

6.3.3 Services

The introduction of modern services into any old building is a challenge wherever they are; in parts of Looe the issue is exacerbated by the lack of a domestic curtilage and 'private' elevations. When a formerly domestic building has also been adapted to some form of commercial use there is still more pressure. Incrementally there has been the addition of waste pipes, heating flues, air management systems, TV antennas, phone wires and so on. These have, for the most part, been installed without regard to the impact on buildings and sometimes they are not removed once they become redundant.

Servicing of the motor car and access for delivery vehicles is an ever-present concern. In the centre of East Looe there are clear conflicts with pedestrians at busy times; this can make the town a less desirable place to spend time (and money). [photo 27]



27: The pedestrian realm is regularly disturbed by traffic

In the more residential areas (notably in West Looe Hill) the squeezing of cars into any available space and the protection of that space when it is vacant does detract from the scenic quality of some of the most picturesque localities. It seems that wherever it is possible to put a car there will be pressure to do so; if this is not resisted character can be lost.

6.4 Streetscape and townscape features

The standard of the streetscape is high in places and rather poor in others. As already stated Looe is in many respects a good example of a surviving medieval town, with intimate public spaces and tantalising glimpses of private spaces abounding in both West and East Looe. Confined scenes are

often punctuated by views of elevated buildings and spaces, sometimes close but often distant. At other times the viewer is drawn into a scene by deflected views that hide what is ahead but offer an enticing suggestion of what lies ahead. [photo 28]



28: A deflected view generates interest and anticipation

There is a seemingly endless network of footpaths, alleys and steps, both public and private, that are essential to Looe's character. The informality of the plan and the diversity of building types generate a unique character that presents surprises, delights and a few disappointments. The evolved historic plan rewards the more adventurous visitor with a fantastic range of views and sights which are worth the effort sometimes required to tackle the slopes.

There are significant surviving examples of typical Cornish historic surfacing and paving. In particular there are many exceptionally interesting areas of cobbled paving, with granite and slate stone used as kerbs to frame and partition the area of cobbling. Particularly good are the long runs on West Looe Hill and Fore Street (WL), and the significant area in Church End in front of a row of elegant 18th/19th century houses. There are also interesting survivals in the private courtyards and gardens of houses and commercial properties (Quay Street, EL, Hannafore Lane, WL). These may largely be early 19th century, but could include earlier work, and there are later (20th century) examples which preserve and refer back to the tradition, especially in East Looe (Higher Market Street). It is suggested that these light brown cobbles were imported as ballast, perhaps from Holland, which was jettisoned before returning home with granite and other cargoes.

Granite paving slabs are generally absent except for important lengths associated with the quays – along with some large limestone slabs on Buller Quay. [photo 29]



29: Limestone slabs and granite mooring post at Buller Quay

Granite setts are not common, although there are runs of cobbled or stone-lined gutters and water channels. The traditional, simple and elegant use of shallow or flush, broad granite kerbstones marking out pavement and roadway is found in both East and West Looe, with occasional fine granite stone channels. Patterned buff pavements are an occasional feature in both public and private locations. [photo 30]



30: Pavements and granite steps in West Looe

The later 20th century use of concrete slabs and pavements does not sit comfortably with the historic streetscape and has contributed to a general loss of character. [photo 31]



31: Modern paving schemes look poor and have not aged well

Despite the neutralising effect of wide stretches of grey pavements, especially in East Looe, some indication of the traditional hierarchy of surfaces does still survive – granite on the working quays, hand-selected cobbles laid and framed in patterns as a setting to relatively polite houses. Roads throughout are macadamised except for rough unmetalled tracks in the back lanes; blacktop is for the most part a neutral material but there are places where replacement with a surface of greater character would be very welcome indeed.

There is relatively little in the way of historic street furniture, although there are some features associated with water supply and distribution, for example a former

shute along West Looe Hill, the ancient well along Shutta Road, and St Martin's Well in Shutta. [photo 32]



32: Historic well on Shutta Road just yards from Fore Street

Some of the steps have handrails which are mostly simple iron tubes attached to walls or on posts; this practical and unpretentious character is typical of Looe. [photo 33]



33: A simple handrail on Farmers Hill

The survival of wrought iron moorings on the quayside are significant historic features which combine with the more ephemeral nets and baskets to present the essence of Looe that most visitors take away in their memories.



