

# Little Petherick

## Conservation Area Character Statement



(front cover)

*Little Petherick is situated in the steep-sided valley of Petherick Creek, a tributary of the River Camel. The busy Padstow-Wadebridge road bisects the village as it descends to the bridge at the tidal limit of the creek.*

## INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas are designated by local planning authorities under the Planning Acts. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a Conservation Area as *an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*. North Cornwall District Council, as the local planning authority, has a duty to designate appropriate parts of its area as Conservation Areas. At present there are some 8,500 Conservation Areas in England of which 29 are in the district of North Cornwall. During the preparation of the North Cornwall District Local Plan the centre of Little Petherick was identified as a potential Conservation Area. Following public consultation it was designated as a Conservation Area by North Cornwall District Council on 3 February 1997.

### The Village of Little Petherick

Little Petherick is situated in a small and picturesque valley on an inlet of the River Camel between Padstow and St. Issey. In the centre of the village a narrow stone bridge carries the busy A389 Padstow - Wadebridge road across the creek. The old Cornish name 'Nansfonteyn' meant 'the spring in the valley', but from the 14th century the village has been known as Little Petherick. 'Petherick' is derived from Petroc, the Celtic saint to whom the church is dedicated. 'Little' distinguishes it from the larger earlier monastic foundation at nearby Padstow.

*A traffic calming scheme has been introduced to reduce traffic speeds and control its flow over the bridge.*

Today this small village is part of St. Issey parish. Apart from the church, there is a village hall and a hotel. A parking area for public use is provided behind the village hall. In summer this is well used by visitors walking along



part of the historic Saints Way route between Padstow and St. Issey. Recently, a traffic calming scheme has been introduced in order to improve road safety and conditions for pedestrians in the village.

## Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary has been drawn to include the historic core of the village around the bridge and church together with the landscape elements which provide the essential backdrop to the village setting.

The purpose of this statement is threefold:

- to analyse the special character and appearance of Little Petherick
- to outline the planning policies and controls applying to the Conservation Area
- to identify opportunities for enhancement



*Mature trees form an important element of the bowl-shaped setting of the village.*

## THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### Historical Context

The history of Little Petherick mirrors that of other settlements around the Camel Estuary such as Chapel Amble and St. Kew. From Padstow, a landing point for Irish and Welsh Celtic Christian missionaries, the surrounding area was colonised. Little Petherick was developed as a subsidiary settlement by the Welsh missionary St. Petroc who arrived in the early 6th century and was active in the neighbourhood for about 30 years. The elevated position of the church of St. Petroc Minor is typical of many in the area (e.g. St. Tudy, St. Teath and St. Kew) and is indicative of the site's original function as a preaching point and place of religious assembly.

The choice of site is probably related to the historic limit of navigation on Petherick Creek. Some of the wharves and quays where goods such as lime and grain were loaded are still clearly visible on the west side of the creek. There are also old quarries nearby. Immediately upstream was the lowest



*The Church of St Petroc Minor has 14th century origins, but was largely rebuilt in the mid-Victorian period. Its elevated position is indicative of the site's original function as an open air preaching point established by Celtic missionaries during the 5th and 6th centuries.*

convenient bridging point on creek for the old pack-horse route between Padstow and London. The present bridge dates from 1830. Following the extension of the North Cornwall Railway in 1889 barge and horse traffic gradually ceased.

Little Petherick is also situated on a historic route now known as the Saints Way. This was used in early Mediaeval times by pilgrims travelling to Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain. Pilgrims set out from South Wales and the Bristol area, disembarked at Padstow, went overland to Lostwithiel from where they sailed for Brittany. They then journeyed through France and Spain to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.

### **The Present Character and Appearance of the Village**

Little Petherick is cradled in a tight bowl-shaped valley which lies at the margin between two major habitat types - the tidal waters of Petherick Creek and the farmland of the interior. The focus of the settlement is on the west bank of the creek around the church. As an aid to understanding, the village is analysed in more detail below, in the following order:

- *Setting*
- *Building Character*

#### ***Setting:***

On both sides of the valley the main road descends in steep curves down towards the narrow stone bridge at the east end of the village. Although

the traffic calming scheme signs at the top of the hill on each side give some advance notice of the approach to the village centre, the sense of arrival is not confirmed until Tredoe Cottage on the east side and Carthew Alms on the west side are reached. From these points the first clear views of the bridge and church are obtained.

