



Priorities, objectives
and principles

03

3.1/

Strategic priorities

Getting an understanding of Penrith and the drivers and constraints affecting development has been supported by the formation of the focussed project steering group. Baseline research has been augmented by steering group review and wider consultations.

Wider consultation has provided opportunity for a wide audience of stakeholders to comment upon the most important issues and opportunities: what are the key priorities for Penrith, in terms of new development and growth?

The following key priorities have been repeatedly expressed across the consultation sessions and through Steering Group collaboration.

Connections to and from the M6

Penrith's relationship with the M6 at its junction with the A66 is unanimously considered a major asset that defines the form and function of the town. Efficient, free flowing access to and from the M6 is high in the list of priorities as this is recognised as vital to the local economy – supporting the promotion of Penrith as a premium business location, supporting the visitor economy, and supporting the daily travel patterns of many residents. Although there are aspirations to see Penrith develop more sustainable travel patterns, with reduced reliance on the private car, the M6 is and will continue to be a very high profile asset.

This is also about creating a strong 'front door' into Penrith – a recognition that the M6 will continue to be a primary interface for visitors. Growth needs to take place in a way that maintains strong connections to and from the M6 via attractive and well managed routes. This should include maximising opportunities to channel financial contributions from new development into highway improvement and also promoting the use of Junction 41 to take pressure off the overburdened junction 40.

Managing Traffic flows

The coalescence of major transport routes at Penrith is both a key asset and a significant threat, in terms of traffic volumes passing through the area. This is a particular issue with regards the A6: although the spine of the town and performing both a strategic and local traffic function, historically it has caused management issues given the lack of relief by orbital routes.

With a substantial level of growth anticipated, consultees have highlighted the need for a holistic strategy which ensures that development on the periphery through urban extension is complimented by improvements in the centre. This is important if new residents are to be attracted into the town centre and if its pedestrian environment and experience is to be enhanced. This issue is heightened by the Penrith New Squares development proposals.

The need for better managed flows also extends to employment locations and sectors - the importance of managing the movement of HGVs out of the town centre. Associated with this is an idea that orbital movement could be created by a new bridge over the West Coast Mainline, perhaps linked with the expansion of Eden Business Park.

Improved Social Infrastructure

Penrith's social infrastructure offer – e.g. schools, healthcare, recreation and community facilities – was considered by most consultees to be strong, offering a range of high quality services and facilities.

However, there was clear consensus that;

a) There is insufficient capacity amongst existing primary schools to accommodate new pupils in any great numbers (consultees offered the opinion that existing primary schools have no space for any new pupils), and;

b) The current distribution of healthcare facilities does not favour ease of access by communities located to the north of Penrith, by transport modes other than the car.

All consultees stressed the need to ensure that growth is underpinned by significant investment in social infrastructure provision. This should at the very least include on-site provisions such as childrens' play and open space, but could extend to the construction of one, or even two, new primary schools.

Local needs and affordable housing

Consultees have reiterated anecdotally the evidence translated by the Core Strategy relating to the relatively high prices of houses within Eden district and the difficulties experienced by local people, especially younger people, purchasing homes - often finding themselves priced out of the market.

The policy objectives of the Core Strategy are supported by the majority of consultees, with acknowledgement that - where viable - the maximum number of affordable dwellings should be delivered from new housing development over the period of the plan.

Notwithstanding, consultees were keen to stress the need for flexibility and judgement when seeking affordable housing provision.

Widening the employment offer

Many consultees have expressed concern and frustration at the lack of diversity with the town's employment mix. Two key priorities have been expressed in connection with this;

a) Recognition of an imbalance in the current sector mix and in particular the dominance of lower skilled jobs in the market. Consultees considered there to be a lack of higher paid job opportunities that can attract and retain higher skilled, economically active residents. Graduates were often stated as a specific target, both in terms of retaining those from the University of Cumbria and attracting back those young people who have grown up in Eden but left to study in other towns and cities.

b) Recognition that the strategic accessibility of the town by key road links (in particular the M6 / A66 junction) is not being maximised, and in particular the market for warehousing and distribution space is not be capitalised upon.