34: Mooring rings and chains add to the sense of place

Although some may see such features as a trip hazard and the open quaysides as a potential danger, it is most important that the established character is not sanitised in an effort to manage risk.

There are some iron railings in Looe but they are an occasional feature which is generally absent; the most notable example being the War Memorial. [photo 35]



35: War Memorial and railings

There is a red K6 telephone kiosk by Buller Quay car park and another (with a traditional post box) by the Old Lifeboat House. [photo 36]



36: Telephone kiosk and post box

Although the intimacy of the street scenes often keeps the eye down at ground level, there are some instances of quite intrusive wirescapes, that form a tent-like webbing overhead - Fore Street and West Looe Hill, for instance. [photo 37]



37: Intrusive wirescape in West Looe

While the lack of space in the streets means that there is thankfully limited impact of typical tall grey steel street lights, the posts do become intrusive once seen. The decorative lighting lining the riversides is attractive by night but by day is a bit tatty. The historic cast iron light columns on the bridge are a rare example of historic street furniture in the town. [photo 38]



38: Victorian light columns complement the bridge

There is a distinctive approach to seating in public spaces in Looe, whereby solid (mostly granite) seats form memorials; these are found on The Wooldown, riverside and on the seafront walk in Hannafore. For the most part these are a welcome feature but in places the designs may be a little plain and uninspiring; there is also a danger of there being too many in some locations.

Historically there were not items like bollards in the town and where they have been introduced they have added little. The use of standard catalogue bollards and themed 'heritage-style' items fails to add to the sense of place or distinctiveness. [photo 39]



39: 'Heritage' bollards do not enhance the streetscene

The railings at East Looe beach are well chosen for the location, and re-located cannons are a feature outside the museum and on The Wooldown.

The seal sculpture is a well-appreciated memorial of a former 'resident'.

There are places where signage adds to the negative clutter that diminishes the character of a location. [photo 40]



40: Negative clutter in Shutta

Double yellow lines are an intrusive aspect of many of the towns most charming localities. There is a subtle balance in an historic town between negative clutter (permanent or temporary) and the kind of clutter that is indicative of people living in, and enjoying, their environment. There are not many historic places where piles of plastic crates can be said to add to the special character – but in Looe that is the case! [photo 41]



41: Uniquely Looe!

7.0 Character Areas

Despite a shared history and a recognisable similarity in current uses and functions, the conservation area is none-the-less made up of distinct character sub-areas. These reflect the various stages of development history, and in particular the differing histories of the anciently separate settlements that make up modern Looe.

Seven areas have been identified:

- 7.1 The riverside/harbour
- 7.2 East Looe
- 7.3 Church End and the Coast
- 7.4 Shutta Road/Barbican Lane
- 7.5 Shutta
- 7.6 Polvellan
- 7.7 West Looe

These areas are fairly distinct, only the riverside physically overlays the other areas, but because of the topography there is always a close visual relationship between the various sub-areas, each forming part of the setting to another; all the areas interact with each other, and cannot be considered in isolation.

If a street or building or group is not given its own description within the detailed sections this must not be taken to mean that it is in any way of less value to the character or appearance of the conservation area. The intention is to give an indication of the features that combine to give character, not to provide a directory of every positive item.

7.1 The riverside/harbour

7.1.1 Spatial context

Around the lower part of the estuary, a sense of enclosure is given by the bridge, the long, straight lengths of quay walls and the narrowing of the estuary mouth where the tall warehouses in East Looe and the warehouses and cliffs on the west side come close to the water's edge. Although concentrated in East Looe, the marine-based activities in this area are shared by both towns; the Harbour Commissioners have stores in West Looe and fishing boats tie up to both quaysides, even though the fish market and handling is all done on the East Looe side.

