it is a pity to see it being removed to expose the rough rubble walling, a practice that is becoming all too prevalent.’ This tendency has led to a widespread, but not irreversible, loss of texture, colour, and character, and conflicts with the genuinely distinctive use of granite in the town’s architecture.

Within the commercial core, and particularly in the area around the Market Place where virtually all the shops in the town were concentrated until the early 20th century, almost continuous rebuilding took place throughout the 19th century. The result is a great diversity of materials and architectural detailing; there are just one or two buildings in Queen Street or Alverton Street that survive from before the first great rebuilding of this area in the early 19th century. Deceptively small, the use of good quality stone indicates that in their day these were substantial properties.

The elegant classical Market House of 1836 (Lloyds TSB) the symbol of the commercial heart of the town, still has Lamorna granite almost at a stroke changed the face of building in Penzance. After this date, little was built outside the commercial core of Penzance that was not of granite, usually with varied dressed detail. The rock-faced granite terraces and public buildings of west and north Penzance, usually with subtle differences in colours and types of rock used for architectural details, are as much part of the character of the town as the stuccoed inner residential streets. Indeed, with similar examples in Newlyn and St Ives, these form a distinct west Penwith element in Cornish building.
around it many contemporary, simple stuccoed buildings, together with some of the stronger forms and wilder materials of the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Far more examples of the latter are to be found in what were at the time the secondary, or newly expanding, shopping streets in Green Market, Queen’s Square, Causewayhead, and the Terrace in Market Jew Street. These are the quirky buildings of commercial advertising, competition and excess, with curlicues and brightly coloured materials, terracotta and glazed tiles and bricks, and timber and stone shop fronts with iron and polished granite columns.

A good 20th century shopfront in Causewayhead.

The good shop fronts that survive tend to be associated with these later 19th century buildings (some earlier, small timber shop fronts are an added attraction of Chapel Street), or else are good early-mid 20th century examples (Ann Marie’s tearooms in Causewayhead).

One of the notable features of shops in the town is the survival of former names in the mosaic-paved entranceways; that of the former Cryséde shop in Queen’s Square is of more than local significance.

Street and rooftops in the Battlefields.

Roofs throughout the town are of Cornish slate; a surprising amount is still wet-laid. The big red brick stacks on these roofs are a feature of much of the town, and tend to be highly visible because the sloping topography makes the local rooftops more visible.

There are extensive areas of traditional paving throughout the town and a long tradition of their use: there are 17th century records of the paving of Causewayhead and Abbey Slip. John Pope Vibert was responsible for starting a programme of paving with granite in the 1820s. The combination of pattern scored granite slabs, granite steps, rubble walling and cast iron railings makes the Terrace a particularly attractive element of the streetscape. At the junction of the Terrace with the market area is a surviving area of older moorstone setts. Their rounded texture and pink colour contrasts tellingly with the rough, machine-cut grey imported granite setts which appeared in the town in recent years. Not at all appropriate are the widely used brown or grey concrete paviers; the deadening effect they can have in an historic streetscape is seen most noticeably in Causewayhead.
Historic surfacing: granite setts on South Pier and (below) highly distinctive granite slabs in North Parade (west).

The harbour area, particularly the piers, has extensive areas of large granite paving sets and blocks of a uniquely robust quality. On the Albert Pier these are set with the remains of an original mid 19th century iron tramway.

Cobble and moorstone setts abound in rear alleys off the central area, sometimes marking cart tracks (as in Parchment Lane off Chapel Street). The roughly metalled surfaces of back lanes (for instance, that between Causewayhead and Clarence Street) are probably the original mid 19th century surfacing, and a remarkable survival in an urban context.

**Streetscapes and views**

The sloping topography and dramatic setting of Penzance mean that views and vistas are key elements of townscape character, throughout much of the town. Some are certainly ‘strategic views’ which could be recognised by policy and designation. Examples include the wider vistas that centre on the dome of the Market House or on St Mary’s church and its relationship with the harbour and the sea, or those that emphasise the sweeping interplay of the whole town with the bay and wider landscape. Principal views within the townscape are focused on the Market House, along Market Jew Street and Alverton Street, or along the curving length of Chapel Street; these can bear comparison with any streetscapes in the country.
Glimpses of the sea and the harbour contribute a significant impression of space within the town, while the lanes that run throughout Penzance provide a contrasting small scale of views and tantalising glimpses.

Perhaps truly unique in the Cornish context is the impact of aerial views of Penzance: tens of thousands of visitors to the Scillies are familiar with the views from above Penzance, where the shapes and outlines of the Promenade, harbour and Jubilee Pool, and the dominance of the central ridge with St Mary’s church are more prominent than individual buildings.

The harbour, Jubilee Pool and St Mary’s church stand out in views from the air (CCC Historic Environment Service, ACS 5672).
The character areas

Understanding character

The CSUS investigation, in addition to identifying the broad elements of settlement character that define Penzance as a whole, identified nine distinct character areas within the town’s historic (pre-1907) urban extent (see below; Fig 7 and character area summary sheets 1-9). These character areas are differentiated from each other by their varied historic origins, functions and resultant urban topography, by the processes of change which have affected each subsequently (indicated, for example, by the relative completeness of historic fabric, or significant changes in use and status) and the extent to which these elements and processes are evident in the current townscape. In simple terms, each character area may be said to have its own individual ‘biography’ which has determined its present character.

Taken with the assessment of overall settlement character, the nine character areas offer a means of understanding the past and the present. In turn, that understanding provides the basis for a positive approach to planning future change which will maintain and reinforce the historic character and individuality of each area and the town as a whole - sustainable local distinctiveness.

1. The town centre

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheets 1a – 1e)

This large area is fundamentally the late medieval borough, Penzance as it was before the massive expansion and structural changes of the 19th and 20th centuries. The busy skyline of Chapel Street and Market Jew Street, wrapping around the harbour, is one of the key images of Penzance.

Bustling with people and traffic, occasional street fairs and festivals, this area retains the traditional mixed uses of an historic town - commercial, cultural, administrative and residential.

In the core area are gathered many of the principal buildings of the town, commercial, municipal, residential and religious. There is a wide diversity of styles, materials, date and quality to match.

Within this overall unity there is considerable diversity of scale, use and atmosphere. While it has a broad overall unity based on its primacy within the town, it also divides naturally into a number of component parts:

1a. The market core
1b. Market Jew Street
1c. Chapel Street
1d. Causewayhead
1e. The back streets

1a. The market core

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 1a)

The busy historic commercial and market focus and the meeting and crossing point of the town’s main streets. It is made up of several linked strongly enclosed spaces with a diverse collection of important historic commercial and public buildings.

(Alverton Street, Green Market, Queens Square, Princes Street, junction of Bread Street and Causewayhead, Market Place).

This, despite the alternative historic ‘pull’ of the harbour and the attractions of Chapel Street, is the true heart of Penzance. It is the meeting and crossing point of the town’s main streets, the focus of movement and of many of the most significant views and streetscapes in the town. It is made up of a sequence of apparently non-aligned spaces: Market Place, Queen’s Square, lower Causewayhead and Green Market, with Alverton Street as an extension to the
latter. These are all to some degree spaces created by the piecemeal infilling of the original large, triangular medieval market area. Alignments and plots have historically seen continuous change, particularly with road alterations.

Because of the way it developed, this is one of the more permeable parts of the town, with the spaces well connected by footways, back lanes and alleys. The busy main spaces, however, are also heavily given over to traffic, so that their spatial qualities are not always appreciated. Pedestrians are often confined on narrow pavements. In the back streets and cleared rear plots are most of the town’s formal parking spaces away from the Wharfside car park.

The buildings here are large, mostly of the mid-late 19th century. The rather bland plain stuccoed commercial buildings (a result of the rebuilding of the boom years of 1820-50) form a continuous and generally flat frontage enclosing and framing the spaces. There are exceptions: in addition to the remarkable survival of some 17th-18th century buildings, especially in Queen’s Square and Alverton Street, the area is also peppered with some of the most varied and interesting of the later 19th - early 20th century buildings in the town, with an eclectic range of often colourful materials and detailing. Good examples include the White Lion Hotel, Threshers, Coco’s delicatessen (27 Market Place) opposite the Market House, the HSBC bank in Green Market and Holland & Barrett (the former Devon and Cornwall Bank, by James Hicks). These buildings add contrast and a sculptural, three-dimensional depth to the street frontages and a remarkable liveliness to the skyline; the rooftop belvederes around Queen’s Square are a particular feature. The quality of these buildings is reflected in the fact that many of them are listed.

This core area incorporates some large, civic buildings, not least the classical centrepiece of the town, the Market House. Appropriately, given the level of commercial activity here, it is the re-built Lloyds Bank facade of 1925 which faces into this area. Standing, uniquely for Penzance, within the width of the street, the Market House with its dome dominates the area, as it does the whole town, acting as the focus of the various disparate spaces in the centre and as a transition from one area to the next.

The grandly Italianate St John’s Hall (and Geological Museum) with its railed forecourt and beautifully decorated lamp standards closes this area in a similar way at the west end of Alverton Street. These grand public buildings were once accompanied by others: an equally grand fish market once stood in Princes Street to match the impressive Masonic Lodge and there was a well designed rendered early 20th century telephone exchange in New Street.

The looming bulk of the 1960s telephone exchange in Princes Street, on the other hand, is a sad insertion into Penzance’s skyline so close to the Market House dome; so too is the DHSS building which replaced the town’s first purpose built hotel, the Western, on the corner of Clarence Street and Alverton Street, and the Post Office sorting office nearby. And yet these buildings in some way maintain the function and impact of the earlier...
municipal buildings, albeit in coarser language.

The poor transitions to Clarence Street and Causewayhead – Bread Street, in terms of some of the later 20th century corner buildings and the road junction and streetscape treatments, are the more noticeable given the quality of the older buildings on the corners of the Market Place (HSBC, Coco’s delicatessen), which have rounded facades and entrances on the corners, and the extensive and strikingly detailed areas of surviving historic granite setts and slab paving in the main spaces (Market Place, Green Market and Queen’s Square) and back alleys.

Post-war buildings on the corner of Market Place and Causewayhead contrast strongly with the distinctiveness, character and quality of the historic buildings in this area.

Shops here today tend to be local, specialist secondary retail, banking and estate agents, and public houses, with stylish coffee shops, bars and restaurants, especially around the Market House. The relatively high turnover of occupiers and small scale of operation means that many of the buildings are not generally in good condition. There are also some poor 20th century alterations and a disappointing lack of good shop fronts (historic or modern); the historic and streetscape value of the buildings is not always recognised.

Alverton Street is included in this central area because, despite its linear form, it is visually and functionally strongly linked to Green Market. Historically it has been part of the market area and was the focus of the town’s medieval fairs. Framed by the twin end-stops of the Market House and St John’s Hall it has a similar sense of enclosure, dominated by traffic and with no obvious pausing place. The roundabout near St John’s Hall marks the transition from the main commercial focus of Penzance: the streetscape to the west immediately becomes suburban. This is an historic division, not just a function of modern traffic engineering, for the width of Alverton Road is likely to fossilise a medieval fairground. So close to the centre, within sight of the Market House dome, this change in character is a reflection of the lopsided form of the historic town.

The buildings in Alverton Street are less dominantly associated with 19th and 20th century commercial uses than those in Green Market and it contains many good 17th-18th century survivals. Of particular note is the fine 18th century Alverne House, listed Grade II*, with its granite face set back and perhaps indicating the original width of the street. Buildings around the junction of Clarence Street and Morrab Road reflect the later, rather brutal, insertion of both these streets into the older framework.

Overall, this is an area of strong movement and activity, where people, buses, taxis and informally parked cars all meet, particularly in Green Market. The lower end of Causewayhead is often busy with buskers, campaign groups and stalls. Alverton Street is the collecting and starting point for the Golowan processions, emphasising its continuing role as part of the central, formal focus of the town.

Archaeological potential

As the heart of the later medieval town there is potential here for both buried deposits and for standing fabric. Evidence may survive for long sequences of
building remains and of the former market space and related structures. The rear portions of plots may retain the remains of outhouses, workshops, rubbish pits and other ancillary activities but because of the extent of infilling of the former market space some may also retain evidence of its former extent. The market area was itself the focus for significant public structures such as market buildings, the guildhall and coinage hall, gaols and water supply. This area may also hold evidence of early medieval activity predating the establishment of the town.

1b. Market Jew Street

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 1b)

A late medieval expansion from the market core, this is now Penzance’s main shopping street, close to the main car park and bus and railway stations. It has striking townscape qualities dominated by the porticoed façade of the Market House at the head of the rising street.

This is Penzance’s main shopping street and commercial focus with most of the larger shops and almost all the national multiples. Its proximity to the station and main car park and visibility to arriving traffic means that it is the place where most visitors go first. Even out of the tourist season it is thronged, the press of people made more insistent by the lack of space.

Strong topography, vistas and engineering dominate over the built detail – the overriding impact is made by the slope, the Terrace, views over the sea and, primarily, up the curving hill to the Humphrey Davy statue and the porticoed and domed Market House at the head of the widening street.

The development in the early 20th century of larger stores along Market Jew Street brought a shift in the focus of commercial activity away from the market core. This trend has been reinforced by the late 20th century Wharfside development, a successful and visually fairly modest insertion into the streetscape of a major retail development which also provides a link with the town’s principal car park below in Wharf Road.

There is an historical contrast between the lower, eastern end of the street and the main modern shopping area further up the hill; this is made more noticeable because the pronounced bend in the street means the two ends are not inter-visible. At the lower end, uses and building types merge with those associated with the mid-late 19th century harbour and railway developments. There are occasional reminders in this area of the domestic scale and character the street maintained until the late 19th century (for example, no. 83), and the north side of the road in particular begins to share in the character of the early 19th century stuccoed residential streets to the north and east.

