

ST AGNES PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TABLE

CHARACTER AREA: ST AGNES PARISH – Intermediate sloping land		
Character Attribute	Landscape reference guide	ST AGNES PARISH
Topography and drainage	What is the shape of the land?	Generally shallow and gently sloping undulating land more complex around Mithian with sharper folds and curves. Also slightly steeper landform around St. Agnes Beacon. Porthtowan ward has limited areas of this character type between the more dominant elevated plateau and steep-sided valley character types. The most gently sloping land lies in the Blackwater ward.
	What water is present?	Two narrow fast flowing shallow streams in the east of the Blackwater ward. Former mill pond at Manor Parsley. Streams run into St Agnes village in the vicinity of Goonbell and Promised land. Overall, very little flowing water is evident.
Data source	<i>OS Map; aerial photographs</i>	

<p>Biodiversity</p>	<p>Does the area contain areas of 'semi natural habitat?</p> <p>What elements of the character could support protected species?</p> <p>Are there any invasive species?</p>	<p>Semi-natural habitats are present where regeneration has occurred on old mine workings, for example Wheal Butson and Polberro sloping away from Towan Cross. The Manor Parsley area also has semi-natural habitat as does the Porthtowan ward in the vicinity of the Coastal Path.</p> <p>Heathland and regenerating areas offer valuable habitats for snakes, lizards, slow worms, insects and birds. The many overgrown hedges found in all wards offer opportunities for a variety of species both protected and otherwise. Green lanes, verges and disused railway line offer similar opportunities.</p> <p>Small areas of Japanese knotweed in several locations: Wheal Butson, Wheal Davey, railway cutting; not all being treated. Ragwort near the Coast path in St. Agnes ward. Himalayan balsam near Manor Parsley mill pond and individual, potentially spreading pockets of Rhododendron ponticum (Mount Hawke and St. Agnes).</p>
<p>Data source</p>		<p><i>CWT Wildlife notes and maps, and local knowledge</i></p>

Land cover and Land Use	What is the land used for?	<p>Predominantly improved grassland used for cattle grazing, but also some sheep and occasional pigs. Also paddocks for horses. Some arable farming around Blackwater and in the Mithian and Mount Hawke wards. Leisure and recreational uses: campsites and caravan parks and active leisure activities. Some small areas of woodland present throughout the parish.</p>
	What is the vegetation cover?	<p>Mainly improved grassland with some heathland especially along coastal edge and in old mining areas. Small areas of woodland: Blackwater, Mithian and St. Agnes wards. Many tree-lined hedgerows with particularly fine examples evident below Menagissey.</p>
Data source	<i>OS Map; aerial photographs, local knowledge</i>	

<p>Field and woodland pattern</p>	<p>Where is the woodland located</p> <p>What size are the fields</p> <p>What are the hedges made of?</p> <p>What is the character of the hedge?</p>	<p>Woodlands of any scale are very limited in this character type throughout the parish. However, there is a small relatively recent Pine plantation at Torvean, and broadleaf woodland to the north of Mithian near Anchor farm. Some broadleaf woodland to the east of Blackwater ward, and both broadleaf and conifer trees associated with development at Menagissey, Mawla, Skinners Bottom and Wheal Rose.</p> <p>Field sizes vary from small to large throughout the parish. Those closer to valley sides tend to be smaller; those on higher, more level ground are larger. There are extensive areas of mine worker smallholding fields, and at Stencoose there are recognisable remnants of a medieval strip field system. Very large arable fields at Parc Nor, St. Agnes ward. Fields are generally rectilinear, but also the boundaries weave with the undulations of the land.</p> <p>Predominantly Cornish hedges made with local "Killas" stone, but also with some granite and slate. Frequently overgrown with Gorse, bramble, grasses and increasing cover of shrub and tree species at lower levels.</p> <p>Hedges are sculpted by the wind in the more exposed locations in the St. Agnes and Mithian wards, sometimes there is a buffer of meadow / grassland adjacent to the hedge.</p> <p>Most hedges have tree and shrub growth typically containing Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Elder, Gorse, Ash, Oak and Sycamore in various combinations. Unsurprisingly, growth is better in the more sheltered locations where mature trees have frequently been allowed to grow on top of or beside the hedges.</p>
<p>Data source <i>OS Map; aerial photographs, CWT Wildlife notes and maps, Historic Environment information and visit the area to confirm details</i></p>		

