

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan

Interim SEA Environmental Report to accompany the
Regulation 14 version of the Neighbourhood Plan

Penzance Town Council

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Quality information

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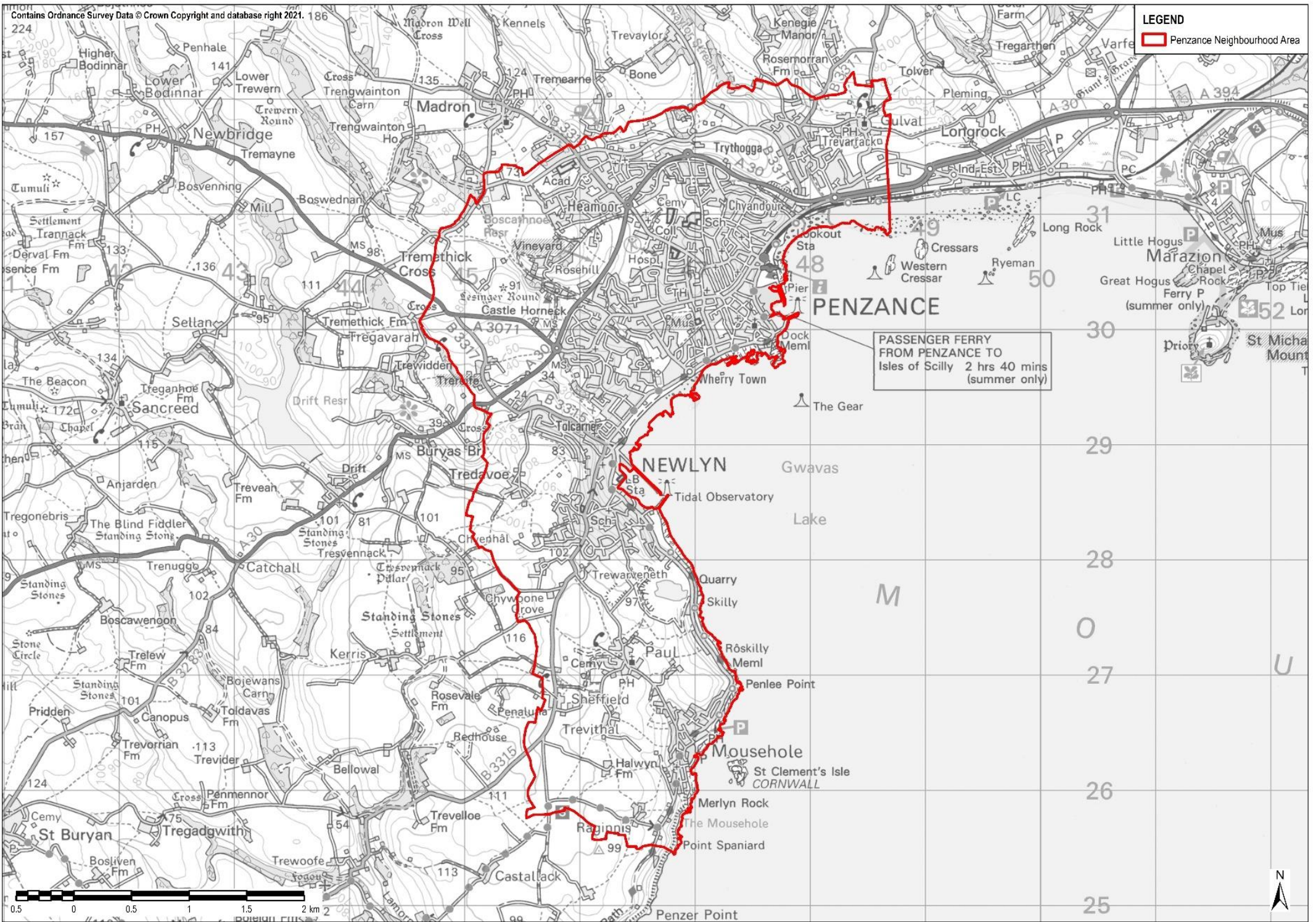
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LEGEND

Penzance Neighbourhood Area



1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Penzance Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 The Penzance Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Penzance Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the adopted Cornwall Local Plan¹, the key documents of which include the Strategic Policies (2010-2030), Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Minerals Safeguarding DPD.
- 1.3 The neighbourhood area (hereafter referred to as the “Plan area”), which covers Penzance Parish, is shown in the figure above. Within the Plan area, the key concentrations of housing and employment development is within Penzance town, where more than half of the population live. The rest of the population is distributed across the parish in other settlements, including (but not limited to) the distinct communities of Newlyn, Paul, Mousehole, Gulval, Heamoor, and Eastern Green.