The Terrace, north side of Market Jew Street. Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

Market Jew Street is also fundamentally different between its north and south sides, a consequence of the tightly constrained topography of this late medieval extension to the ancient town. Plots on the south side are limited in depth by the low cliff above the former shore line and those to the north by the sharp slope; Bread Street, the back lane to properties on the north side of Market Jew Street, is considerably higher again than the frontage buildings. The Terrace
was built in about 1825 as a response to this topography, unique in its scale and impact in a Cornish town and one of the defining elements in the character of the street. It is a raised walkway running the whole length of the northern side, formed as a rationalisation of what was originally a slope across the width of the street. Accessed by several flight of steps and a few ramps (inserted in the later 20th century), there are late 19th century open railings, some good quality street-lamps, but also a plethora of flower basket poles creating some visual clutter and interrupting views to the buildings. The paving is formed of distinctive patterned granite slabs while the original carriage road to the north of the Market House is marked by granite setts.

Post-war buildings on the south side of Market Jew Street.

This contrast between the two sides of the street is partly a function of the difference in height, the resulting isolation of the Terrace above the traffic and the fact that the accessible views look south over to the Bay, but it also derives from the different development histories of the two sides of the street. Because of the availability of rear access from the Wharf Road area and street level front access for deliveries, the south side of the road was much favoured in the 20th century for the development of larger shops. Some significant historic buildings remain, notably the post office, and the white glazed Warrens bakery east of Wharfside, but there has otherwise been considerable loss of historic fabric, with much less continuity of building line and quality of detailing than on the north side. Recent buildings are generally of two or three storeys, rendered or with extensive use of dull, non-traditional cladding materials. A horizontality alien to the historic street scene prevails.

Warrens: glazed brick and an elaborated roofline.

The more limited access for premises on the north side of the street made it less attractive for big multiples, and this has preserved it from loss on anything like the same scale. Buildings on the Terrace are generally set hard to the back of the pavement, three storeys in height, with vertical emphasis, front-facing gables and tall bay windows. Many incorporate good quality shop fronts in a wide range of materials and detailing. The one major mid-late 20th century rebuilding is Barclays Bank, fortunately one of the less insensitive buildings in Penzance of this period.

This area is similar to other Cornish towns in the grid of small lanes and opes that run at right angles to the main road and connect it with the adjoining back lanes, although this apparent permeability is made less easy by the steep slopes, necessitating severe flights of steps on the north side. There are strong visual links...
and views between Market Jew Street and the harbour, but the streets on the south side are unattractive to pedestrians and these routes are under used.

There are undoubted traffic issues which can obscure the visual (and commercial) attractions of the street. The roadway is fairly narrow and, in places, unable to accommodate two lanes of traffic, particularly at busy times when there are a lot of pedestrians trying to use the congested pavement, waiting for buses and crossing the street; this is exacerbated by a high level of casual stopping and parking by road users. The lower end of the street shares not only building types and uses of the wharf-side and traffic interchange area, but also its severe traffic circulation problems.

The traffic-dominated transition to the transport interchange area at the lower, north-east end of Market Jew Street

Archaeological potential
There is potential in this late medieval area of the town for complex sequences of building remains along the street frontages and in rear plots. However, this is an area in which there has been significant engineering and terracing; a watching brief on the Penzance gasworks site extended into the south side of Market Jew Street and found evidence only of 19th century levelling.

1c. Chapel Street
(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 1c)

| An extraordinarily fine historic streetscape, with an assemblage of historic buildings of very high distinction and charm. Formerly one of the main axes of the medieval town, it now presents an air of quiet gentility, underpinned by a range of predominantly ‘quality’ uses. |

Chapel Street is central to how Penzance presents itself to the outside world. It lies at the core of the visitor experience of the town and is undoubtedly one of the most picturesque of all urban scenes in Cornwall. Architecturally, and in terms of its classic, curving, sloping topography focused on landmark buildings, it is amongst the best streets in Britain. The attractive stepping of the buildings down the slope of the street, combined with a curve in the road, provides tantalising glimpses of the key buildings.

Yet, in terms of its function within the town centre, as a part of the daily experience of most of the residents, it is the least intensively used and one of the most residential streets in the central area, where one-way traffic and limited access encourages quieter traffic use and greater prominence for pedestrians. It was never a major 19th century shopping street but the northern end, close to the market place, has some good shops with surviving historic shop fronts. It is no longer strongly associated with the harbour, to which it was once the main access.

Chapel Street is now for the most part given over to antique shops, pubs, cafes, restaurants, private clubs and institutes (Hypatia, Penzance Arts Club), church and chapel and residential buildings, a similar mix to what it has had in the past. It retains an air of gentility, even in the type of commercial enterprises it contains, but is no longer central to the functions or activities of the town. It was the heart of
the medieval borough of Penzance, the main thoroughfare and commercial street prior to the development of Market Jew Street, but by the early 18th century was already the upper-class ‘court end’ of town, not the commercial core.

Chapel Street: many outstanding individual buildings and a memorable overall streetscape.

From within, Chapel Street is uniquely self-contained: it is the only one of the main streets that does not strongly focus on the market place and, for most of its length, there is no direct physical or visual connection with the harbour. At the southern, lower end of the street, there are suddenly views over sea and obvious connections down to the harbour, but even there, there is a steep, cliff-like drop down from Chapel Street into a different place, an underworld of harbour, work places and humbler housing.

Yet this internal enclosure is in great contrast to its external impact, where the street is seen always in direct relation to the rest of the town, especially as the backdrop to the harbour. The skyline of the street running down the ridge of the Holy Headland dominates views from both east and west, from land and sea.

These interior and external experiences are brought together mainly by their mutual dependence on the tower of St Mary’s as the focus of views and movement.

The street is full of outstanding buildings, especially from Penzance’s first age of elegance between about 1750 and 1850 when Chapel Street was the focus of the cultural, leisure and religious life of the town, of polite society and the luxury trades. These include the towering presence of St Mary’s church, of course, but also the Methodist Chapel, one of the grandest and best known in Cornwall. The adjacent school was once the county’s principal girls’ school, the sister institution to Truro School, and the Tower House was also once an important local school. Hotels, inns and higher class shops are also part of this legacy and one of the features of the street are the grand or startling facades designed to advertise commercial businesses; these include the Egyptian House and the Union Hotel (with its nationally important, but hidden and sadly decaying 18th century theatre).

Many of the grand ‘residential’ buildings were also places of business for prosperous merchants and bankers.

Particularly striking is the series of very impressive 18th - early 19th century houses, especially at the lower end of the street. These are built in the finest granite or elvan ashlar, cut and moulded in beautiful crisp and restrained detail (especially the Vicarage and the houses opposite the Church), or else in brick, as in the startling sequence of houses formerly known as ‘Rotterdam buildings’.

Unity of form and appearance in the streetscape comes from the recognisable historic ensemble, rather than from a uniformity of building itself (as in, say, Lemon Street in Truro). In fact, the materials, shapes and sizes, dates and uses are quite varied. Overall scale, proportion, traditional pattern and shape are what makes Chapel Street successful.
architecturally. Even the Egyptian house, despite its apparent wild abandon, is controlled by the same largely rectangular flat facades, sashed windows and classical proportions.

Buildings are mostly close up to the pavement, enclosing and defining the space, although major buildings such as the chapel, school, church and vicarage are set back behind railed forecourts. A few plots are undeveloped and remain as gardens. Plots are generally relatively broad. The quality of the built environment is mirrored in the detail of the streetscape, with distinctive granite paving with scored arcing patterns and kerb lines, and an appropriate lack of cluttering signs, posts and mock-historic street furniture.

Archaeological potential

The site of the principal medieval phase of urban settlement, there is likely to be archaeological potential of the greatest significance here, both buried and in remains incorporated into later structures. Individual plots may reveal complex sequences of buildings with potential for remains of boundaries, rubbish pits and ancillary buildings behind. Evidence may survive for the overall extent of the ‘planted’ medieval settlement and the former existence of burgage plots and a separate market area.

1d. Causewayhead

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 1d)

A lively pedestrianised shopping street with some of the best surviving historic shopfronts in Penzance. There is a diverse range of building styles and heights, but the street overall offers a strong sense of enclosure.

Causewayhead is a relative latecomer to the historic core of Penzance, a short street of piecemeal development along the old road to the mother church of Penzance at Madron. The town reservoir of 1757 and Bullock Market of 1811, which mark the northern end, were in fields when first built, and the street still ends somewhat abruptly here.

The street has always been a secondary commercial street and through-route; the principal road on this side of the town was Alverton Road. Clarence Street was specifically constructed in 1827 to provide access from there to the Bullock Market. More recently Causewayhead has become significant as a route to the centre, with increasing traffic from the hospital, schools, housing estates, cemetery and District Council offices north of the town, together with the small car parks at the northern end of the street.
Traditional shopfronts are a particular feature of Causewayhead.
Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

This is one of the busiest, most people-orientated of all the town’s streets. It is pedestrianised and lined with specialist local shops, together with the cinema and cafes. There is a greater sense here of the informal, vibrant, ‘alternative’ culture that is an important part of the popular image of West Cornwall than in any other of the town’s main streets, enhanced by the presence of buskers and street campaigners. There is a strong sense of an identifiable community.

The buildings match this eclectic and exotic mix. Some simple 18th or early 19th century buildings survive, particularly at the northern end (extremely rare and important in the context of central Penzance), but most of the street consists of later 19th century commercial buildings. There are some fine and large 19th century stores, in dressed granite, brick, and terracotta, even false timber framing, with an eclectic mix of detailing. There are also some exceptional 20th century buildings, including the Savoy Theatre of 1912, the mid 20th century ‘Modern’ style Warrens’ building and the 1950s extravaganza of Anna Marie’s tearooms. Causewayhead has the most continuous frontage of ‘traditional’ shop fronts in Penzance and some of the best individual examples. Overall, there is a variety of building heights and plot widths. The buildings, even when not very high, crowd in almost claustrophobically on the narrow space, often making it difficult to appreciate the quality of the elevations.

Always an area of shops and manufactory – workshops mixed together, an important part of the street’s character is the back buildings seen and accessed by alleys, yards and rear lanes. Although these lanes are less prominent than examples elsewhere such as Bread Street, the buildings are nonetheless of great significance: large warehouses and outbuildings forming great geometric blocks in granite rubble.

Archeological potential
Causewayhead appears to be a late medieval or post medieval extension to the town, not continuously built to its full extent until the 19th century. Much of the standing fabric may be the earliest on site or a second-generation replacement. The full extent of the medieval Borough is not clear, however, and below-ground evidence of earlier activity in the area may also survive.
1e. The back streets

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 1e)

Secondary streets around the historic core, mostly narrow and strongly enclosed, with buildings reflecting mixed residential, commercial and small industrial origins and current uses.

Bread Street, Queen Street, Parade Street, Abbey Street, New Street, Jennings Lane, New Town Lane.

These streets, although scattered and not a discrete and self-contained area, have sufficient broad similarities and even more distinct differences from other character areas that they may be usefully considered together. They are the back streets ringing the central core, largely post-medieval in date although clearly related to the medieval street pattern and topography. Here the enclosed, inward looking central streets begin to open out to the wider town, connecting both physically and visually with the residential suburbs and intensively industrial working zones around the harbour. Historically they were the location of workshops and small industries (laundry, breweries), stables and mews, warehouses, workers’ cottages, courtyard housing and slums, much of the fabric of which has been cleared in the 20th century.

They retain their urban-edge character, at the same time merging into the adjacent zones. Indeed, Jennings Lane and New Town Lane have shared much of the late 20th century destruction of historic fabric which characterises the harbour side and the south side of Market Jew Street which they link. There are some remaining gap sites and infill and redevelopment has not always been sympathetic to character.

Elsewhere these streets accommodate a vibrant mix of specialist shops, cafes and good restaurants, entertainment, galleries, workshops and residential uses. The presence of the Acorn Theatre in Parade Street is characteristic: Queen Street contains the Bingo Hall (a 1930s cinema), while the Georgian theatre and yard at the rear of the Union Hotel is actually accessed from New Street, as are the former Assembly Rooms of the Star Inn.

These streets are well used by pedestrians and there are problems of vehicle – pedestrian conflict in some places. Queen Street is particularly constrained by narrow pavements, on-street parking and vehicles loading and unloading; it is additionally used by local drivers as a convenient rat-run to the town centre from the Promenade. The continuing density of commercial uses in Bread Street leads to often surprisingly high traffic volumes with problems created by the narrowness of the street and constrained turning spaces. Yet the presence of traffic in these places does add a sense of activity and life.

Commercial and industrial buildings adjacent to Bread Street, close to the historic core.

There is a dynamic tension in these streets between those buildings, domestic and non-domestic, that face onto the street as a principal frontage and those which turn their backs, in effect treating it as rear-
servicing for the core area. These are not back alleys, however, but proper streets. Although not generally characterised by great or polite architecture, the built environment is nonetheless of the greatest significance, with a vibrant and distinct character within the town; it is typically vernacular, built in random granite rubble and with a great mix of uses and types.

Parade Street.

Some of these streets have always been more domestic in character than others; Parade Street in particular was of a generally higher social status, with good 18th century buildings surviving, including the grand but currently ruinous brick shell of no. 8, and a chapel of 1889, now the Acorn Theatre. Queen Street and New Street are also more overtly domestic, with cottage rows (including the outstanding 1930s cottage development of St Michael’s in New Street) and some good mews and courtyards associated with Chapel Street.

Bread Street is distinct for its unique range of non-domestic structures of outstanding interest: mews, stables, outhouses, bakeries, breweries and other industrial buildings. Here, the tension between building types and uses, between the road as street or back alley, is perhaps the greatest of all, and this gives it a highly distinctive character in Cornwall, let alone Penzance. The similar groups in the back alleys to Causewayhead are also of great importance (see above).

While fundamentally tightly enclosed, these streets sometimes also have startlingly impressive vistas and views; Bread Street is again outstanding in this respect. Its slope gives it spectacular views over the eastern residential hills, and in the lower eastern end of the street it merges with some of the prettiest of these streets. Views in New Street are also amongst the finest in Penzance, whether looking south out to sea or in to the centre, with the market house as an end stop; the short length of Abbey Street not only includes one of the best individual buildings in Penzance (the Abbey Hotel), but also one of the most exhilarating views, over the Abbey step, slip and inner harbour and out to the wider vista to the Mount. Other back streets draw the passer-by in with intriguing glimpses of the backs of grander buildings and the promise of intimate, private spaces (Parade Street is particularly effective in this way), while signboards on the main streets point off to an enticingly secretive world of esoteric shops, galleries and cafes.