The movement of the tides, the activity of boats and people, combine with the quality of space and light to create what is in effect a shared central open space of tremendous character. The quays and the buildings on and behind them form the principal 'frontages' in Looe and here again there are a range of activities, commercial and recreational, that add richness to the

sense of place. The atmospheric qualities of the harbour are enhanced by the scale and sense of purpose offered by the bridge, quays, warehouses, boats and the topography of Hannafore Road, which enclose and enliven the space. [photo 42]



42: The harbour entrance

This scene is scarcely recognisable as a commercial harbour at times – the boats and dinghies tied up or on the quayside suggesting recreation rather than industry. On other occasions though the quays are vibrant places with a great range of activities ongoing; locals working and visitors at play combine in an evocative mix. It is a special characteristic of the riverside in Looe that so much of the activity is contextual and linked specifically to the place. In an age where activities are so often labelled, sanitised and segregated it is refreshing for many people to find a place where children can dangle a crab line from a quayside while fishermen unload their catch or mend their equipment a few yards away. [photo 43]



43: Happy days in Looe!

There is a difference in the buildings that stand on or back the quays. In West Looe the quays are very narrow, roads run along their length, backed by the houses shops and hotels of Quay Road and West Looe Square, while the sloping hillside behind is much closer to the waterside than East Looe. The rows of houses in North Road and the large villas (and Coastguard Cottages) loom over the space, while at the same time merging into the wooded hill and West Looe Downs above. The quayside in East Looe is largely dominated by the modern commercial buildings; their scale and massing is consistent with their purpose and what they lack in architectural merit is easily compensated by the character brought by the associated activities.

So much of Buller Quay is given over to car parking that appreciation of the space is difficult. The pedestrian is channelled to either side of the car park and there is a real sense that in summertime such a space could be better used to benefit the town as a whole. The stone walls do offer an attractive form of enclosure from outside and to some extent they soften the blow of parked and queuing cars.

Although there are municipal buildings in West Looe Square and Princes Street, they, like the warehouses and commercial properties along the old quay by St Nicholas's Church, tend to be fairly small scale and blend easily with the rows and terraces and domestic scale of the streetscene. Between the end of Princes Street and the bridge, the scale on Quay Road is more domestic and the green terraced hillside makes as much impact as the built environment.

7.1.2 Built environment

Nearly all the buildings along the river side date from the 19th century. In West Looe most of the quay itself dates in fact from around 1895 (or the rebuilding in 1931), apart from small areas by the Harbour Commissioners' stores (a row of buildings which might also include some earlier fabric). [photo 44]



44: The Commissioners stores are uniquely unspoilt amongst the riverside buildings

Granite slabs top the quay walls but most surfacing is of tarmac, with just a few patches of granite setts, notably by the Harbour Commissioners' stores. The commercial buildings around West Looe Square and on the quays are also largely 19th century in character – as befits a relatively late piece of townscape on what was in earlier centuries a small, shelving side inlet.

For all the antiquity of West Looe, the rebuilding of the quays and Bridge in the mid 19th century swept away anything earlier along the riverside. The major exception is St. Nicholas' Church, and one or two 18th/early 19th century houses along the central stretch of Quay Road. Not that many earlier buildings might be expected along Quay Road - the late medieval link between West Looe and the old Bridge (the springing point of which is marked by a stone plaque dated 1689) ran not along the riverside, but along North Road, where there are a few earlier houses – perhaps 18th or 17th century in origin.

On the East Looe side are the utilitarian buildings of a much more evidently commercial working quay, as historically it always was. The town is set further back from the water's edge and a good group of 19th century town buildings line Fore Street with green suburban slopes further back still, and not part of the immediate scene.

Buildings and structures on the East Looe Quays are perceived as objects in (mostly) public space. This is permeable space – people can move around virtually all buildings, there are few 'rear' elevations; boundaries, walls, rear enclosures and outbuildings are of significance in their own right, and in their contribution to the setting of principal buildings and the streetscene. This is a working harbour area, with boat stores, a large steel hoist, warehouses, a workaday fish market, and processing buildings (with all the attendant waste bins, parked vans, small stores and debris to be expected), all of varying heights and materials, yet somehow it all produces a cohesive and truly distinctive townscape character. There are buildings of genuine quality but the sense of place is so strong that architectural quality is perhaps less significant. [photo 45]



45: Robust and varied character typifies the working quay

Again, nearly all this townscape is mid 19th century or later – only a few early buildings stand close to the quay, most notably at Middleton Corner near an older stretch of quay wall, or on the east side of Quay Street in East Looe (the old quay line). One of the major elements of built structure is of course the quay walls themselves; some major repairs have taken place in recent years, and they are in generally in good condition. The only surviving fragments earlier than 1856 are by Middleton Corner.