SEA screening for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.4 A Neighbourhood Plan requires SEA where it is likely to have significant environmental effects. In this respect, Neighbourhood Plans are more likely to be screened in as requiring an SEA if both the following apply:
 - i. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared within a Plan area with significant environmental constraints, such as, for example, within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site, Site of Special Scientific Interest, or large concentrations of heritage assets; and
 - ii. The Neighbourhood Plan is likely to allocate sites for development.²
- 1.5 The Penzance Neighbourhood Plan was screened on behalf of Cornwall Council in June 2022. Though the Neighbourhood Plan isn't allocating sites for housing development, the statutory consultees consider that an SEA is required for the following reasons:
 - The inclusion of a number of economic regeneration policies which have not been considered through the sustainability appraisal work completed for the Local Plan. In this respect, the SEA will likely need to explore reasonable alternatives for some of these policy aspirations.
 - Historic England have also stated that their opinion is that SEA should also be required to avoid potential harm to heritage assets as they have some concerns about policy wording in the draft plan. They state: *“The grade I listed Market House is on the Heritage at Risk Register and is centrally located in the town. Whilst there are plans afoot to repair and*

¹ Cornwall Council (2016): [Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030](#)

² DLUHC (February 2022): Chief Planner's Newsletter: [SEA for Neighbourhood Plans: timely and effective screening](#)

find a new use for it, it has been rather neglected for a number of years and it would benefit from extra and continuing focus.”

- Potential significant effects to the Marazion Marsh Special Protection Area, which is approximately 5 km east of Penzance and is designated for its populations of aquatic warbler and wintering bittern.

1.6 In light of this screening outcome, an SEA process is being undertaken to meet the specific requirements prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).³

SEA explained

1.7 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the potential impacts of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of the SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating potential negative impacts and maximising the potential for positive effects. Through this approach, the SEA for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the emerging plan's contribution to sustainable development.

1.8 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:

- i. When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues.
- ii. A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the Draft Plan (i.e., the draft Penzance Neighbourhood Plan) that presents outcomes from the environmental assessment (i.e., discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.

This Interim SEA Environmental Report

1.9 This Interim SEA Environmental Report, which accompanies the Regulation 14 version of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan, is the latest document to be produced as part of the SEA process. The first document was the SEA Scoping Report (September 2022), which includes information about the Plan area's environment and community. The aim of this Interim SEA Environmental Report is to provide the reader with an overview of SEA progress to date, including a summary of the next steps.

1.10 Following the close of SEA scoping consultation, this Interim SEA Environmental Report will be updated to include the full SEA findings. The updated version of the SEA Environmental Report (i.e., the key output of the SEA process) will be published on **Monday 14th November 2022** alongside the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan for a period of six weeks up until the close of Regulation 14 consultation.

1.11 The remaining sections of this Interim SEA Environmental Report are structured as follows:

³ [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

- **Chapter 2** presents the local plan context and vision for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Chapter 3** presents a summary of SEA scoping, including the key sustainability issues for the Plan area and SEA Framework of objectives against which the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.
- **Chapter 4** presents an overview of the next steps for the SEA process, the findings of which will be included in the updated version of the SEA Environmental Report (i.e., the key output of the SEA process).
- **Chapter 5** presents the conclusions at this current stage.

2. Local Plan context and vision for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan

Local Plan context for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 The overarching document for the Cornwall Local Plan, the *Cornwall Local Plan: Strategic Policies 2010-2030*, was adopted in November 2016. This sets out the land use policies to meet Cornwall's economic, environmental, and social needs and aims for the future, and provides the framework for all subsequent documents which form part of the Local Plan.
- 2.2 The Cornwall Local Plan identifies a requirement for 2,150 new dwellings across Penzance with Newlyn, (in addition to the villages of Heamoor, Gulval and Longrock) between 2010 and 2030. This is to support the provision of around 16,083 sqm of B1a office accommodation and 16,083 sqm of B1c / B2 / B8 industrial space.
- 2.3 Cornwall Council has prepared a Site Allocations DPD⁴ to support the delivery of objectives within the Local Plan. The purpose of the Site Allocations DPD is to allocate land for a range of uses to meet the growth targets for the main towns in Cornwall, relating to housing growth, commercial growth and enabling infrastructure. It should be noted that the housing allocation for the Plan area has already been met through a combination of existing completions and commitments (i.e., sites which have already been developed, or sites which already have planning approval but have not yet come forward), and through strategic site allocations within the Site Allocations DPD.
- 2.4 Neighbourhood plans will form part of the development plan for Cornwall, alongside, but not as a replacement for the Local Plan. Neighbourhood plans are required to be in general conformity with the Local Plan and can develop policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. In this way it is intended for the Local Plan to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Cornwall, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