Archaeological potential

All of these streets bound or are within the medieval area of Penzance, and share the generally high archaeological potential of both standing fabric and below-ground deposits in the historic core. In particular, these areas may offer evidence of the outer limits of the medieval town.
2. Harbour and railway

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheets 2a - 2c)

This area is a monument to Victorian engineering, with railway embankments, retaining walls, roads, station, harbour and dock structures on a substantial scale. Within it there are three broad divisions:

2a. Transport interchange;
2b. Tidal harbour;
2c. Working harbour.

Despite these subdivisions, the area forms an entity. It is cut off by steep slopes from the historic core of the town, which itself largely turns its back on the harbour. Because of the level, curving, enclosing shape of the harbour, dominated by the engineering and architecture of transport and quayside, it is seen as a single area from most viewpoints, both within and outside it. The scale of buildings along Wharf Road, and the line of the road itself, preserve the historic shoreline and give a defined edge to the built up area. The area has a direct relationship with the sea, with a curious mix of commercial, engineering transport and tourism functions.

2a. Transport interchange

A busy, diverse area, dominated by large structures, traffic movement, street furniture and signage, and the functional hard landscaped spaces of the railway, bus station and car park.

This area is the least connected to the harbour-side; the water is for the most part difficult to access and hidden behind parked cars or high sea walls; the only sense of an active water frontage is at the junction with the Albert Pier by the sailing club. The key buildings, both historic and contemporary, are functional in appearance and related to engineering, transport and warehousing; they include huge retaining walls, the railway station, Tourist Information Centre, recent bus station and sewage pumping station, Albert pier, the converted warehouse on Wharf Road, Branwell’s mill and not least the Wharfside complex. The sheer bulk of the warehouses and the 1881 station building are impressive, while the latter, with its crisp granite detailing, its great stacks and curving roof is one of Penzance’s major buildings. It places Penzance in a select club of British towns with grand terminus stations of this sort.

The transport interchange area from the Wharfside Centre. There are major traffic and public realm issues in the area.
Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

These buildings are rarely fully appreciated, however, since the dominating characteristic of the area is traffic and pedestrian movement, and the dominant streetscape features are traffic controls, signs, lighting, a plethora of road junctions. There is luxuriant screen-planting to the Wharfside car park, behind which is a bleak expanse of tarmac and in front of it a barrier of roads. The large, open extent of the car park, while not enhancing the townscape, does maintain the historic low-rise and open character of the harbour, still contained between its historic wharf line and piers.

This is one of the most used and visited areas in the town, a gateway and the transfer point for many to the pedestrian experience of Penzance. Traffic management issues are an inescapable part of its current character, with the principal
historic links from the wider harbour and station area to Market Jew Street and the core less than attractive to pedestrians. Albert Street is a fume-filled and difficult to cross section of the traffic gyratory system and the smaller lanes are blighted by inhospitable and inactive blank walls. This has focused movement even more through the Wharfside shopping centre, which provides a very successful link between the harbour, main car park and the primary commercial area on Market Jew Street.

2b. Tidal harbour

The large expanses of tidal water in the outer harbour and inner basin give this area an open, expansive character, framed on the landward side by historic buildings mounting the coastal slope.

The harbour is open and expansive here, with big views filled with small craft. This feeling of space, with the inner basin and outer harbour, the rare experience of walking over tidal water on Ross Bridge and the ensemble of historic structures, creates a dramatic and distinctive sense of place. Together with the captivating backdrop of Chapel Street, it is hardly surprising that this was the subject of one of Stanhope Forbes’ best-known paintings of Penzance.

The openness of the area, with Wharf Road thrusting through, provides part of the sense of drama, but also adds to the sense of a difficult connection with the working harbour to the south, for pedestrians at least. Pedestrian movement to and from the main car park area is extremely unclear and sometimes hazardous, with a footpath only on one side of the road and no clear signage.

The surviving historic built environment is all linked to the harbour and engineered infrastructure: piers and quays, slips, retaining walls, the dramatic incline and steps up to Abbey Street, the Abbey warehouse and quay and the old lifeboat house.

The inner basin, Abbey warehouse and dry dock.

This is almost entirely a hard landscape of granite, tough and permanent, seen always in contrast with the ebb and flow and movement of the water and the softer textures of the low-tide mud. The surfacing on Abbey Slip is of granite blocks and setts, one of the most extensive surviving areas in the town. Recent environmental improvements, while referring to the historic use of materials, have also introduced planting and soft landscaping akin to that screening the Wharf Road car park. This has further divided the street scene from the harbour, adding to the sense of isolation of the lifeboat house.

The effect on the area of mid 20th century large scale demolition, when virtually everything east of the Ross Bridge was cleared, has not yet been fully repaired. There are still significant areas of empty plots and the backdrop to the area is partly waste ground, ruins and exposed retaining walls. Recent building is generally undistinguished and alien in
form and materials. Its pronounced horizontality and location set back from the road is not in keeping with the historic character of structures located hard against the quayside and Wharf Road and does little to recreate a sense of active street frontage.

2c. The working harbour

A busy, strongly enclosed area, dominated by large buildings and engineered structures and a mix of industrial, commercial, maritime and tourist and leisure uses.

One of the defining characteristics of this area is the experience of moving through the heart of the bustling working port. It is small and closely contained, defined by the sharp turn and sudden enclosure near the Barbican on its south side and the emergence into the broad expanse of the tidal harbour to the north. Within these limits, the streetscape is an indeterminate linear space with informal openings and parking and movement both along and across it rather than a simple defined road. In contrast to the central, tidal part of the harbour, the presence of water here is constant; the dock encloses standing water and the inner face of the South Pier stands in deep water whatever the state of the tide.

Wharf Road and Quay Street, adjacent to the working harbour.

The range of historic buildings in this area and facing into it from adjoining streets is impressive: the Dolphin Inn and other buildings around the Barbican and Quay Street, the Custom House, yard and steps, the former Holman’s complex, the dry dock itself, waterside warehouses, the Harbourmaster’s offices, Trinity lighthouse yard, weighbridge and office, and, of course, the massive structures of the South Pier and lighthouse, the sea wall and the floating dock piers and gates. There is a range of materials – granite and other igneous rocks dominate on engineering structures and surfaces as well as buildings, but much is rendered (and

Penzance harbour.
Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.
more, like the Dolphin Inn, was historically rendered); rubble stone, timber boarding, slate roofs and iron and steel cladding are all used. The more recent, mid 20th century structures around the docks are certainly not pretty but are an essential part of both the historic and current character of the area.

There are indeterminate edges to the landward side of the area: Quay Street opens out into the harbour area and is part of its wider context, with storage and office uses linked to the harbour. The Barbican and Barbican Lane also form part of the immediate context, but these streets have a separate character as the remnant of the old, inward-looking lower town.

A mix of industrial, commercial and tourism uses on Wharf Road.
Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

Although backed by steep cliffs, long quarried into and altered in shape, the foreshore and harbour area has always been linked by small alleys and flights of steps to the top end of Quay Street and Chapel Street, and is overlooked by a backdrop of the highest, most picturesque qualities. Seen from out on the piers, there appears to be an immediate relationship between the two areas which is not always apparent at street level.

This area suffers from traffic levels on the Quay. The problem, however, derives less from the mix of pedestrians, informally parked vehicles and working vehicles moving around the buildings and boats and across the road, than from the often speeding through-flow of traffic unrelated to the harbour.

Archaeological potential
Archaeological investigation on the former gasworks site assessed an area straddling the wharf side and the back of plots along Market Jew Street. It recovered little other than remains of the 19th century gasworks itself, the building of which seems to have comprehensively removed or confused earlier evidence.

In addition to the significant standing historic fabric around the harbour, remains of numerous phases of earlier activity – dating back to the initial occupation of the site - have been buried or masked by subsequent development. There is therefore very high potential for the survival of layers of evidence below the current surfaces. Significant palaeoenvironmental evidence may be preserved in shoreline and inter-tidal deposits.

Although it only arrived in Penzance in 1852, the railway has seen considerable changes since then – the first station was replaced by 1881, and there is substantial documentary, map and photographic evidence of former goods sheds, engine sheds, signal stations, turntable and other structures of interest. Rails and contemporary storage buildings survive on Albert Pier.

The railway itself originally approached the harbour on a timber causeway, replaced in the early 20th century by the present embankment. The old shoreline is buried beneath it, and, particularly around the stream outlets at Chyandour and Ponsandane, significant archaeological layers may be preserved.
3. The Barbican

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 3)

The earliest focus of activity in Penzance. Although subject to major changes in the 20th century, important traces of its former tight-grained and small-scale industrial and residential character survive.

Quay Street, Coinage Hall Street, Under Chapel Yard, Green Street and Barbican Lane

This is the site of the earliest historical settlement in Penzance, yet in its present condition it is something of an appendage to Chapel Street. The true historical relationship is the reverse: Chapel Street and indeed the whole of Penzance grew from this starting point. The only visible clue to this antiquity rests in the surviving fragments of the medieval chapel now in St Anthony’s Gardens. A massive slum clearance programme in the 1930s swept away the courts and alleys of what was then an overwhelmingly working class area. However, the underlying historic topography remains, based on a small grid of ancient streets. Despite gaps and over-large amalgamations of some plots, the historic narrow plots, relatively small-scale buildings and tight urban grain can still be discerned, along Quay Street, for instance, or in Coinage Hall Yard.

This primary role in the history of Penzance is one crucial reason to regard this as a single area, but it clearly has strong associations with adjoining zones. Quay Street and the Barbican can be seen as part of the harbour area, a link emphasised by the presence of offices and storage for the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company. The west side around St Anthony’s Gardens, the Yacht Inn and Jubilee Pool, acts as the end of the Promenade, while the remainder of the area stands in direct relationship with Chapel Street and St Mary’s Church. However, seen from the churchyard against the wide sweep of Mount’s Bay, this is clearly a self-contained, distinct enclave, with little real affinity with the elegant Regency terraces to the west, the grand 18th century opulence of Chapel Street or the vast Victorian engineering of the harbour and railway.

In the streets, the links with adjoining areas are even less obvious. Views do not look out over the length of the Promenade until one actually stands on it. In the same way, from within Quay Street, little of the sweep of the harbour (or indeed the sea) can be seen, only more intimate glimpses around the South Pier and Dock Inn, the site of the ancient harbour to which the street once led. The sense of a self-contained inward-looking area is emphasised by the enclosing presence of the sea wall, the curve of Battery Road and intimate alleys behind.

The Barbican building and sea wall. The area remains distinct from the working harbour.

Surviving historic fabric is varied and overlaps in function with adjoining areas. The Dolphin Inn relates to the harbour, lighthouse depot and weighbridge office; the buildings around St Anthony’s Gardens are part of the setting of Jubilee Pool and war memorial on the Promenade. The former Sailor’s Institute of 1908 predates the inter-war alterations to the area and is clearly related in use and form to the older historic character of the area, even though its brick detailing is at odds with the heavy, four-square granite or rubble stone of most of the historic buildings here (for example, the sea wall, Barbican, Isles of Scilly Steamship Co.
warehouses and offices and the churchyard wall).

Other historic structures include modest and difficult-to-date cottages overlooking the dry dock yards and the older buildings in Quay Street, generally rendered (as was the Dolphin Inn until the late 20th century). These stand in contrast to large, gaunt concrete early 20th century commercial buildings in Green Street and Quay Street and late 20th century residential insertions.

Uses in the area are diverse. The Quay Fair and Golowan festival events are held here in late June (the Golowan offices are situated in the Barbican) and there are pubs, restaurants and cafes in Quay Street, Barbican Lane and Green Street, often with customers spilling out onto the pavements. The car parks, offices, stores and coach unloading areas for the Isles of Scilly ferries also create short bursts of activity around sailing and docking times. At these periods the area is transformed, the activity and colour lifting its otherwise rather disused and forgotten appearance. The fluctuating impact of these cyclical and seasonal uses is an important ingredient in its character.

Battery Road is part of the Wharf Road - Quay - Promenade route and shares the same problems of heavy, speeding traffic, cutting off the Jubilee Pool and making for an unpleasant and dangerous pedestrian environment. The streets behind the Barbican, in contrast, are relatively quiet and pedestrian-friendly, although on-street parking is prevalent and can be intrusive.

On the whole, the current townscape is somewhat degraded and does not reflect the historic importance of the area. There are a number of gap sites, some enclosed by granite walls displaying intriguing blocked doorways and windows, and occasional outbuildings, many potentially of some age and interest. Street scenes are often of back lands, parked cars, empty plots and indifferent redevelopment. The large and important open space by the War Memorial and Jubilee Pool is indifferently treated in terms of surfacing and streetscape detailing.

Archaeological potential

This area is one of the most historic and archeologically significant areas in the town and one of the most sensitive, with many gap sites and large mid 20th century commercial buildings ripe for redevelopment. There is potential for evidence of the earliest shore-side settlement and of a variety of subsequent commercial, industrial, residential and maritime uses. Much of this fabric was demolished in the slum clearance programmes of the 1930s but investigation of standing structures, both complete buildings and the walls around empty plots, may identify significant survivals.

The only archaeological intervention in the area has been a watching brief on a site in Coinagehall Street. This found that no trace survived of features predating 19th century occupation of the site.
4. The Promenade

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 4)

This area is unified by the broad, elegant, linear engineering of the Promenade itself, with a range of leisure, tourism and residential uses fringing its landward side. It offers striking views across the Bay and into the town.

The Promenade is something apart from the rest of Penzance. Facing away from the town and harbour, it looks south over the wide expanse of Mount’s Bay. From the landward side, the openness of the Bay comes right up to the town with no obvious barrier. Seen from the beach, however, or from along its length, the Promenade is a monument to Victorian engineering and civic pride. The great granite wall stretches for more than half a mile in a gentle sweep along the seafront between Battery Rocks and Lariggan Bridge. It is constructed of huge squared close-fitting blocks, with flights of steps, paved ramps, grilled culvert outfalls, simple but elegant cast iron open railings, and all surmounted by the broad expanse of the ‘Prom’ itself.

