

Polkerris Conservation Area Character Appraisal & Management Proposals



March 2010

The Polkerris Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals were commissioned by Restormel Borough Council. It was endorsed by Restormel Borough Council's Policy and Scrutiny Committee 4 and Cabinet in June 2007 and was subsequently endorsed by Cornwall Council as a material consideration within the emerging Cornwall Council Local Development Framework on 24 April 2010. The recommended changes to the boundaries of Polkerris Conservation Area were authorised by Cornwall Council and came into effect on 24 April 2010.

Contents

Summary

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Location and Setting
- 3 Historic Development
- 4 Character
- 5 Negative features and issues
- 6 Management proposals

Sources

Acknowledgements:

Thanks go to Cornwall County Council's Historic Environment Service, Cornwall Centre (Cornish Studies Library) and Cornwall Record Office, and to the Royal Institute of Cornwall's Courtney Library for their assistance during the research for this appraisal.

A draft version of this appraisal has been through a public consultation process and revised in light of comments received. Thanks go to all who took part in the consultation process.

This document was endorsed by Restormel Borough Council in June 2007.

Contacts

Historic Environment Service
Cornwall Council
39 Penwinnick Road
St Austell
PL25 5DR

vic.robinson@cornwall.gov.uk

01726 223454.

This document is available to view and download on the Council's website - at <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=17377>

Maps

The maps are based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution and/or civil proceedings. The map data, derived from Ordnance Survey mapping, included within this publication is provided by Restormel Borough Council under licence from the Ordnance Survey in order to fulfil its public function to publicise local public services. Restormel Borough Council Licence No. (100018639) 2007.

The tithe map of 1839 (TM/242) is reproduced with permission of Cornwall Record Office, Cornwall County Council.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map is reproduced, based on the Ordnance Survey and Landmark 1880 OS 1:2500 historic mapping with the permission of the Controller Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright and Landmark Information Group. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to Prosecution or civil proceedings. CCC licence No 100019590. All material copyright © Cornwall County Council 2007.

© Restormel Borough Council 2007

No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the publisher.

Summary

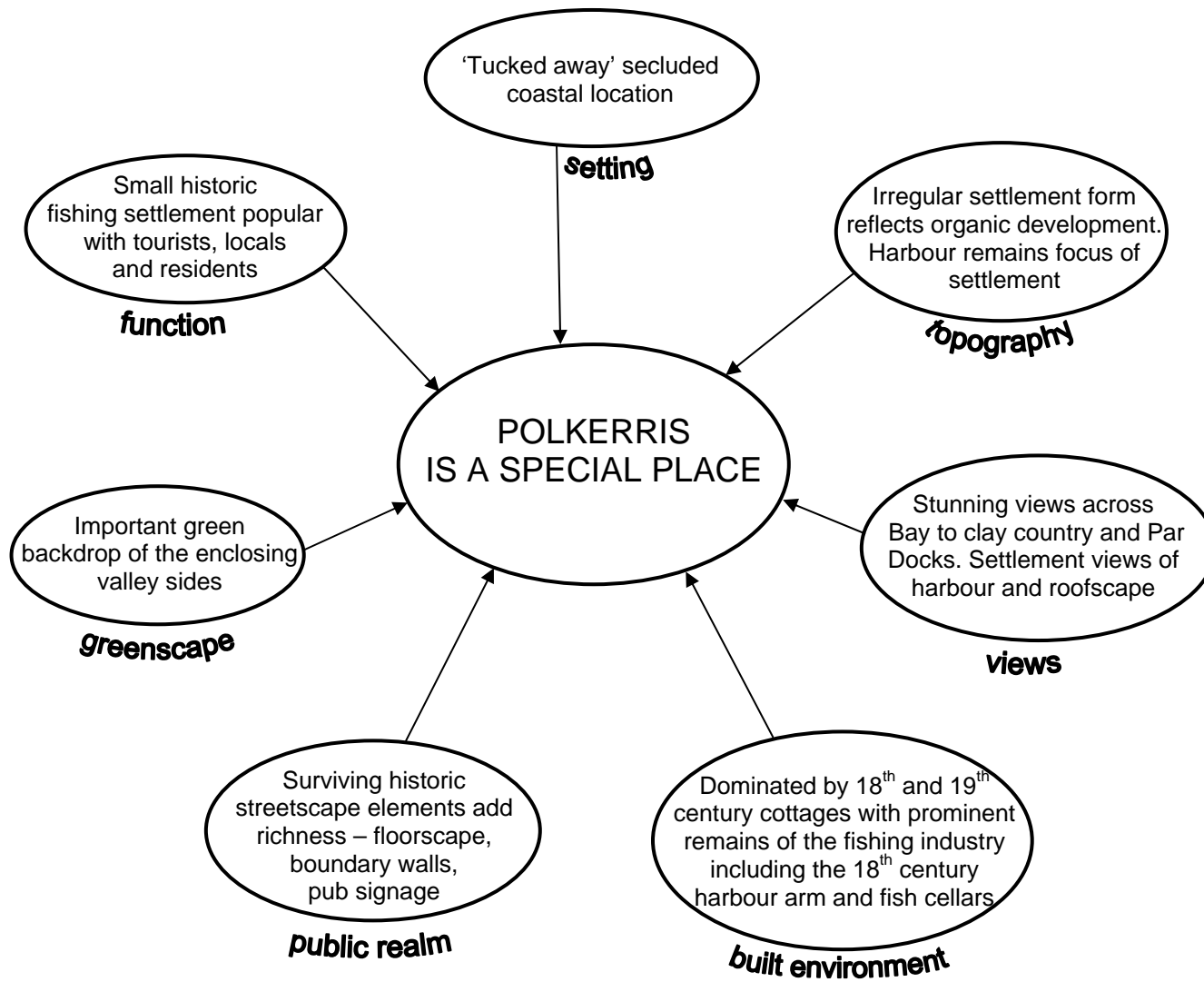
Summary of special interest

Polkerris is a small historic fishing settlement that developed around a sheltered sandy cove, at the foot of a steeply sloping valley, on the east side of St Austell Bay. The character of the village is strongly linked with its landscape setting and its 'tucked away' location is an important part of its charm.

Popular with tourists and locals alike, the village remains a living community with a year round resident population. Largely unaltered during the 20th century, it is still defined by its historic use as a fishing cove and the crescent shaped harbour remains the focus of the settlement. Now used predominantly for leisure, recreation and tourism, the harbour arm and the remains of one of the largest fish cellars in Cornwall are iconic features of the settlement and reminders of the 18th century commercial development of the pilchard fishing industry and the harbour as a place of work.

The development of the settlement has been constrained by the dramatic topography of the site. Former maritime related buildings, many now converted for commercial use, front the harbour and feature a number of surviving slipways. Behind this frontage the settlement, is dominated by residential dwellings of cottages and larger vernacular residences, and has an irregular form reflecting its 'ad-hoc', organic development.

The trees and vegetation of the tightly enclosing valley sides form an important green backdrop to views inland. Equally spectacular views are available of the harbour from the cliff tops and across St Austell Bay to the Clay Country and Par Docks.



Negative features and issues

The appraisal has identified the following negative features or issues adversely affecting the special character of the conservation area:

- Three listed buildings have been demolished since their listing in 1974.
- Some inappropriate alterations to historic buildings have led to the incremental loss of historic architectural features.
- Traffic management measures have impacted on the streetscape, in particular the extensive parking control measures.
- The entrance to a small caravan park above the core of the settlement has, to some degree, a negative impact.
- Public realm issues including poor boundary treatments, the use of standard street furniture that fails to respond to the high quality of the setting, prominent overhead cables and waste management issues.

- Climate change has the potential to seriously affect the conservation area.

