

PNIEL

Pniel has lost some of the strong spatial structure and elements that would once have defined it as a typical Cape Mission Settlement. For example, the loss of the agricultural allotments or “water erven”, which would once have stretched from Middel Street to the Banghoek River, has made way for housing. In all other respects, a legible settlement core remains, and the buildings, spaces and streets making up that core still retain an appropriate grain and scale.

The core character unit in Pniel is made up of: the “head” of the town – the church and church hall to the north-west of the R44, when it bends; the “heart” of the town in the form of the commonage or village green, flanked by the museum and dotted with memorials and monuments, and the “spine” of the settlement, being Middel Street, with appropriately-scaled cottages defining both sides of the street.

These elements are collectively seen to embody the core townscape character of Pniel, and should duly be protected, and any new development controlled to ensure this historic pattern is retained and strengthened.

MAIN AIM: ENHANCE (MANAGE) - The main aim of the proposed Special Area for Pniel is not to protect each and every structure (aside from those that have been identified as having intrinsic heritage significance) but rather to preserve those character-giving elements that extend beyond each individual property, and are common to the village as a whole. Special characteristic elements and features include the church, commonage and the modest scale of the historic dwellings along Middel Street.

MAIN VALUE: HISTORICAL – The appropriate use and renewal of heritage features is critical for their preservation. Any development that will result in the loss of the church precinct, public open spaces or remnant historic buildings, will undermine the heritage value of this townscape unit.

DEVIATED LAND USE/USES THAT WILL LIKELY ERODE TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER: Over-scaled private dwellings (including multi-storey residential structures), change in land use to non-residential uses, cluttered properties, gated residential estates, high and solid boundary treatments, large parking lots, isolated shopping centres or petrol stations.

A ECOLOGICAL

Significance: *Pniel is located alongside the Banghoek River.*

COMPONENTS: **Stream course.**

Development Criteria:

- Maintain ecological support areas (here associated with Banghoek River).

B AESTHETIC

Significance: *The core character unit in Pniel is made up of: the “head” of the town – the church and church hall to the north-west of the R44, when it bends; the “heart” of the town in the form of the commonage, flanked by the museum and dotted with memorials and monuments, and the “spine” of the settlement, being Middel Street, with appropriately-scaled cottages defining both sides of the street.*

COMPONENTS: **Public Spaces and Social Foci, Grain (Consolidation, Subdivision, Density and Coverage), Streets and Infrastructure, Planting Patterns, Stream Course, Interface between Streets and Buildings:** *Verges/Pavements, Boundary Treatments, Gardens, Parking, Setbacks, Stoeps, Heights, Materials, Colour and Architectural Detail, Security and Modern Fixes, Street Elements.*

Public Spaces and Social Foci:

- The character of the church precinct (established by its werf-like qualities and building pattern) must be respected. Negative impacts on visual-spatial relationships (including the broader setting) and buildings of architectural and historical significance must be avoided.

- The strong character and patterns of the village precinct (established by street and building-patterns, including building setback, scale and form, and dwellings on narrow plots) must be respected. Over-scaled new development should not be allowed.
- Work on public spaces of historic significance should only be undertaken by professionals who are sufficiently trained and experienced.
- The Commonage/Park and Church structures and sites have heightened heritage significance as the “civic heart” of the community. Their conservation is important as they perform an anchoring role, and structure the village as a whole.

Grain (Consolidation, Subdivision, Density and Coverage):

- The historic pattern of subdivision into rectangular plots associated with mission village houses (and previous agricultural allotments) are part of an increasingly rare typology, but are still evident in Pniel. The consolidation or subdivision of land units will impact the “grain” of the neighbourhood. Therefore, the potential impact on the character of the neighbourhood must be carefully considered before consolidation or subdivision is approved.
- Densification should only be contemplated where it respects the historical patterns of subdivision. The prevailing pattern of subdivision consists of a rhythm of long, thin, rectangular plots with their shorter sides facing the street edge, and with the cottage/dwelling located along the street edge.

Streets and Infrastructure:

- Careful thought has gone into the character and quality of the road at Pniel – the accommodation of the R44 through the town is one of the best examples of a major route passing through a historic context, and utilizes brick surfacing, low white walls and flush pavements to integrate the various hierarchies of roadway. The scale of roads (especially those that align with historic routes) should be the minimum possible. Insensitive, over-engineered, hard elements can compromise the character of a townscape as a whole.
- Existing footpaths and routes for walking, hiking, running and cycling should be reinforced and extended where possible.

