This Conservation Area Appraisal was undertaken by Penwith District Council in 2008. It was adopted by Penwith District Council’s Full Council Committee on the 11 March 2009 and was subsequently endorsed by Cornwall Council as a material consideration within the emerging Cornwall Council Local Development Framework on 24 April 2010. Any recommended changes to the boundaries of Penzance Conservation Area were authorised by Cornwall Council and came into effect on 24 April 2010.
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Penzance sits on the north west shore of the spectacular sweep of Mounts Bay and is the most south westerly town in Britain. It is a port, rail and coach route terminus and a major interchange of local rail, road and bus networks and these connections make the town of strategic importance. It is also a diverse town being a centre for cultural, artistic, entertainment, sport and tourism.

The town sits on a sloping, restricted site overlooking a sheltered harbour in the lee of a dominant ridge - this creates sloping and curved streets with grand views and exciting townscapes. Indeed Penzance has wonderful individual buildings and set piece architectural statements, but the special character of the streets is often as much to do with their topographical value.

The surviving fabric reflects Penzance's historic diversity of economic and social activity and quality of built environment. Despite it being documented as an urban settlement, market town and port in the 14th century and recognised as one of the principle towns in the west by the 16th century, little survives that is certainly older than 17th century, due to growing wealth and continuous redevelopment. The 17th century saw both private and public property development and new economic activity, growth which continued into the 18th and 19th century.

Broadly the Conservation Area covers the whole historic urban area and has a complex archaeological and historical development. The central ridge, occupied by Chapel Street, separates the town into two, with the level market place at the centre. Within it are areas as diverse as the old medieval town (its various phases of development and street patterns still discernable despite centuries of prosperity); the working harbour, the elegant early 19th century suburbs, with their polite stuccoed terraces and grand villas in broad leafy grounds, later 19th century housing for the middle classes, a promenade and hotels/guesthouses for the tourist trade and the tight grids of later 19th century industrial housing.

Given the diverse nature of its historical development it is not surprising to find that Penzance’s Conservation Area has distinct character areas. They are all, though, bound together by the town’s location with unrivalled views of Mount’s Bay. Indeed the sea is everything to Penzance, whether one has direct access to it or enjoys one of the many views and glimpses of it around the town.

A vast range of historic buildings associated with the port and transport functions survive. Throughout the town is a whole range of workshops, warehouses and storage buildings associated with small scale manufacture, commercial warehousing, shops and trade. Given the importance of shops, markets and commerce relatively few good shopfronts survive, those that do are primarily concentrated in secondary commercial areas like Causewayhead and Chapel Street. Contrasting with the plain stuccoed buildings in the core area (c.1820 - 50's) is a good sequence of architecturally interesting late 19th century commercial buildings.

Tourism, recreational and cultural structures dominate the sea front and public parks and gardens of the 19th / early 20th centuries with their attendant built structures, are major features. It also has numerous religious and educational buildings and these are significant elements in the streetscape, roofscape and wider landscape, many dating from the 19th century boom. Penzance is also well known for its significant range and quality of historic residential buildings. Chapel Street is dominated by grandly classical houses, elegant early 19th century, usually stuccoed, terraces are also plentiful and contrast with the more humble granite built rows in other areas of the town. The result is a limited but locally distinctive range of styles and materials.
1.1 Conservation Areas

Conservation areas were first introduced in 1967 through the Civic Amenities Act and to date more than 9000 exist in the UK. They are areas of ’special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, {the Act] Designation of a conservation area imposes a duty on the Council, in exercising its planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. 2 Section 72 of the Act. In fulfilling this duty, the Council does not seek to prevent development, but to manage change in such a way that the special qualities which warranted designation in the first place, are protected.

Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and the lopping or felling of trees. It does not, however, control all forms of development. Some changes to domestic dwellings (known as permitted development) do not normally require planning permission. These include minor alterations such as the replacement of windows and doors, or the alteration of boundary walls. Where such changes can erode the character and appearance of the area, the Council can introduce special controls, known as Article 4 Directions, enabling the Council to require planning permission for such works. The Penzance Conservation Area is already covered by an Article 4 Direction. Further information on what additional restrictions apply can be obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

1.2 Penzance Conservation Area

The Penzance Conservation Area was first designated in 1969. Subsequent amendments to the original boundary alignment were introduced in 1976 but little has changed to the boundary since then.

The Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey (CSUS) ‘Historic Characterisation for Regeneration’ Report for Penzance was published in September 2003. The CSUS report is an informative document and has been drawn on for this appraisal where appropriate.

1.3 Purpose & Scope of this Character Appraisal

The Character Appraisal aims to define the qualities that make Penzance’s conservation area special. This involves understanding the history and development of the town and analysing its current appearance and character – including describing significant features in the landscape and identifying important buildings and spaces.

Whilst there is no national prescribed format which determines scope and content of character appraisals because areas vary so greatly, the structure of this appraisal is based on the criteria suggested in English Heritage's guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals published in 2006.

This Character Appraisal is based on a clear and objective assessment of the area's special architectural or historic interest and broadly consists of the following key parts:

- a clearly defined and analysed written statement defining the special interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area providing a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for the relevant development plan policies and subsequent development control decisions.

- An analysis of the problems and pressures facing the area
1.4 Planning Policy Framework
The legal basis for conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. National policy guidance is provided by Planning Policy Guidance notes 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) and 16 (Archaeology and Planning). PPG15 & PPG16 are due to be replaced with a combined document Planning Policy Statement 5 – Planning for the Historic Environment in the near future.

The Penwith Local Plan, formally adopted in 2004, sets out the Council’s general policies for the protection of the historic environment and the factors which will be taken into account in assessing planning applications.

A new development plan system has been introduced through commencement of the relevant sections of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Local Development Frameworks will gradually replace Local Plans. The adopted Penwith Local Plan Policies are 'saved' for a period of three years or until such time as they are replaced by relevant Local Development Documents. The generic policies for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area will, in due course, be reviewed through this process.