Management proposals

The protection and enhancement of the special character of the conservation area depends on the positive conservation management of the settlement. In addition to the existing national statutory legislation and local planning policy controls the following management proposals are recommended:

- Rationalisation of the conservation area boundary.
- Consideration of the introduction of an Article 4 (2) Direction to protect significant historic features and details of unlisted dwellings within the conservation area.
- Reduction of the negative impact of traffic and traffic management measures.
- Public realm enhancements.
- Promotion of the historic interest of the settlement.
- Respond to the challenge of climate change.

1 Introduction

What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is *'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'*.

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

What does conservation area status mean?

Conservation area status provides the opportunity to promote the protection and enhancement of the special character of the defined area. Designation confers a general control over development that could damage the area's character with strengthened controls covering the demolition of buildings, minor development and the protection of trees.

Change is inevitable in most conservation areas and it is not the intention of the designation to prevent the continued

evolution of places. The challenge within conservation areas is to manage change in a way that maintains, reinforces and enhances the special qualities of the area.

What is the purpose of this appraisal?

This appraisal seeks to provide the basis for making informed, sustainable decisions in the positive management, protection and enhancement of the Polkerris conservation area.

Initial chapters provide a brief account of the historic development of the settlement and an analysis of its special character. Subsequent sections identify negative features and issues that detract from the area and outline management proposals.

This appraisal follows the current guidance set out by English Heritage in the 2006 publication 'Guidance on conservation area appraisals'.

The appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

Planning policy context

This appraisal should be read in conjunction with the wider national, regional and local planning policy and guidance.

Relevant documents include:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment 1994
- Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning 1990 (PPG15 and PPG16 are due to be replaced with a combined document PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment in the near future)
- Cornwall Structure Plan 2004, particularly Policy 2 Character Areas, Design and Environmental Protection
- Restormel Borough Council's Local Plan 2001-2011, particularly Chapter 5 Environment and Conservation

Public consultation

A draft version of this appraisal went through a six-week public consultation process. All residents and businesses within the conservation area were contacted by direct mail with a summary of the appraisal findings, an information

leaflet on living in a conservation area, a response form and details on how to view the full appraisal. Other interested parties, including councillors and officers of the Borough Council and County Council, the Parish Council, the Menabilly Estate as landholder, the Cornish Buildings Group and Old Cornwall Society, were also contacted. The consultation was advertised with posters in the village and local press coverage. The draft appraisal and response form was made available through the Council's website and paper copies were available to view at the village pub, the local library and at Council offices. A presentation on the appraisal's findings was given at a public meeting hosted by the Polkerris Women's Institute on 14 March 2007, followed by a discussion session.

The consultation responses were evaluated and the appraisal was amended in light of comments received. This document was endorsed by Restormel Borough Council in June 2007. It was formally endorsed by their Policy and Scrutiny Committee 4 at the meeting of 11 June 2007 and by their Cabinet at the meeting of 18 June 2007. The appraisal will be a material

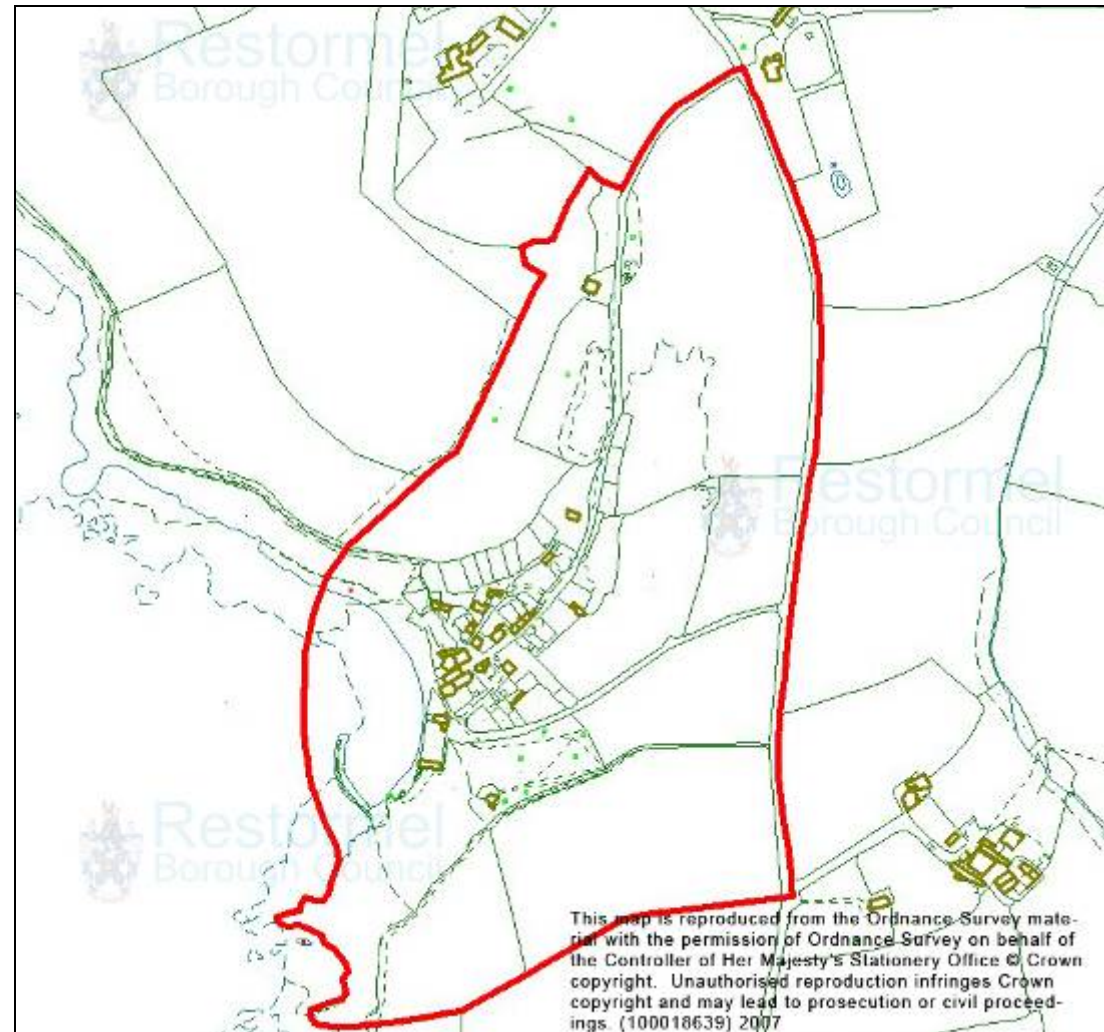
consideration when applications for change within the conservation area or its setting are considered by the Council.

Polkerris conservation area

The Polkerris conservation area was designated by Restormel Borough Council in 1976. The current conservation area covers the extent of the settlement and a number of fields and areas of woodland that surround it. The eastern boundary of the area is defined by the Kilmarth to Menabilly road, north and south boundaries by field divisions and the western boundary running along the coastline enclosing the harbour.



Conservation area location: within the wider borough (top) and the surrounding local vicinity



Existing conservation area boundary

2 Location and context

Polkerris is a small, coastal settlement, situated on the south coast of Cornwall within the boundaries of the Central 2 area of Cornwall Council. It is located on the east side of St Austell Bay, 10 km east of St Austell, 4 km west of Fowey and 1 km east of Par. Located historically within the parish of Tywardreath, the churchtown of the same name is 3 km to the north east.

The settlement is approached from minor roads from Kilmarth to Menabilly accessed from the A3082 Par to Fowey road.

The popular footpaths of the South West Coast Path and the Saint's Way pass through the settlement.