Vision for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.5 The vision for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan is as follows:



Penzance Parish will:

- *reconnect with the sea - our greatest natural asset – driving sustainable economic regeneration and growth;*
-

⁴ Cornwall Council (2017): [Cornwall Site Allocations Development Plan Document](#)

-
- *see the main centre for the Parish, the town of Penzance, be a place where people have improved opportunities to live, work, meet, shop and visit;*
 - *have a built environment which is easy for people to get around on foot, by bicycle and using mobility aids;*
 - *be a place where people have the opportunity to access and enjoy our natural environment across the Parish and pursue a healthy and active lifestyle;*
 - *have new housing development which meets the needs of the local community, as well as supporting economic growth and responds positively to the challenges posed by a changing climate; and,*
 - *see future development within the Parish which respects the quality and heritage of our built and natural landscape and the distinct identities of the communities that make it up.*

Vision statement for the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan



3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Summary of SEA Scoping

- 3.1 The SEA Regulations require that: *“When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”*. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England.⁵ These authorities are being consulted on the scope of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan SEA for a period of five weeks, between 27th September 2022 and 1st November 2022.
- 3.2 The purpose of scoping is to outline the ‘scope’ of the SEA through setting out:
- A context review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of national, regional, and local plans and strategies relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan.
 - Baseline data against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.
 - The key sustainability issues for the Neighbourhood Plan, presented under a series of environmental themes which incorporate the ‘SEA topics’ suggested by Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive.
 - An ‘SEA Framework’ of objectives against which the Neighbourhood Plan can be assessed.
- 3.3 Responses received on the Scoping Report will inform the next steps for the SEA process (as discussed within **Chapter 4** of this interim SEA Environmental Report).
- 3.4 The key sustainability issues and SEA Framework are presented below.

Key sustainability issues

Air quality

- Increased congestion and reduced air quality have the potential to negatively affect the health of residents. Such effects will be explored under the ‘community wellbeing’ SEA theme.
- While there are Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in the wider area, they are far enough away that development through the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan will not have a substantial effect. This includes Camborne-Pool-Redruth AQMA.
- The Neighbourhood Plan also presents opportunities to enhance accessibility and support more local and sustainable journeys / connections around Penzance. These opportunities will be explored in more depth under the ‘transportation’ SEA theme.
- Considering the above, within the Plan area there is an absence of any significant air quality issues (i.e., AQMA) and there are no exceeded or expected exceedances of national air quality objectives. **Therefore, it is**

⁵ In-line with Article 6(3). of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because *‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programme.’*

recommended that the air quality theme is scoped out for the purposes of the SEA process.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- As the Plan area falls within the Zone of Influence for the Marazion Marine Conservation Zone and Marazion Marsh Special Protection Area, any new residential development will be required to mitigate the effects of the development and show how this will be achieved prior to approval of planning permission. Consultation with Natural England is also likely to be required.
- In terms of nationally designated biodiversity sites, both Penlee Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Penlee Point SSSI are located in the southern section of the Plan area. Increased recreational access to these areas as a potential result from Neighbourhood Plan proposals, without mitigation, could result in the significant features of the sites being degraded or lost.
- The Ancient Woodland and County Wildlife Sites within the Plan area host a variety of plant and animal species that contribute to biodiversity and support ecological connectivity. These areas should be retained and enhanced where appropriate.

Climate change

- Cornwall has observed a 36.3% reduction in the percentage of total emissions per capita between 2005 and 2016, slightly lower than the reductions for the southwest of England (36.7%) and England (37.6%).
- The transport sector is the largest contributor to emissions in Cornwall, and continues to be a key challenge locally, reflecting the rural nature of the Plan area. There is a distinct lack of charging stations to the north of Penzance, potentially discouraging sustainable travel methods in this direction.
- Opportunities to influence per capita emissions could be sought the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan process, particularly by planning for integrated and connected development, which reduces the need to travel and supports opportunities to travel by more sustainable modes.
- The Plan area is partially affected by areas of fluvial and surface water flood risk, notably along the main watercourses and adjacent to Gwavas Lake. It is vital that major development proposals within the Plan area should not only provide a long-term water management plan, but also demonstrate that adequate contractual and funding arrangements are in place to ensure the continuity of the plan over the lifetime of the development. This is particularly important given the recent history of flooding incidents in the Penzance Critical Drainage Area catchment, and local residents' concerns about downstream flooding as a result of development as expressed in the community consultations.
- Opportunities to enhance the resilience of both the Plan area and its residents to the effects of climate change should be sought. This can include adaptation strategies, green infrastructure enhancement, flood betterment measures, infrastructure development, and increased renewable energy sources.