1.5 Consultation & Adoption
Whilst there is no legal requirement for character appraisals to go to public consultation this Council acknowledges the benefit in gaining local community support and therefore made the draft appraisal available to the public and the Town Council for comment prior to formal adoption. Penwith District Council formally adopted the document at a meeting of the Full Council on 11 March 2009. The document was endorsed by Cornwall council on the 24 April 2010.
2.0 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

2.1 Location
Penzance lies in the 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.

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 Isle 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. Penzance harbour is the most westerly major port in the English Channel and the first to be reached from the Atlantic.

These connections give Penzance a strategic importance that outweighs its remote location. It is one of the larger towns in Cornwall with a population of about 21,000.

Within Penwith and a wider area of west Cornwall, Penzance is the dominant centre. It presents a remarkable self-contained character, with a much greater range of facilities and services than one would expect for its size. It is the main 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 located at Long Rock to the east of the town. Penwith District Council, Penzance Town Council, Government Offices, Penwith College and West Cornwall Hospital are all based in Penzance.

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 Arts, clubs, trusts and societies, libraries, performance venues, a cinema, restaurants and cafes. Golowan is a major annual arts and cultural festival.

It is also a focus for sports with cricket, football and rugby grounds and has extensive ornamental parks and gardens, playgrounds and informal recreation areas and the 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.

2.2 Landscape Setting
Penzance is situated on the ‘pens sans’, or ‘holy headland’ along which Chapel Street now runs, and which ends at the approximate site of the old St Anthony’s Chapel at Battery Rocks. Because of this the buildings along Chapel Street are often to be seen on the skyline, particularly St Mary’s Church and the Methodist Chapel, and this spine divides the working harbour from the more genteel residential and tourist areas to the west. The town centre is on a sloping shelf above this culminating in the dome of the old Market House, which is visible for miles around.

To the north of this Penzance extends out into former fields and is contained largely by the deep valley and embankment containing the by-pass – this is hardly visible from residential areas, creating the illusion that the rolling hills, fields and trees come right up to the town's edge.

The countryside outside Penzance is of interest historically, being designated as Ancient Enclosed Land (medieval or earlier) in the Cornwall Historic Landscape Characterisation. In the 19th century in particular the area around the town was used for flower and vegetable crops, as well as for orchards, the remnants of which permeate parts of the Conservation Area.
Penzance’s landmark buildings can be clearly seen from a few miles away – here viewed from Marazion looking westwards (above) and from Newlyn eastwards (below).
The topography of the town affords good views out to the surrounding farmland (above). It also creates pleasing views and rooftops within the town (below).
3.1 The History of Penzance

Penzance has long had a strategic importance that outweighs its relatively small size and remote location. It stands at the end of the line - literally the terminus of road, rail, air and sea routes. Yet this has made it throughout its history not a remote, isolated place, but a remarkably prosperous self-contained centre with a much greater range of facilities and services than might be expected for its size. Diversity and quality typify Penzance’s role as a cultural, artistic, entertainment and tourism centre, and the main town of this most south-westerly tip of Britain. There are few better places to experience the sense of a big town in a small frame, so typical of the remote towns of Britain.

The Conservation Area, with a few exceptions, covers the whole historic urban area (up to about the First World War period). The area covered has a complex archaeological and historical development, barely explored to date, but which in itself could prove to be of the greatest significance.

Within it are areas as diverse as the old medieval town (its various phases of development and street patterns still discernible despite centuries of prosperity and re-building and the continued vibrancy of the commercial core); the elegant early 19th century suburbs, with their polite, stuccoed terraces and grand villas in broad, leafy grounds, and the tight grids of later 19th century industrial housing.

Around the fringes of the Conservation Area evidence can still be found of a long industrial heritage, while the working harbour remains one of the most attractive elements of the town. It is sometimes easy to forget this workaday character when walking through the elegant streets and past the ebullient libraries, museums, churches and commercial buildings of the centre, or the hotels, guest houses, ornamental parks gardens and promenade created by the 19th century growth of the tourist trade.

It is perhaps this diversity and complexity that is most significant about Penzance. It was never based on a single industry as so many other Cornish towns were (fishing or mining for instance), its main role was as a market and service town – the port was an adjunct to this function - and as the cultural centre of the far west. The evidence for and character of this diversity permeates the Conservation Area.

There are wonderful individual buildings and set-piece architectural statements, but the special character of the streets is often as much to do with their townscape and topographical value. The diversity of activity and enterprise has interacted with a unique topography - a sloping, restricted site overlooking a sheltered harbour in the lee of a dominant ridge. This creates sloping and curving streets with grand views and exciting townscapes, linked by more intimate opes and alleys, the whole set against vistas of countryside, and, above all, the sea, and the broad, open skies of Mount’s Bay. The town is a unique expression of a unique topography.

Penzance was historically a wealthy town, but the expression of wealth and commercial display was always tempered by the articulate and cultured outlook of the inhabitants, and by active and forward-thinking Borough corporations, so that buildings and streetscape are typified by a sense of rightness created by the use of a surprisingly sophisticated but restricted palette of fine quality materials, robust, well-crafted details and architectural good manners, all turning around particularly local characteristics, especially the use of granite.

The dominant topography, medieval origins, long and prosperous history and architectural propriety of the town and Conservation Area are nowhere better symbolised by the twin foci of Penzance - especially when seen standing above the harbour - St Mary’s Tower and the Market House Dome.

3.2 Physical Development

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 Treeneere.

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’ (chuchyard) site and another local name, mennaye, derives from the Cornish for ‘monks’ land’.

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. Penzance market cross, early 11th century, is now located outside Penlee Museum and Art Gallery.

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.

3.2.1 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.
3.2.2 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 Coinagehall 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.

3.2.3 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.

3.2.4 The Market & 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.

3.2.5 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 1820’s 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. 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).

3.2.6 ‘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 become 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 Trereife, 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.

‘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.

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.

‘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 (circa 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 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.

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 chutes.

3.2.7 ‘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.

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, timber yards 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 midcentury.

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.

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.

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.