Topography

The 'tucked away' secluded location of the settlement is an important part of its special character. Set at the bottom of a steeply sided valley and developed around a sheltered sandy cove, the settlement is hidden from view from the landward side and was historically more easily accessible from the sea. The settlement continues to face seaward fronting onto the crescent-shaped harbour and turning its back to the land.

The narrow approach road, linking the settlement with the higher ground above, descends along the coombe, in places cut through the natural bedrock. The valley originally had an open stream running down to the beach. This is now largely culverted, but is visible in places as a small roadside ditch.

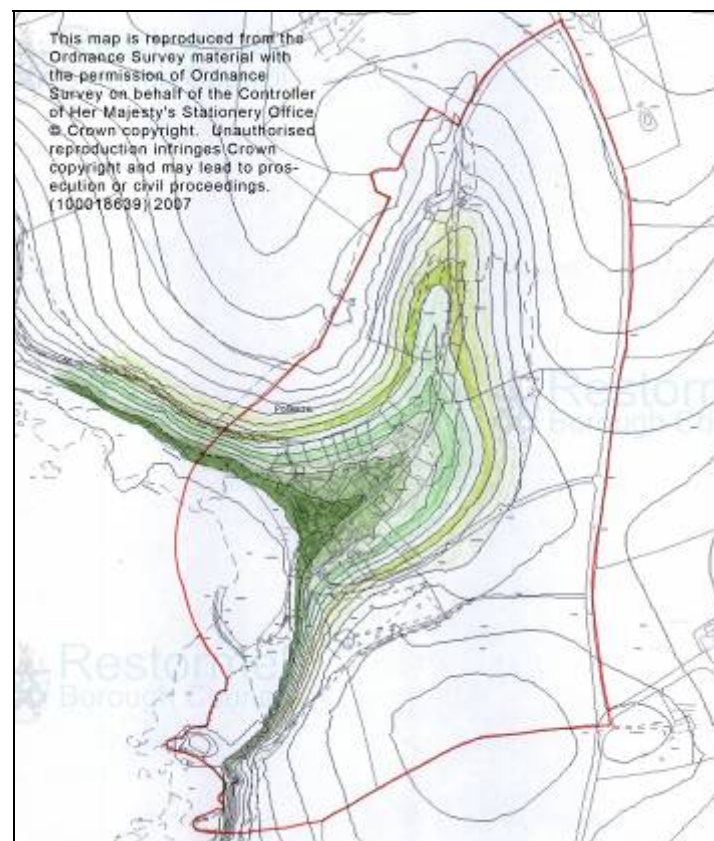
The underlying topography has shaped and constrained the form of the settlement with the majority of the village buildings concentrated within a relatively level plateau at the foot of the coombe. The sharply rising wooded valley sides tightly enclose the settlement and form a green backdrop and the high horizons that dominate views inland.

Landscape setting

The wider landscape setting is of dispersed settlement with farms and hamlets set within an agricultural landscape of largely 'Anciently Enclosed Land', with steep sided river valleys and cliffs of 'Coastal Rough Ground' and a number of 'Ornamental' landscapes formed by the gardens of Kilmarth and Menabilly (Cornwall Historic Landscape Characterisation, 1994). Polkerris falls within the St Austell Bay and Luxulyan Valley character area (CA39) in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Study.

Geology

The underlying geology of the area is of Devonian slatestone, locally referred to, by a traditional mining term, as 'killas'. The stone is visible in the exposed cliff faces along the Bay and was quarried locally, to the north east of the village, probably providing the building material for much of the settlement.



The dramatic underlying topography is an important factor in the special character of Polkerris

Historic associations

The area has been shaped by the long-term influence of the Rashleigh family. Originally from Devon, the Rashleigh's made their fortune as merchants, trading out of Fowey from c1529. Opportune land acquisitions at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries saw them established as the dominant family of the area, with a town base in Fowey. Menabilly, 1 km to the south east of Polkerris, was first developed in the 16th century as the family's countryseat. The Grade II* listed house now includes a registered park and garden and is also celebrated for its associations with Daphne de Maurier. Tregaminion chapel, 0.5 km to the south east of Polkerris, was built as the family chapel of ease in the early 19th century. Kilmarth, a further Rashleigh house, set above Polkerris also features a notable, locally designated garden.

The family's patronage has shaped the development of Polkerris and much of the land is still part of the Menabilly Estate.

Historic environment designations

The current historic environment designations within the conservation area are listed below.

- There are no scheduled monuments
- There are 18 listed building designations within the conservation area. Some of these designations cover multiple addresses, others refer to boundary walls. All are of Grade II status.
- Kilmarth is a Local Historic Park and Garden, as defined by the Local Plan
- The area is within the Heritage Coast, as defined by the Local Plan
- The area is within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

3 Historic development

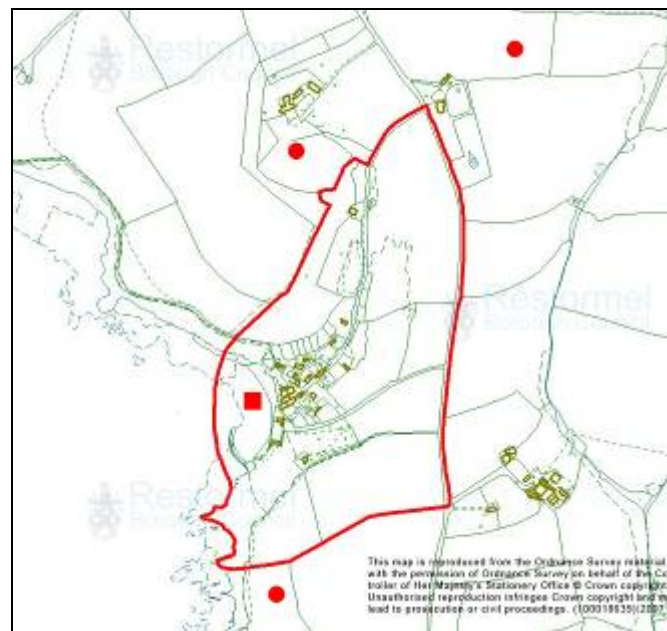
Summary of historic interest

- Polkerris is in an area of 'Anciently Enclosed Land' with evidence of **dispersed prehistoric settlement**.
- Historically it was the **principal fishing station in the Bay** and is likely to have originated as a mixed economy fishing and agricultural settlement. The first documented reference to pilchard fishing from the settlement is of 1583. The historic focus of the settlement clusters around the cove, fronting onto the harbour and turning its back to the land.
- During the **early 18th century the harbour was commercially developed** for pilchard seining under the patronage of the Rashleigh family. The quay was constructed c1730-40 together with one of the largest fish-curing cellars in Cornwall. **Much of the surviving built environment dates to the 18th century.**
- The **19th century decline of the pilchard industry** led to the reduction of the fishing fleet and the abandonment of the fish cellar. The **maritime importance** of the settlement continued with the Coastguard and Lifeboat Stations.
- During the 19th century **increased provision of services** included the construction of a Wesleyan chapel and a school housed in the converted fish cellar.
- The landscape became valued for its **picturesque qualities**. Late 19th century development extended along the valley with 'Eagles Nest' built high above on the south cliff.
- The harbour was **defended against invasion during World War II**. Change during the rest of the 20th century has largely been defined by the **growth of tourism** and leisure use of the harbour.

Prehistory

Since the earliest times the sandy cove on the sheltered east side of St Austell Bay would have been an attractive location for fishing and maritime activity.

A chance find of a bronze fibula brooch dating to the late 1st - early 2nd century AD, recovered on the beach, suggests Romano-British activity in the nearby area. Late prehistoric and Romano-British rectilinear enclosures associated with field systems have been identified nearby as crop marks on aerial photographs. At Kilmarth the historic field name 'Round Field' and the surviving curved field boundary suggests the location of another defended farmstead or 'round' of the same date. This evidence suggests a pattern of dispersed prehistoric settlement in the wider surrounding landscape.