Sometimes windswept and exposed, the effect of crashing waves, spray and the immediacy of the water is undoubtedly part of its attraction. One of the best-loved of the works in Penlee Art Gallery is Norman Garstin’s *The rain it raineth everyday* (1889). The dramatic rain and wave-swept scene captures the spirit of the Promenade in its wilder moments.

Views and dramatic open vistas are the overriding impression here, not only over the beach and rocks and the wider Bay, but also along the length of the Promenade, sweeping round to Newlyn with its harbour and its terraced housing and chapels scattered like great granite boulders on the cliffside. Eastwards is the long slope and dramatic skyline of the Penzance headland punctuated by the bold outlines of the Market House, the former seamen’s mission and, above all, St Mary’s church.

At the seaward end this culminates in the thrusting line of Jubilee Pool and the Battery Rocks, pierced by the war memorial obelisk and with St. Michael’s Mount in the background. At night, the curving sweep is emphasised by the lights strung along its length, linking the brightly lit, sloping centres of Newlyn and Penzance. In closer views, particularly from the western end of the Promenade, the sloping topography reveals a rising townscape of gables and roofs leading up to the ornamental trees around Penlee Park.

The character of this area is not just of static views, or architectural set pieces, however. It is about movement – literally about ‘promenading’ - a kinetic, changing experience along the seaside. The Promenade is a linking element.
There is all the way along it a feeling of former elegance. Most of the formal entertainment buildings (baths, tea-rooms, bandstands etc) once scattered along its length have been demolished or swept away by severe storms over the last century, but much still remains on its landward edge. This is still the focus for most of the holiday accommodation in Penzance and there are restaurants and cafes here and there with pubs in the side streets and even an amusement arcade.

‘A rising townscape of gables and roofs leading up to the ornamental trees around Penlee Park.’

For all that many of these buildings are directly related to seaside use (the Pavilion and the Lugger Hotel, for example, and particularly the prominent bulk of the Queen’s Hotel), the Promenade is only incidentally related to the built environment behind it. There is little sense of a consistently developed ‘sea front’. This reflects the disjointed development history of the area, with residential streets and industrial premises already stretching piecemeal along the shoreline before the Promenade was first built in 1843. What fronts it today are diverse buildings of various scales, materials and detailing, and differing heights, dates and functions. The modest scale of terraced houses suddenly changes to the more monumental scale of the Queen’s Hotel and then dips to the gardens and tennis courts around Alexandra Road. The one consistent element is the views out to sea and to Newlyn and the structure of the Promenade itself.

The absence of unity along the Promenade has been emphasised by storm damage and maintenance problems, together with some poorer quality 20th century alterations. There are gap sites, particularly by Wherry Town, where the townscape has never been satisfactorily dealt with since a destructive storm in 1962. Some courtyards and gardens are given over to parking and there have been inappropriate extensions to buildings, changes in fenestration and a loss of texture and colour as buildings are either inappropriately stripped of stucco and colour or conversely inappropriately rendered or painted. The loss of colour on the brick, stone and terracotta Queen’s Hotel is particularly to be regretted.

At the same time, buildings and architecture were never the essence of this area’s character. The Promenade is still, in effect, what it has always been, a linear park. Extremely well used by residents and visitors alike, it is a place for walking, cycling and skateboarding, providing access to the beach and rocks and to the various gardens and play areas along its length. The Quayside and Battery Road are the traditional location for fairs and special events attracting huge numbers of visitors; further along, the Promenade remains a key space for informal and occasional uses such as Sunday flea markets and charity jamborees.

*The Jubilee Pool forms a dramatic visual element in the wider vista from the Promenade.*
Most of the significant surviving (and lost) structures are extensions of these uses, grouped in three main areas. At the east end is the listed (grade II) Jubilee Pool of 1935. A streamlined concrete teardrop following the shape of the rocks, straight out of railway posters for the Cornish Riviera, this is a monument not only on the ground but also from the air (and from the first great age of air travel and aerial photographs). It is set in the remains of a contemporary interwar townscape: St Anthony’s Gardens, the Yacht Inn, a scatter of bijou balconied Moderne buildings amongst the Regency terraces to the west and the WW1 memorial on the old battery site.

![1930s design for leisure: the Yacht Inn and St Anthony’s Gardens.](image)

Roughly in the centre of the Promenade are the Alexandra Gardens. Focused around the elaborate former Pavilion theatre of 1911 (the venue for symphonies and operas in the 1930s, now an amusement arcade), the landscaped children’s adventure playground, tennis courts and bowling green are immaculately kept and extremely well used.

At the west end of the Promenade nearly all the former grandeur of the Bedford Bolitho gardens and tea-rooms and dance halls is long gone, although the rather bleak built environment (see below under Wherry Town) is redeemed by the intensity of activity in the skateboard park.

Westwards, beyond the Promenade, the recreational use continues much more successfully and is just as intensively used. Here are the open beach backed by the Foster Bolitho gardens and recreational facilities, the open space of Western Green, and the boating pond and 1950s ornamental ponds stretching up the Lariggan Stream. These are a continuation of the Promenade’s character and function and form the main link between Penzance and Newlyn, part of the coastal footpath and cross-county cycle route.

The surfacing and detailing of the Promenade, including the necessary but intrusive flood-barrier walls, rarely matches the quality of its history or the joyous, celebratory nature of most of its uses. There are maintenance problems associated with the structure and resolution of many of the issues of appearance and access across the road and from the Promenade to the beach is linked to finding long-term solutions to these problems.

The wide road behind the Promenade has long been the principal route between Newlyn and Penzance, and forms with Alexandra Road and Morrab Road an important part of the circulatory system. Traffic is often heavy and fast, creating a dangerous barrier between the promenade and the buildings on the other side, particularly where it separates the skate park and the shops in Wherry Town. The function of the Promenade as a critical traffic link forms an inescapable part of its current character, but creates perhaps the greatest tensions in that character (and is indeed a major issue within the town).

**Archaeological potential**

The massive engineering involved in creating and subsequently maintaining the Promenade changed the historic face of the underlying beach and sand dunes and it is unclear whether deposits relating to earlier uses are likely to survive. Various structures have been constructed on the
Promenade (bandstands, baths, etc) and remains of these may survive below its present surfacing. The zone behind the Promenade itself may contain evidence of former landing places, fish cellars, ropewalks, net lofts and hay barns, all of which are recorded in the area in the 16th-19th centuries. The area known as the Folly, at the seaward end of Cornwall Terrace, was a relatively early beach-side squatter settlement, the site in the early 18th century of walled pleasure gardens and from 1768 perhaps the first Borough poorhouse; in the early-mid 19th century there were lodging houses and public baths, a pipe manufactory and pottery here. Deposits relating to these uses may survive.

5. Wherry Town

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet)

Historically an industrial area, Wherry Town retains a predominantly commercial and edge-of-settlement character despite loss of most of its historic topography and fabric.

Wherry Town was once one of the main industrial areas of Penzance, most noted for the Wherry mine and its offshore shaft. The serpentine works, mills and ropewalks here were frequent subjects of 19th century photographs, with the sheer scale and prominence of the buildings and their chimneys, on both sides of the road, emphasised by being so close to the sea. Alongside them were coastguard cottages and workers’ cottages. Cheek by jowl with these were cafés, dance halls and seaside shelters on the Promenade, holidaymakers, fishing boats and drying nets scattered around the beach. Running through it all was the Lariggan stream.

Of all this, only a single building – the Mount’s Bay Inn – survives. Even the ornate Bedford Bolitho Gardens that replaced the serpentine works on the Promenade side only survive in the ornamental, curved wall to the roadside.

Industrial decline in the early 20th century was followed by a series of devastating storms, culminating in that of 1962, which destroyed virtually everything except a large early 20th century industrial shed – now the Co-op car park – and the pub, which bears a poignant plaque in memory of a lost community. Nowhere else in Penzance has there been such a complete loss of fabric, and more importantly, perhaps, of context.

The Mount’s Bay Inn and Larigian Bridge (below) are the principal surviving historic elements in the area.

The commercial – industrial use of the area continues, however, with two small supermarkets, a petrol station and a large builder’s merchants located there. There is also a block of 1960s flats above a row of shops, joining the area to the hotels on the corner of Alexandra Road. The ambiguous, edge of town quality, of somewhere lacking a distinct sense of place, is emphasised by the almost invisible Wherry Town name board set low on the flanks of the Larigian Bridge.

The relationship with the sea is also ambiguous. This is a low-lying, level area, and the sea-wall and promenade are built...
up higher than the street level; from within it the sea is heard and felt but not seen.

Instead, the views are of a bleak car park, stark landscaping and recycling bins, with just glimpsed distant attractions along the road to Newlyn or Penzance; this is an enclosed space, dominated by the road – the busy, over-fast main artery between Penzance and Newlyn. This is a classic example of an urban space being treated simply as a road rather than a street; road signs are overlarge and intrusive and the street lamps are tall grey highways-standard units rather than the ornate types used along the Promenade.

The desolate air and hard, traffic-dominated streetscape is exacerbated by the disjointed townscape of the commercial area, dominated by large unrelated prefabricated buildings set back behind forecourts, parking and wide traffic access roads. The street frontage of the 1960s block east of the Mount’s Bay Inn is bland and recessed. Once both sides of the road were part of the same thriving community, both now share the sense that nothing substantive has yet replaced it. Ironically, the presence of two supermarkets, a petrol station and the beach frequently make this one of the busiest areas of Penzance.

Archaeological potential
The greatest potential here is for industrial archaeology, centred on the former Wherry Mine, the main shaft of which is still visible offshore at very low tides. There were also serpentine works, corn mills, saw mills, ropewalks, a drill hall, dancehall, tearooms and baths and terraces of cottages. Earlier remains are also possible: traces of ancient peat deposit were found during South West Water’s Clean Sweep operation and the Lariggan stream was a focus for settlement from the prehistoric to post medieval periods in its higher reaches. Lariggan Bridge itself incorporates historic fabric and the site is also known to have been a ford and washing place.

6. Chyandour
(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 7)

Chyandour is geographically peripheral to Penzance, in some ways a ‘lost’ part of the town. Historically, however, it has been very important to it, becoming almost a tied ‘estate’ village belonging to the Bolitho family, dominated by their tin smelter, foundry, stamping mills and tannery. The family built themselves a large house set in its own grounds – the first of several they were to build in and around Penzance (Trewidden, Trengwainton, Polwithen) - with a second nearby at Ponsandane. They also built wagon yards, stables and housing at Chyandour, essentially creating a distinct community.
That is exactly what Chyandour was historically. It stood outside the boundaries of Penzance borough (see Fig. 4), a fact emphasised by the location of the still extant County Police Station of 1895, built here because Penzance retained its own independent police force until 1947. A surviving 17th century boundary stone also marks the division. It still remains somewhat distinct from Penzance, even though now absorbed within the greater limits of the town.

The area is now dominated by the A30 distributor flyover, road junctions and the main road into Penzance from the east. With the railway on the other side of the main road, Chyandour is now divorced from the sea, the stream running through a semi-culvert under the road and railway. This important but neglected enclave forms a gateway to Penzance proper, the point where the broad roads and low density industry and activity of Long Rock and Eastern Green close in to the narrow historic streetscape of the town.

Chyandour itself is in a relatively deeply set, secluded, wooded valley. Off the busy road junction the buildings resemble those of an agricultural estate village, built of granite, centred on the great house – courthouse and its walled yards. Eccentric and interesting detail is everywhere, including street furniture (a prominent horse trough, for instance), and an ‘architect-designed’ picturesque quality predominates.

There are gaps and empty plots alongside Chyandour Lane up the valley and considerable loss of historic fabric; nearly all the main industrial buildings have been demolished and the main roadside junction has been made more open by the demolition of an inn and cottages in the mid 20th century.

Some sense of the old, larger nucleated village still remains, however, even along Chyandour Cliff, where the cluster of cottages and larger buildings hard against the roadside (there were others on the seaward side of the road in the late 19th century) are different in character from the villas and hotels closer to Penzance.

The dominance of traffic on the main road is such that the picturesque qualities of the area are difficult to appreciate. There are wider views out to sea, however, and the valley nestles among the broad, wooded hills that surround Penzance, crowned by the ornamental trees on Lescudjack Hill. The seclusion of the area in its wooded valley makes it surprisingly attractive, not least because the side road to Gulval and Ludgvan by-passes the village centre. Chyandour Lane is one of the most surprising, attractive walks in Penzance. Along the wooded stream, the sound of the A30 distributor is barely noticeable, but the valley is marred by empty industrial plots, a sense of abandonment and lack of care along the roadside, culminating in a further industrial site at its head. Beyond, it links with a footpath (an ancient route) to Trencere.

Archaeological potential

The most obvious potential here relates to post medieval industrial archaeology. This includes the ‘blowing house’ which
preceded the Bolitho’s tin smelter of 1720, which itself became the largest and longest surviving in Cornwall. Also here were a major tannery, foundry and stamping mills. There were medieval mills along the valley and some form of settlement here by at least 1504 when the place name Chyandour, ‘the cottage by the stream’, is first recorded. The 19th century settlement in the area was more extensive than today, including, for example, cottages on the south side of the main road. A late 19th century battery was established on the slopes above the road and much of the layout survives.

7. Lescudjack and the Battlefields

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet)

An extensive zone of 19th century housing, predominantly terraces and rows, with accompanying institutional buildings, set tightly on a grid of streets laid across sloping terrain north of the core of Penzance.

Set across the slopes to the north of the historic core of Penzance, views into, from and across the area form a dominant element of its character. It has a focal point in the picturesque Scots pines and substantial arts and crafts style houses on the crest of Lescudjack Hill, itself earlier marked out by the Iron Age hillfort. This is the least well-known part of Penzance, especially to the casual visitor. Its particular history and character have not always been fully recognised (it was, for instance, a later addition to the original Conservation Area). It is, however, a significant part of the historic town, in size, population, quality of environment, impact on the overall appearance and character of the town and numbers of important buildings.

Whether built as close packed, gardenless streets as around High Street and Belgravia Street and the ‘Battlefields’ (around St Michael’s Street and St Mary’s Street), or the later, larger and greener streets beyond, the sheer number, straightness, length, tight grain and repetition of these roads, their predominantly residential character and the steepness of the underlying slopes, makes this area very different from the southern and western parts of the town.