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 (c. 1835). 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 Lariggan), 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.

3.2.8 ‘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 1880’s), tanneries, saw mills, flour milling, ropemaking, foundries - there were also some newer activities. Serpentine working, for example, started about 1851 and by the 1880's there were five separate works in Penzance.

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 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 restructuring 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 1860's), Wharf Road and Morrab Road (both 1880).

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 Road and Morrab Road, remained for the most part an area of large houses in large grounds.

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 Humphry 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.

This period also saw a new scale in commercial buildings. Still important in the streetscape, the new style was architect-designed, usually in granite with bold Gothic, Queen Anne or Baroque detailing. These structures are now as much part of Penzance’s character as the earlier flat-fronted stuccoed buildings they stand alongside.

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 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.

3.3 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.

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

3.3.1 Indicators of Archaeological Potential
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 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.

There are a 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 (CAU))
1997 Penzance Laundry: archaeological evaluation (CAU)
1999 Coinagehall Street: watching brief (CAU)

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.

Also existing are 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.
The Greenmarket, seen here looking towards Market Place occupies part of the area once covered by the medieval market place.

The Queens Hotel (c.1861) was the first large hotel to be built in the town, following the arrival of the railway and still dominates the Promenade.
4.1 General Character.

Given the diverse nature of its historical development it is not surprising to find that Penzance's Conservation Area has several distinct character areas, all of which are distinguished in their own right. They are all, though, bound together by the town's location on a plateau adjacent to the sea with unrivalled views of Mount's Bay.

The sea is everything to Penzance, whether one has direct access to it or enjoys one of the many views and glimpses of it around the town. The same applies to water in Penzance. Although now the many water chutes and, even more importantly the leats are dry, the sight and sound of running water must have at one time been a constant presence in the town's life.

The central ridge occupied by Chapel Street separates Penzance in two, with the level market place at the centre. North-east of this is the tight grid-like landscape of the working "town, while to the south-west it is a more leafy environment, with generally larger houses, parks and trees creating an air of gentility.

This Appraisal looks at Penzance by dividing it into six character areas, all interlinked, which reflect the diverse nature of the town's historical development and the impact of topography upon it (they also relate to areas in the CSUS Report).

Within each section there is detailed analysis of townscape but this does not mean that if a street or even a particular feature is not highlighted it is not of value: a Conservation Area Character Appraisal is just that, not an exhaustive survey of individual elements.

One aim of this Appraisal is to capture the essence of the place so that decision making at the detailed level, whether by owners, occupiers, developers or local and other agencies can be done in cognisance of the context in which they are working. For this reason the character assessments are presented as a series of bullet points rather than an attempt at an all-encompassing text.

Character area boundaries in a complex and layered urban environment are inevitably subjective in places and are based on how the area is perceived as well as historical and archaeological characteristics.

In addition to the character areas map, (located at the start of the document) in summary, without naming every road, ope or alley, the character areas are:

**The Historic Town Centre:**
Covering: the east end of Alverton Street & Greenmarket; Causewayhead; Market Jew Street; Chapel Street and the back lanes around these

**The Harbour and Railway:**
Covering: both harbours, Abbey Basin, car park, bus and railway stations area

**The Barbican:**
Covering Barbican Lane, Coinagehall Street, Quay Street and St Anthony's Gardens area

**The Promenade:**
Covering the Promenade, from its western end to Jubilee Pool, east of Morrab Road, Regent Terrace area

**Lescudjack & The "Battlefields:**
Covering Mount Street and Penwith Street areas, St Clares, St John's Church area, The Battlefields, Lannoweth Road area, Tolver Road, High Street

**Alverton & Morrab:**
Covering Regent Square to Morrab Road, Penlee Park, Alverton Road, Clarence Street, Alexandra Road
4.2 Surviving 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 1980's, 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 1970's 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.

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, 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 rooftopscape 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 1870’s 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.

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.

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.

4.3 Architecture, Geology & Building Materials
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 1830’s.

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.

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.

From the mid 20th century most development was in the hands of large national companies or government agencies, using or commercial architects. For the most part, these designers and their clients failed in-house 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.
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, cours ed 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. 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 practically 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.

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 1837.

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 “The recent taste for removing stucco was lamented by architectural historian elegant. 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.

Even as late as the 1860’s, substantial buildings in Penzance were stuccoed in either Italianate or Gothic taste (for example, Penlee and the Stanmore Hotel). From the 1850’s, granite from relatively local sources became increasingly available and the building of the Public Buildings (St John’s Hall) in 1864-7 in dressed 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.

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 1837 (Lloyds TSB) the symbol of the commercial heart of the town, still has 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 Greenmarket, 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.

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 (Waves Cafe, 29-30 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 Crysede shop in Queen’s Square is of more than local significance.

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 roofscape more visible.

4.3.1 Public Realm
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 1820’s. 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 paviors; the deadening effect they can have in an historic streetscape is seen most noticeably in Causewayhead.

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.

4.4 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 town 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, 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.
4.5 Character Areas

4.5.1 Historic Town Centre

History and Topographic Development
The area consists of a series of linked but not necessarily aligned spaces, relating to the infilling of the original large market place. The Greenmarket, now significantly reduced in size due to 19th century redevelopment along its northern side, leads into Causewayhead and the Market Place.

This is now mostly infilled by the impressive Market House and linked to Queen’s Square beyond, which in turn relates to markets now long gone in Princes Street. Very much the heart of the town, the area still largely serves its original role, although lamentably no organised outdoor market continues here.

Key Views & Vistas
There is an abundance of views and vistas within and out of this area, whether of focal buildings such as the Market House, or longer vistas with the sea or countryside as backdrop, as in Market Jew Street. There are also many tantalising glimpses into the many side streets and alleys that suggest hidden corners.

Ambience
This is a busy area with plenty of traffic and pedestrian movement focused on a series of junctions and access to and from car parks. The result is mixed - there is traffic/pedestrian conflict in places but there is also great permeability in the townscape here with lots of alleys and back lanes, each distinct with its own character.