Prehistoric features (taken from Cornwall Council's Historic Environment Record)

Early origins of the fishing station

First recorded as '*Polkeryes*' by Norden in 1584, the settlement likely originated through the use of the natural cove for fishing and shelter. Gover suggests that the first element of the place name may have originated as '*Porth*' meaning harbour or haven with the second element possibly coming

from '*cherit*', old Cornish for heron, later becoming '*kerris*' meaning to wall, fortify, enclose or fence.

Polkerris was historically the principal fishing station within St Austell Bay, with the first reference to fishing in a document of 1583 that mentions 'three little pilchard houses under one roof on the north east side of Polkerris Green' (CRO, R/2701). Norden, writing in 1584, describes Polkerris as a place 'wher great store of Pilchardes are taken at the time of the yeare' and a document of 1590 provides further reference to 'a seine house' at the settlement.

18th century harbour development

During the 18th century there was a concerted attempt to develop the pilchard fishing industry of the settlement as a commercial speculation. Under Rashleigh patronage, a major programme of investment in the infrastructure of the cove was undertaken. The quay was constructed c1730-40, with the fish cellar to the east probably of similar date. The cellar is one of the largest in Cornwall and shows the ambition of the venture

and the proposed scale of fishing from the settlement at this period. By the end of the century St Austell Bay, earlier Tywardreath Bay, was known as Polkerris Bay indicating the importance of the hamlet.

Much of the surviving built environment of the village dates to this period.



The Rashleigh built harbour of c1730-40



Remains of the 18th century fish cellar, one of the largest in Cornwall

19th century

The 19th century saw the decline of the pilchard industry with poor catches becoming more common from the 1830s. By 1870 there was only one seine and two drift boats fishing from Polkerris.

The tithe map of 1839 provides the first detailed view of the settlement and shows the historic core clustered around the harbour. The map suggests that historically the road widened to a funnel-like open space at the harbour, which had already been built over by 1839. The courtyard form of the fish cellar is easily recognised on the edge of the beach and the map apportionments list another fish cellar at what is now 15 Polkerris (plots 245 and 243) and a boathouse, now the Rashleigh Inn (plot 251). The majority of the village is listed as 'cottages and gardens', with 'stables' at plot 257, and other areas described as 'sands', 'wastes' and 'furze'. Subdivided garden plots are located above the settlement on the south facing valley side and the grey shaded areas (plots 219 and 1397) depict wooded plantations.



Tithe map, 1839
© Cornwall Record Office, Cornwall County Council, TM/242



1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1:25,000 , c1880
© Cornwall County Council

Relatively little had changed by the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of c1880, which shows the addition of a small number of buildings.

The map shows an 'Old Limekiln' in the harbour. The structure survives today and is currently used as a fishing lockup. The kiln was originally proposed by two local farmers in 1827 and was used to burn imported limestone for the production of lime for use as a fertiliser.

The increased provision of services in the settlement is shown on the map with the early 19th century Wesleyan chapel (now converted as holiday accommodation) and a school, located in the former fish cellar, both noted. The General Elliott public house is also depicted overlooking the beach. This building was swept away in a storm and its site is now a car park.

Despite the decline in the pilchard industry, the sheltered location of the cove continued to be important in maritime matters. A Coastguard Station is marked at what is now the Rashleigh Inn. Its officers were housed in the Old Coastguard Cottages fronting the main spine road of the settlement.

Shown on the tithe map, this row was originally built by the unpopular Preventive Service, forerunners of the Coastguards, and housed the Riding Officers who patrolled the cliffs on horseback to discourage smuggling. A Lifeboat House was established in 1859 and was the earliest station in St Austell Bay. The current building and slip date to 1903 and is currently the Life Boat Café. The Station was transferred to Fowey in 1922.

A number of detached dwellings were constructed between the tithe map of 1839 and the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of c1880, extending the settlement further along the valley floor. A single storey building, later known as Eagles Nest, was constructed high above the settlement on the upper slopes of the southern cliff. Built within the woodland of the plantation marked on the tithe map, the house survives in a ruinous form, constructed in a quarried platform in the bedrock of the hillside. A number of ornamental conifers survive within the woodland and may relate to the house. The landscape was no longer perceived solely in terms of its economic value and benefits but also for its picturesque character and views.



Lifeboat house of 1903 with surviving slipway.

Early 19th century limekiln with Second World War pillbox constructed on the roof.

Early 19th century Wesleyan Chapel, now converted for holiday accommodation.

The Rashleigh Inn a former boathouse and Coastguard Station with surviving slipway.





This mid 20th century view of the village provides an interesting record when compared with a similar scene today. There has been very little village expansion but many of the buildings have been altered. The earlier image records the poor state of the roofs, the original large gable-end chimneystacks and the garden plots on the south facing valley side. One of the demolished 18th century listed buildings is shown on the far left.

Early 20th century

Photographs of 1910 show the large courtyard fish cellar intact and roofed. However, by the end of the century the building had fallen into a poor state of repair and was partially rebuilt. The surviving outer walls of the cellar form one of the landmarks of the settlement with the former window openings of the upper floor net loft surviving as 'crenellations'.

During the late 19th and early 20th century the use of non-vernacular architectural styles in newly built residences and the addition of details to the existing buildings suburbanised the character of the settlement to some extent. The mock timber framed rebuilding within the footprint of the fish cellar and the bay window replacing the boathouse doors of the former lifeboat station mark a departure from the traditional building forms of the settlement.

During the Second World War the cove was defended against the threat of invasion with the construction of a pillbox on the roof of the limekiln and the addition of anti-tank barriers along the beach.

Later 20th century to the present

Polkerris remains relatively unaltered in terms of its built form, but the nature of the settlement has changed dramatically. Tourism has replaced commercial fishing and agriculture as the main stay of the economy and a number of hospitality and leisure focused businesses operate around the harbour area. A large car park has been created above the settlement to accommodate visitor's vehicles.

Archaeological potential

Evidence of the settlement's origins, development and evolution may be present in below-ground archaeological deposits and in the standing fabric of the buildings. The area of the harbour and the historic focus of the settlement at the foot of the coombe are of particular significance with likely evidence of fishing and other harbour activities. There is also potential for further prehistoric deposits predating the settlement.

