

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Penrith



Penrith Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Eden District Council

April 2010

This document is also available in larger print on request.

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Designed and produced by Eden District Council. We are grateful to Craig Hamilton Architects Ltd for their kind permission to incorporate their work on Penrith conservation area in this document and to Penrith Civic Society; Hannah Nelson of Newcastle University and Phillip Brunskill of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, for all their invaluable survey work.

Front cover aerial photograph by Simon Ledingham / www.visitcumbria.com

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1 Introduction

We are fortunate in Eden in having an outstanding natural and cultural landscape that we want to conserve and celebrate. There are currently 24 conservation areas in Eden, outside of the Lake District National Park. They form an important part of Eden District Council's approach to protecting and enhancing areas of particular historical and/or architectural importance.

This character appraisal includes a description and assessment of the historical, architectural and townscape qualities of Penrith conservation area that we hope will be of interest to the general public, residents and developers. The supporting evidence base for this document can be found in the Penrith Conservation Area Technical Appendix that comprises a more detailed character appraisal together with townscape analysis plans. Penrith conservation area is broken down into a number of smaller areas which are considered and assessed in detail.

1.1 What is a conservation area?

Conservation areas are defined in law as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Local planning authorities have a responsibility to consider the quality and interest of an area as a whole, rather than individual buildings within it. Conservation areas can bring many benefits, including giving greater controls over demolition, minor development and tree felling.

Penrith's historic town centre was first declared a conservation area in 1975 and has been twice extended in 1977 and 1981 to include adjoining areas of residential development in Townhead, Brunswick Square and Victoria Road.

1.2 How does this document relate to planning?

National planning policy regarding conservation areas can be found in the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* and *PPS15: Planning for the Historic Environment*. This national guidance has a regional dimension in the form of the Regional Spatial Strategy, and a local one in terms of Eden's Local Development Framework (LDF).

At the heart of the LDF is the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), which sets out the vision, spatial objectives and core policies for the future development of the District. The Core Strategy DPD (2010) contains policies to conserve and enhance the historic environment, including conservation areas (Appendix A). With effect from 4 May 2010 the Council has adopted this document as background evidence for Core Strategy Policies *CS17 Principles for the Built (Historic) Environment* and *CS18 Design of New Development*. Guidance in this character appraisal is aimed at advising the public and developers when considering proposals in Penrith conservation area. We will also use it to assist us in our development management function ie in determining planning, advertisement, listed building and conservation area consent applications.

1.3 Public consultation

This character appraisal has been developed with generous assistance from Penrith Civic Society. Together with the forthcoming management plan it forms an important ingredient of the Vitality of Penrith multi agency regeneration initiative to reinvigorate the town. This appraisal has been subject to wide public consultation before being considered for final approval and adoption by the Council on 4 May 2010..

SECTION 1 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

2 Summary of special interest

Key attributes are:

- pre-conquest origins
- medieval street pattern
- town layout dominated by its past use as significant agricultural trading centre
- high degree of permeability
- numerous dedicated former market places connected by narrow streets
- tight grain of development
- extensive remaining yards and lanes
- well defined building hierarchy
- surviving vernacular buildings in town centre
- organic morphology of town centre
- widespread use of local materials - red sandstone, Westmorland and Burlington slate
- buildings are predominantly two storied in height and do not exceed four
- irregular roofscape
- vertical fenestration, largely sash windows
- limited number of green spaces with hard landscaping predominating
- planned elegance of the Brunswick Square area

3 Location and setting

3.1 Location and context

Penrith is strategically situated at the junction where the main east-west and north-south routes in the north of England meet. It has an estimated population of approximately 14,756 (2001 figures) and is located 34 miles (55 kms) north of Kendal and 22 miles (35 kms) south of Carlisle, Cumbria. The town lies approximately 146m above sea level, on the edge of the Eden Valley between the River Eamont and the River Petteril, in an area of undulating countryside. Thacka Beck runs through Penrith although it is now largely culverted.