As in West Looe, granite slabs top the quay walls (with some historically interesting sections of limestone on Buller Quay), but most surfacing is of tarmac, not inappropriately as these are working quaysides. There are wrought iron mooring rings and the ever-present ephemera associated with fishing, crabbing and so on. The simple row of stores gives a variety of scale and may contain earlier fabric as well. [photo 46]



46: The stores give a different perspective and scale to the public realm

Areas of interesting cobbled paving enliven the private courtyards and gardens of houses and commercial properties in Quay Street, so that some indication of traditional materials and hierarchy of surfaces is available. An equally rare instance of greenery in the central area is found in the few street trees on the edge of Buller Quay and Buller Street.

There is virtually nothing in the way of historic street furniture, and the barriers, fencing, lighting and signage associated with the parking areas on

both sides of the river, especially Buller quay, are a jumble of 20th century materials and fixtures, uninspiring at best, detracting from character and appearance at worst. The intrusive array of signs and the organised chaos of the Buller Quay car park dominate the setting of the war memorial, the Bridge and the buildings of Fore Street.

7.2 East Looe

7.2.1 Spatial context

The historic core of East Looe is a late medieval urban matrix consisting of tightly packed rows of attached houses forming informal terraces. There is an absence of individual yards or gardens in this densely developed infill of an old market area and sand-bar. It is framed by two older, more sinuous streets, Buller Street (to Middleton's Corner) and Fore Street/Upper Market Street, forming the main commercial streets with larger plots and yards. [photo 47]



47: The scale and enclosure of East Looe emphasises its medieval origins

The outer edges of the area were extended by 19th century quays and beach-front alterations – the old edges are still to be found in Quay Street, Lower Street and Church End. A varied and attractive built environment with a seasonally vibrant mix of uses is evident, with a prevalence of tourist-related shops, restaurants and facilities, but still with some local service providers. This character merges in the Rows with residential use – offering both permanent and holiday accommodation.

Although not pedestrianised, vehicle access is limited and for much of the year there is not too much pedestrian-vehicle conflict; but at busy times of the year there is clear conflict and the quality of the place as experienced by the pedestrian is significantly diminished by car traffic and delivery vehicles.

The town centre opens up as it merges with Buller Quay, or with Church End; even then, the back lanes which preserve the old edge-of-quay streets are narrow and enclosed, facing into the backs of sometimes very large and enclosing commercial buildings. The enclosure and uses in the shopping streets and the more residential Rows today give little hint of their closeness to the quays, but are enclosed by the tall warehouses and the modern fish market and processing buildings, closing off most of the views towards the river but giving an intimate sense of enclosure. The tight streets, paths and occasional gaps or yards generate character spaces and an abundance of closed or deflected views and glimpses of buildings or more distant sights. Focal points such as the church tower take on an added resonance seen in this context. Whereas in views from outside this enclave it is the Victorian buildings that dominate, within the Rows the relative scale of the buildings is of another time.



48: The location and scale of the church tower blends well with its historic neighbourhood

Although for the most part the buildings are of a standard two storey height, the fact that the lanes themselves are so narrow makes for a delightfully intimate sense of enclosure. Their origins mean the Rows are so densely packed that they have no private space; alleys are bridged over by buildings in places and it is difficult to distinguish frontages from rear elevations. Drainpipes, service ducts, soil pipes and satellite dishes are

found indiscriminately on all elevations, dustbins are set (necessarily) out in the street, and personalisation of space is possible only by setting a few potted plants outside the door - as many householders do to very great effect. This humanisation and addition of colour is made all the more necessary since the use of small concrete pavements in recent paving schemes has reduced the ground colour and texture through much of the central area to a dull uniformity. [photo 49]



49: The positive contribution of residents through planting is a positive character feature

Fore Street by the Buller Quay car-park is a mid 19th century urban townscape, its larger scale and classical detailing intended to offer presence and status and a commercial scale that positively addresses a large public open space – almost like a continental square or piazza. In this it contrasts with the tighter grain and enclosed spatial character of the older streets. As previously stated the effective loss of most of the open urban space to car parking has a certain impact on the character and perception of Looe to locals and visitors.