4 Settlement character

Summary of essential character

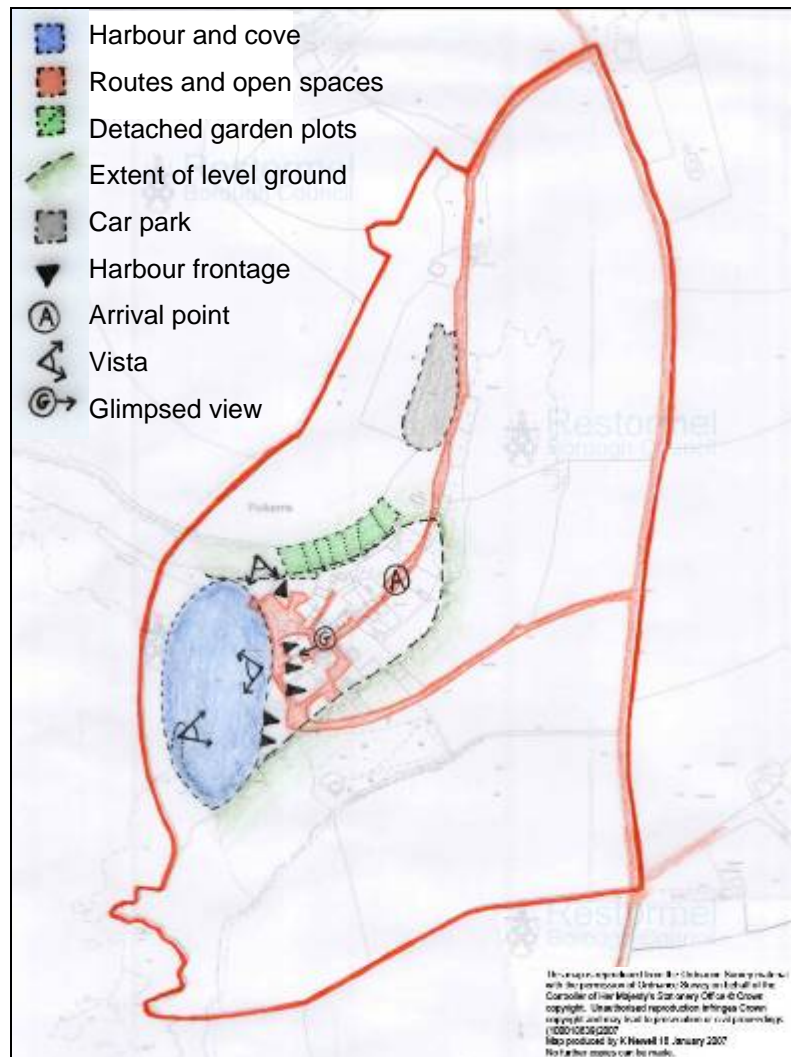
The historic development and topographical location of Polkerris has created a settlement with a distinctive character. Essential character elements include:

- **The strong relationship between the settlement and its beautiful natural setting.**
 - The **organic, unplanned settlement form** with detached dwellings and cottages rows clustered around the settlement focus of the harbour, constrained by the area of level ground at the foot of the valley.
 - The **spectacular views** across St Austell Bay to the pyramid tips of the clay district and Par Docks. Inland views of the settlement enclosed by the green backdrop of the wooded valley sides and the views of the roofscape of the settlement from the clifftops are important.
- **The degree of completeness of the built historic environment** – the majority of buildings are listed and of 18th or 19th century date. Cottages and larger vernacular residential buildings dominate but there are also important maritime and fishing-related structures, especially around the harbour. Despite the variety of form, function and siting common materials of slatestone rubble (killas) often with granite dressings unify the built environment.
 - The **surviving historic elements of the public realm** that add richness and include areas of beach-cobbled surfacing, granite gutters, rubble-built boundary walls and historic signage.
 - The **greenscape** of the settlement including the valley side woodland, the walled gardens, hedgerows, vegetation in the boundary walls and cottage front planting.

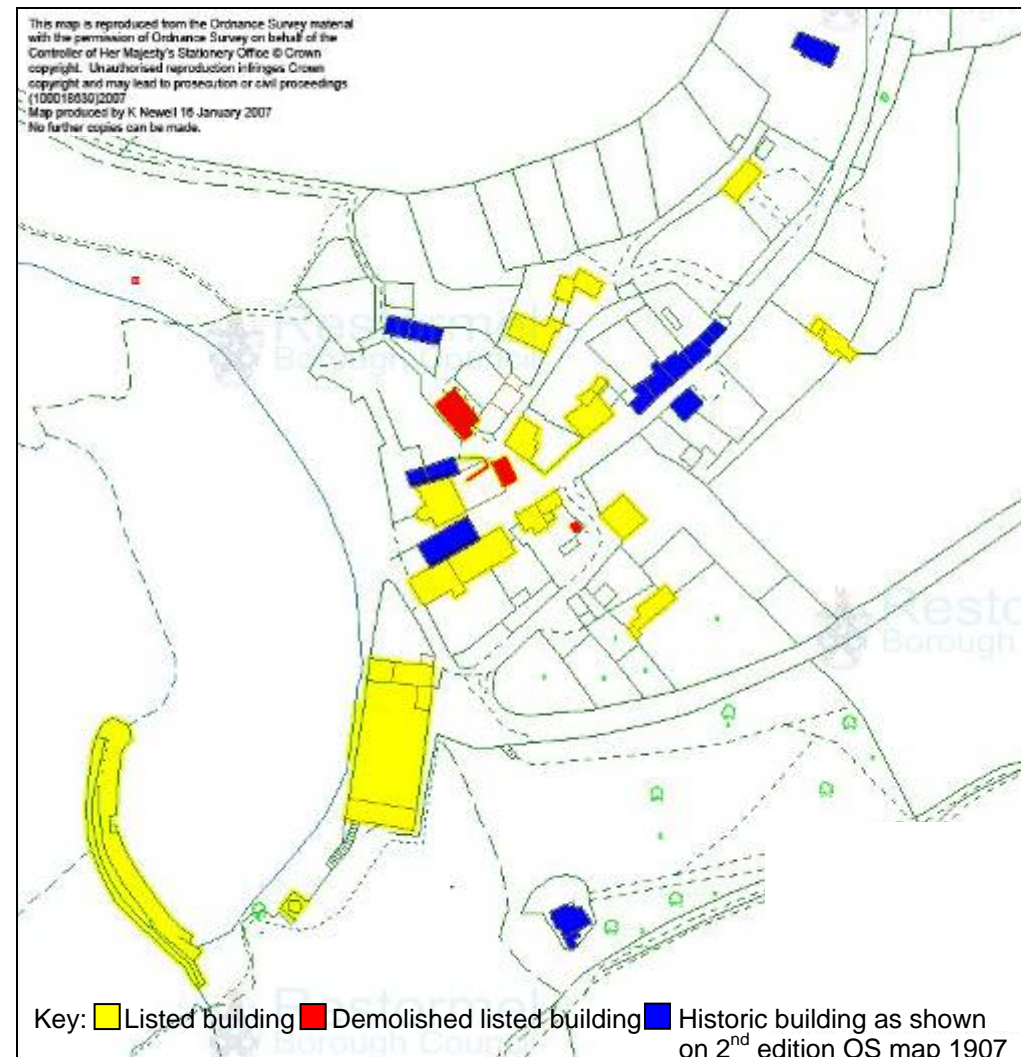


The strong relationship between the settlement and its natural setting is an essential element of the special character of Polkerris





Spatial analysis



Built environment analysis

Spatial analysis

Topography and settlement form

The natural topography of the cove, set within the wider sheltered bay, at the foot of the steep valley continues to be an important element in the character of the settlement defining its secluded and hidden nature.

The harbour and cove remain the focal point of the settlement and its principal open space. Enclosed by the curving harbour arm, the space is strongly defined with a distinct sense of separation from the rest of the village. Buildings front onto the harbour, turning their backs to the approach road creating strongly defined 'front' and 'back' areas of the settlement with restricted views between the two.

There is a strong sense of approach and arrival, descending along the tunnel-like valley road with high Cornish hedges and overarching trees. Views unfold along the route with a definite point of arrival defined by the gable end elevation of the Coastguard cottages (6-9 Polkerris).

Open spaces within the settlement, apart from the harbour, are restricted to demolition sites (such as the Rashleigh Inn car park where the ghostings of former roof pitches can be seen in the surviving historic boundary walls) and at road junctions or in irregular back plot areas.

The natural topography has restricted the size of Polkerris with the majority of the settlement contained by the relatively level area at the foot of the valley, set close to the harbour. Later development spread up the spine road ascending along the valley floor. Very few buildings have been built on the higher ground of the valley sides.

The organic and unplanned nature of the development has created a distinctive, irregular settlement form. There is some degree of order along the spine road and fronting the harbour, but in general buildings are set in haphazard sitings and orientations within a range of plot sizes and shapes. Common build forms are detached dwellings and cottage rows of varied date and style. Planned rows of houses set directly onto the



Tunnel-like approach road flanked by Cornish hedges and overarching trees, descending to the harbour along the valley floor



Strong arrival point to the settlement defined by the gable-end elevation of the Old Coastguard Cottages (6-9 Polkerris)



Ad hoc development has created a generally irregular settlement form with some uniformity along the spine road

street front, such as 6-9 Polkerris, the Old Coastguard Cottages, are the exception within the settlement.