Across the Battlefields: sloping streets, diverse roofscapes, monumental institutional buildings, stone-fronted terraces and occasional quirky detailing.

Development did not progress in a simple way from the town centre outwards. The area is composed of irregularly aligned gridiron blocks of streets, developed piecemeal from the grounds attached to various large houses or individual fields between them. Paying little respect to changes in contours, the interlinking roads take sharp and unexpected turns while threading their way through the various blocks. Taroveor Road - Mount Street is the only through-route and has been a focus for both commercial and institutional uses. It is a curving, sloping route with unfolding views, interesting buildings, substantial retaining walls, flights of steps up to adjoining streets (Belgravia Street, for instance), all of which make for a striking urban streetscape. It is now too much given over to traffic flows to be easily appreciated.
Among the houses, and acting as navigation marks in the maze of streets, are a number of impressive institutional buildings (for example, Richmond Chapel, St John’s Church, the chapel, school and hall grouped in Taroveor Road and High Street, and the former Coastguard buildings). Many appear to be underused and they are rarely recognised for their significant architectural and townscape qualities.

Despite some overall similarities, this area is far from being an homogenous sprawl of identical streets. The piecemeal development history results in streets of Regency structures like Rosevean Road, perhaps the earliest in the area, set deep within a grid of granite-built streets nearly a hundred years younger. Similar early 19th century areas of attractive terraced, stuccoed rows of great sophistication, sometimes interspersed with free-standing villas, were built off what were at the time the ends of the town to the east (around Leskinnick, Adelaide Street and Mount Street) and to the north (Windsor Place). Again, these now stand side by side with streets built a century later.

The rows around High Street and St James Street, with flatter elevations in rubble or render, less detail, regular eaves lines and low-pitched roofs, set hard against both pavements and rear alleys, form a distinctive small area within Penzance, reminiscent of industrial towns like St Just and Camborne. They relate closely to the urban-edge area of Bread Street, with its mixed houses, workshops, corner shops and pubs, and the often stunning views over the town revealed by the curious reversing slopes of the site.

The quality of these later streets is also very high: granite detailing in various dressed finishes, with contrasting tones for architectural detail, ornamented gables, steep slate roofs, large stacks, occasional belvederes and turrets, above all the stepping façades and roofscapes; these features all add interest and variety, sometimes excitement, to what could otherwise have been a repetitious and bland townscape.

The outer edges of the area, in stark contrast to these hard-grained inner streets, are marked by an informal transition into inter-war housing (in a continuing terraced tradition), interspersed with surviving early 19th century villas, the large Girls’ and Boys’ grammar schools of 1908 and 1912 (now Humphrey Davy School), and the large, open and informal Princess May recreation ground. The area around the schools and recreation ground shares characteristics with the adjoining St Clare and Penalverne character area and could have been incorporated within that were there not such an immediate relationship with the adjoining residential streets to the south.
The other fringes of the area, where character becomes less overwhelmingly residential and building types less repetitive, is in the ribbon development along the two main routes entering Penzance through this area, Chyandour Cliff and St Clare Street. The buildings along Chyandour Cliff are a diverse group that do not quite create a distinct frontage in themselves; those closest to the town are rather the tail ends of the grid of streets to the north. There is a variety of dates and styles, with four-square Regency stucco set against late 19th century towered and gabled granite.

The road is now divorced from the sea by traffic, retaining walls and railway, and there are prominent gap sites which create a neglected feel to this major entrance into the town. Although more overtly ‘seaside’ with hotels and flats, there is a distinct lack of unity or of a definite sense of place here.

Archaeological potential

The clearest archaeological potential here lies in and around the Iron Age Lescudjack hillfort. This was scheduled in 1958 and described then as a ‘roughly oval univallate earthwork’. There are indications, however, that there were additional defensive circuits outside the surviving rampart, now underlying the built-up area around the summit of the hill. In recent years the interior has been used as allotment gardens and paddocks.

There are poorly recorded early mining remains in this area, probably relating to a 17th or 18th century sett known as Chyandour Cliff, with reports of adits and shafts in Mount Street, off Chyandour Cliff and around St Clare’s. Rope-walks and quarries (around Lescudjack Hill) are also known to have existed. There is also potential for traces of garden and domestic activity associated with 19th century housing, including some larger houses. There is a small 18th century Jewish burial ground in Leskinnick Terrace.

8. Alverton and Morrab

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet)

A large and diverse suburban area, predominantly of genteel villas and terraces, with a significant presence of professional, recreational and institutional uses. Trees and green spaces are an important element in its character.

This large, diverse area encompasses most of the western half of the town and is a strong element in Penzance’s public identity. One of the most attractive areas
of any Cornish town, the elegant, gently sloping streets of different periods, uses and social mixes combine with exotic subtropical public parks and gardens, set just back from the shore, to form a unique townscape. The presence of public open spaces, libraries, Art School, art gallery and museum means that this is also one of the best-known and used parts of the town.

Stuccoed terraces and distinctive, leafy, high-quality urban spaces: Morrab Place and (below) North Parade.

The principal route into Penzance from the west is a gently sloping, curving approach dominated by large, ornamental trees and plantations screening large houses, but also dotted with historic buildings clearly rural in character; the only thatched buildings in Penzance are here. This ‘green’ approach reaches the broad boulevard-like stretch of Alverton Road leading into the town centre, or else branches down Alexandra Road, a tree-lined avenue with large and attractive houses now mostly used as guesthouses. There are few more pleasant ways into what is one of the major towns in Cornwall.

Within the character area there is a broad framework of an inner belt of substantial Regency terraces giving way to an outer ring of larger suburban houses in substantial grounds, absorbed and redeveloped by later 19th century housing. In detail, however, the pattern is not so clear cut and there is actually an abrupt and unexpected mix of dates and styles cutting through the distinct sub-areas: 18th or early 19th century terraces and houses can be found beyond late 19th century roads. These themselves cut dramatically through Regency streetscapes, as in North Parade, while the late 19th century character of development associated with the Promenade borders the southern edges of the Regency terraces. By contrast with the northern suburbs of Penzance, many substantial houses with large grounds still survive.

This is much more than a residential suburb. Arts, professional and health-related uses are important, especially along Alverton Road and Morrab Road, as are public gardens and institutions and visitor accommodation. In the past this area hosted many of Penzance’s exclusive middle class institutions: two gentlemen’s clubs, the Conservative and former Liberal clubs, a subscription library and the original museum foundation. Most of the present institutional and non-residential buildings have been converted from domestic buildings with private gardens, as at Morrab House and Penlee House, maintaining an overall unity of domestic style and scale in the buildings. The purpose-built public Art School and Public Library in Morrab Road, with their granite gables, ostentatious terracotta panels and enrichment, are exceptions in this respect, more conspicuous because institutional buildings created for the...
wider population were always more prominent in other areas of the town.

The library and art school, Morrab Road.

The public access and use so characteristic of the area is enhanced by very high permeability and a pedestrian-friendly environment. An intricate network of lanes, successors to earlier cross-country paths, runs east-west through the area, forming a grid with the later north-south roads and their distinctive long rear alleyways bounded by high walls. It is possible to walk from the outskirts of Newlyn, the guesthouses and hotels around Alexandra Road or the sea front, into the heart of the shopping centre in Penzance, along quiet footpaths, though a park or sub-tropical gardens, crossing only one or two relatively quiet roads.

Street trees create a distinctive sense of place in Alexandra Road.

The prominence of green spaces and public amenity areas continues beyond this area in the adjacent football and rugby club grounds off Alexandra Road, and the playgrounds, gardens and recreational areas along the Promenade and westwards towards Newlyn.

From outside the area, from the Promenade and the rising ground around Newlyn and Alverton to the west, this area looks like a broad wooded vale, seemingly leading up to the crowning ornamental stands of trees in Penlee Park. The buildings appear to be set among the trees and it comes as something of a surprise to walk through these residential streets and realise just how densely built up they actually are. Even so, houses are set back from the road behind low walls, railings or planting, and greenery, gardens, palms, rubble walls and intimate, enclosed paths and alleys are the overriding impressions. There are occasional dramatic vistas over sloping rooftops either up to the parks or else out to sea; views along and down Morrab Road to the sea are particularly striking.

A pedestrian-friendly environment: lanes, boundary walls and lush greenery near Morrab Road.

Within the overall unity of the character area there are a number of discrete sub-areas. The oldest part, Alverton Road, stretches furthest from the central core of the town. It is a genteel ribbon development, with well-built 18th and 19th century granite rows and stuccoed
townhouses merging along its length with suburban villas. A clear-cut sense of enclosure or continuous street frontage is missing for much of the street because of the unusual width of the road combined with less than elegant 20th century buildings, car park and access roads on the south side and intrusive traffic engineering at its eastern end. Further west the road narrows, an embanked pavement, tall enclosing garden walls and mature trees give a sense of closure and of movement out into leafier suburbs and countryside. This is an historical legacy from when this was a wide country lane, probably a former medieval fair site, which has still not been fully subsumed within the urban fabric, and with an abrupt and not very elegant transition to the urban core at the roundabout by St John’s Hall.

Morrab Gardens lends a green setting to houses in St Mary’s Terrace and other nearby streets.

There is an isolated grid of humble mid 19th century cottages at Alverne Buildings (off the northern side of Alverton Road), an atypical and self-contained block of workers’ housing in this part of Penzance. These rows adjoin the site of a large candle factory and stand apart in their materials, detailing and streetscape from the 1930s housing surrounding them.

Clarence Street was built in 1827 to link the western approaches to the new bullock market at the northern end of Causewayhead. With the once-famous Western Hotel (now demolished), an extraordinary Baptist chapel and elegant stuccoed terraces, it was in effect a northward extension of the character of Alverton Road and Street.

More tightly spaced early 19th stucco and granite terraces are to be found on the periphery of the medieval core of the town. Elegant, and not always modestly so, inward-looking and with a sense of private enclosure, they are built along private or no-through roads, or lanes so small as to be almost footpaths, often going nowhere in particular, but sited to take advantage of picturesque views over former fields (in the case of North Parade) or to enjoy the landscaped setting of an adjacent large ornamental garden. These areas quite resolutely looked away from the core.

The granite-fronted later 19th century development in the area ranges from the large villas and institutional buildings on Alexandra Road to more modest houses nearby in Bay View Terrace.

Although predating the building of the Promenade, many of the streets have subsequently been drawn into the ‘esplanade’ character of that area, often making divisions between these two areas.
difficult to determine. Just off the Promenade is a mixed area of smaller cottage rows, again largely rendered with simple late-Regency classical detailing in a warren of narrow streets, mixed with workshops and yards.

Redinnick Terrace.

The large houses and grounds along Alverton Road set the trend for other large houses, spaciousness and greenery in the whole area west of the old town. Four of these houses survive in the central part of the wider area – Morrab, Penlee, Redinnick and Rose Villa. Although both the latter have seen their grounds developed, the greenery, trees, gardens and parkland of Penlee and Morrab, together with adjacent gardens along Alverton Road, and the football and rugby grounds off Alexandra Road, define the character of this area as much as the surrounding built environment.

Archaeological potential

Place-name evidence suggests an early Christian and manorial focus somewhere in or around the Lariggan valley. There is also potential for remains associated with the surviving medieval farm settlements and the sites of former mills here. Close to the shore there may be surviving evidence for informal use as landing places, fish cellars, ropewalks, net lofts and similar activities, and of the pleasure gardens, poorhouse and pottery complex around the Folly. Traces may also survive of the small industrial area centred on Alverton Bridge and of garden and domestic remains associated with the large 19th century houses in the area.
9. St Clare’s and Penalverne

(Fig 7 & character area summary sheet 9)

A green, low-density suburban area with a concentration of large-scale public and institutional uses, including hospital, cemetery, schools and cricket ground. It forms a gateway for traffic approaching Penzance from the north.

This is the most diffuse of Penzance’s character areas. Although not densely developed during the historic period, it was the focus for the spread of a variety of ‘public’ uses out of the centre along the ancient route from Penzance to its mother church at Madron: the 18th century borough workhouse and the gaol of 1825; the hospital itself developed from 1874 onwards, the cemetery was laid out by 1856, and extended in 1886, 1901 and 1913, and the cricket ground has been here since the mid 19th century. The institutional character of the area has persisted through a concentration of public buildings and uses: West Cornwall Hospital, Penwith District Council offices and leisure centre, the fire station, cricket ground, Penwith College and other schools and sports facilities.

Modern schools and other institutional functions are set within former fields and ornamental settings for large houses.

These are set within an open landscape of mainly large fields and plots separated by hedgerows and shelter-belts of mature trees, the remnants of the older agricultural landscape and the ornamental grounds of large houses - York House, St Clare; Polwithen - built in the vicinity from the early 19th century. The area forms an important green break between urban Penzance and the outer suburban settlements of Heamoor and Treneere. The requisite access routes, car parking and service areas belonging to these various public uses has not always matched the architectural or landscape qualities of the setting, however, and there are areas of uninspiring tarmac and ad hoc buildings.

Standing historic fabric plays a less immediate role in defining character here than the historic topography, yet there are substantial and important buildings. York House, a crenellated Gothic suburban villa of 1825, survives as the core of the District Council offices, while Polwithen (now the Bolitho School) was built about 1870 as one of the many houses of the Bolitho family around Penzance. The core of the hospital is still 19th and early 20th century, although much altered and extended and with little architectural unity. There are important incidental survivals - the lodge to Nancealverne, a Borough boundary stone by the entrance to the cricket ground, some small areas of granite setts along St Clare Street, for instance - but little overall continuity of streetscape, materials or architectural style.
The best architectural and historic ensemble is in fact the cemetery. The boundary walls, entrance gate and lodge and twin chapels are charming and the layout of the grounds with their rather overgrown evergreens standing for ever in memoriam is redolent of Victorian funereal landscapes. Individual memorials include those of some of the great names of the town - Boase, Bolitho, Branwell – of John Matthews who created so much of 19th century Penzance and the acclaimed Penzance-born artist Harold Harvey.