Planting Patterns:

- The felling of mature exotic or indigenous trees within residential areas should be avoided. Instead continuous tree canopies and longer-term replacement planting with suitable species should be encouraged. Fruit trees have particular social significance in Pniel (see social significance cards).
- Many of the strongest planting patterns that contribute to the historic character of landscape and townscape units, are within road reserves and on public land. A maintenance and (re)planting plan should be developed. Trees must be regularly maintained.

Stream Course:

- The role of water as a structuring system within settlements must be respected. River courses are founding elements in historic agricultural and gardening activities. Water often serves as a place-making and social element within the settlement fabric, and this role should be preserved and strengthened where possible.

Interface between Streets and Buildings:

- The interface between streets and buildings is a key character-giving component of the Special Area. Pattern of interface should be followed/interpreted in new infill buildings, and reinforced when re-developing existing properties.
- Where historical fabric and elements make up a street interface, they must be conserved.
- Ensure that new buildings within the Special Area are generally in sympathy with the scale, massing, layout and idiom of the surrounding buildings.
 - **Verges/Pavements:** The verge areas within Pniel are largely grassed or hard-packed earth/laterite pavement. Some streets, such as Middel Street, are defined by the lack of verges, as the houses direct abut the streets, with a very narrow strip of land between the kerb and the stoeps.
 - **Boundary Treatments:** A range of boundary treatments are evident within Pniel, but the most characteristic is the raised stoep with low way, which closely abuts the street edge. High and solid walls that obscure views to

buildings should not be permitted, as well as pre-cast concrete fencing, exposed blockwork, and facebrick walling. Historic boundary elements must be preserved as far as possible.

- **Gardens:** Front gardens, where they exist, should be retained.
- **Parking:** Off-street parking should not be located in front of historical structures, but should rather be located alongside or behind the structure. Parking areas and structures should preferably be screened with planting. The Municipality should not unreasonably withhold relief for on-site parking departures where existing requirements will likely result in a degradation of the character of the Special Area.
- **Setbacks:** The prevailing setback of building from street edge is highly consistent within Pniel. New buildings should be set back the same distance as the existing historical buildings to either side (and within the streetscape as a whole), and the Municipality should not unreasonably withhold relief for setback departures, or may impose measures more restrictive than those that may typically apply within the applicable zoning category, where existing requirements will likely result in a degradation of the pattern and character of the Special Area. An extension to the side of an historic building should be set back slightly from the original façade.
- **Stoeps:** The fabric making up Middel Street has a high concentration of street-facing stoeps. These are typically raised from street level (on a plinth), with a low wall, and supported on columns. The front door is access off the stoep area. New buildings should look to replicate stoeps, certainly where the existing historical buildings to either side (and within the streetscape as a whole) have them.
- **Heights:** Buildings within Pniel are seldom higher than one storey. New buildings should look to adhere to the same heights as the existing historical buildings to either side (and within the streetscape as a whole). Greater height may be acceptable towards the rear of the site, when not visible from the street edge. The Municipality should not unreasonably withhold relief for height departures, or may impose measures more restrictive than those that may typically apply within the applicable zoning category, where existing requirements will likely result in a degradation of the pattern and character of the Special Area.
- **Materials, Colour and Architectural Detail:** Building materials should be compatible with traditional materials in terms of scale, colour and texture. Historical architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible, and alterations that seek to copy an earlier style should be avoided. Rather, the underpinning principle should be that new additions and new buildings must be sympathetic to the architectural character of the Special Area, but should also be of their own time.
- **Security and Modern Fixes:** The use of unobtrusive security systems on historic buildings is encouraged: beams and shutters are preferable to burglar bars, trellidoors and security gates. If gates and bars are unavoidable, they should be painted the same colour as the element they enclose. Satellite dishes, airconditioning condensers, roof windows and solar panels should preferably be installed where they are not visible from the street. Solar panels should be mounted flush with the roof, rather than having their own framing element. Where electric fencing is unavoidable, a recessive colour for the fittings must be selected. Barbed wire, spikes (except where part of the fencing) and similar should not be permitted along the street frontage within the Special Area.
- **Street Elements:** Street lighting and street furniture (benches, bins, bollards and so on) should be understated, modern (they should not be pseudo-historical) and neutral in colour and form. Street kerbs, raised zebra-crossings, speed bumps, street signs and so on should be the minimum possible to meet safety requirements, and should again be neutral.