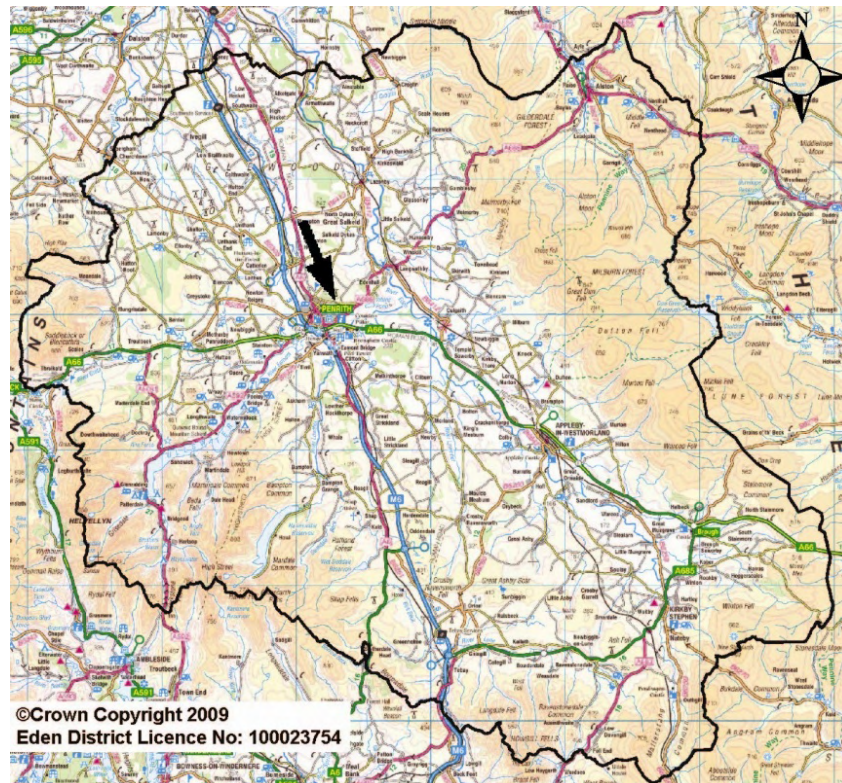


Figure 1 - Location of Penrith

3.2 Topography, geology and landscape setting

The underlying geology of the Eden Valley is of New Red Sandstone, mostly comprising Lower Permian based breccias, sandstones and mudstones, but with a narrow band of Upper Permian and Triassic sandstones, including Bunter and Keaper sandstone. Penrith lies to the western edge of the New Red Sandstone, with Carboniferous Limestone of the Dinantian series to the West. The drift geology of the area is dominated by glacial deposits in the form of drumlins formed from ice moving north-north-west down what is now the Eden valley.

In practice what this means is that the majority of historic buildings in Penrith are constructed of red sandstone. In addition to sandstone, Westmorland and Burlington slates are common traditional roofing materials. These elements help define the historic character of the town.