The hospital faces out to a streetscape that takes on a more urban character (part of Character Area 7). There is a small area of mid-late 19th century terraced housing here, built in the typical tight grids of north Penzance. Much of this housing was redeveloped in the mid 20th century.

Since construction of the A30 distributor road in the 1980s, this character area now forms one of the gateways into Penzance, a relatively pleasant, tree-lined and welcoming entrance into the town. Although traffic is busy along the main road, this is also an area of well-used pedestrian routes, particularly important given the numbers of school and college students, and visitors to the hospital and Council offices; the main road is also the principal pedestrian link to Heamoor, one of the largest of the satellite settlements outside Penzance. The road has been less given over to heavy traffic engineering than some of the other principal routes into Penzance, and retains much of the green, suburban quality of the surrounding uses.

**Archaeological potential**

Archaeological investigation on the proposed site of a sports hall at the cricket ground revealed significant deposits relating to occupation of the area in the Late Bronze Age and later prehistoric and Roman periods. It is likely that substantial associated remains survive in the area. A medieval chapel was also located in this area, traces of which were recorded in the 19th century.

The character area was formerly divided between at least two ‘manorial’ sites, Nancealverne and Treneere, and evidence of historic field systems may survive. There are also likely to be traces of garden and domestic activity associated with the large 19th century houses in the area.

The hospital was the site of an 18th and early 19th century workhouse, gaol, dispensary and school complex. Evidence of these earlier uses may survive beneath existing structures.
6 Regeneration and management

Characterisation of the historic environment of Penzance has revealed the essential dynamic factors underpinning the town’s character. Regeneration planning which is informed and inspired by these elements can take a sure-footed and proactive approach to creating beneficial change, reinforcing and enhancing existing character and ensuring that new developments are closely integrated into the existing urban framework, more focused on enhancing Penzance’s distinctiveness and strong ‘sense of place’, and ultimately more successful.

The characterisation process has also produced a valuable dataset on the historic fabric, archaeological potential and townscape character of the town. This information can be used as a conventional conservation and planning tool to define constraints, as a yardstick against which to measure new development and policy proposals, and as the basis of well founded conservation management, restoration and enhancement schemes and policies.

Character-based principles for regeneration

The principles outlined below, derived directly from the analysis of key character elements for the town and the assessments of the individual character areas, should underpin all regeneration initiatives in Penzance.

- Recognition of the superior quality and particular distinctiveness of Penzance’s historic environment.
- Commitment to achieving comparable quality and character in new buildings and evolving townscapes.
- Promoting a continuing diversity of functions and activities in the town.
- Respect for the different character areas within the town and a commitment to acknowledging and reinforcing the urban hierarchy and diversity they represent.

Regeneration and the historic environment: key themes for Penzance

Characterisation has highlighted regeneration and conservation opportunities for the historic area of Penzance as a whole and for specific areas and sites. These opportunities may be grouped under the following broad themes.

Understanding the asset

Penzance’s distinctive character is based firmly on its setting and the quality and diversity of its historic components. To be fully successful, any regeneration scheme, whether or not dealing directly with the historic environment, should take full account of these elements and ensure that appropriate designations and management policies are in place at an early stage.

This will benefit regeneration by giving certainty to the planning and development process. It also offers links to the priorities of funding programmes, especially Objective One’s requirements for enhancing local distinctiveness and respecting the cultural and historic resource.
Re-evaluating designations and the information base as part of this process might include:

- a review of the statutory list of historic buildings (recently updated for the harbour area);
- creating a supplementary list of locally significant structures (the ‘other historic buildings’ identified on Figure 5 and CSUS digital mapping offer an initial baseline);
- comprehensive buildings at risk and/or condition surveys;
- a review of the boundaries of the present Conservation Area (see Figure 5) and preparation of a Conservation Area Appraisal.

**Maintaining and promoting diversity**

Historically, and to the present, the prosperity of Penzance has been based on a diverse social and economic base, the aggregation of numerous, often relatively small, industrial, commercial and social activities. Highly visible large-scale developments such as the 19th century harbour expansion and railway were as much responses to the fundamental leaps in prosperity in the town as they were their progenitors.

In this context it is important to encourage comparable diversity in the present and the future. Concentration on ‘big-hit’ solutions to regeneration may divert attention from smaller, more easily achievable and more appropriate schemes which, because of their scale and variety, are likely to better integrate with the town’s historic character. In aggregate these are likely to produce as much, if not more, new employment, vitality and regeneration, with less potential conflict with the quality and diversity that is fundamental to Penzance and smaller overall impact on the historic built environment. Such schemes are likely to be most successful if carried out in the context of an overall vision for the future of the town.

**Natural setting and topography**

Much of Penzance’s character stems from its unique natural setting of great scenic charm and environmental importance. The town is unusually well known for its setting, widely visited and highly visible, even from the air.

It is crucial that important views are respected (and planned developments assessed within that context), particularly those into and out of the various character areas, into and out of the town and across Mount’s Bay to St Michael’s Mount. Additionally, the potential value of sensitively exploiting the scenic setting of the town in new development is very high.

**Respecting character**

Understanding of the specific qualities of the various character areas and respect for the urban hierarchy they represent is vital. Such understanding and respect has immediate practical applications, including:

- Appraising all proposals for change in terms of their potential for maintaining and enhancing character and Penzance’s distinctive sense of quality. This applies equally to minor changes to historic buildings and streetscapes and to large scale
Integrating conservation approaches to regeneration

The overall quality of the built environment in Penzance throws into sharp contrast a relatively small number of structures and sites where character has been eroded by a past lack of care or which are currently underused.

Traditional approaches to repair, maintenance and enhancement of historic buildings could be an increasingly important component of regeneration in Penzance, helping to improve attractiveness, support property values and benefit the overall condition of the housing and general building stocks.

‘Heritage’ oriented public funds such as HERS and THI could beneficially be used in conjunction with broader initiatives like LOTS and building condition and vacancy surveys. As well as reinstating distinctive architectural features on historic buildings and in the public realm, this could free up an available stock of buildings and sites for development and reuse and act as a significant catalyst to wider investment in the town. The result would be a sustainable source of brownfield development sites, increased occupation and help in meeting demand for (affordable) housing, thus securing the vitality of the town centre where historic buildings are concentrated.

There is potential for the local authority, RDA or other agencies to acquire, re-use, enhance and promote such sites as a stimulus and contribution to regeneration investment.

Enhancing townscape

A proactive approach to public realm enhancement offers potential for some relatively easily achieved schemes that could have a decisive effect on the quality of the town. This is especially the case for townscape improvements at key gateway points (Chyandour, Wherry Town, the north end of Causewayhead and the area around St John’s Hall). These are distinctive historic places on the periphery of the ancient core; they make the important initial impression on visitors that colours the whole of the subsequent experience of coming to Penzance.

Distinctive historic street details are a feature of Penzance.

Within the core, public realm schemes could make radical improvements in the quality of spaces and streetscape and the attractiveness of the town. Penzance benefits from an outstanding assemblage of historic street surfacing, furniture and ephemera, granite paving, boundary
stones, conduits and fountains, walls and raised pavements. Properly recorded and understood, these could form the basis of truly locally distinctive design for enhancements to the public realm.

Some key views and historic routes are obscured by signs, street furniture and traffic-management features. Such street ‘clutter’ could be reviewed, with potential for increasing the effectiveness of necessary signage and reducing unnecessary obstructions. A joint Civic Society – Penzance Area Town Forum initiative has already secured the removal of excess traffic signage in many sensitive sites and this area may be an opportunity for further community involvement.

**Strategic review of traffic issues**

Traffic related issues are a recurring theme in most conservation and regeneration initiatives in Penzance. Public reaction to various traffic management proposals in Penzance has given clear indications that only sensitive and creative design solutions are likely to be acceptable. Poorly designed solutions could well degrade and blight otherwise attractive areas and historic townscapes critical to the future success of the town.

Character and the historic environment can contribute to the design and effectiveness of traffic management schemes, as for example:

- enhancing ‘gateways’ on roads into the town emphasises the transition to an urban environment, with lower vehicle speeds, and thus reduces excessive and repetitive signage throughout the rest of the town;
- designing highways within the historic townscape as streets in which people move, live and work, rather than simply as roads for vehicle traffic (manifested, for example, in the scale of lighting and form of signs and surface treatments);
- placing streetscape improvements at the heart of future traffic management schemes, thus playing a key role in the enhancement of the public realm (no management scheme is likely to be accepted or successful unless accompanied by sensitive, appropriate and imaginatively designed enhancement works);
- recognising the value of the historic buildings and streetscapes in the transport interchange area and using these as the basis for an effective re-planning of the area (rather than considering traffic circulation in isolation from its immediate context).

To enable the historic environment to work most effectively in regeneration, a major issue is reduction of through traffic in the historic core. Relevant issues here are:

- introduction of a park and ride facility;
- encouraging greater use of the by-pass;
- greater pedestrian priority within the core area, allowing the recognition of and reclamation of important spaces and streets (not least for further development of open-air activities such as street markets and festival entertainments);
- radical reappraisal of public transport with the aim of providing improved access to all parts of the historic core,
adopting flexible routing and recognising the value of the 19th century circulatory road system. NB. Ross Bridge was created specifically as a link between the east and west sectors of the town. It is closed to traffic for short periods about five or six times a year but in this respect is an insignificant barrier to effective public transport; by comparison, London’s Tower Bridge, on a major transport artery, is closed about 1000 times a year.

**Improving connectivity**

Penzance is a town uniquely accessible to pedestrians. And yet there are significant barriers to pedestrian flow, for example around the transport interchange, the harbour and north end of Causewayhead.

![Abbey Street – an historic route to the foreshore.](image)

Utilising and improving historic links and connections, particularly pedestrian links and public transport links, could have significant regeneration benefits. Making places attractive can draw people in and through otherwise uninviting places. For instance, the streetscape around the Barbican does not effectively draw together the Quay, Chapel Street and the Promenade in the way that it could. Amending this is as much to do with improving townscape and signposting (both literally and figuratively) footpaths and small roads as it is about solving traffic problems along the Wharf Road – Quay - Promenade route, and could, indeed, obviate the need for intrusive or heavy-handed management solutions on that route. Similarly, the better linking of residential areas with public buildings and activities and with the commercial heart of the town should be an important underlying theme of regeneration.

Improved pedestrian links and activity also depends in part on greater security. This could be achieved by restrictive, controlling measures, but is much more effectively done by increasing use and passive surveillance levels - in other words drawing on the historic patterns of use in the town centre. Stimulating the connections between places, making the centre more attractive at all times, increasing uses and viability in ‘back street’ areas such as Bread Street or Jennings Lane are all valid regeneration objectives, and can all benefit from reference to historic fabric, uses, connections and patterns of movement. Increased occupation of underused commercial buildings through LOTS-type schemes could improve the connections between the core streets and the surrounding areas through the opening up and effective surveillance of alleys and paths that are currently blocked or underused.

**Presentation and promotion**

Penzance’s various attractions are well marketed via web sites, printed literature and other means, yet more could be done in the quality ‘branding’ of the town and to make it accessible to residents and visitors alike. Parts of the town are underused, not fully recognised for the qualities they have, nor easy to access.

Regeneration initiatives building on the town’s attractions in Chapel Street, Penlee Park and Morrab Gardens, the harbour and Promenade may need to begin with a review of the facilities, transport options (bus-routes and access to these places), quality of signage, street maps and promotion available, particularly around the transport interchange.
Tourism is inevitably a major driving force in this regard but quality rather than the mass market has always been characteristic of the town. In promoting this aspect, Penzance has the advantage over many rivals of an historic, sophisticated and high quality townscape and social and cultural setting.

The economic importance to Penzance and Penwith of arts and culture-based business and enterprises is growing ever-larger; it is now one of the largest employment sectors in the District. A place like Penzance, which lacks an obvious tourist beach, theme park or other ‘attraction’, relies heavily on its artistic and cultural reputation to attract visitors, business and residents alike.

The Acorn Theatre.
Photograph: Charles Winpenny, Cornwall CAM.

The fundamental issue here is that this cultural importance is almost entirely set within, and based upon, the town’s historical legacy. The historic environment of Penzance and the future enhancement of that character is unavoidably a key part of how Penzance presents itself to the wider world, how it is measured, and how it can compete in that wider world. The principal attractions are historic streets like Chapel Street; even the Promenade speaks more of the Victorian and Edwardian seaside than of a modern beach resort. Penzance, more specifically Penlee House, is the place to see the art of the Newlyn School, and Penlee is an historic house set within an historic, public park.

Examples could be multiplied, but Penlee serves as a model for the intimate relationship between art, culture and the historic environment in Penzance. Even the most up-to date expression of new trends in community arts, especially the Golowan Arts Trust, is located in an historic building in the Barbican; its most visible artistic expression is perhaps the bold flags on the Jubilee Pool, itself a listed building.

Coordinating change

The diversity of players within the regeneration process underlines the need for co-ordinating action and reducing uncertainty. There is a particular need for comprehensive conservation plans and management schemes for particular sites and areas of the town, to guide and inform future action.

Penzance’s high quality, diverse historic environment forms a crucial element in the town’s character and sense of place. It also creates major opportunities, to an extent that would justify allocation of significant resources to project development and obtaining funding. The aggregate benefit in increased economic activity, employment, and quality of life could far outweigh that derived from major infrastructure-based projects, with significantly less potential harm to the historic and natural environment.

The synergy of this approach with the aims of the Objective One programme, particularly measure 5b, was underlined in the Resource Review for Penzance and Newlyn undertaken in 2002: ‘There is therefore a real opportunity for some of
the heritage / land reclamation / historic building refurbishment / tourism and other projects, which capitalise on the distinctiveness of the area, to bid for funds under this measure. Targeting this measure should be a priority for the Project Delivery Team.’