Smells are of pasty shops and traffic fumes while the sound of traffic can dominate, particularly buses in Market Jew Street and the Greenmarket.

Definition of Character

**Alverton Street** - The Public Buildings (usually known as and including St John’s Hall) make a grand civic statement. Built in the 1860’s, they are of Italianate style in granite ashlar, set in a large forecourt behind a wall topped with railings and wonderfully ornate lamp standards.

This setting has been compromised by the car - whether parked in the bland tarmac forecourt, behind the buildings or accommodated by the road junction at the bottom of Penalverne Drive.

The ornate fountain that once stood in the forecourt is now located in St Anthonys’ Gardens, having reportedly been relocated to provide space for the mayor’s car.

The junction with Penalverne Drive is key as a gateway to the inner core and as a transition point between the small scale but polite Alverton Terrace on one side, the lush and spacious Penlee Park to the south, the estates up the hill and the historic urban core to the east.

The single storey Town Council offices and associated landscaping are similarly out of character - this piece of land was once the garden to Buriton House and had a high wall and railings that gave it a strong boundary. Now not only has that been lost to the new road layout but the setting of Buriton House, a fine early 19th century villa, has also been compromised.

East of Buriton House the buildings start to close in on the back of pavement line.

Alverton Street is a mix of texture and scale on the north side partly because of more intrusions on the continuity of streetscape. These are in the form of new buildings and extensions to existing ones, such as...
that to the Alfred Smith building, which is otherwise an imposing 19th century corner building at the bottom of Clarence Street, albeit with a very 20th century shopfront.

The DSS building, Bramwell House, which dominates the other side at the bottom of Clarence Street, has nothing to commend it, being totally out of scale, built in alien materials and with poor detailing. This breakdown in townscape on the north side of the junction is exacerbated by the view up Clarence Street of the sorting office and car park entrance, although the longer view reveals higher quality buildings further up Clarence Street. The ornate façade of the Baptist Chapel can also be glimpsed from the car park to the rear of the Public Buildings. The view culminates, though, in the ugly tower to the flats in St Clare Street.

The south side of Morrab Road junction is host to the well detailed and interesting early 19th century terrace that includes Morrab Studios. These properties are stucco with flat pilasters and dressed windows, and 1st floor bays extending out over the cornice line of the shopfronts below. There are good long views of this group both from Morrab Road and Alverton Road as well as coming down Clarence Street, but it also makes a significant contribution at street level with interesting details such as the light-well grilles.

On the opposite side of Morrab Road is an eclectic and mostly attractive mix of heights and dates in the buildings, from the Buttery to single storey shops which are themselves adjacent to the rather grand pedimented old Liberal Club (Penwith Housing Association), which dominates the skyline and the north side of Buriton Row. All are of good quality and interest.

The focus looking south from the junction is primarily beyond North Parade through which Morrab Road was rather savagely cut in 1880, towards the world of the late Victorian leisured classes. The Old Gentlemen’s Club, the Art School (1880) and its gallery (1886) now the Public Library, are all part of a different, quieter and leafy place removed from the hustle and bustle of Alverton Street.

East of the junction, Alverton Street is characterised on its south side by two and three storey painted/rendered properties with mostly single width shopfronts beneath unifying cornices and fascias.

The street is at its narrowest here and is usually in the shade – with narrow pavements (particularly on the south side) and sometimes heavy traffic, this can be an intimidating environment for the pedestrian – a place to pass along rather than to linger window shopping. The tendency is to cross to the north side where the pavement is wider and the sun shines more often.

There is a mix of modern – not very interesting or relevant to the character of the area e.g. Camelot Court - and extremely high quality architecture, such as the 18th century Alverne House with its distinctive flight of steps to the front door.

**Greenmarket** - This bustling well-used square with access to and from the car park along a small lane lined with local shops - other than the banks there are very few big names at this end of town, giving it a unique character.

Understanding that the north side was redeveloped and realigned in the early 20th century gives a deeper appreciation of shape of the space historically.

On its south side the buildings are still set back and form an interesting group from the 18th and early 19th centuries. They are mostly stucco, with The White Lion in painted brick - interesting detailing abounds e.g. the granite paving outside the florist’s shop.

The building that steps forward to enclose the space (Threshers) is important for its position opposite the bottom of Causewayhead - it has a wonderful articulated facade (albeit with an over-intrusive CCTV camera) and, by being taller than its neighbours, also draws attention to the interesting roofscape.
The Market House (1837) is the focal point - its façade and dome dominate the vista from the west, and lead the eye through into Market Place.

The position of the fine NCT building (3 The Greenmarket) in front of the old building line shows how the south side has also been infilled. The poor quality of its shopfront lets down this space - there is photographic evidence of a high quality one that really completed the square.

On the north side the facades are not as exciting as a group, being later in date and of mixed quality - HSBC, 1 The Greenmarket, (1922) stands out on the corner of Causewayhead as being of particular interest. The scale is on the whole three storeys.

Permeability is an essential part of Greenmarket's character - the almost forgotten alley beside The White Lion has a lot of potential for improvement, but is important as one of the many routes in and through this space as is the link by Andrewartha’s to the car park to the rear of Causewayhead.

The Greenmarket car park, other than the vibrant treatment to the rear of the Acorn Theatre, has the feel of a tatty space left over from something else - the backs of the properties that face onto it are by and large not well tended and, especially if approaching from North Parade, the space is a let down.

Causewayhead - Causewayhead is potentially one of the most attractive streets in Cornwall, lined with interesting mostly Victorian buildings of two and three storeys with lots of interest and detail. However, it has been blighted by an ill-conceived resurfacing scheme, which is in wall-to-wall herring bone brick - a clearly alien material - with an attempt made to define the historic pavement line, which presumably had at least granite kerbs.

There is a clear distinction to be made between the two sides of the street architecturally, although the overall impression is of an eclectic mix of styles. On the east side, for example, there are no bays at all - instead the buildings rise flat fronted up from the ground. On the west side there is generally more articulation, with bays and decoration. Perhaps the pinnacle of this is the Savoy Cinema which is a wonderful building much unappreciated.