Within the irregular grid of East Looe there are occasional buildings of townscape importance which frame views and punctuate the generally tight grain; often corner buildings are given a greater emphasis. [photo 50]



50: Corner buildings have presence by virtue of location

7.2.2 Built environment

Usually entered from the north, Fore Street is the main shopping street; a winding road which widens and narrows along its length, somewhat overshadowed by the three and four storey buildings which lie to either side at first. Nearly all the buildings along its length opposite Buller Quay are 19th century, some of very good quality; mixed in more frequently with important 16th and 17th century survivals as it progresses into the core of the medieval town. Beyond the Victorian Guildhall, which is the imposing focal point of the towns skyline, the visitor quickly steps back in time and all ostentatious pretensions dissolve into the almost labyrinthine townscape of the three Market Streets and two Chapel Streets.

The shops are mainly small, local businesses, with some national outlets and banks. They are mainly located in historic buildings and there is little modern infill to disrupt the character and scale of these buildings; but there have been harmful alterations to elevations and roofscape.

The commercial core has an outstanding collection of late medieval and early post medieval building, although the 16th and 17th centuries have left the most distinctive body of surviving buildings before the 19th century. There is some visible timber framing, typically with stone side and rear walls, although much is disguised by later rendered façades. The range of materials used is as great as any urban centre in Cornwall – exposed stone rubble, timber framing, carved stone architectural details, slate-hanging, painted stone, rough render, finely detailed stucco, all set under slated roofs.

The architectural styles and details are likewise varied; there are no standard designs, shapes or sizes here, although informal, one-off vernacular designs two, three or four storeys high are typical of the

streetscape; virtually without exception the buildings sit on the back of the pavement or road. Domestic buildings mix with sail lofts and stores plus the focal community buildings, especially the church and former guildhall – now the museum. Within this mix there are also ancient inns and the whole adds up to a unique and enjoyable urban experience.

As with many tightly developed historic places the visitor who looks up above the bustle at street level is rewarded with a richer experience; there are oriel windows and occasional novelties such as figureheads which contribute another layer of identity.

The roofscape is barely visible from within the area, but seen from outside, from the hills behind, or across the water for West Looe; the huddled rows of slated roofs, punctuated by chimneys, are a prime feature of the townscape.

Close behind the 19th century warehouses on the quays are a number of semi-private courtyards which fringe the old core, many incorporating former fish cellars – typically with exterior stairs leading up to old net lofts or living accommodation over the ground floor cellars. These now have a variety of uses but they are an important and characteristic component of the varied townscape.

7.3 Church End and the Coast

7.3.1 Spatial context

The sense of an opening out from the tight street pattern of the core of East Looe is very marked at the seafront; the rows of cottages that mark the old edge of the town along Church Street and Church End change abruptly to the openness of the car-parking area and beach defences, themselves a culmination of successive sea-defence and reclamation schemes over the centuries. The beach and sea are shielded from the town by the heavy 1970s concrete sea wall, with the result that East Looe is visually cut off from its beach and the sea, but also has the simultaneous feeling of being threatened by it.

Paradoxically, this is also one of East Looe's few public spaces, lined with an enclosing cluster of mostly good buildings, with the added interest of the lifeboat station, memorials, free-standing municipal buildings and all the potential of a sea-side park. It seems at times, however, to lack satisfactory definition and the sense of place is not as strong as it could be. This is a reflection of the floorscape, the car parking, the fact that the buildings have been located for historic purpose and the focal points of the sundial and fountain do not really occupy focal positions. On a sunny day the pedestrianised area does, however, come alive compared to less favourable times. [photo 51]



51: A versatile space with interesting buildings

The angular concrete forms of the sea wall, which at times are harsh and alien, can also become enlivened on a sunny day by people using them as a base for their day at the seaside, by young children clambering about and older ones playing or just relaxing. The beach itself is a charming strand with safe bathing, good sand, entertainment and all that the town offers right alongside. It is a great asset for East Looe that is much appreciated. The banjo is a fine piece of engineering which is well used by promenaders. [photo 52]



52: Even concrete is nice when the sun shines!

The setting for this area is made dramatic by the enclosing cliffs and tree-lined slopes of the enigmatically named Mount Ararat and the cliffs of Hannafore Point to the west, with its battlemented and arched road and seafront walk. This is further reflected in the wider setting, the 20th century seaside villas on East Cliff above Church End, and the walks out into the open land of The Wooldown.