Opportunities in the character areas

1a. The market core

Reassert role as urban hub
This was formerly the central focus of the town, accommodating many key functions and civic buildings. Reinstating some sense of this vital central historic role could help to underpin the long-term economic viability of Penzance. Locating Town Council functions or an additional Tourist Information Centre in the area could reinstate some sense of this being the civic heart of Penzance. St John’s Hall would be a particularly suitable location, with the added benefit of releasing land where the present Town Council offices stand, offering the opportunity to reinstate a high quality streetscape in the area. St John’s Hall is one of Penzance’s most important individual buildings and its setting and surroundings are critical to the character of the area. Enhancement of the grounds, particularly the forecourt area, as an element in promoting its full future use, could attract outside, public investment and be of major benefit to the community. This is no longer the primary shopping area (now Market Jew Street), nor does it provide pedestrian-friendly, specialist-shopping like Causewayhead or Chapel Street. Reinstating some element of the historic market in the area would restore a sense of commercial significance. There are a few permanent stall sites alongside the Market House itself but the phenomenal success of open-air markets elsewhere in Britain promises success for a similar provision in the mild climate of Penzance. This may require occasional street closures or permanent pedestrian-priority over at least part of the interwoven spaces here and could be considered as part of an integrated traffic and transport strategy. At the same time, maintaining the vitality and sense of movement of the area is of prime importance: Green Market’s role as a transport pick-up and dropping off point is one key to its continued vitality. Any revised traffic management regime and associated enhancements works will clearly be of major consequence to character and appearance.

Enhance permeability and the public realm
This area is one of the more permeable in the town. Spaces and streets are well connected by footways, some of which lead only to rear yards (but could easily be opened up), while others are dingy and uninviting. Some or all could be enhanced through a review of access and security and improvements to signage. Rear spaces, including the car parks behind Alverton Street and in North Parade could be considerably improved in appearance. The quality of surfacing and streetscape ephemera along the streets and rear lanes is very high and distinctive. These elements should inform enhancement schemes; standard ‘heritage’ public realm materials and techniques would do little to add to the quality of the area.
Maintain historic fabric
Enhanced permeability offers linked opportunities to improve access to premises above or to the rear of the frontage shops; a LOTS scheme could extend the vitality, security and value of the area. Such a programme would involve partnerships, management and surveillance agreements with private owners as well as the public realm enhancements.

A complementary strategy would be the development of grant schemes based on the high quality of the historic built environment in the area. This is reflected in the concentration of Listed Buildings, including many of the highly distinctive structures of the later 19th century. The immediate setting of the Market House could provide a focus for HERS or THI schemes. For such an important central area, the built environment is not always well appreciated, presented or maintained. The relatively high turnover of occupiers and smaller scale of operation here does not tend towards continuity of design, maintenance and decoration of the frontages.

Reinstate character and quality
The overall townscape is of high quality in this area, despite the poor quality of many of the 20th century buildings. There are strong visual links and views between the south side of Market Jew Street and the harbour, but the streets here are unattractive to pedestrians and are under used. Fortunately, the surviving historic topography, remaining diversity of historic plots, stepped slopes, street pattern and other elements provide an opportunity to break down the scale and impact of modern development; redevelopment here should aim to re-create a sense of place, with active frontages, pleasant streets and improved connectivity, making an effective draw between the harbour area and the town centre. Plans for individual sites (the corner plot to New Town Lane, in particular) should be informed by existing plot proportions, heights, relative differences between the north and south sides, street lines, use of materials, etc. In other words, the historic grain itself can shape the saving of this blighted area of townscape.

1b. Market Jew Street
This is a key ‘gateway’ to Penzance for many visitors. It presents immediate issues, largely related to traffic management and streetscape design. It also offers long-term development potential, for which historic characterisation will be of paramount importance.

There is potential for a review of public realm provision in the area, particularly aimed at ensuring that the quality and
pride of place evident in historic components such as the Terrace are emulated in modern interventions. In this respect, both the bulky planters on the south side of the street and the hanging baskets and poles on the Terrace are obtrusive in the streetscape.

**Increase evening and Sunday activity**
Despite the congestion and liveliness during peak hours, the area looks closed and deserted at other times. Measures to increase the sense of life in the evening and provide a more stimulating environment could improve vitality, security and value, diversify and expand economic activity and help to stimulate the vibrancy of the adjoining harbour area. The promotion of LOTS schemes aimed at both upper storeys and rear premises (especially in Bread Street, Jennings Lane and New Street) could achieve much in this respect.

So, too, could flexible use of town-centre shopping hierarchies in the Local Plan, recognising that Penzance has historically always had very diverse commercial uses in all its main shopping streets, and that tight zoning of particular uses is not characteristic and could be counter-productive.

The success of open air charity bazaars, fetes and shows on the Promenade on summer Sundays suggests an additional potential way of extending life in this area out of normal shopping hours.

**Resolve vehicle – pedestrian conflict**
There are critical traffic issues in Market Jew Street, with significant congestion (accompanied by noise and fumes) and vehicle-pedestrian conflict. The pavement on the south side is narrow and constricted further by planters and bus queues. These problems should be tackled in the context of an integrated traffic and transport strategy which reduces traffic in the core area, but this can itself be informed by character. The liveliness and accessibility of the street scene comes in part from traffic as well as people, so that pedestrian priority (rather than full pedestrianisation) is appropriate. The quality of the Terrace gives clues to real quality of streetscape possible throughout Market Jew Street; even at the lower, ‘gyratory’ end of the street, there is good townscape. The blighting effect of traffic flows could be minimised by emphasising the character of the area as a street, a place primarily for people rather than traffic, and stressing the quality of the environment over the traffic engineering ‘clutter’.

**1c. Chapel Street**
Chapel Street is the premier urban street in Penzance, an icon of the town and at the core of community pride and the potential experience for visitors. It is unlikely ever to offer many new development opportunities, unless in the numerous rear courtyards, but is important to regeneration precisely because of its major historic value.

The street is well promoted in the main body of interpretation and publicity material, but its existence is not necessarily evident to casual visitors. Anecdotal
evidence suggests that many visitors arriving in the transport interchange area are unaware of it as an 'attraction', or are unwilling or unable to make the relatively long journey to it on foot. It would therefore be worthwhile to review promotion available around the transport interchange, information provided to visitors by transport operators and transport options facilitating access to the street itself.

**Maintain quality uses**

‘Quality’ uses are as important to the character of the area and its continued vitality as the quality of the built environment. The role of the street as a focus for the arts and cultural life of Penzance is particularly significant. The Hypatia Trust has redeveloped an important historic building in the street (Trevelyan House) as an arts and cultural meeting place, library and venue. Chapel Street also contains the Penzance Arts Club, also situated in a major historic building, while new gallery space, including a new venue for the Newlyn Art Gallery, is being developed in the adjoining Princes Street. The repair and refurbishment of the 18th century theatre in the rear of the Union Hotel is a significant opportunity in this respect: the uses projected for the building could prove a major catalyst for further developing specialised cultural activities in Penzance.

The importance of these sorts of ventures to Penzance cannot be overstated. Not only do they maintain the high quality of use and appearance that Chapel Street demands, but, with arts, media and culture already one of the major sources of employment and wealth generation in Penwith as a whole, they are central to one of the major developing areas of the local economy. Further growth of these uses is crucial to maintaining the street’s vitality and to enhancing its role as the main link between the town centre and the Quay and Promenade areas.

In this context it is of primary importance that the historic buildings here are kept in good repair and full use and that their setting is maintained and enhanced. Applied here, traditional conservation constraints combined with grant aid schemes and sensitive and restrained streetscape and public realm works will have a disproportionately high knock-on benefit to the town as whole.

**1d. Causewayhead**

This is a busy and vibrant area but the shift in the commercial focus of Penzance towards the lower end of Market Jew Street means that occupation levels are fluid: some properties have remained empty or underused for considerable periods, especially some of the smaller and older ones towards the northern end of the street. The liveliness of the street scene is attributable, to a large extent, to informal pavement advertising and displays; the bland and rather cluttered public realm (concrete paviers, planters, seats, iron bollards, hanging basket poles, etc.) detracts from this vitality.

**Maintain the historic fabric**

Causewayhead has very good survival of historic fabric, much of it of very high
quality and interest, with a good sequence of shop fronts and little intrusive modern building. Given this quality, the street is a good candidate for established conservation-based regeneration approaches. Such schemes could help reinstate and enhance the quality of the historic fabric and appearance, improving attractiveness and value and supporting full economic use of properties. LOTS-type schemes could again improve values, occupancy and out-of-hours vitality in the area.

Increase use of ancillary buildings and spaces
Allied to this is increased use for the interesting outbuildings, workshops and yards that are important to the area’s character. Those on the west side of the street in particular have good access from the delightfully rough-metalled lane to the rear of Clarence Street. Erosion or loss of these buildings could result in a similar poverty of townscape as already exists in the southern part of this area, where wholesale demolition has taken place for a car park. They too, therefore, could be considered for grant schemes, and for use in LOTS-type schemes.

There is also an opportunity to improve the connections between the street with the surrounding areas, and the overall permeability of this part of the town, through the opening up and effective passive surveillance of alleys and paths which are currently blocked or underused.

There is potential for increasing the use of the important complex of enclosed market yards and the wide area around the small circular market office. Such uses might include extending the present street markets and introducing open-air performances.

Enhance the public realm
Heritage-based grant programmes and urban design initiatives (for example, THI and Civic Pride) could help towards the enhancement of streetscape, particularly for focal structures and buildings such as the market yards at the northern end of the street. Investment in the quality of the public realm could better suggest quality overall; granite paving does much to achieve this around the market areas, for instance, and the lower end of Causewayhead should be regarded as part of this environment. Measures like this could better integrate the street with the main shopping and visitor movements focused on Green Market and the Market House.

Improve access and connectivity
Causewayhead has historically ended rather abruptly at its northern end, but there is today an unsatisfactory transition to adjoining roads and unresolved parking and traffic management issues. Improvements in surfacing, streetscape and traffic management here could provide a satisfactory end stop to the street and also make this an important and welcoming gateway into the town centre. Currently access from this direction is difficult, particularly on foot, yet this is the only pedestrianised street in Penzance and the focus of many pedestrian routes in the busy north-western quarter of the town. The function of this nodal point within the traffic and pedestrian circulation systems could be a major point in a future transport strategy review.
1e. The back streets
Opportunities in this character area coincide closely with those proposed for the rest of the central portion of the town. Those particularly appropriate include:

- improving pedestrian links and activity, combined with greater security (planned in reference to historic fabric, uses, connections and patterns of movement);
- increasing occupation of underused buildings through LOTS-type schemes.

Promote appropriate development
The centrally located back yards and streets, underused buildings and gap sites in the area offer a range of brownfield development sites, development of which would increase occupation and help meet demand for high-density affordable and sheltered housing, further contributing to the vitality of the town centre.

The challenge lies in avoiding overlarge developments based on clearance and amalgamation of plots, but rather following historic character and developing individual plots and yards and buildings, small-scale and inward-looking. Keeping development, scale, rents and ‘improvements’ low-key would help stimulate the arts and culture, food and drink and other growth industries (like IT) that are already concentrated in these areas. Low rents, empty floors, warehouse type structures, all encourage these sorts of enterprise, already in aggregate a major part of the local economy. The back streets of Penzance have a large stock of appropriate buildings offering a major resource to further stimulate this sector.

2a. Transport interchange
Redefine as a place for people
This key gateway area is currently one of circulating, confusing and confused traffic, dominated by signs, lights, dangerous junctions and crossings, especially for pedestrians, and poor integration of facilities and uses. There is a need to recognise the value of the historic buildings and streetscapes in the area and treat it as part of the urban core rather than just a gyratory system. Key requirements here are to resolve vehicle – pedestrian conflicts, review the ‘street clutter’ of signage, railings, traffic engineering structures and street furniture and enhance the public realm.

Penzance is a town uniquely accessible to pedestrians and this area is actually part of both the main commercial area, Market Jew Street, and the wider harbour zone. Recognition of this provides the basis for
an effective re-organisation of the area and creation of a true transport interchange of real character and quality.

**Review opportunities for the harbour car park**
The car park area is currently bleak and unattractive. Opportunities range from restoring the former tidal harbour over part or all of its extent, or landscaping the existing car park with additional minor improvements to facilities, to substantial redevelopment. In planning for this area, the sense of it as part of the former open harbour should be retained, maintaining the primacy of Wharf Road as the historic urban edge. Whatever actions are taken to create waterfront activity in this area, the scale, particularly the height and visibility, of development should be carefully controlled.

**2b and 2c. The harbour**
The harbour has been the focus of most of the recent regeneration proposals for Penzance. The timescales and potential for realisation of the various initiatives remain uncertain, however, and it is appropriate here to concentrate on the underlying principles for regeneration planning which derive from characterisation and the historic environment.

**View the harbour within a wider context**
The dominance of the harbour area in the overall potential for regeneration becomes less clear-cut when seen in the wider context of the historic environment of Penzance. Indeed, to overload the harbour area with expectations for regeneration could do it a disservice and make real solutions more difficult to find.

Overall, characterisation and historical analysis highlight the complementary rather than primary role which the harbour has played in the past economic vitality of the town (and in the present) and the diversity of economic activity based more or less loosely around it. In consequence, large-scale regeneration in Penzance is more likely to result from the aggregate impact of numerous relatively small achievable schemes all around the town, rather than a ‘big-hit’ infrastructure initiative focused in one area.

In the harbour area itself, substantial opportunities lie in the cumulative effects of a number of smaller potential interventions. These are certainly likely to include improvements to harbour facilities for resident and visiting vessels, resolution of problems relating to loading and unloading the *Scillonian* and reductions in traffic blight and vehicle–pedestrian conflict. In addition there are significant opportunities arising from the area’s high quality historic environment itself and from reinstating character and distinctiveness.

**Seek opportunities from the historic environment**
The quality and significance of the historic environment in the harbour area has been recognised in the ‘listing’ of a number of harbour area structures. This should not be perceived as a constraint: listing means that opportunity sites such as the Abbey Warehouse now have a ‘quality’ tag to them; even gap sites along Wharf Road are placed in the context of a valued, not a devalued landscape. At the same time, designation opens up new areas of funding and support.

Restoration and re-use of the Abbey Warehouse is likely to be a key exemplar and focal regeneration initiative, but it is
important that this and other interventions are carried out in a manner sensitive to the location. A co-ordinated master plan based on detailed characterisation should guide both this and development of the gap sites. Finding beneficial uses for other under-used historic buildings in the area will also be important.

The distinctive Lifeboat House is now isolated from the harbour by the road and landscaped amenity area. Future interventions should avoid isolating other individual sites and buildings around the harbour in this way.