Historic routes are limited, apart from the main approach route along the valley floor, the only other route linking the settlement is a now much degraded lane originally linking directly to the large fish cellar. Other routes within the settlement are small access tracks or paths.

A group of detached garden plots survive on the south facing valley side. The tithe map shows these were once more extensive.

Key views and vistas

The most striking views of the settlement are dominated by the dramatic natural setting and the built environment, namely the enclosing valley sides, St Austell Bay, the harbour area and settlement roofscape.

- Sequential views along the descending approach road provide the first sea glimpses that are shielded in the



Spectacular views across the bay feature the pyramid tips of the clay district and the industrial landscape of Par Docks

settlement core by buildings fronting onto the harbour.

- From the harbour, spectacular long distance views across St Austell Bay feature the green fields of the Black Head peninsula, the pyramid tips of the clay country and the industrial landscape of Par Docks.
- Landward views from the harbour are equally impressive with the settlement nestling at the foot of the enclosing green backdrop formed by the wooded valley sides, with glimpses of the agricultural land at the top of the slope.
- Views from the cliff-top coastal path provide stunning panoramas over the harbour and village roofscape,

emphasising the contrast between the irregular, angular settlement form and the sweeping crescent of the cove.

Activity and use

The historic activity and use of Polkerris as a fishing and agricultural settlement continues to define its character and distinctiveness today. Although fishing has largely been replaced by tourism and leisure, the harbour and beach remains the focal point of the village. The commercial businesses, including pub, café and watersports shop, are focused in this area and the harbour retains a small fleet of vessels that form an important link with the settlement's heritage.

Polkerris remains a living community, with a year round resident population boosted by the seasonal influx of day visitors and those that stay in the small caravan park and a number of holiday homes, including the converted Methodist chapel.

Standing historic fabric

Architectural characteristics

The built environment of Polkerris is dominated by domestic structures of mainly cottage status and larger vernacular dwellings. Some of the later houses and alterations are of a more generic, non-vernacular character. Buildings relating to the former fishing industry and maritime activity form an important group around the harbour including the former cellars, boathouses, slipways and the robust harbour pier. Other notable buildings include the limekiln in the harbour and the early 19th century Wesleyan chapel.

The majority of the buildings are of early 18th century date, with the remainder of the later 18th and 19th century. More recent building is restricted to extensions and alterations to the earlier properties.

Despite the variety of architectural styles and the irregularity of siting and orientation of the buildings, a high degree of unity dominates the built environment due to the use of common

materials and recurring architectural forms and details. Symmetrical frontages are common, of both two and three windows wide with central doorways, and seen in both detached and adjoining properties. Houses are generally of two storeys, although there are some smaller one and a half storied buildings with gabled dormers to attic levels. Building plans are generally linear in form, of shallow depth to length ratio.

Listed buildings

The majority of the buildings within the conservation area are grade II listed structures and together form a good village group. There are 18 listed entries, although some of these refer to multiple buildings. Listed structures include vernacular cottages, buildings relating to the former fishing industry, the limekiln, chapel and boundary walls.

Of particular note is the harbour quay, perhaps the most significant structure in the settlement. The mass of its stepped outer wall and substantial materials add to the robust

character of the harbour area. The 'crenellated' form of the large courtyard fish cellar is another landmark structure. Less obvious are the remains of another fish cellar at 15 Polkerris. To the harbour frontage this is one of the most architecturally impressive buildings in the conservation area, with granite quoins, lintels and keystone detail to a central blocked opening. Set behind and fronting onto The Square, is a fish cellar structure of industrial character with large double doors.

High rubble-built boundary walls form part of the special interest of the conservation area and are both listed in their own right, for example the garden wall to the south east of No 11 Polkerris, and as curtilage structures, such as the impressive wall adjoining No 15 Polkerris on the harbour front.

Two listed 18th century cottages have been demolished since their listing in 1974 and a listed K6 20th century Telephone Kiosk has also been removed.



Symmetrical frontages are common



Stepped form of the harbour



Architecturally impressive harbour fronting elevation, 15 Polkerris



Fish cellar of 15 Polkerris, fronting onto The Square



Redeveloped former fish cellar



High garden wall, 15 Polkerris

Unlisted buildings

The small number of unlisted historic buildings within the conservation area make a positive contribution to the special character of Polkerris. Of particular interest are 6-9 Polkerris, the former Coastguard cottages and the 1903 Lifeboat Station with its surviving slipway. The Lifeboat Station is of an unusual construction type with a prefabricated iron framework structure.

Unconverted surviving outbuildings help retain the character of a working settlement and have prevented Polkerris from becoming over-sanitised. These are the simplest buildings in the settlement with rubble walls, timber lintels, plank doors and slate roofs, sometimes replaced with corrugated iron.

Remains of a former footbridge, probably associated with Kilmarth, that crossed over the approach road in the upper valley, is marked by two surviving masonry piers either side of the road. Historic photographs show that the rest of the structure was of timber.

Materials

The predominant building material is slatestone rubble (kilas), probably obtained from the quarries marked on historic maps higher up the valley. Rubble walling is commonly paired with granite dressings including lintels and quoins. Elsewhere lintels are of timber, sometimes brightly painted. Rubble walling is also paired with cob construction of upper floors in a number of buildings.

Granite ashlar is used at the northern end of the harbour pier and the substantial blocks are an obvious area of rebuilding.

Water-worn beach stones are used throughout the settlement, particularly in boundary walls and areas of floorscape.

Brick is generally limited to chimneystacks, topped with red or white ceramic chimney pots, but is also used as vousoirs in the windows of the former chapel. Red ridge tiles are a feature of many of the re-roofed buildings, although there are also black tiles that blend more successfully with the setting and surviving historic slate roofscape.



6-9 Polkerris, Old Coastguard Cottages, of particular historic interest



Remains of a footbridge crossing the approach road



Outbuildings are an important element of the special character



Common materials unify the built environment



Historic stucco survives on the walls of the ruinous Eagles Nest

Some rubble elevations have been painted, others rendered. Historic stucco survives on the remains of the Eagles Nest property and is scored to imitate ashlar. However, most of the current rendered elevations are more recent with inappropriate highly textured finishes.

Roofscape is an important part of the special character of Polkerris and is highly visible from the cliff top coastal path. Roof form is varied with hipped and gable end forms the most common. Many roof coverings have been replaced since the 1974 listing when many cement washed, bitumen painted, felt covered or corrugated iron roof coverings were noted in the descriptions. Scantle slate is the historic covering, with some of the older surviving roofs of sized Delabole slate. Modern replacement roof coverings are commonly of Spanish slate and artificial asbestos slate. Some skylight dormer windows have been added to the roovescape including the converted chapel and 21 Polkerris.

The texture and colour of building materials and details are important elements in the special character of the area. The

substantial mass of the rubble-built walls adds a robust quality to the streetscape. Rendered walls are generally painted white with fenestration details and lintels sometimes picked out in bright colours. The blue expanse of the sky and sea add to the colourful scene on summer days dwarfing the built environment of the settlement.



22-23 Polkerris, large gable-end stacks have been removed



20 Polkerris, typical local detail with windows directly under eaves



25-26 Polkerris, historic unlisted structure



16-17 Polkerris, symmetrical facades in adjoining cottages

Local details

There has been an extensive loss of historic fenestration and detail including door and window fittings, wall surfaces, roof coverings and chimneystacks. As a result the authentic character of the settlement has been to an extent eroded and dominant textures and colours altered. However, historic fittings do survive and include both casement and sash windows. Window openings are typically set directly under the eaves, a notable feature of Cornish vernacular architecture.