From higher locations the biggest single element in the setting of this area is, of course, the sea. Scarcely visible from within the tight confines of either East or West Looe, the long sweeping coast, great open skies and rocky foreshore are a place apart from the inward-looking huddle of the town and its quays; the very openness and wildness of the shore emphasise the sense of Looe as a safe haven.

7.3.2 Built environment

This is an area added on to the medieval core in which, as elsewhere in Looe, the 19th century legacy is dominant, with an eclectic and ornamental collection of structures not found elsewhere in the town. Church End is complemented by Banjo Pier (1850s and 1899), the quayside warehouses (1860s), the adjacent Seaview Cottages (mid-late 19th century) and St Mary's Church (1850s and 1882) with the rows of cottages around it. [photo 53]



53: St Mary's and cottages

In rather awkward isolation by the seafront stand modern buildings, principally the new lifeboat station and toilets, both reasonably well designed. The unique mix also has older structures in the shape of the Old Lifeboat Station (1866), the Obelisk (1881), the Memorial Fountain (1902) and the distinctive Victorian Gothic wilfulness of Boscarn House. The adjacent 20th century development is now looking a bit jaded.

There are quite good groups of (formerly) seaside cottages and the mid-century terrace at the end of Higher Market Street retains much of its character, despite loss of railings and some poor window replacement. The larger houses on the slopes of Mount Ararat above stride purposefully upwards in a staggered fashion that generates visual interest; but the buildings add little in terms of architectural presence. [photo 54]



54: These seaside cottages are now some way from the sea and Mount Ararat rises behind

On the west side of the estuary are the developments of hotels and villas along Hannafore Road; they take advantage of an outstanding outlook. At their best they exhibit some good detailing, but most have undergone harmful alteration over the years. Although physically separated by water they are part of seafront scene when viewed from East Looe.

7.4 Shutta Road/Barbican Hill

7.4.1 Spatial context

The roads going up and out of East Looe and Shutta and running up to Barbican, with their ancient pattern of regular plots still retain something of the back lane character normally expected in a medieval town that is completely missing in the tight enclosed spaces of the central area. These roads are dominated as much by the great series of walls along their length as by buildings; both ancient enclosure walls and 19th century engineering retaining walls are evident. [photo 55]



55: Massive retaining walls mark the historic link between Shutta and East Looe

These lanes and paths allow interesting sequential views as well as sweeping panoramas of the town and estuary below. [photo 56]



56: To experience Looe fully it pays to take the high road!

Ancient winding roads and paths, springs and wells, quarries and 17th century burial grounds are set amongst picturesquely sited and designed houses, terraces and gardens. The whole is seen from across the valley as a sequence of mature, walled gardens and informally arranged rows of houses. The gardens, old quarries, overgrown closes, especially those containing trees, are a foil to the mass of buildings and an important feature of the overall landscape. The specimen planting of past generations now makes a very tangible contribution to our enjoyment of a variety of views and is a lesson from which we can learn.

From within, it is at times a sheltered, enclosed and scenic area which echoes some of the grander and better known Victorian and Edwardian resorts. The area is backed, and somewhat interspersed, with more mundane modern housing and bungalows, but the topography of the hillsides and the barrier of the Klymiarven Hotel and its grounds mean that these impact relatively little on the immediate character of the roads. Further infilling of the hillside is in progress and the impact will depend on the quality of design and landscaping.

Barbican itself remains a recognisably ancient farming hamlet with some interesting buildings, even though its setting and context has been quite severely compromised. Surrounded as it is by modern housing, the distinctive qualities of the group can be easily missed; the road going

through it is treated more like an estate road at this point, making little reference to the change in date, scale or materials of the buildings. Only when it dips down towards the town is a sense of a gateway to something different recognised. [photos 57a, b & c]



57a b & c: A small cluster of buildings mark the ancient settlement site of The Barbican

Despite its lower level Station Road is seen from many viewpoints as part of the Shutta and hillside development groups rather than as part of East Looe and this is an accurate reflection of its late development, since the road itself was merely a tidal foreshore track before the building of the railway in the 1860s. Again, although there are some good buildings along the road, it is the walls in front of and behind the buildings - high, sheer and often overgrown, that set the character of the area. The presence of the working station and popular rail link is a major asset of the town.