Landscape

- The Penzance Neighbourhood Plan should seek to maintain the integrity and setting of the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; protecting and enhancing locally important landscape and townscape features wherever possible and protect the identity of the distinct communities within the Plan area.
- Adverse impact of light pollution is a key issue within the Plan area. As such light arising from development should seek to limit impacts from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark skies, and nature conservation.
- The Plan area falls within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 04 Mounts Bay and LCA 01 West Penwith South as set out in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Assessment. The unique nature of LCAs should be conserved and enhanced through the appropriate design of new development in the Plan area.
- Moreover, Cornish hedges should form a key element within the design of any new development's green infrastructure network. The space required to achieve a well-designed green infrastructure network which sustainably retains Cornish hedges (amongst other landscape features), should be factored into calculations to determine available built areas / density of the development. The Biodiversity Guide describes acceptable scenarios within plans which involve consideration of buffer zones, retaining connectivity, enhancement measures, light shielding and overall management.

Historic environment

- The Plan area is home to 404 Listed Buildings, three scheduled monuments, conservation areas, and one registered park and garden. Moreover, three designated assets within the Plan area are known to be 'at risk' according to Historic England's risk register.
- Opportunities to further understanding and protection of the historic environment should be encouraged through the Neighbourhood Plan, including with relation to 1) any of the conservation areas which do not currently benefit from an appraisal or management plan, and 2) the heritage at risk asset which has been specifically mentioned by Historic England in their consultation responses to date.
- The town is also rich in non-designated assets with the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record recognising 796 heritage assets which lie either wholly or partially within the Plan area.
- New development within the Plan area should seek to protect and enhance the special character of designated Conservation Areas and other heritage assets, along with their settings, including areas of Penzance town, Newlyn, Mousehole, Paul and Gulval.
- Conservation area appraisals don't exist for some of the conservation areas in the Plan area, which indicates a gap in the existing baseline information. As such, the Neighbourhood Plan presents an opportunity to further enhance our understanding on the special qualities of these areas (including potentially through compiling a local heritage list).

Land, soil, and water resources

- A proportion of the Plan area is underlain by land classified as best and most versatile agricultural land, including areas of Grade 1 land. Future development should seek to avoid loss of productive and high-quality agricultural land wherever possible.
- The south of the Plan area also intersects a site of aggregate Mineral Safeguarding Area. New development within the Plan area should seek to protect the integrity of mineral resources.
- Future development has the potential to affect water resources and quality through increased consumption, diffuse pollution, waste-water discharges, water run-off, and modification.

Community wellbeing

- The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 shows significantly high levels of deprivation in central and east Penzance (including Treneere), Eastern Green and parts of Heamoor, with low and middle levels in other parts of the parish. As such, opportunities to revitalise Penzance Town Centre environment and (more widely) the additional community areas within the Plan area should be encouraged through the Neighbourhood Plan. This may include supporting the key projects proposed through the [Penzance Town Deal](#) such as the Newlyn Harbour Marine Skills and Resource Centre Project or improving the health and wellbeing of Penzance residents through 'The Waterfront Project'.
- A large proportion of the population within the Plan area are within the over 65 age band. This suggests there is an ageing population within the parish and a subsequent need to plan for more adaptable homes, specialist homes, etc. Furthermore, an ageing population can place extra and different demands on local health, education, transport and potentially housing.
- There is a range of community facilities in the Plan area, including provision of equipped space for teenagers and a very high level of allotment space (but still a waiting list), which can help reduce barriers to accessing services and improve the living environment.

Transportation

- Considering trends which favour cars/vans as the primary mode of transport and low levels of public transport use, planning should seek to maximise opportunities to reduce the need to travel, enable home working, and access a choice of sustainable transport modes where possible including active travel opportunities.
- New development has high potential to increase traffic and lead to additional localised congestion and parking issues which in turn may reduce road safety. A key concern in this respect is narrow streets which are already heavily trafficked, and the exacerbation of existing peak time congestion.
- According to the Community Vision Statement for Gulval, more local traffic includes journeys to and from the primary school and cars and delivery vans avoiding congestion on the A30 in and out of Penzance. The roads within the village are mostly unsuitable for this amount of traffic and the

main road creates a barrier between different parts of the village with no designated crossing points. The lack of safe pedestrian, or cycling, routes within the village, and between the village and Penzance town centre, results in movement around the village, or between the village and Penzance, which is often hazardous and unpleasant for residents.