Simple slate covered porch hoods are a common feature with fully enclosed, small timber-built porches a more modern adaptation.

Brick-built chimneys are commonly set on the ridgeline of roofs however, the earlier tradition was of substantial projecting end stacks of stone rubble construction; an example survives at number 21 Polkerris but many have been removed. The majority of guttering is of modern replacement and is now fascia mounted.

Streetscape

Public realm

Surviving areas of **historic surfacing** add to the textural richness of the streetscape. Some of the back lanes retain cobbled surfacing and a cobbled gutter and thresholds survive at 6-9 Polkerris, the former Coastguard cottages. Granite gutter channels line the harbour end of the spine road. In contrast to this, some areas of modern cast concrete surfacing are disappointing, such as above the retaining wall to the beach.

Street furniture, street lighting and signage are minimal but the use of standard items fails to match the quality of the surrounding historic environment. In some places, overhead cables are a prominent negative feature. A proliferation of parking control measures detracts from the quality of the streetscape, with extensive double yellow lines, pole-mounted official highway and private signage and obstacles designed to prevent parking.



Cobbled gutters and thresholds add texture to the streetscape



Poor public realm detracts from the special character in places



Poor public realm treatment along the route of the coastal path



Historic surfaces survive in some of the back lanes



The Rashleigh's ornate hanging sign is an attractive feature



Poor boundary treatments detract from the special character



Much of the current conservation area is agricultural land



Walled gardens are important in the settlement



Public realm along the coastal path provides a poor welcome



Deciduous woodland forms a green backdrop to the settlement



Vegetation clothes the high rubble boundary walls

Sensitive **commercial signage and advertising** adds vitality to the streetscape. The ornate historic wrought iron projecting sign on the side elevation of the Rashleigh Inn is a positive local feature.

Boundary treatments are an important element of the streetscape. High rubble-stone walls and Cornish hedges emphasise the rural character of the village and the need for protection against the elements and salt air. Elsewhere a more recent treatment of picket timber fencing encloses garden plots. Poor boundary treatments along the coastal path adjacent to the Rashleigh Inn and the late 20th century retaining wall of the beach detract from the special character.

Greenscape

Despite the exposed coastal location, **trees and vegetation** are an important element of the special interest of Polkerris. Much of the current conservation area is of agricultural land, predominantly laid to pasture. The approach road is lined with lush and verdant Cornish hedges and made tunnel-like by the

overhanging trees. The deciduous woodland and scrub clothing the steep enclosing valley sides insulate the settlement and form a dominant green backdrop. Towards the sea edge the trees are contorted and their angled growth emphasises the slope of the cliff edge. An ornamental conifer on the southern slopes, possibly associated with the Eagles Nest property or the earlier Rashleigh plantation, stands distinct, its exposed trunk visible against the leafy canopy.

The surviving detached garden plots on the south facing valley side form a reminder of the more extensive allotment pattern shown on the 1839 tithe map.

Within the settlement itself greenery is surprisingly important. Many properties are associated with walled garden plots providing glimpses of trees and planting behind high valerian covered rubble walls. Buildings facing directly onto the road often feature thin beds along their facades planted with climbers, roses, fushias and other flowering varieties. Suburban clipped Ielandi hedges within the settlement core

form a negative element at odds with the surrounding character.

5 Negative features and issues

There are a number of negative features and issues within the conservation area.

Loss of historic architectural features

Despite the high proportion of listed structures, incremental loss of historic architectural detail, including the replacement of windows, doors, traditional wall surfaces and roof coverings with inappropriate materials and designs, is an issue. The loss of three listed buildings is a serious concern.

Traffic and traffic management

Traffic congestion, gridlock of the single-track access road and illegal parking are issues that negatively affect the special character of the conservation area during the summer season.

Failure to enforce existing parking control measures has resulted in a proliferation of road markings, signage (official

and private) and the addition of physical deterrents that detract from the special character of the village. Pressure for residents parking has had an impact on the historic environment; the sites of both demolished listed buildings have been redeveloped for additional parking provision.

Negative sites

A small caravan park is located on the valley side above the settlement. It has a minimal negative impact on the conservation area, generally being well screened from view by the roadside hedges and rising topography. The entrance to the site is the main area of impact with rough surfacing, wooden fencing and glimpses of the caravans with their decked verandas detracting somewhat from the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Public realm

Street furniture and signage is generally minimal but the



Litter can be a negative feature at peak season and following storms



Parking control measures and the use of standard street furniture have a negative impact on the conservation area



Poorly sited skip bins on the route of the coastal path

use of standard items fails to match the high quality of the surrounding historic environment and detracts from the special character of the area.

In some parts of the village overhead cables are particularly prominent in the street scene and have a detrimental effect.

In contrast to the important rubble-built boundary walls, some boundary treatments are of low quality, for example the 'gas pipe' railings along the harbour and beachfront and the fence around the decked pub garden.

Litter can be a negative feature during peak season and following stormy weather. Within the Rashleigh Inn car park the large skip bins are poorly sited close to the coastal path.

Climate change and the historic environment

Climate change has the potential to seriously damage the historic environment of Polkerris. Rising sea levels causing coastal erosion, more frequent and severe flooding and the possible increase in the frequency of extreme weather all

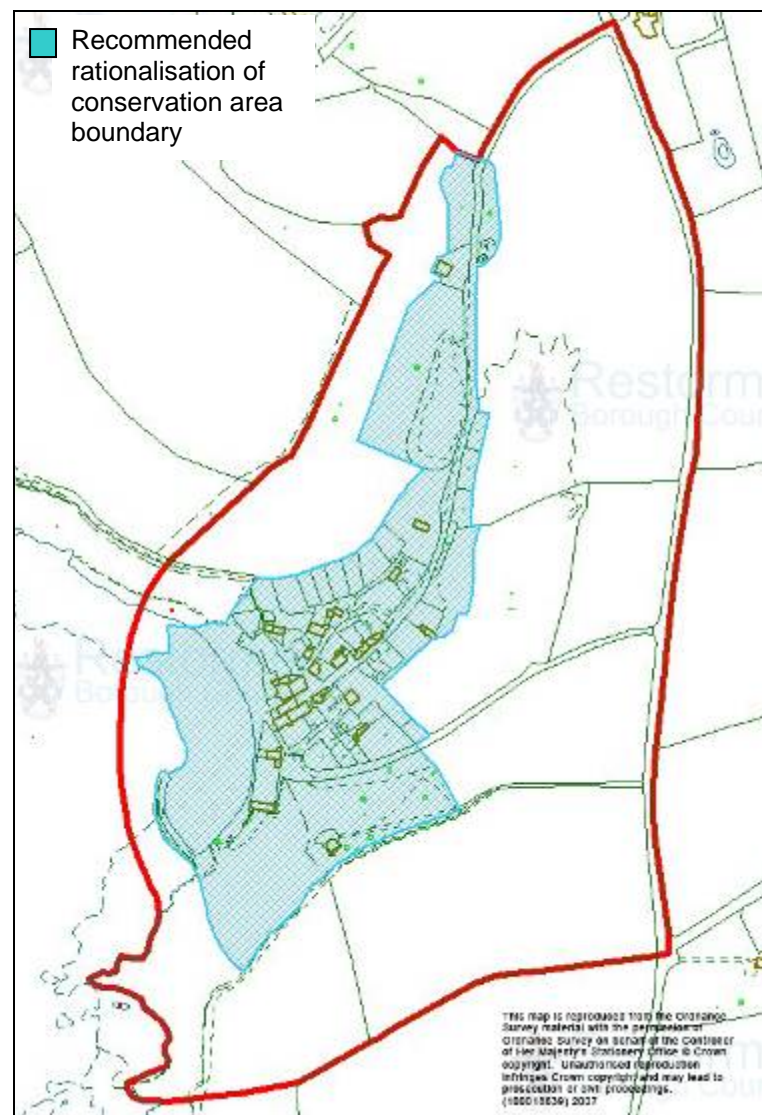
have the potential to damage historic buildings, landscapes and archaeology.