All along Causewayhead there are lots of little openings and courtyards - some with original granite surfacing which add to the interest of the street.

The top of Causewayhead opens out in the classic funnel shape common to market places, with the added attraction of the small market kiosk at the top. However the clutter created by street furniture, the large advertisement hoarding and the treatment of the junction, which has become an ill-defined space, detract from the true quality of the space and the buildings around it.

At the bottom The London Inn is like a full stop at the junction with Bread Street and turns the corner well - a focal building, although it was probably originally rendered. However, below this bollards, seats and even, incongruously, a struggling tree, clutter up the street.

The back lane to Causewayhead is like a well-kept secret in the town. A wonderfully intimate and varied rough surfaced lane (and should be) lined with outbuildings and warehouses of various materials, and the backs to houses in Clarence Street. This is a precious, secluded area away from the adjacent busy street. The cattle market extension car park (1932) is surrounded by high granite walls with traces of former openings; like Clarence Street car park it suffers in the detail - surfacing and steel railings reduce its quality.

Clarence Street car park - Clarence Street car park is a vast space on two levels, surrounded by granite wall, some of which are of interest having traces of old openings. There are also good views of the backs of properties in Causewayhead, with interesting shapes and textures. There is poor detailing (e.g. tubular steel railings, signs) and surfacing could be improved, as well as linking paths and steps. On the north side of the
car park the quality of the buildings is higher, with plenty of interesting texture - these are to the rear of Clarence Street.

**Bread Street** - Bread Street is, for the most part, characterised by living up to its traditional back lane status, lined with warehouses and workshops, narrow in places and with no pavement but good granite gutters (see issues).

This character has been broken down in places by modern housing which fails to address the traditional materials and orientation of other buildings on the street.

It is important for its role in linking the large residential area behind to the town centre and is not only an ‘up and down’ route but is also host to lots of street endings and alleys/steps through to Market Jew Street.

There are also various yards - one of the best known is Old Brewery Yard which links through to a huge garage court behind, once the site of the brewery buildings. The Yard is redolent of other buildings in Bread Street, being two storeys in large granite blocks with small window openings, now converted to offices, a shop and a café. There is a date stone on one of the buildings of 1837.

Of the rears of buildings on Market Jew Street the problem is that they are highly visible, not only from Bread Street but from the wider residential area beyond. For example, the Barclays extension (and indeed the main building) is intrusive, and elsewhere flues and extractor fans are spread liberally on rear elevations.

At the bottom of Bread Street the Crown Inn is a focal point, it is quite different from the warehouses in the rest of Bread Street, being a relatively polite rendered two storey villa - its brick paving and old post and rail fencing are an essential part of its setting and character.

Victoria Square, unfortunately signalled by thick double yellow lines and a battalion of bollards, is a wonderfully secluded square of late 19th/early 20th century two storey rendered terraces with a well-conceived central parking area. This is an impressive set-piece on what was once a builder’s yard and brewery.

**Market Place** - That this area was once a vast space that stretched down Market Jew Street and south to Queen’s Square is hard to imagine. Today the Market House (1837), with its 1925 west façade, its dome visible from across Penzance and for miles around, fills and dominates - a magnificent central statement in the streetscape.

The car has inevitably reshaped this townscape and, despite the zebra crossing, there is plenty of pedestrian/traffic conflict as people follow natural desire lines to cross what is now a sweeping and sometimes fast bend.

Approaching from the west, this is the first glimpse of the sea, with fields rising up in the distance, and a sense pervades of Penzance’s position, elevated above Mount’s Bay surrounded by countryside.

The ‘split level topography has effectively split the space and created two streets: one is the pedestrianised upper area, the other ‘down’ at street level, a pattern that is then extended down Market Jew Street.

Architecturally this is a rich area although the quality of the upper floors can lose out to the paucity of modern shopfront design. E.g. Cornwall Sports (No 23-4 Market Place) four storeys high it was built in the 1850’s by Samuel Draper as an advertisement for the quality of his merchandise, its full height stucco Corinthian pilasters visible for a long way coming up Market Jew Street. Another example is the arcade columns to Dorothy Perkins (No 25-6) which are most probably 1823 originals.

At the bottom of Market Place Peasgoods Chemists (No 1) is of particular interest, not only for the shop front’s own quality but for what it says about the history of the space - it has clearly been extended forward historically, demonstrating that the Market Place was even wider at this point in the past. On the upper
level the late 20th century resurfacing scheme has had two negative impacts: the first is the impracticality of the surfacing and the way it was laid, resulting in an uncomfortable surface; secondly it has been laid over the old pavement line with loss of definition and, in the case of the Market House steps, historic fabric.

There is further loss of definition and quality associated with the ETS building (28 Market Place), which fails to address the building line and is of no quality in itself. (This is made worse when one knows that a particularly fine building once stood on this site!) The negative impact of this critical corner is exacerbated by the alterations that have taken place to the BetFred building (31 Market Place).

**Market Jew Street** - The overriding impression of Market Jew Street is of a long, curved funnel shape that tapers down the hill, looked over by the statue of Humphry Davy, with a raised pavement on one side lined with shops and cafes, and with people often spilling out onto the road from the narrow pavement on the south side.

There is plenty of texture and interest, with the changes in level producing a series of granite steps, some with original railings as well as those on The Terrace.

There is interesting evidence of when water used to run in leats along the side of the street, fed by the reservoir which still lies beneath the Bullock Market at the top of Causewayhead, as in other Cornish towns e.g. Truro, Helston.

While there are some good historic buildings (e.g. the Post Office, Warrens), in fact most of the south side has been redeveloped during the latter half of the 20th century, and there has been a huge loss of character.

The Terrace (1825) is a key element in Penzance’s character, and one of the main townscape images that visitors and residents alike have of Penzance. Its distinctive granite paving, railings and steps are all part of its palette of textures and colours. In addition it is a more pleasurable experience to stroll above and away from the traffic on a relatively wide pavement than to be cramped on the narrow equivalent on the south side, often competing with buses and delivery lorries.