Settlement pattern	How is the development distributed? Age and type of buildings and their relationship with the landscape What are the distinctive elements of the buildings?	<p>The majority of village and hamlet development is found in the intermediate sloping landscape character area with the exception of Mount Hawke (elevated plateau). Many scattered farmsteads and hamlets such as Mawla, Wheal Rose, Mithian, Skinners Bottom, Menagissey. The concentrations of miners smallholdings are evident in several locations especially in the southern parts of Mount Hawke and Mithian wards and around Blackwater. Miners smallholdings are not such a feature in Porthtowan ward, and are more dispersed throughout the St. Agnes ward.</p> <p>Buildings date from the 18th century onwards. The older buildings exhibit the more traditional use of local stone, slate and scantle roof design, with cob a frequent component.</p> <p>More random distribution of development over the last 60 years with less connection to local vernacular or landscape setting.</p> <p>As noted above, local stone predominates in older properties with slate roofs (rarely but occasionally thatch e.g. Highlands in Blackwater ward). Older community buildings frequently constructed from “killas” stone with granite dressings or painted rubble stone.</p> <p>More modern buildings are dominated by the use of painted render finish. This creates the dominant visual impression through much of the parish.</p>
Data source		<i>OS Map; aerial photographs, Historic Environment information, and visit the area to confirm details</i>

<p>Transport pattern</p>	<p>What is the character of the roads?</p> <p>Describe the public rights of way</p> <p>Are the roads and paths part of the historic field pattern?</p> <p>Are there bridges?</p>	<p>Varied character of roads from short section of A30 in south of Mount Hawke ward, through the B3285 from St Agnes to Perranporth with its steep winding course across Jericho Valley to the numerous minor unclassified roads that predominate in the parish. Frequent unmade tracks also serve as access to remote dwellings</p> <p>The parish is well served with public rights of way including an extensive bridleway network. In addition, numerous old mine tracks which are not official PROW criss cross the abandoned areas through regenerating heathland.</p> <p>In Mithian ward footpaths are noticeably part of the field pattern, in Porthtowan and Blackwater less so. Mostly in good condition, there are however several paths which have become waterlogged, are overgrown and in places, lacking signage.</p> <p>Stone bridges at Barkla shop and Wheal Butson, also on Mithian Downs where there are two crossings of the disused railway. Between St Agnes & Mithian wards, the railway viaduct is over the valley at Wheal Liberty. No bridges in this character type in Mithian and Porthtowan wards.</p>
<p>Data source</p>		

OS Map; aerial photographs local knowledge and visit the area to confirm details

Historic Features	Are there features in the landscape? The features will have their own setting.	Much evidence of mining history especially in St Agnes ward, e.g. at Polberro, Wheal Butson & Gooninnis mines. Ancient remains in the form of barrows near Wheal Davey, and a "Round" in a field near Coosewartha farm. Old farms are numerous, for example Trevissick farm in Porthtowan dates back to 1337. Old chapels at Blackwater, Mawla, Goonbell, Higher Bal & Mongoose are all features in the landscape. Cameron Camp on the seaward side of The Beacon is distinctive, as is the viaduct at Wheal Liberty on the abandoned Newquay-Chacewater railway.
Data source		
		<i>Use local knowledge, Historic Environment information; aerial photographs and visit the area to confirm details</i>

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<p>Condition</p>	<p>In what state/appearance are the characteristics of the area?</p> <p>Are there areas where improvements could be made to enhance the character of the area?</p> <p>How is the area managed</p>	<p>Road verges and some PROW's (in particular St. Agnes and Blackwater wards) suffer from fly-tipping. Some road surfaces, especially in Mithian, require repair. Condition of farmland is generally good, showing good management practices in most cases.</p> <p>The simple management strategy of improved rubbish collection would have an immediate effect.</p> <p>Some buildings, for example, in Beacon area are deteriorating due to rain damage and could be renovated. Similarly, rain damage to footpaths needs attention.</p> <p>Less aggressive flailing of hedgerows would benefit visual appearance and habitat variety. Allowing more trees to grow in hedgerows would also bring advantages.</p> <p>Many hedgerows are excessively trimmed, often at the wrong time of year, addressing this would enhance the visual appearance and improve habitat potential in many locations.</p> <p>Heathland low level management is a good strategy & apart from some clearance of bramble and invasive species by the National Trust, should continue in the same manner.</p>
<p>Data source</p>		