It is important that a strategic masterplan that ostensibly seeks to manage housing growth also identifies complimentary employment development opportunities.

3.2/

Development objectives

The strategic priorities can be refined as a series of more specific objectives for development and growth in and around Penrith. The development objectives listed here are an amalgamation of the strategic priorities described at 3.1, the baseline research summarised at section 2, and sources of masterplanning and urban design guidance, such as;

- Creating Successful Masterplans (CABE, 2011)
- Large Scale Urban Design: Getting the Big Picture Right (CABE, 2010)
- By Design – Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Best Practice (DETR / CABE 2001)
- By Design – Better Places to Live (DLTR 2001)
- Urban Design Compendium (English Partnerships / Housing Corporation, 2000)
- Urban Design Compendium 2 (English Partnerships / Housing Corporation, 2007)

These development objectives have shaped the proposed set out in the strategic masterplan document, having helped in particular to compare the relative strengths and weakness of different growth scenarios and options considered along the way.

The objectives will continue to be used to guide and assess site-specific development proposals in the future and provide common ground on the expectations that need to be met.

A / Support the development planning process

The masterplan will feed the Housing DPD and create the basis for development that helps to deliver key planning policy objectives.

- A1 Create a clear and robust evidence base to inform housing allocation and phasing through the Housing DPD
- A2 Ensure that development helps to deliver appropriate mitigation for associated traffic impact in all areas of the town, including the town centre
- A3 Ensure that development is planned around and delivers appropriate social infrastructure, including open space
- A4 Help create balanced and sustainable neighbourhoods that are strengthened by new housing and new employment opportunities

B / Support

communities

The strategic masterplan must support and enhance the idea of communities – places which create a sense of togetherness and foster shared values.

- B1 Create a plan for development that has the support of a wide range of stakeholders, including the views of existing residents
- B2 Help to ensure that new development has positive consequences for existing communities, for example supporting the viability of services
- B3 Ensure that development delivers housing that is affordable and accessible to local people
- B4 Ensure that development makes a positive contribution to social infrastructure provision that is accessible to existing and new residents alike

C / Develop the physical infrastructure network

Development locations must be accessible and deliver sustainable physical infrastructure.

C1 Development must contribute to new physical infrastructure in and around Penrith including roads and services

C2 Development should help create improved connections between neighbourhoods and the strategic highway network

C3 Development must be managed to ensure compatibility with the proposed upgrade to waste water treatment works

C4 Development should help facilitate - if feasible - the creation of a new road bridge over the West Coast Main Line

D / Create responsive environments

Going forward, development must maximise the special setting and sense

of place of Penrith, and take responsibility for environmental impacts.

D1 Development must be based on design principles that are specific to Penrith, and that enhance its sense of place (see section 3.3)

D2 Development must be sensitive to visual impact and landscape character, and ensure it does not harm environmental and heritage assets such as the Eamont Valley

D3 Development must minimise flood risk and ensure appropriate mitigation

D4 Development should contribute to more sustainable and functional movement patterns especially by improving connections through existing residential areas for pedestrians and cyclists, and from the edge of Penrith into town centre

E / Support employment

Development needs to be planned to create a balance between new housing and employment provision, and also

maximise the diversity, accessibility and connectivity of employment locations.

E1 Create strong pedestrian / cycle linkages between housing and employment areas

E2 Respond to and raise existing developer and market aspirations

E3 Meet the Core Strategy target of creating 30ha of employment land

E4 Create opportunities for delivering a mix of B1, B2 and B8 employment uses

quality and characteristics of development, there's little point the masterplan defining development concepts that cannot or will not be built out by developers.

