

Public Footpath
Scaws
Beacon Edge



Introduction

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1.1/ Urban extension

Eden District Council is committed to defining a clear and robust strategic masterplan for Penrith, in order to help define and meet expectations and targets for growth for the development plan period up to 2025.

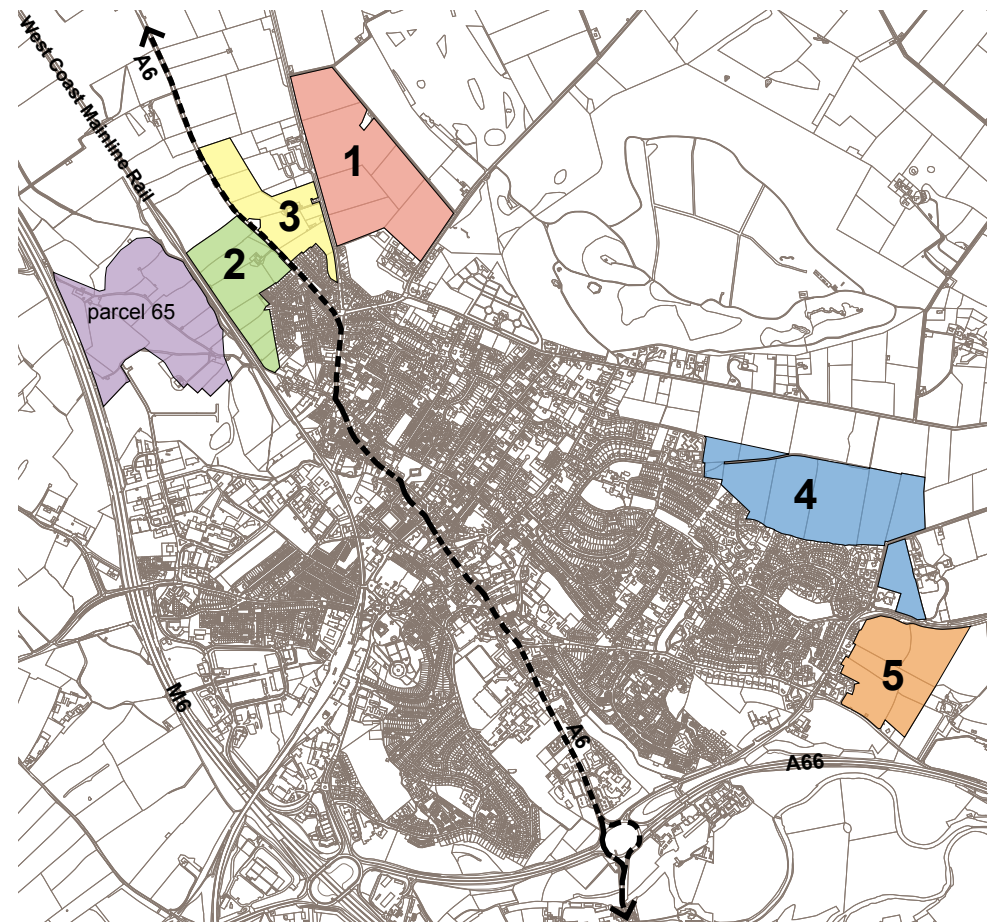
The LDF process to date has identified potential need for development land with the capacity for circa 2600 new homes, plus circa 30ha employment land, specifically in and around the town. The principle of making urban extensions to Penrith in order to accommodate this scale of change has been expressed through the Council's adopted Core Strategy. Due to the lack of suitable brownfield sites, strategic greenfield areas have been identified on the northern and eastern edges of Penrith for potential development.

Six "option areas" for urban extension have emerged through the early stages of the LDF process, as identified in the plan to the right;

- Five of the areas (numbered 1-5) were specifically identified as housing development opportunities.
- The remaining site (described as 'parcel 65') is identified as an employment development opportunity.

The five housing areas are drawn from the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Study (SHLAA). The SHLAA provides a broad estimate of site development capacity, and on this basis the five areas were identified for housing, thought to have sufficient capacity to cater for the level of growth planned.

Notwithstanding, it is acknowledged that the option area specifically identified for employment development (Parcel 65) would not in itself generate 30ha of employment land.



Original Option Areas as defined through the LDF process

1.2/

The Strategic Masterplan Project

The development of 2600 dwellings would represent an increase in the size of Penrith by approximately one third, in terms of dwelling numbers. This in itself clearly represents significant growth, however the additional large scale release of employment land will combine to generate a considerable level of change in the town.

The challenges that such a scale of change will bring, are heightened by anticipation that this may need to be delivered within the current plan period – before 2025.