Most of the buildings are three storeys high with front facing gables, tall bay windows and, in all, have a strong vertical emphasis that is accentuated by their raised position and by some of the horizontally orientated, and therefore inappropriate, designs of the late 20th century, most notably, on The Terrace itself, the Barclays Bank building.

Shop fronts have also faired better on The Terrace - mostly only the multiples detract from this - and there are plenty of good examples of high quality shop fronts with a range of materials and detailing.

Towards the bottom of the street, there is increased evidence of the domestic scale of the town centre as it was before the commercial aspirations of the 19th and 20th centuries. Here, beyond the masses of Peacocks, Poundstretcher and Wharfside there are two storey buildings with granite rubble walls and simple shop fronts, more reminiscent of smaller country towns like St Just. Again, the pavement narrows and for pedestrians this is quite a hazardous spot so near to the sweep of the one-way system, which can at times take on the atmosphere of a race track.

The Peacocks building (no 88-9), stepping back from the pavement edge, may therefore give relief in one sense, but the price is a breakdown of street frontage and a particularly unattractive open ‘forecourt’ area in front of a similarly ugly building.

From half way down Market Jew Street it appears that the street carries on uninterrupted out of town to the east, except for the traffic islands and poles that accompany the one way system and impact on what is otherwise an interesting townscape.
Looking down Albert Street, damaged as a pedestrian environment by the constant fast moving traffic, it nevertheless has some very good three storey buildings and shopfronts, all of which were once part of the grand entrance to the town from the station, but now have a run-down feel about them.

Beyond Albert Street, where there are views across the bus station to St Michael’s Mount, there is something of a huge traffic island, occupied mostly by Branwell’s Mill and other warehouse type buildings these and the Edwardian corner buildings are on a larger scale and cast a nearly permanent shadow over the street, blocking out views of the harbour and station.

The station itself, an 1882 rebuild, is a grand statement in a heavy style, inevitably granite, and acts as a full stop to the bottom end of Market Jew Street. (See Railway and Harbour section for more)

Opposite, the Longboat Inn still has traces of its former glory as the Railway Hotel, when it boasted ‘an almost intuitive knowledge of the tastes and requirements of the guests,’ but is also weighed down with a tremendous amount of clutter – the granite steps to the front still survive.

**Side Streets and Opes** - There is an array of lanes and opes that run off Market Jew Street, which contribute a sense of permeability and also, on the south side, afford stunning glimpses of the harbour and sea.

On The Terrace the opes link up to Bread Street beyond, most via steps, accentuating the change in levels.

Adjacent to Simpsons’ (36 Market Jew Street) was the site of the 19th century meat market through which a right of way already ran, and which was kept even after the meat market was demolished. Now it is host to a particularly steep flight of steps and covered way – this is gated off at night for security reasons and the materials and design of the gates do not contribute to the quality of this space.

The Arcade is very attractive and characterised by its array of hanging signs and unusual late 19th/early 20th century gault brick gables stepping up the worn steps towards Bread Street – it is a wealth of texture and colour.

New Town Lane has suffered from modern development on both sides – Poundstretcher (No. 94, formerly Tesco) is a large bulky grey building. Beneath this, the former gas works/iron foundry site is vacant and has been for some time, a blot on the townscape.

**New Street** - Running down from the heart of the town to the harbour area it is of mixed styles and uses, sometimes losing definition, but mostly held together by the way the buildings and spaces step down the hill.

The top is superficially attractive with its granite setts and narrowing down – but the setts are poor quality, the wrong shape and size, and uncomfortable. In addition, the thick yellow double lines detract from enjoyment of this intimate space.

The buildings near to Market Jew Street relate to town centre uses – e.g. the substantial range to the rear of the Star Inn, the restaurants opposite.

The telephone exchange building on the site of the old butter market is a large and incongruous presence in the streetscape, despite recent renovations.

Through a narrow alley, tucked away and now used as a cycle shop, the long building behind is important for its historical role as a synagogue.

Going down the hill, the street is as much a back lane as anything in places – e.g. the entrance to the Union Hotel takes up a significant amount of space and the heavy dark roughcast render to the extension to the gym in Princes Street is intrusive. Backs take on a new significance and there are glimpses all along on the
southwest side of 18th and 19th century granite outbuildings hemmed in by modern development – this is a tight urban grain, but there is still somehow space for the odd palm tree to assert Penzance’s identity. The north-east side is dominated by 20th century courtyard development, which has been well-detailed and landscaped.

While there has been some mundane redevelopment along the street e.g. flats, entrances with barriers, and poorly landscaped garage courts, in the end the more complex textures and shapes win the day.

Towards the bottom the townscape becomes tighter again with mostly two storey 18th and 19th century buildings some up the road edge, others set behind well-enclosed courtyards.

This intimacy is suddenly opened up at the junction with Abbey Road by the stunning view across the harbour and the Abbey Slip and Basin.

**Jennings Street** - Like New Street, Jennings Street was built to give better access between the town centre and harbour.

It lacks any kind of definition and the general feel is of a townscape where “anything goes from tatty car parks and uninviting public toilets to wholesale redevelopment for blocks of flats that could be in any British town. As such it is a poor setting for the fine townscape of Abbey Basin.

**Queen Square** - Today considered as an extension to Chapel Street, this area nonetheless has its own identity and is another example of the permeability of the Penzance townscape, with routes through from Greenmarket car park, Parade Street, Queen Street, Chapel Street and Princes Street.

There is surface evidence at “Corner’ of where a pump possibly stood - the granite sink and pavements give texture and colour.

The Co-op building, recently renovated, is particularly interesting in granite - it was formerly a bank and used to have an arcaded front.

On the east side is an important range of early buildings, all of interest for their mixed scale and detailing. From the hidden gem of a granite paved yard behind Cosi’s, to the tiled Meeks and, even more exciting, Crysede in-gos, this is a row rich in texture and historical reference.