7.4.2 Built environment

There is on these slopes a tremendous variety of styles and built forms, mostly residential, although there are, for instance, (converted) chapels. For the most part the rows of houses trace the line of the terraced roads, but many stand isolated in their own plots, and even when close to their neighbours are often strangely angled – all were built with the principal consideration of catching the views.

Although rendered elevations of varying hues predominate there are individual accents, such as the striking red brick pair on East Cliff, or the eccentric verandas on Shutta Road. The introduction of items like decking

and garaging may have a significant impact over time if not carefully managed. [photo 58]



58: A natural patina has limited the visual impact of this construction

There are certain characteristics that tie the whole slope together architecturally– especially the closely packed pairs and short terraces along East Cliff and Shutta Road. These are almost all of two storeys, with prescribed eaves and ridge height with attic floor and either basements or raised terraced foundations. They nearly all have paired full height bay windows supporting gables, often a veranda runs between the two bays. It is a style which allows considerable variety in detail, but is pleasingly ordered and neighbourly. The lower slopes of Barbican Hill, Shutta Road and Station Road show similar detailing – but there are more individual buildings, some of great character from a slightly earlier period (Klymiarven was originally Waterloo Cottage). These older properties have the most impressive gardens, notably Klymiarven and Trehaven. Tregertha Court has a notable detached Victorian villa at its core but it has been subsumed by later extensions. [photo 59]



59: Victorian semi-detached houses and terraces stand proud overlooking the harbour

The upper slopes are mostly given over to a variety of 20th century houses and bungalows that do not aspire to complementing their location. In consequence there is a disappointing lack of design quality evident in the developments of recent decades and they represent missed opportunities to achieve something special.

7.5 Shutta

7.5.1 Spatial context

Shutta rises up its valley as a distinct and separate place where the topography establishes its own sense of enclosure. When Shutta was laid out as a medieval planned settlement the road, at the lower end, was a tidal inlet and quay area. Once the original settlement area of East Looe, it is now a quiet residential suburb focussed around the single road leading up the valley – a mirror image in many ways of West Looe. [photo 60]



60: The spine of Shutta

The pub, old coach house and mature gardens attached to a good mid 19th century house (again with strong lines created by enclosing walls) contribute to a sense of a gateway to another place. This lower area has something of the density of the rest of Looe; buildings are set closer to the road with small plots, particularly on the south side of the lane. Shutta Road itself, the medieval land route to East Looe, begins here as a steep, narrow twisting lane that adds to the sense of a remnant older urban place.

Along the middle and upper stretches of Shutta, gardens, retaining walls, planting and outbuildings are as much part of the character of the area as houses. The wooded upper slopes of the valley are protected and make a strong contribution to the character of the place. Incorporated in them, or on the edges of the area, are larger houses, some in substantial gardens.

Dominated by a steep hill, the valley road has no pavement and originally ran out into the countryside, in its upper reaches it retains the character of an ancient hollow-way gouged out of the valley. Along the back lanes are good walls, springs and the important survival of St Martin's Well, an ancient site now largely 19th century in character which, despite being nearly absorbed by modern housing developments that pay no heed to the historical topography, manages to retain something of its air of rural seclusion.

7.5.2 Built environment

Shutta now has just one early post medieval cottage of note and some mid 19th century cottages, although some of the buildings down by the main road are likely to incorporate earlier fabric. There are signs in many of these of former commercial or warehousing use, and there are stone and rendered cottage rows reminiscent of industrial villages in the area – Shutta at one time was closely associated with the running and staffing of the Looe Canal and Railway.

Otherwise, the houses are mostly 20th century, with a picturesque variety of styles and detailing; the tone is set by the heavy moulded detail of the public house and the gothic detail of Polhendra. [photo 61]



61: Pattern book gothic at the entrance to Shutta

The older properties generally respect the ancient layout, and add a great deal of picturesque detail and quality to the scene, especially as they sit, for the most part, within old established plots and relate to the central lane, either facing it or standing in small rows at right angles. A pleasing mix of cottages, a mill and 19th century infill developments make up a varied character. Some of the earlier 20th century additions are not too intrusive in scale or form but more recent developments have not always been as appropriate in either detailing or setting.