In this context a very carefully considered and coordinated development strategy is needed, if we are to ensure sustainable growth and a stable process of change. By this we mean a strategy that reconciles and balances two overarching aims;

1. The need to **maximise the potential benefits** such growth could deliver for the town as a whole, particularly in terms of;
 - new physical infrastructure (potentially rethinking the road network and providing new energy infrastructure, utilities and services)
 - new social infrastructure (in particular new schools and community facilities / services)
 - bringing fresh impetus to the local economy (in particular helping to strengthen the vitality and viability of the town centre)
2. The need to **maintain and enhance the character and quality of place of Penrith** – ensuring that growth does not erode those characteristics and qualities which combine to create a very special place. This is an authentic, appealing town that has over time grown in an organic way and achieved balance between built form and natural environment.

Penrith project specifically aims to define this balance through production of a spatial framework that can help structure and shape development in a way which could maximise opportunities and benefits yet remain responsive to character and quality of place.

Reshaping the option areas

A key role of the strategic masterplan is to refine the ‘option areas’ for urban extension that emerged from SHLAA and early stages of LDF preparation. The strategic masterplan project has tested various ‘growth scenarios’ in order to explore the relative strengths and weaknesses of different spatial strategies, and in so doing reshapes the option areas in order to achieve the best possible balance between the two overarching aims described above.

The ‘growth scenarios’ all had as their foundation the original option areas and illustrated the implications of modifying them in response to different objectives and priorities. This has been a crucial step in the preparation of the strategic masterplan.

The study of growth scenarios is explained in further detail at section 4.

This Strategic Masterplan for

1.3/

Status

The strategic masterplan will directly inform and be represented within the Council's Housing Development Plan Document (DPD), which itself is an integral part of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

In effect therefore, the strategic masterplan is part of the LDF evidence base.

The masterplan sets out a spatial framework and delivery strategy which will guide policy making decisions and site allocations in the Housing DPD. However it is not a statutory planning document and does not in itself formally allocate development sites.

This masterplan report document sets out information, ideas and principles that will be relevant to site-specific development proposals. We would encourage developers and their design teams to use the document as a common reference point when evolving their development proposals.

Notwithstanding, and whilst the strategic masterplan has been prepared in collaboration with the Council's planning officers, formal decisions on development proposals will be subject to further consideration of the merits of individual proposals.

It should be noted that in developing the strategic masterplan project a significant volume of baseline research has been undertaken. This has been captured across a series of topic papers covering;

- Planning policy objectives, regeneration and development priorities
- Quality of Place: urban design and environment
- Transport
- Flood Risk
- Ecology

The baseline topic papers are an integral part of the strategic masterplan and the Housing DPD evidence base.

1.4/

Document structure

This masterplan report intends to communicate the strategy for future development in and around Penrith, and articulate its rationale.

Section 2.0 Context and Key Drivers

describes the development context, in terms of both existing policy objectives and the characteristics of Penrith as a place and environment. It identifies some of the key drivers behind – and potential constraints to - development and growth.

Section 3.0 Priorities, Objectives and Guiding Principles

confirms the main issues and opportunities various stakeholders have expressed during consultation, with regards to the management and delivery of development in and around Penrith through urban extension. These are expressed as broad priorities, and

distilled into a number of specific development objectives and strategic principles (to inform subsequent development proposals for individual sites).

Section 4.0 Strategic Masterplan

is the main section of the document, illustrating the masterplan itself and its layered, underpinning strategies. This includes indicative representation of development potential.

Section 5.0 Delivery Strategy

describes an approach to delivering the proposals inherent in the masterplan – opportunities for structuring and coordinating the implementation of development sites, and mitigating risks.



1.5/

Masterplan summary

The strategic masterplan is based on an approach that seeks to preserve and enhance – as far as is possible – the overriding characteristics of Penrith: a town which has grown with built form and natural environment in balance.

The scale of growth envisaged in the near future will inevitably change this balance, and so the inherent challenge is to manage this change and reshape the built form of Penrith in a way that minimises harm (e.g. to the natural environment) and maximises wider, social and economic benefits for local communities.

In summary, the masterplan;

a) Curtails the extent of development areas to the east, limiting this to a relatively modest scale of growth so as to control visual and landscape impact, and manage infrastructure pressures.

b) Expands the extent of development areas to the north, but in so doing directs growth towards lower lying ground. This is a response both to landscape character sensitivities, and the opportunity to maximise the potential for new infrastructure that can benefit the town as a whole. This could include for example a new road link over the West Coast Mainline rail line.

The strategic masterplan identifies initial development opportunities with a

capacity of circa 1800 new homes and circa 36ha of strategic employment land (net).

It also identifies potential additional development opportunities that would increase the capacity of residential development sites to circa 2300 units. This additional capacity would – allied with anticipated yield from brownfield sites within the existing urban area – allow the full Core Strategy housing target to be met.

The masterplan has been developed with careful consideration for infrastructure, flood risk, open space / landscape character, conservation of the built environment, and delivery constraints / opportunities.

Right: Spatial framework for development proposed under the strategic masterplan (not to scale)