Other than the line of mostly modern development extending along the creek towards the old quays, the dominant spatial character is one of enclosure. The pronounced form of the valley setting is reinforced by other features. Trees in particular are very important to the character of the village, providing a backdrop behind the church and Rock Cottages, and giving an added sense of depth to the village's position. A similar effect is created by the trees growing up above the rock cuttings through which the main road approaches either side of the village.

Walls in front of buildings also emphasise the land form. On the north side of the main road the church and Rock Cottages are built up on retaining walls. On the south side there are front garden walls and privet hedges with stepped gardens up the hillside towards Ballamminer's Cottage adding to the terraced effect.

The road bridge which marks the eastern entry point to the village is a further constraint. The volume of vehicular traffic detracts from the potential for pedestrians to enjoy the natural attractions of the surrounding scene, despite narrowing of the carriageway as part of the traffic calming scheme. As in other parts of the village, the shape of the valley and the dense tree cover generates strong light and shade contrasts, here enhanced by the movement of water running under the bridge. From points near the bridge public footpaths run northward along both sides of the creek. Important woodland runs along the western margin of the creek whilst its

*Little Petherick Bridge was built in 1820 using local stone and slate dressings, following the raising of a voluntary rate by the Rev. Richard Lyne.*



*The Old Mill, now a hotel, is a prominent building beside the bridge. An 18th century building with 19th century additions and alterations, the front elevation retains much of its early 19th century glazing - the 12-pane hornless sliding sashes typical of that period. The rear has however been altered with the introduction of 20th century mock bow windows and casement style openings.*



eastern edge is more open, fringed with a line of trees and shrubs giving way to pasture with less abundant hedgerow growth. To the south, however, there is no public access along the valley through the grounds of the old mill. There is a significant avenue of trees running in this valley, consisting of mature lime, sycamore, ash and oak.

From the high ground on the south edge of the village at Ballamminer's Farm, there is a panoramic view southwards over farmland, where narrow tree-clothed valleys interconnect with abundantly vegetated hedgerows and pastures. Looking northwards, there is also an attractive vignette of the creek.

### ***Building Character:***

Crossing the bridge from the east into the centre of Little Petherick, the Church of St. Petroc Minor overlooks the village and dominates the scene. The church building has 14th century origins, but in 1858 was taken down almost to its foundations and rebuilt by William White. It has a squat Victorian tower with carved granite pinnacles and pyramidal slate roof. The remainder of the church is more domestic in scale than most Cornish churches, with gabled dormer windows and leaded lights. There is also

some fine interior work from the early 20th century by Sir Ninian Comper. The churchyard includes some specimen plantings - evergreen oaks, yews, beech, ash and sweet chestnut. The evergreen trees are quite dominant. From the footpath behind the church there are views back towards the village which highlight the importance of the tree canopy - clusters of ash, sycamore, beech and some eucalyptus dominate with the slate rooftops protruding through occasionally.

Set back from the road immediately adjacent to the bridge is the Village Hall. Together with the adjoining caretaker's cottage it also dates from the early 20th century (1907) - and reflects the Arts and Crafts tradition of that period. It has a rag slate roof with sprocketed eaves and carved barge boards, and timber mullioned windows with diamond leaded lights.

On the opposite side of the road beside the creek is the 18th century former mill - now converted to a hotel. This is a large two and three storey building retains much original detail. Traffic noise problems have been addressed by the installation of discreet secondary glazing on the front elevation. Further along, however, the former 19th century inn at The Maltsters has been altered by the insertion of top-hung PVCu windows and a modern clipped slate roof. St Petroc's, set obliquely to the road on the south side of the hill, is a key building in this position with its long rag slate roof and stone rubble walling.

Opposite there is a pair of rubble stone Victorian villas with more ornate detailing - Rose and Church Cottages. The gabled windows have carved barge boards and finials and decorative brickwork surrounds. At the top of the hill on the north side Rock Cottages form a simple terrace with a workshop at the end. Some window alterations have occurred in this terrace.

*Rose and Church Cottages illustrate mid-19th building traditions - gabled slate roofs with crested terra cotta ridges, stone rubble construction with banded brick dressings, 4-pane timber sliding sashes and decorative cusped bargeboards to the porches and dormer windows. A rubble stone wall fronts the roadside.*





*A 19th century iron pump and stone wellhouse is situated beside the lane leading uphill to Ballamminer's Farm.*

Behind Pant Derv and Ball Cottages, a steep lane rises up past the village pump towards Ballamminer's Cottage, from which there is a good view down into the centre of the village. At the top of the hill is Ballamminer's Farm, a prominent group with a long barn and round house, now sensitively converted to residential use. In this lane also are a few modern houses.