**Enhance public access and facilities**

The presence of several tourism-related businesses and the Lighthouse Museum underline the significance of the harbour area as a visitor draw. While recognising that the harbour is a working and industrial environment, there is potential for improving the pedestrian experience in the area, particularly along the main through road, and improving access to and use of the water edges and piers. The harbour area is one of the most stimulating, attractive and interesting in Penzance. One of the great delights of the town is to walk out to the ends of the piers and look back over the harbour and town; this is presently neither encouraged nor apparently widely experienced.

Better integration of the area with Quay Street and the Promenade area could be achieved by improving the public realm around the Barbican, and there is also potential to enhance links between the harbour and town. The visibility and impact of the large harbour car park could be reduced through appropriate landscaping.

**3. The Barbican**

This area presents some of the most significant opportunities for regeneration in Penzance, and some of the most complex issues; regeneration and the historic environment are particularly interdependent here. The direct challenge is how to give back to the area a sense of place and form relevant to its history and topography, recognising that this also has critical implications for the success of wider regeneration.

**Recognise the area’s significance**

The area is in a crucial position within Penzance, surrounded by townscape of the highest significance and with a concentration around it of attractions and key economic activities. It acts not just as a link between neighbouring areas, particularly for pedestrians trying to avoid the dangerous traffic flows through the harbour area, but is also critical to their proper functioning. It provides offices, storage, loading space, and parking for the quay and docks and accommodates a major part of the pub, café and leisure function of the harbour side. It serves also as an access, refreshment and parking area for the Jubilee Pool, Battery Rocks and Promenade, and for the flagship urban streetscape of the town in Chapel Street. Additionally it is a focus of Golowan festivities, the biggest single event and attraction in the town.

The area is therefore a crucial factor in regeneration planning for the Promenade, Jubilee Pool and harbour area, and even for changes in traffic management regimes along Wharf Road – the Quay and Chapel Street. These will not achieve their full potential if the impact on the area is not fully taken into account.
Create an integrated master plan for the area

The current townscape and regeneration issues here result in large measure from 20th century changes, from the 1930s slum clearances to piecemeal later development of plots without reference to their surroundings. It is imperative that the same mistakes are not repeated. The area would benefit from consideration as a whole with the development of an appropriate unified strategy and master plan. The points outlined below should constitute significant elements of this.

- Respect for the existing high quality 1930s townscape immediately to the south of the Character Area. The Pool, memorial, gardens and Yacht Inn complex offers a comprehensive design aesthetic both for a unifying space and associated uses. The alternative piecemeal approach to development of the various gap sites may neither reinstate the townscape nor provide the improved connectivity between various areas that is required.

- Recognise the appropriate scale for future development. Future change needs to work to an appropriately small scale within a tight grain, creating space and connections around pedestrians and not repeating the development of overlarge individual buildings. The example of high density ‘urban village’ schemes based on traditional tightly developed streets could be a significant model.

- Understanding the importance of the historical and archaeological legacy. This is perhaps the most sensitive area archaeologically in the town and, while the potential for development to restore the sense of individual place is perhaps the greatest in Penzance, constraints are likely to be significant. Proper recognition of this, and the building of these factors into development briefs and proposals, could be a major element in avoiding costs and delays at later stages and thus helping secure viable solutions.

Reinstate character and quality

With its present rather degraded streetscapes, the Barbican area will be less successful in ‘pulling’ people from the adjoining character areas, especially from Chapel Street down to the water front. It is also less likely to attract investment in new business or be attractive for housing. Yet, the existence of gap sites and large mid 20th century commercial buildings apparently ripe for redevelopment creates an important opportunity to reclaim some of the damaged townscape, improve urban form, reinstate a sense of the historic streetscape and, very importantly, provide a fitting setting for Penzance’s most important group of historic buildings, especially St Mary’s Church.

There are also management issues. Parking and traffic congestion have considerable adverse impact on the quality of the area. Revised road and parking regimes could ease traffic congestion and allow considerable townscape improvements.

4. Promenade

Overall aims for this area relate to improving access to the Promenade and beach, improving appearance and facilities and resolving traffic issues. The Promenade is a key asset for Penzance and achieving these aims could be a major stimulus to regeneration.

Seek enhancements in the short term

The major structural and maintenance problems associated with the Promenade and the wider infrastructure issues of access and traffic management require solution. At the same time, the Promenade has not been signalled as being in danger of major failure in the short or medium-term. It will, as with other seaside promenades in Britain,
always be subject to the effects of severe weather.

Similarly, managing conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is only partly dependent upon the outcomes of a comprehensive strategic review of traffic in the town.

There is, therefore, potential to achieve a number of significant enhancements in the short term, building confidence, improving the public realm and developing facilities. It is important to recognise that there has been a decline in economic activity and vitality here and follow a course which will work towards reinstating this aspect of the historic character of the Promenade. Examples of possible actions for the area include:

- improvements to St Anthony’s Gardens, the spaces used by Golowan and the quay fairs and by occasional community and charity events near Alexandra Road;
- completion of the Wherry Town skateboard park;
- celebratory design approaches to enhancing the Promenade surface and associated structures (shelters, seating, etc.);
- measures to limit traffic speeds.

5. Wherry Town

Review designated uses

This area includes potential development sites unusually large for Penzance. While the historic character is certainly one of industrial use, there has been almost total loss of the associated historic fabric and topography and, given the location adjacent to the Promenade, it is appropriate to review the continued suitability of these sites for commercial – industrial allocation alone. Other uses would be likely to allow significant reintegration of the streetscape with conjoining areas.

Park-and-ride in some form may be appropriate in this area; the car park is already used in this way for visitors to the Newlyn and Mousehole Christmas lights. Parking provision on some of the land on the north side of the main road, rather than on the Promenade side, would enable re-establishment of the former gardens, entertainment venues and similar leisure facilities on the Promenade itself.

Archaeological potential in this area is high, but with the exception of the good early 20th century industrial shed behind the Co-op, a survival of the former industrial complex, there is little standing fabric that is worthy of retention.

The resultant opportunity to restore Bedford Bolitho gardens as part of the linear park of the Promenade and a connection with the wider recreational
facilities of Western Green – Lariggan could be a major stimulus to the area.

6. Chyandour

Enhance as a ‘gateway’
The historic character of the Chyandour area could contribute significantly to regeneration by developing the idea of a gateway into Penzance, re-creating a distinct sense of place and thus marking a real transition into an urban landscape. The success of this approach will be to an extent dependent on measures to manage traffic flows; currently, what should be a spectacular, scenic entrance to the town, full of historic and picturesque interest, is scarcely apparent to drivers or pedestrians as they struggle with the narrow road, noise and fumes.

Ensure quality in redevelopment
This area has some of the very few sites in Penzance within the Penwith Draft Local Plan allocated for small-scale industrial or workshop use. While this echoes historic uses, current design and use aesthetics for industrial buildings are unlikely to complement the scenic and historic quality of the area. Re-allocation to residential use might be appropriate; but, rather than revising or losing the industrial allocations, this area could be targeted and promoted for higher quality businesses. Access and space here will always be constrained, but as part of major improvements and enhancements of the quality of the area, specialised, high quality uses and buildings could be attracted.

Improve links
Improving links with the town centre and transport interchange could mean not just looking at the main road, but reconnecting this area with the beach and coastal foot and cycle ways. There is also potential for improving connections with Ponsandane and Gulval, making more attractive and effective the existing scenic walk up the Chyandour valley and developing new links through the scattered properties and streets along the slopes of Lescudjack.

Sustain the green element
Given the overwhelming predominance of trees and greenery in this area, the implementation of co-ordinated management and tree replacement strategies, including management of the wider topography of Lescudjack Hill and hillfort, hedgerows, gardens and designed landscapes, could considerably enhance the attractions of this key gateway into the town centre.

7. Lescudjack and the Battlefields
The major significance of this predominantly residential area for regeneration is its character as a high quality urban landscape, reflected in its status as part of the Penzance Conservation Area. Maintenance and enhancement of buildings could considerably improve the quality and value of the housing stock, while there are also interesting and unusual pieces of streetscape (dated water shutes, good paving, steps and railings) that could benefit from sensitive public-realm works and enhancement schemes. All such works should be guided by a clear understanding of the different historical phases of development and associated acute differences in character, design, materials and treatments (for example, between the earlier 19th century stuccoed streets and later granite-built terraces).

Promote beneficial reuse for historic buildings
Within this area, and particularly on the periphery, there are numbers of large, well-designed historic industrial buildings, chapels and schools of considerable townscape value. Some of these currently stand underused or empty; many or most could benefit from targeted enhancement schemes and grant aid to improve both buildings and setting. This could have a
considerable impact on a wider area, given their focal, eye-catching qualities.

An audit of these buildings and of the local demand for commercial or community space could help to identify appropriate new uses.

Enhance the primary through route
Several of these buildings are located along the Taroveor Road - Mount Street route; this road could play a significant role in any revised transport system for Penzance, it certainly has great potential for enhancement in terms of its streetscape and pedestrian access along and across it. Rather than being a barrier, as it sometimes appears to be, it could provide a focus for regeneration of local facilities. Improving the quality of this street scene could help reverse the trend towards closure of corner shops.

Restore links with the centre
Throughout this area, connections between core residential streets and the peripheral area have lost much of their historic quality, largely due to traffic-related problems. This most pedestrian-orientated and permeable area can seem somewhat cut off from the rest of Penzance. Reductions in traffic flows and the enhancement of the peripheral streetscapes could help re-integrate these streets with the commercial and tourist heart of Penzance, allowing all to share effectively in regeneration of the central area.

Enhance the ‘gateway’ area
The real gateway point to the town centre from the north is at the southern end of St Clare Street, in the area by the walled bullock market (see Causewayhead character area). The disjointed, ill-defined streetscape here and along St Clare Street is at odds with the quality of the built environment (including the 20th century housing schemes). Investment in enhancing the street environment could have a marked effect on the vitality and value (economically and socially) of the area, perhaps achieved through Civic Pride or a similar scheme, while THI environmental enhancements may also be appropriate given the important historic structures around the bullock market.

Reinstate character and quality on Chyandour Cliff
Proposed redevelopment of sites along Chyandour Cliff has raised local concern about quality of design and impact on the streetscape. This indicates a strong and growing local awareness of the potential for these sites to reinstate a sense of place, of re-creating a street (for people) here from what is too often regarded merely as a traffic route into the town. Development should also recognise the ‘gateway’ character of this area: it is the first image many people have of Penzance, and historically buildings here, domestic and public (Police Station, Battery, Coastguard), have made bold statements
about the quality to be found within the town. Reinstating that sophisticated, bold and impressive quality would do much to promote Penzance’s image and sense of welcome.

**Maintain community facilities**

The Princess May Recreation Ground is a valuable recreational space for local residents, especially important given that most other formal recreational facilities are at some distance. It is also the site of large visiting fairs and occasional events (one reason for its early 20th century purchase and layout by the Borough). Reinstatement of its historic quality will have benefits for the whole town.

**8. Alverton and Morrab**

The primary significance of this area for regeneration is in the quality of its individual components and as a townscape of striking charm and character. It contributes substantially to Penzance’s unique sense of place and its high quality character merits appropriate maintenance and protection. In this respect traditional approaches to conservation and management of public spaces and facilities are likely to have the greatest continuing impact.

**Ensure long-term sustainability of the ‘green’ element**

The registered historic gardens at Morrab, park at Penlee and public facilities within them (Penlee Museum and Art Gallery in particular) are key attractions for visitors and priceless facilities for residents; they are also surrounded by luxuriant private gardens and mature street trees, creating a remarkable townscape. A long-term strategic approach to sustainable management of the whole of this wider landscape could attract funding and have with wider employment and training benefits. The growing importance of gardens as a major part of visitor experience in Cornwall offers potential for promotion of these resources, perhaps in conjunction with important gardens elsewhere in West Penwith.

**Review promotion and visitor access**

Casual visitors to Penzance may not be fully aware of the attractions of this area. Well marketed and promoted as they are, they are at some distance from the rail, bus and coach stations; bus routes, town maps and guidance at the transport interchange could all improve accessibility.

**Ensure quality and character in development**

There are occasional sites in and around the area with potential for redevelopment. This area relies on the quality of its historic environment and streetscapes and it is vital that new development is designed to respect and enhance these assets. Of particular significance in this respect is the Bellair health centre in Alverton Road, redevelopment of which is clearly important because of the facility it provides but which will also be a test of how well something of real quality of our own times can be fitted into (and in some measure reinstate) an historic townscape of the highest order. As it is on one of the principal routes into the town, it could be one of the most prominent developments in Penzance in the near future, and set a benchmark for future quality.

**9. St Clare’s and Penalverne**

With the development of a new sports and leisure centre adjacent to the District...
Council Offices in St Clare Street, this area is set to play an important part in the regeneration programme for Penzance.

**Sustain and enhance the green element**

Given the overwhelming predominance of trees and greenery in this area, the implementation of co-ordinated management and tree replacement strategies, including maintenance of the surviving underlying topography of hedgerows and designed landscapes, could considerably enhance the attractions of this key gateway into the town centre.

The knock-on effect of increased traffic and increased pedestrian activity in the area needs to be considered. There are already large, rather insensitively handled parking areas and access roads; floodlighting, barrier fencing around sports fields and increased parking could be destructive of the ‘green’ and landscaped character of the area. Maintaining and enhancing the high quality historic and natural environment of the area will enhance the ability of facilities here to compete successfully with other attractions.

**Improve and develop pedestrian access**

The connectivity and accessibility of the area is something of an issue – there are already high pedestrian flows along the main road, yet this area contains large open spaces, much public land and many underused or cut-off paths. A programme of footpath creation would flow naturally from the character and topography of the area, could enhance the accessibility of the various facilities, improve links between Heamoor and the town centre and reduce reliance on the busy, noisy and sometimes dangerous main road.

The southern part of the area would benefit from inclusion in schemes to improve the townscape around the bullock market.
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**Historic maps**

Tithe map for Madron parish (1841)

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**Websites**

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**Cornwall County Council Historic Environment Record**

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Aerial photographs (obliques 1988 - 2002)