The Globe & Ale House is a focal building when approaching from Market Place, Chapel Street curving away out of view to the left.

**Parade Street** - This short street is nevertheless diverse, a tight urban landscape with room for a granite pavement on one side only.

The Smithy public house, an interesting side coach yard with granite slabs affording glimpses through to the rear.

Small shops on the south side give way to the former Cornish & Birtill offices, now called Phoenix House and converted to flats following a disastrous fire. Of incidental interest there is the remains of an early lamp column built into the front garden wall.

The Acorn Theatre retains its chapel façade (1889), and wonderful set of granite steps with rails, and is as important in the Conservation Area as a community based building as it is as a good use for an old building. Beyond this on the north side the sheltered housing scheme is not as attractive, being of alien materials and bulky in feel. Again, it is the south side where survival is better with the early 19th century Parade Chambers, which should be rendered and not left with stone exposed. This building is important as it stands at the junction of several roads and paths.
However, this is dwarfed by the concrete mass of Penlowarth beyond. Penolwarth has been described as one of the ugliest buildings in Great Britain and is considered to be an unsightly blot on the landscape. Its removal and replacement with a building more in scale and in sympathy with its surroundings would be welcomed.

**Queen St (top half)** - Linking the town centre with the seafront, Queen Street is but a shadow of its former self as many of these dwellings were cleared as slums in the 20th century. Now something of a rat run, lined with chunks of characterless modern housing, vital traces of its history do survive – e.g. the granite pavement and some cottages and some good shop fronts.

The houses that remain give an indication of how the street must once have looked, with large granite blocks – there is a maritime feel to the street. The Queen’s Chambers is a three storey warehouse type building, reinforcing this.

Near the top the old cinema endures, albeit in a bland and slightly run down fashion, as a bingo hall.

The Market Dome dominates the view here, rising up above the end of the narrow street.

The old rear ranges to the Globe & Ale House are also visible and add to the variety of the roofscape and give much needed texture and interest to this part of the street.

The granite slab pavement that runs up the east side of the street holds it together and, in a street where so much has been lost, gives it historical integrity.

**Chapel Street** - This is famously one of the most historical streets in Cornwall. From top to bottom where it terminates at St Mary’s Church it is awash with important buildings, any one of which could be the subject of its own appraisal. Highlights include the Egyptian House, the Union Hotel, the Wesleyan Chapel and School, and the Penzance Arts Club. In all it is the scale and diversity of the quality and long vistas along it that contribute to its character.

Surfacing is particularly important here with extensive use of granite for the slab pavements and deep gutters where water used to run, just as in Market Jew Street.

St Mary’s Church tower is the focal point at the bottom of the street where there is a mix of stucco, ashlar and brick buildings, nearly all at least three storeys in height.

There are lots of interesting openings into private yards, with views of backs e.g. the lane to the rear of Trevelyan House which is laid in granite.

The Methodist Chapel and school are very important in the street as grand statements that stand back from the pavement behind impressive railings and yard.

The bottom of the street curves sharply to the west around the churchyard as the land falls steeply away here down to Quay Street and the harbour.

The churchyard itself is the first real piece of green open space in Chapel Street and, as such, is something of an oasis with mature semi-tropical planting, terracing and magnificent views across the rooftops to the sea.

Across the street the very fine range of ashlar buildings all with steps and ornate door cases, and railings to light/stair wells, together with the grand Penzance Arts Club with its walls and railings, mark the gateway to the street.
At the bottom of Chapel Street there is a small water chute built into the wall, one of many in Penzance from the early 19th century and an essential part of its character.

**Off Chapel Street**

**Custom House Lane** - is an almost forgotten part of Penzance, running down beside the Regent (ironically once Perrow's Temperance Hotel), and revealing an old door (now window) with intricate fanlight in the side of the Regent of exceptional quality and interest. Otherwise, attractive cottages give way to a disappointing garage court, although mature planting and a good roofscape compensate in some part.

**Abbey Street** – the colonnaded building sits uncomfortably here while on the other side the Abbey Hotel, an interesting building in itself, is a local landmark with a national reputation – it is also important as being visible from the harbour area.

The view at the bottom of Abbey Street should be water as this is the old harbour area – unfortunately this is now the town’s main car park, and it is the sparkle of chrome rather than of sunlight catching the waves, which detracts the eye and deflates the spirits.

**Voundervour Lane** - is very narrow with a granite pavement on one side only, rendering the thick double yellow lines absurd. Bulky granite buildings make for a tight, hard urban feel to this part of the area – a back lane that also serves as a route through to Regent Square.

Regent Joinery Works building is important as it addresses the corner and shows how workshop type buildings are historically juxtaposed with the politest architecture in the comparatively cramped townscape.

**Princes Street** - This short street was once home to the butter market and was therefore part of the inner core of the town – it has been compromised by redevelopment on its north side but has retained an impressive array of high status buildings on its south side. It remains, though, a quiet secluded street, now cut off from the bustle of the town.

The three storey array of buildings includes the Masonic Hall, which is very fine with stucco detailing and large sash windows.

The street at its western end has original granite paving and there is a good granite slab pavement all along the south side.

On the north side the parking area is poorly detailed and the former telephone exchange remains a bulky grey mass in relation to its neighbours.

There are, however, good views of the backs of historic buildings on Queen’s Square and Market Jew Street, with different shapes and textures adding interest above the car park.

### 4.5.2 Historic Town Centre Issues

**Reasserting the market area as a central hub**

1a - The role of the historic market core needs to be re-established as the civic heart of Penzance, with a pedestrian friendly market centre.

**Permeability**

1b - Many of the alleys, opes and paths that give this area its permeable character are in a poor state of repair.

1c - Car parks: Greenmarket, Clarence Street and Causewayhead are all of an inappropriate standard of repair and/or finish for the Conservation Area. They are also subject to a large amount of clutter.

**Vitality in the historic environment**
Id - This built environment is not always well appreciated, presented or maintained.

**Streetscape**

Ie - There is a huge amount of clutter in the town centre (e.g. bins, signs, poles, seating, bollards) that needs to be radically reduced or improved to open up the spaces and views as they should be enjoyed.