### **Building Materials**

The village has a mixture of materials, textures and colours but the prevailing construction is of random rubble masonry with brick arches and reveals. Some walls have been colour washed. Roofs are of rag slates with terracotta ridge tiles and brick chimneys; these remain largely unaltered throughout the village. Sliding sash windows and casements, painted white, are usual.

Stone boundary walls right on the roadside are common with the buildings set back, or high up like Rock, Rose and Church Cottages.

Pant Derv Cottage has a simple attractive iron railing at the front edge, surrounding a raised slated area of paving.

Newer buildings on the south slope of the village marry in reasonably well, although often not built with traditional materials.

## **PLANNING POLICIES AND CONTROLS**

All planning authorities are required by Sections 71 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to *pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas*. Local planning authorities - in this case North Cornwall District Council - have a duty to *formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas*. This statement seeks to respond to that statutory duty.

Guidance on planning policies in Conservation Areas is provided at a variety of levels. Government guidelines are given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG15). English Heritage also publishes advisory leaflets. At county level, the Cornwall Structure Plan provides a strategic policy framework in its Countryside and Built Environment chapter. At local level the North Cornwall District Local Plan forms the basis for planning decisions. The policies contained in the *The Historic Environment* section of its Environment chapter are particularly relevant. Supplementary planning guidance is provided by this Character Statement and by the North Cornwall Design Guide.

Little Petherick is also subject to particular policies which are described in more detail in the North Cornwall District Local Plan. The village is situated within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The creek is an Area of Great Scientific Value and is also a Cornwall Nature Conservation Site. The settlement has been identified as a minor village capable of absorbing only very limited residential development.



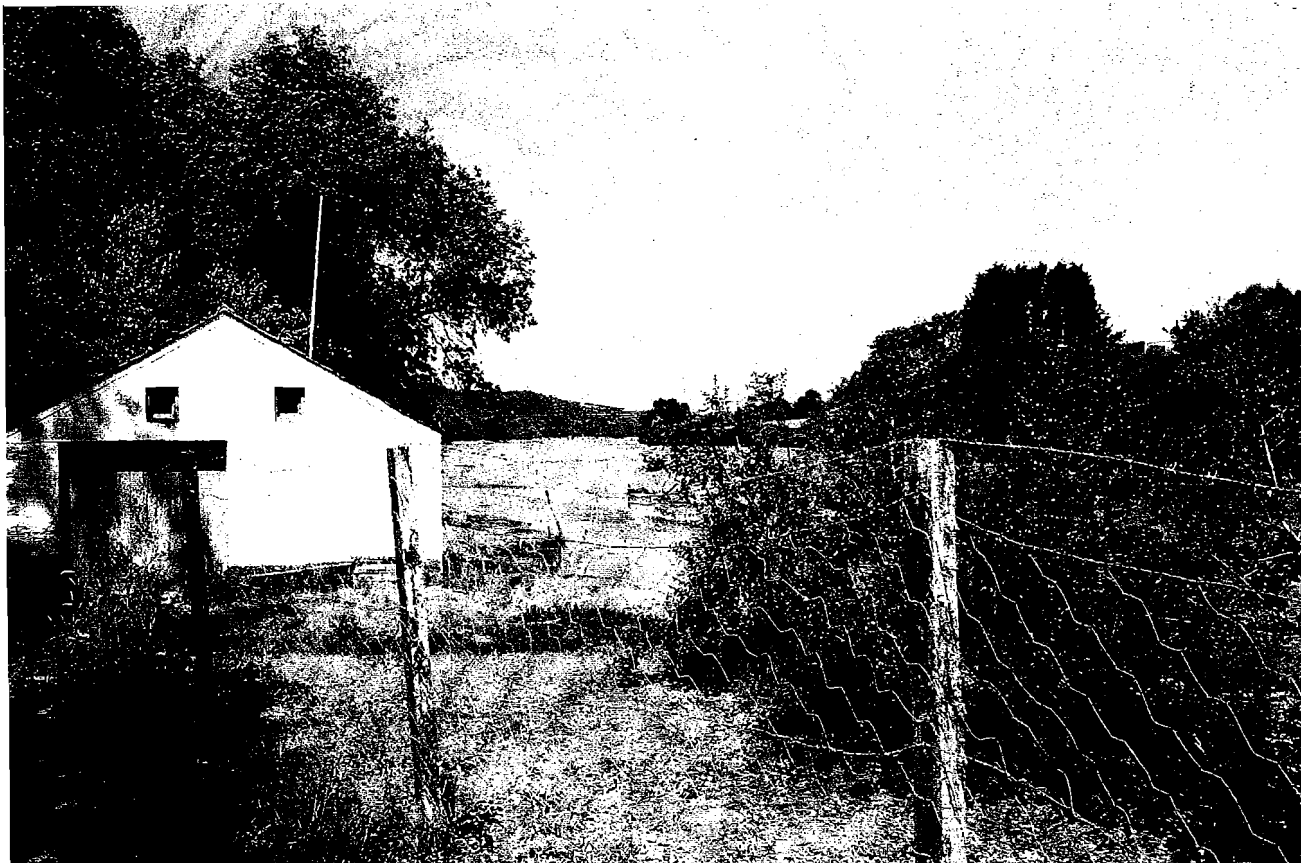
Owners of property within the Conservation Area should be aware that the designation of a Conservation Area automatically brings into effect additional planning controls and considerations which include:

- The demolition of buildings is not permitted except with the prior consent of the District Council.
- Tighter limits on 'permitted development' allowances.
- Restrictions on felling and other tree work. Owners must give 6 weeks notice to the District Council of proposed work to trees. Important hedges and trees are shown on the accompanying character map.
- The District Council must publicise development proposals.
- A presumption that new development should preserve or enhance the character of the area.
- Outline planning applications will not be accepted.

The provision of substitute windows, doors and materials to walls and roofs has occurred in some cases. This is considered to be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area. The future use of PVCu, or other inappropriate window, door or wall styles or materials is discouraged. This includes the use of manufactured slates or tiles on roofs or as cladding. As a general rule repair rather than replacement is preferred. Where repairs are necessary the use of traditional materials and styles which maintain the architectural detailing of the Conservation Area is recommended. Noise problems caused by traffic should be dealt with by the addition of secondary glazing rather than complete replacement with double glazed units. The North Cornwall Design Guide gives further details.

*The roofscape of the village is especially noticeable from Ballaminers - local rag or sized slate with mitred hips or windspur courses on gable verges. Terra cotta ridge tiles and brick chimneys were introduced in the 19th century.*





*The remnants of old quays can be seen along the west bank of Petherick Creek but direct public access to the waterside is limited at present.*

### Listed Buildings

Some buildings are listed by the Secretary of State as being of special architectural or historic interest in their own right. The interiors and exteriors of these buildings are protected by law and prior listed building consent is usually necessary from the District Council before any works of alteration, demolition or extension can be carried out. Such works could include re-roofing, rendering or painting walls, the alteration of doors and windows, replacing rainwater goods, the removal of internal fixtures or structural changes. Permission is also required for the erection of small buildings such as garden sheds within the grounds of a listed building, or for changes to gates, fences or walls enclosing it.

Buildings in Little Petherick which are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest are shown on the accompanying character map.

### AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ENHANCEMENT WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

There are some features of Little Petherick Conservation Area where there is scope for enhancement work. Responsibility rests with both private owners and public bodies. The suggestions below have been identified in conjunction with local people and are set out for consideration as opportunities arise. The District Council will take the lead in encouraging their implementation.

- The most conspicuous negative factor in the village is the heavy road traffic which is constrained by the narrow road cuttings and the

bridge. The traffic calming scheme should partially alleviate some of the resultant problems. In the long term possible declassification of the A389 could help to further reduce traffic levels.

- Modern development along the west edge of the creek reduces views across the water from the public footpath. Conversely there have been conflicts between walkers and private owners along this stretch. Proposed improvements to the Saints Way should help to address these difficulties in terms of signage and routing.
- There is potential to improve the appearance of the Village Hall car park, and possibly open up views of the creek from this point by altering boundary treatments.
- There is potential to enhance views of the east side of the creek by means of planting to screen the sewage works.
- The co-operation of statutory undertakers will be sought to reduce the impact of overhead lines.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Documents and policies referred to above include:

Department of the Environment/Department of National Heritage,

PPG 15 : *Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic*

*Environment*, HMSO 1994

English Heritage, *Conservation Area Practice*, October 1995

English Heritage, *Development in the Historic Environment*, June 1995

Cornwall County Council, *Cornwall Structure Plan*

North Cornwall District Council, *North Cornwall District Local Plan*

North Cornwall District Council, *North Cornwall Design Guide*

*Lake's Parochial History of the County of Cornwall*, Vols. 1-4, 1867-72

O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place Names*, 1988

Cornwall County Council, *The Saints Way*, 1991

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