Use local knowledge and visit the area to confirm details

<p>Aesthetic and sensory</p>	<p>Describe the level of tranquillity</p> <p>How is the landscape experienced?</p> <p>How will the experience of the area change through the seasons?</p> <p>What is the level of light pollution at night?</p>	<p>Generally quiet except in the immediate vicinity of well used roads such as the A30, B3277 and some of the minor roads which access the larger settlements. Numerous quiet and sheltered locations such as Silverwell and Mongoose areas.</p> <p>Numerous rural and intimate areas especially along footpath routes where hedgerow trees have frequently been allowed to grow to maturity providing a very distinctive character. The phrase "Lost World Charm" has rightly been used to describe Menagissey.</p> <p>Seasonal farming changes and changes to hedgerows make an impact. As leaf cover is lost, a degree of additional exposure can be felt, and views open up. Wind exposure noticeably increases in the winter. Heathland colour changes seasonally.</p> <p>Low levels of light pollution, except in parts of the villages and around Mithian school. Some under-cloud reflections of lights from distance e.g. Redruth.</p>
<p>Data source</p>		
		<p><i>Use local knowledge and visit the area to confirm details</i></p>

<p>Distinctive features</p>	<p>Specific Features.</p> <p>The features will have their own setting.</p>	<p>Tree-lined hedgerows can impart a feeling of woodland when seen as long views along the slopes. Such hedgerows are frequently individually distinctive. Pylons and power lines are evident widely throughout the parish and are sometimes visually intrusive. Similarly for wind turbines and telecommunication masts.</p> <p>Farmstead clusters of buildings are frequently of historical as well as landscape relevance and are a general feature throughout this character area. Mining heritage features such as engine houses are seen within and beyond the character area.</p>
<p>Data source <i>Use local knowledge, Historic Environment information</i></p>		
<p>Views</p>	<p>Are there any important vantage points?</p>	<p>Views tend to be more restricted than in more elevated areas, but there are views from Wheal Butson towards the St.Austell clay pits and some views to the sea, particularly within the St Agnes ward.</p> <p>Also vantage points at Eastcliff above Porthtowan along the coast to St Ives and inland to Mount Pleasant.</p> <p>From Wheal Davey there are views to St Agnes and the Beacon similarly from the intermediate land above Jericho valley.</p>
<p>Data source <i>OS Map; Use local knowledge</i></p>		

<p>Key characteristics</p>	<p>What features stand out from completing the assessment sheet as being a key characteristic of the area.</p>	<p>Throughout this character area the features which stand out are particularly related to the pattern of farming activity. Characterised by small to medium sized fields, the boundaries are often well vegetated Cornish hedgerows. Where trees have been allowed to grow to maturity, there is a less “open feel”, which predominates in the lower areas.</p> <p>Several settlements such as Mawla, Mongoose and Mithian have many older properties where stone and slate roof construction predominates, giving a sense of great local character and timelessness.</p> <p>Regenerating heathland and scrub vegetation on old mine areas, particularly in St Agnes ward, impart a distinctive sense of place as befits the World Heritage Site designation.</p>
<p>Relationship to the adjacent assessment area(s)</p>	<p>The transition between this landscape character area and the adjacent one.</p>	<p>The intermediate sloping character area is the “linking” character type between the elevated plateau areas and the steep-sided valleys which characterise the landscape closer to the sea.</p> <p>The transition to the valleys includes a general tendency to smaller scale fields often with significant tree cover to the hedgelines.</p> <p>Near the cliffs, the field pattern gives way to coarse grasses and clifftop heathland.</p> <p>The transition between intermediate and plateau offers striking views in many directions especially around “The Beacon”</p>

List existing evidence base documents used to complete this assessment:

- Cornwall Landscape Character Assessment 2007 – Character Area CA11: Redruth, Camborne and Gwenap
- Character Area CA12: St Agnes
- Character Area CA14: Newlyn Downs