If - Water used to run in leats along the side of the streets (these survive in Market Jew Street and Chapel Street), fed by the reservoir which still lies beneath the Bullock Market at the top of Causewayhead – this is redolent of the character of other Cornish towns e.g. Truro, Helston, and would be a welcome re-instatement. In addition, the many water chutes in the town require care.

Ig - Market Place: the 20th century resurfacing scheme has proved uncomfortable to walk on and has covered over historic features around the Market House.

Ih - New Street: poor granite paving and thick double yellow lines detract from historic character.

Ii - Jennings Street: is disjointed and ‘forgotten’ as a historic street. It requires a concerted effort and scheme to improve its character and appearance.

Ij - Bread Street – the granite gutter is only interrupted outside the housing scheme, where it disappears under tarmac.

Ik - Causewayhead – the inappropriate and tired paving scheme, together with an inordinate amount of street furniture detracts from the character of this otherwise historically important street.

**Buildings**

Im - The almost wholesale 20th century redevelopment of the south side of Market Jew Street for chain stores has diminished the quality of the townscape. The south side of Market Jew Street would benefit from major enhancement scheme and co-ordinated redevelopment.

In - There has been significant loss of historic shopfronts, together with a growing trend towards inappropriate signage.

Io – Inappropriate shutters are becoming prevalent in the town so that, after shopping hours, the central area starts to take on a more forbidding atmosphere. CCTV cameras are sometimes inappropriately placed on historic buildings/ sites (e.g. Threshers).

Ip - In many places rear elevations are just as visible as fronts and features such as flues and extractor fans can be eyesores.

Iq - 28-9 Market Place (ETS and Britannia) is particularly poor and the opportunity should be taken to replace it with a quality scheme on this corner.
CHARACTER AREA: HISTORIC TOWN CENTRE

Lined with superb architecturally important buildings, seen here framing St Mary’s Church, Chapel Street is perhaps the jewel in Penzance crown.

Generally buildings on the north side of Market Jew Street have survived better than those on the south side. The Terrace is particularly distinctive with its high quality granite paving, railings and steps.
The Wesleyan Chapel (above), set back from the street behind stone piers and railings, with its symmetrical facade, and the Egyptian house (below) with its ornate facade are fine examples of the quality of buildings found along Chapel Street.
27b Market Place: A striking granite building (c1905) with red and yellow terracotta dressings that occupying a prominent position on the Greenmarket at the junction on Causewayhead.

The Market House (1837) dominates Market Jew Street and its iconic lead covered dome with octagonal lantern can be seen from numerous locations within the town.

Sir Humphry Davy stands proudly on its eastern side, looking down Market Jew Street and towards St Michaels Mount.
St John’s Hall, is a monumental municipal building marking the edge of the commercial town centre, and the start of residential properties in Alverton Street.

The Acorn Theatre stands as a successful non residential conversion redundant chapel within the town centre.
Water forms less of a feature within the town than it did in the past, however much evidence survives of open gullies and pumps and this feature on Market Jew Street is a welcome reminder of its historic importance.

Causewayhead, now pedestrianised, remains a vibrant shopping street with an interesting range of buildings styles and material.
4.5.3 The Harbour and Railway

**History and Topographical Development**

There has been a port at Penzance since at least the Middle Ages, and the earliest record of a quay is from 1512, although this is to do with repairing an existing structure rather than building a new one. The development of Penzance’s functions as market centre, fishing port and import/export centre associated with the tin industry and flour mills led to the development of the harbour in the 17th and 18th centuries.

It was in the 19th century, though, that the harbour as we know it today truly started to take shape. Matthews Dry Dock (1815), the gas works (1830), and Holman’s iron foundry (1839) were among the businesses dependent on the harbour. In 1826-7 the harbour is recorded as being extended by 150 ft. This expansion culminated in the years 1845-8 with the building of the Albert Pier, the extension of the South Pier and provision or improvement of existing wharves, docks and warehousing (including the landmark Abbey Warehouse).

In 1852 the railway arrived, taking advantage of the flat coastal plain and conveniently near to the waters’ edge, and boosting the trade in flowers, vegetables and grain, and tourists. The following year Albert Pier was extended to take sidings. In the 1880’s Wharf Road was extended to the south, with new quays (created by back filling with mine dirt from Wheal Bolton near Ludgvan) and the Ross Bridge was built in 1881. In 1884 a new wet dock was built and the dry dock re-aligned.

The railway station was rebuilt in 1880 in line with the redevelopment and upgrading of many other public buildings in the town.

In the 20th century there were two important developments: during the 1950’s a large portion of the harbour was in-filled to create a car park and the gasworks/foundry area became disused, resulting in its partial redevelopment as the Wharfside Centre, for retail and housing.

**Landscape and Setting**

The harbour area is built on largely reclaimed land on the flat coastal plateau that lies below the historic town centre.

What should be the obvious setting for a harbour area – the sea, is not always as visible as one might expect. In the northern half of the area, given over to the so-called transport interchange – the bus station, car park and railway land, the relationship between the historic harbour side and the sea has been all but lost.

The situation is better in the southern half where the sea comes up to and passes beneath Wharf Road to fill the historic Abbey Basin. As with the promenade and Barbican areas, the state of the tide is as much an element of the area’s character as the townscape itself.

To the north and west of the harbour it is the town that forms the setting on the steeply rising ground behind. At the southern end this is the oldest part of the historic core, with the skyline silhouettes of St Mary’s Church and the Market House dome critical here. At the northern end the backs of redeveloped properties on Market Jew Street are clearly visible and do not make such an attractive setting. However, beyond this, the land rises up to Lescudjack Hillfort with its fine houses and pine trees.

**Key Views & Vistas**

Key external views in this area, for the road user are limited, perhaps constrained to the way the St Michaels’Mount is framed between the arms of Albert Pier and South Pier. From the piers themselves views abound across the sweep of Mount’s Bay and the Lizard beyond.