Equally, measures designed to address such issues, and the wider need for the reduction of carbon dioxide levels may also have an impact on the special character of the conservation area.

6 Management proposals

Conservation area boundary review

The conservation area boundary has been reviewed and a reduction in the designated area is proposed, removing areas of surrounding woodland and agricultural land and rationalising the boundary within the harbour area. Conservation area designation is not generally an appropriate means of protecting the wider natural landscape. This can be more appropriately managed through its designation as part of the Cornwall AONB and Heritage Coast, informed by the Historic Landscape Characterisation of 1994 and the emerging Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Study. Equally the setting of a conservation area can be used as a material consideration within the planning process as part of the positive conservation management of the settlement. Prior to any change in designated area, appropriate protection of



the important woodland should be secured through the relevant tree preservation order procedure.

Recommendation: Rationalisation of the conservation area boundary.

Article 4 (2) Directions

The incremental loss of historic architectural detail through inappropriate alterations to historic buildings has been identified as an issue affecting the special character of the conservation area. The majority of the settlement's buildings are protected from such loss through the enforcement of listed building legislation. However, there are a number of significant structures that are not listed. The introduction of an Article 4 (2) Direction could be used to protect the special character of the residential unlisted buildings. Article 4 (2) Directions work by removing certain permitted development rights allowing greater control over changes to elevations, boundaries and materials. The Direction has to specify a prescribed range of development that materially affects aspects of the external

appearance of unlisted dwelling houses that may normally be altered under 'permitted development rights', for example:

- Removal or replacement of any door or window
- Replacement of painted finishes with stains on woodwork or joinery
- Erection, alteration or removal of chimneys or flues
- Addition of porches, carports and sheds
- Changes to wall surface treatments including the painting of previously unpainted elevations, the addition of renders or claddings
- Changes of roof materials and installation of roof lights
- Demolition or alteration of boundary treatments

Such Directions can only be used where there is reliable evidence to suggest that otherwise permitted development is likely to take place that would damage an interest of acknowledged importance and which would therefore be in the public interest to bring within full planning control. To designate such a Direction local authorities must consult local people and take into account public views. To become effective, notice of the Direction has to be advertised in a local

paper and notice should usually be served to the owners and occupiers of all affected properties.

Recommendation: The Council should consider the introduction of an Article 4 (2) Direction to protect significant historic features and details on unlisted dwellings within the conservation area.

Traffic management

To some extent, the traffic issues affecting the conservation area could be addressed by the effective enforcement of existing traffic management measures. Maximising the use of the car park by clearly defining parking bays or encouraging orderly parking and improved signage advertising the car park and discouraging cars from progressing further into the village would also alleviate the problems. Other issues such as the congestion of the single-track access road may require more detailed analysis and intervention by the relevant traffic authority. Exploration of alternative methods of visiting the village should also be explored, including 'Park and Float' options.

Recommendation: The Council will work with its partners to explore ways to ameliorate the negative impact of traffic and traffic management measures on the special character of the conservation area.

Public realm enhancement

Although generally uncluttered and featuring a number of significant historic features, the public realm of the settlement offers a number of enhancement opportunities. Including the following:

- Replacement of standard street furniture items with fittings more sensitively designed to respond to the quality and special character of the conservation area.
- Reduction of the impact of overhead lines through a programme of undergrounding.
- Improvement of poor quality boundary treatments and floor surfaces.
- Public realm enhancement along the route of the coastal path through the settlement.
- More sensitively designed parking control measures.
- Adequate refuse collections within the peak seasons.
- Sensitive landscaping and screening of the caravan site entrance.

Recommendation: The Council will work with its partners to promote public realm enhancements within the conservation area as opportunities arise and will ensure that future public realm works respect and enhance the special character of the conservation area.

Heritage related opportunities

There are opportunities to make the interesting history of the settlement and its surrounding area more accessible through a village trail or guide leaflet promoting Polkerris as an historic settlement and highlighting its surviving features. A wider circular walk could be developed exploring the surrounding historic and natural environment of 'Rashleigh country'.

Recommendation: The Council will explore and encourage opportunities for the celebration of the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area.

Responding to the challenge of climate change

Sustainable development lies at the heart of the Council's planning policy and Cornwall is committed to becoming one of the UK's most sustainable places.

Interventions such as coastal and flood defence systems, the greater use of renewable energy technologies and eco friendly development, would need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. However, ultimately the historic environment is made up of evidence of how we have adapted and evolved in response to new pressures and opportunities and it is likely that one of the defining features of 21st century development will be our response to the challenges of climate change.

Recommendation: The Council will work with its partners, and establish itself as a community leader, in the response to the challenges of climate change.

Sources

Published sources

Anon, 1983. *Meg's memories of Tywardreath and district*, typewritten manuscript at the Cornwall Centre

Betjeman, J, 1964. *Cornwall. A Shell Guide*, Faber and Faber, London

Gilbert, D, 1838. *The Parochial History of Cornwall*, Vol IV, JB Nichols and Son, London

Gill, C, 1995. *The Great Cornish Families: A History of the people and their houses*, Cornwall Books

Gover, J, E, B, 1948. *The Place Names of Cornwall*, unpublished typescript, deposited in the Courtney Library, Royal Institute of Cornwall, Truro

Hitchens, F, 1824. *History of Cornwall*, edited by Samuel Drew, William Penaluna, Helston

Isham, K, 2000. *Lime kilns and limeburners in Cornwall*, Cornish Hillside Publications, St Austell

Luck, L, 1988. *South Cornish Harbours*, Nautical Books, London

Pearse, R, 1964. *The Ports and Harbours of Cornwall*, HE Warne Ltd, St Austell

Pett, D, E, 1998. *The Parks and Gardens of Cornwall*, Alison Hodge, Penzance

Polsue J, 1974. *Lake's Parochial History of the County of Cornwall*, Vol IV (originally published 1867-73)

Pounds, N, J, G, 1944. 'Cornish fish cellars' in *Antiquity*, vol XVIII, pp 36-41

Rawe, D, R, 1978. *Cornish Villages*, Robert Hale, London

Todd, A,C and Laws, P, 1972. *Industrial Archaeology of Cornwall*, David and Charles, Newton Abbot

Wilson, J, 1986. *Around St Austell Bay*, Bossiney Books, Bodmin

Strategic, policy and programme documents

Cornwall County Council, 2004, *Cornwall Structure Plan*

Cornwall County Council, 2006, *Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Study*, Draft Character Area Profile text and mapping

Department of the Environment, 1990, *Planning Policy Guidance 16:Archaeology and Planning*

Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage, 1994, *Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment*

English Heritage, January 2006. *Climate change and the historic environment*

English Heritage, February 2006 (a). *Guidance on conservation area appraisals*

English Heritage, February 2006 (b). *Guidance on the management of conservation areas*

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Restormel Borough Council. *Local Plan 2001-2011*

Restormel Borough Council, March 2006. *Local Development Framework: Statement of Community Involvement*

English Heritage - Images of England

Access to Archives – www.a2a.org.uk

Other sources

Cornwall Council's Historic Environment Record including the Sites and Monuments Record, Historic maps, aerial photographs, Historic Landscape Characterisation

Map sources

Tithe map of Tywardreath parish, 1839

First edition 1:25000 Ordnance Survey map c1880

Second edition 1:25000 Ordnance Survey map c1907

Internet sources