C HISTORIC/ARCHITECTURAL

Significance: *The church and village green are key to establishing the character of the Special Area. In addition, several cottages have heritage significance.*

Development opportunities in Pniel fall into 4 categories: (1) Opportunities for conservation of historic buildings and elements of heritage significance; (2) Opportunities for alterations and additions to historical buildings and elements of heritage significance; (3) Opportunities for new structures within environments of historical significance; and (4) Opportunities to redevelop intrusive buildings, elements and sites in order to better reflect the character-giving elements of Pniel.

Development Criteria:

Opportunities for conservation of historic buildings and elements of heritage significance:

- Work on historic buildings and elements of historic significance should only be undertaken by professionals and builders/tradesmen who are sufficiently trained and experienced. Heritage expertise should be sought: it is in the interest of the property owners to have their plans prepared by advisors who have recognised experience and standing in their field of heritage conservation.
- Where the historic function or use of a building is still intact, the function has heritage value and should be protected. Where a new use is sought, every effort should be made to find a use that is compatible with the heritage significance of the element/site, and will require the minimum extent of alteration to historic fabric.
- Distinguishing original features, examples of craftsmanship and so on should not be falsified, destroyed or removed. These elements should be repaired rather than replaced as far as is possible.
- Where repair necessitates replacement, the replacement should be the minimum necessary, and the new material should match that being replaced in composition, design, colour, texture and other visual qualities, but its newness should be apparent on close inspection (its age should not be faked). Traditional materials should be used in repair work.

Opportunities for alterations and additions to historical buildings and elements of heritage significance:

- The basic plan of the historic core of the building should always be retained. Where internal walls are removed, the extent of removal should be the minimum necessary and ribs should be retained to reflect the historic layout of spaces.
- Any intervention should be the minimum necessary to meet the new requirements, reversible when possible, and designed not to prejudice future interventions and/or restoration. For instance, if the addition or alteration were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic structure would remain intact.
- Alterations and additions to conservation-worthy structures and elements should be sympathetic to their architectural character and period detailing. Distinguish old from new but ensure visual harmony between historical fabric and new interventions in terms of appropriate scale, massing, form and architectural treatment, without directly copying these details.

Opportunities for new structures within environments of historical significance:

- New structures should respect and respond to traditional settlement patterns and siting by considering the entire Special Area as the component of significance. This includes its spatial structure, layout, scale, massing, hierarchy, alignments, access, and landscaping setting. Any development that departs from the inherent character of the Special Area should be discouraged.
- Designers of new structures must have an understanding of the context, traditional patterns of place-making and historical elements that are characteristic of the Special Area. New elements must respond to and interpret these character-giving aspects of the neighbourhood.
- Contemporary designs for infill buildings should not be discouraged, provided they do not destroy significant fabric and are compatible with the size, scale, material, layout and architectural character of the property and Special Area.

Opportunities to redevelop intrusive buildings, elements and sites in order to better reflect the character-giving elements of Pniel:

- Wherever possible, existing buildings that are intrusive because their scale, style, materials or siting departs from the strong character-giving patterns of the Special Area should be redeveloped in order to minimize their disruptive effect. This can be done gradually as part of general maintenance – for instance repainting in more sympathetic colours, or replacing mid-20th Century roof tiles with corrugated sheeting or “finer” roof tiles.
- Encourage mitigation measures (for instance use of vegetation) to “embed” existing intrusive elements and structures within the townscape.

D SOCIAL

Significance: *Established community, with deep roots within the village.*

Development Criteria:

- Encourage and support the establishment of local heritage conservation bodies, particularly within Special Areas, as is envisioned in the National Heritage Resources Act. Such bodies can assist with heritage resource identification, assessment and decision-making.
- Proposed development should recognise the relationship of communities to their land and communal facilities. Any development proposal should show a clear understanding of the 'intangible'⁵ features and values of these sites.

E ECONOMIC

Significance: *There is pressure on Pniel to extend, in order to create housing opportunities.*

Development Criteria:

- Prevent gentrification from threatening the distinctiveness of this unique settlement within the Stellenbosch winelands.
- Prevent over-engineered and insensitive infrastructural upgrades within historical settlements.
- Encourage integrated planning for extensions and densification, allowing new typologies that reinterpret historic settlement patterns. Inappropriate suburban and affordable housing, that does not follow the massing and integrity of the settlement pattern as a whole, should be discouraged.

⁵ This study is limited to the compilation of a tangible heritage inventory. A formally commissioned intangible heritage study is encouraged, and therefore we only have limited capacity to operate within this principle and merely point to these associations encountered whilst out in the field and during public engagement. Please refer to the online map for a reference to these sites.