Much of the charm of the built environment in Shutta comes not from individual buildings, but from their response to, and relationship with the topography. The overall effect of the stepped roofs and rendered elevations climbing the valley is pleasing to the eye.

7.6 Polvellan

7.6.1 Spatial context

Just as there is a marked change of character north of the bridge in East Looe, so in West Looe the area around Polvellan and Polean is in many ways quite distinct from the ancient borough in its valley to the south. The area around Polperro Road and the Bridge shares much of the characteristics of Quay Road/North Road - a small suburban area that developed only really after the building of the new bridge in 1856. Roads and retaining walls play a significant role in defining character, perhaps even more dominant when actually moving through the streets than in similar areas in East Looe (Shutta Road for instance).

The riverside changes north of the bridge where there is no longer a public quay and walkway, but, instead, the semi-private domain of the mill, millpond enclosing walls and the associated buildings and yards. The small street leading down to the Mill Pool has a distinct character of its own, a small working area separate from the hotels and villas south of the bridge, with just a few cottages set amongst working buildings and derelict industrial sites. Although activity is now mostly recreational and commercial, the congestion and buzz of the place at busy times is characteristic.

Once beyond this small tight enclosure, the landscape dominates the scene. The beautiful wooded valleys and broad expanses of water become the main setting of the conservation area, the most significant elements of which are the equally broad if less picturesque expanse of the car parking at the Mill Pool, and the relict woodland and ornamental grounds of Polvellan House. [photo 62]



62: The Mill Pool and wooded grounds of Polvellan House

The post-war infilling of the tidal millpond has in itself been one of the most significant changes and losses of historic character, not only of this area, but in the whole of Looe. There is, however, some compensation in the loss in that the town has ample parking which helps to support economic activity throughout the town. Such industrial/commercial activity as remains here is being marginalised in terms of both use and townscape impact as the area turns more and more to tourist related activities.

Behind these riverside areas, the terraces of 20th century housing of various types, the burial ground, the roads and walls, even the industrial estate are all sensed as part of the deeply wooded landscape of the valley. With the open downland on the crest, Polperro Road itself is, remarkably, more of a woodland drive in character than a principal approach to a bustling tourist town. The sudden arrival at the bridge and estuary is a real treat for the new visitor. [photo 63]



63: The arrival point in central Looe via Polperro Road

7.6.2 Built environment

The buildings close to the riverside are relatively few, and all quite distinct in character. The small, vernacular cottages have artificially added 'character', as have some of the more recent commercial buildings. There is little here of distinction; bland materials and simple structures contrast unfavourably with the slightly more ornate and honest old ambulance station. [photo 64]



64: The ambulance station and RAOB club

The RAOB club is of historic interest but of little architectural merit; but plain functional sheds do have a place and gentrification of such sites is seldom desirable. A large development of flats is underway which will significantly change the character of the locality.

The two principal buildings in the area stand out as truly unique in Looe. The 17th century mill building was altered in the 19th century and clumsily raised in the 20th century. It is a large, stone-built and slate-roofed structure – a rare industrial building in Looe; with its attendant sluices and pond walls it is one of the most important in the area. Polvellan House and its grounds are equally important to the history of Looe – being associated with the Buller family, sponsors of Looe's mid 19th century renaissance. It is a large, rambling Gothick building – rather like an overgrown cottage-ornee, significant for its setting and outlook as much as its architectural qualities. It is a bit rundown at present and the grounds seem to lack a suitable management regime.

The modern housing immediately above Polvellan House is poorly designed but the housing on the other side of Polperro Road is attractive. Beech Terrace and Trelawney Terrace have considerable presence and the former has a fair survival of original joinery which is a positive factor. [photo 65]



65: Survival of original windows at Beech Terrace

The modern housing scheme at Bonson Close makes successful use of the traditional palette of materials, forms and details to break up its apparent mass in more distant views; the only down side is the 'rustic' concrete block walls. [photo 66] Other modern developments in the vicinity are much less successful.



66: Bonson Close

Other buildings of the 19th and early 20th century sometimes exhibit attractive detailing; the balconies and the highly glazed dormers at Furzedown Terrace epitomise awareness of location. [photo 67]



67: Good detailing at Furzedown Terrace

The lychgate to the cemetery is a simple but neat focal point. [photo 68]



68: Lychgate to cemetery