- The Penzance Neighbourhood Plan should seek to support small-scale infrastructure improvements and active travel opportunities that seeks to maximise opportunities for pedestrian and cyclist movements, as suggested in the Penzance Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

SEA Framework

3.5 The SEA Framework provides a way in which environmental effects can be defined and subsequently analysed based on standard ‘tests’. Each proposal within the Regulation 14 version of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan will be assessed consistently using the framework, shown in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1 SEA Framework

SEA theme	SEA objective
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
Climate change	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within the Plan area.
	Support the resilience of the Plan area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding.
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape.
Historic environment	To protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the Plan area.
Land, soil, and water resources	To ensure the efficient and effective use of land.
	To protect and enhance water quality and use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.
Community wellbeing	Ensure growth in the Plan area is aligned with the needs of all residents and capacity of the settlement and social infrastructure, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

4. Next steps for the SEA process

Consideration of reasonable alternatives

Introduction

4.1 In accordance with the SEA Regulations the Environmental Report must include...

- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
- The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.

4.2 The 'narrative' of plan-making / SEA up to this point is told within this part of the Environmental Report. Specifically, how the SEA process to date has informed the consideration of different approaches for key elements of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan.

Options considered through the SEA process

4.3 Reflecting this, the SEA will appraise a series of alternatives (hereafter referred to as "options") which are currently being evaluated as part of plan development. The options are as follows:

Options for non-principal residences

- Option A: Take a policy approach to limit non-principal residences within the Plan area by establishing 'principal residency zones'.
- Option B: Do not take a policy approach to limit non-principal residences within the Plan area.

Options for car-free residential development

- Option A: Encourage car-free residential development within Penzance Town.
- Option B: Do not encourage car-free residential development within Penzance Town.

Options for protecting settlement identity

- Option A: Rely on existing policy provisions within the Cornwall Local Plan and Site Allocations DPD to protect the separate identity of settlements within the Plan area.
- Option B: Define 'green buffers' to protect the separate identity of settlements within the Plan area.

Options for managing the impacts of strategic site allocations

- Option A: Encourage developers to consider supplementary briefing notes for the strategic site allocations within the Site Allocations DPD to ensure that local community knowledge and aspirations are reflected within new development areas.

- Option B: Do not encourage developers to consider supplementary briefing notes for the strategic site allocations, relying solely on the site-specific criteria and requirements in the Site Allocations DPD for new development areas.

Approach to the options appraisal process

- 4.4 Each set of options will be considered against the SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed at SEA scoping. The following information will be presented in the updated SEA Environmental Report:
- A description of the options appraised (i.e., the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with).
 - A ranking of the sustainability performance of each option relating to each SEA theme to highlight their relative sustainability merits, with '1' the most favourable ranking; and
 - An overview of the likely significant effects (both positive, and negative) of each option.

Appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan

Introduction

- 4.5 The aim of this stage of the SEA is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the Regulation 14 version of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan, presented under the seven themes which have been scoped into the SEA.

Approach to this appraisal

- 4.6 For each SEA theme, 'significant effects' of the Regulation 14 version of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan on the baseline are predicted and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' will be described within the assessment, as appropriate.
- 4.7 Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

5. Conclusions at this current stage

- 5.1 This Interim SEA Environmental Report accompanies the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan at Regulation 14 consultation.
- 5.2 Following the close of SEA scoping consultation, this Interim SEA Environmental Report will be updated to include the following key outputs:
 - Summary of the SEA scoping responses and how these have been considered through the next steps for the SEA process.
 - The findings of the options appraisal process.
 - The appraisal of the Regulation 14 version of the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan under the seven SEA theme headings.
- 5.3 An updated version of the SEA Environmental Report will be published on **Monday 14th November 2022** alongside the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan for a period of six weeks up until the close of Regulation 14 consultation.
- 5.4 Following the close of Regulation 14 consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Steering Group, and the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan and Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated and final version of the SEA Environmental Report will then accompany the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Cornwall Council, for subsequent Independent Examination.
- 5.5 At Independent Examination, the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with local planning policy.
- 5.6 If the Independent Examination is favourable, the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by Cornwall Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Penzance Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for the parish.