F1 The masterplan needs to be based on a form and mix of development that can be delivered in the short-medium term.

F2 The masterplan must be positive about design aspirations but also be realistic about what developers are able to achieve.

3.3/

Key design principles

Responding to the myriad priorities and objectives needs a holistic approach, and one that is structured and coordinated. A good starting point to this is to define design principles which can bind the masterplan together - a consistent foundation.

The design principles expressed here provide an important bridge between the priorities and objectives, the strategic masterplan itself (see section 4) and site development proposals / detailed design later in the process.

1 / Shaped by a special

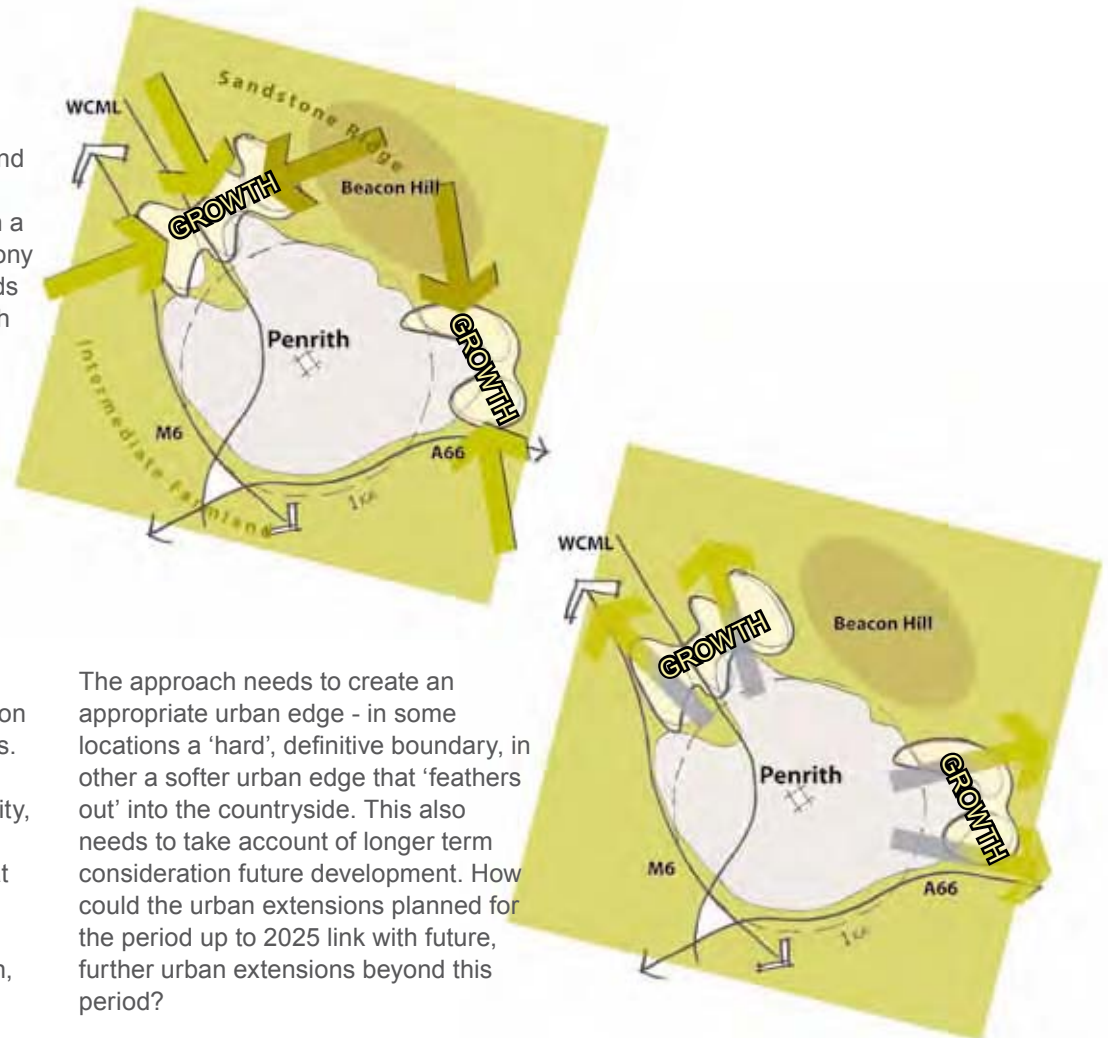
landscape character

Penrith is defined by an attractive and charismatic balance between urban and natural environments. Its growth over time has occurred incrementally but in a way that seems 'organic' and in harmony with its setting, particularly with regards to topography and the relationship with Beacon Hill. Ensuring that urban extension continues this tradition of sensitive development is a key challenge, but vital to protecting Penrith's unique sense of place.

2 / A transition

from urban to rural environment

Care is needed to manage the transition between urban and rural environments. This requires intelligent design of buildings and spaces in terms of density, massing and views. Design must take cues from existing parts of Penrith that make it special and distinctive, but balance this with a recognition that extension sites will interface with open, rural environments.



The approach needs to create an appropriate urban edge - in some locations a 'hard', definitive boundary, in other a softer urban edge that 'feathers out' into the countryside. This also needs to take account of longer term consideration future development. How could the urban extensions planned for the period up to 2025 link with future, further urban extensions beyond this period?

3 / Connected, legible and unified

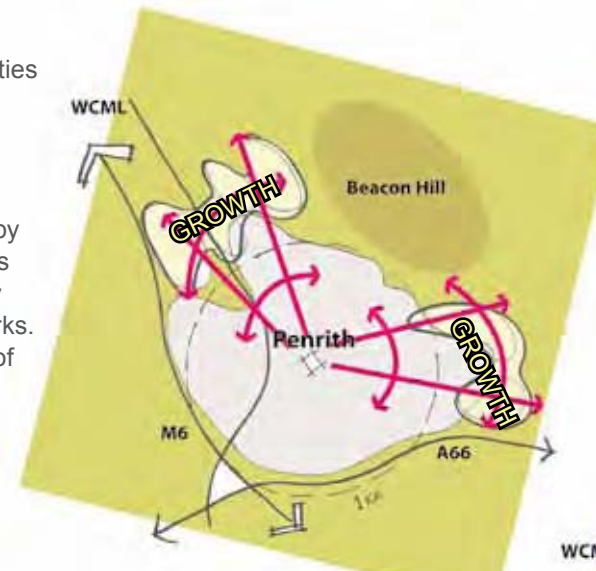
The risk with any large scale development proposed outside of an existing settlement boundary is that it becomes a disconnected adjunct with little if any relationship with the adjacent communities. There are opportunities to link the proposed urban extensions at Penrith into the existing urban fabric, and the strategic masterplan (and later site development proposals) must be physically structured by pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly routes that connect through adjacent residential areas to the

town centre and key community facilities and services.

This principle extends to the urban extension locations – individual development sites should be unified by legible interconnecting links, and sites themselves should be coordinated by permeable and ordered street networks. This means approaching the design of development in a comprehensive, holistic way.

4 / Green infrastructure networks

Development must embrace the natural environment, being sensitive not only to landscape character and visual impact, but habitats / biodiversity and flood risk. Urban extensions need to enhance the concept of “living in the valley” in a complementary and mutually beneficial way. The aspiration is to create green development, both metaphorically (environmentally sustainable / eco-friendly) and literally - a place with plentiful and attractive green spaces. Green spaces can link development



sites physically, visually and socially.

Green infrastructure will play a key role in providing recreation and amenity assets, supporting wildlife and enabling flood risk mitigation (in particular providing opportunities to incorporate surface drainage infrastructure).

Its important to recognise that as well as setting out strong aspirations for the