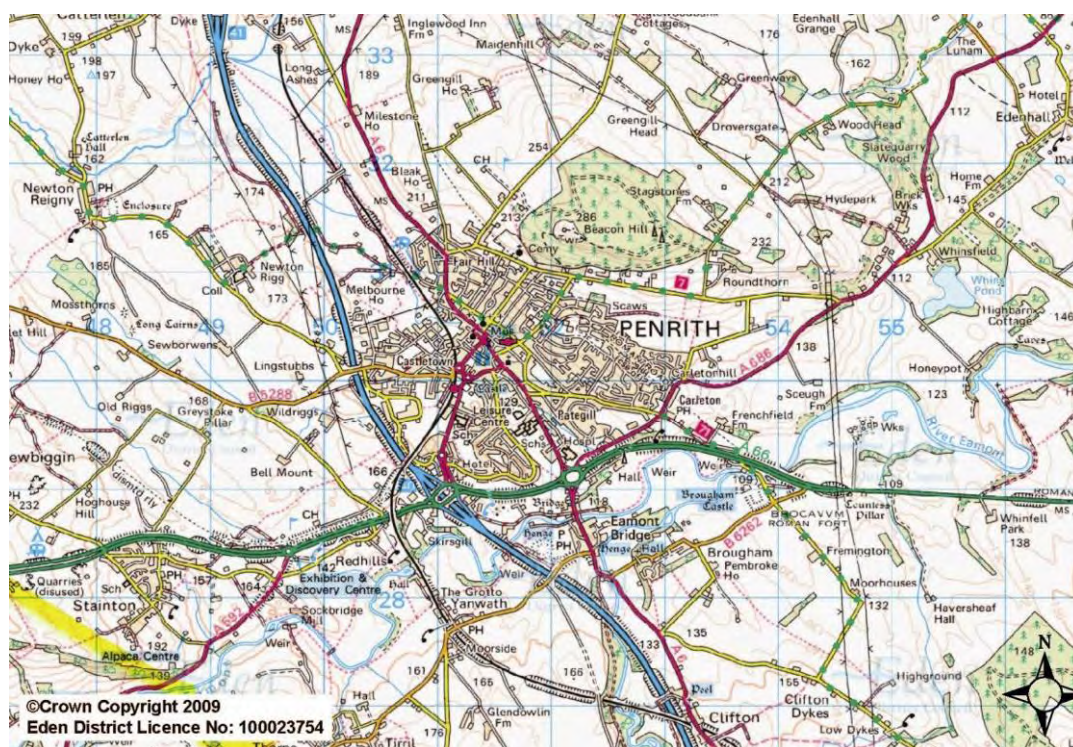


Figure 2 - Topography of Penrith

4 Historic development

4.1 Origins

Evidence of prehistoric human activity in the Penrith area can be seen at Mayburgh Henge, King Arthur's Round Table in Eamont Bridge, one mile south of Penrith, where artefacts dating from 1800 – 1400 BC have been found. Although little is known of the site of Penrith itself there was a Roman military station at Plumpton to the north while to the south east there was a major Roman fort at Brougham guarding the crossing of the river Eamont.

In the C10 the River Eamont marked the boundary between the kingdoms of Strathclyde to the north and England to the south. Penrith may have been the capital of Cumbria, which was annexed by Strathclyde. Tradition maintains that King Owen of Cumbria (920 – 937) is buried in the Giant's Grave in St Andrew's churchyard. It is likely that the town was in Norman hands by 1092 when the Conqueror's son, William Rufus, captured Carlisle. Penrith became part of the Forest of Inglewood.



Figure 3 - Giants Grave 1833

There is no conclusive evidence as to the date of the first settlement in Penrith. The earliest written record was in 1167 under the “pleas” of Alan de Nevill of the Forest of Inglewood when the Sheriff rendered an account for 10 shillings for “Penred Regis” (King’s Penrith). The name Penrith is thought to derive from the town’s situation under the “red hill”. This refers to the local sandstone which characterises the town where it has been widely used for buildings and walls.

4.2 Historic development

Although there is no documentary evidence for the occupation of Penrith before the 12th century the street plan for St Andrew’s Church, standing within an oval enclosure, indicates a potential pre-Norman settlement. It is possible that Devonshire Street, De Whelpdale Lane and St Andrew’s Place define the remaining extent of a pre-urban fortified enclosure. It has been suggested that a nucleated settlement existed centred on the church that fulfilled a number of urban functions.

At the time of the Conquest Penrith was in Scottish hands, but was seized by the Normans by 1086. It continued to be claimed by the Scots and in 1242 a compromise was brought about whereby Penrith was recognised as a Scottish possession, but one which the Scottish king held as tenant-in-chief of the English Crown. This situation was to last until 1295, when Edward I seized back Penrith and restored it to the jurisdiction of the English Crown.

Scottish raids destroyed the town a number of times during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1297 a large number of Scots set Penrith alight and in 1308 the tenants of Penrith petitioned the King, complaining that their lands, tenements and corn had been destroyed by the Scots. The town suffered heavily once more in 1345 when a large number of settlements were razed to the ground. The present layout of the town may reflect those troubled times with several open spaces into which cattle and goods could be brought for safety. Its narrow lanes and small courtyards with confined entrances would also have had similar advantages. By the mid sixteenth century Penrith Castle had begun to fall into disrepair and was being used as a source of building material. The threat from Scotland must have abated by this time. The conflict however was not finally resolved however until the Union of the Crowns in 1603.

The destructive violence of those times has meant that little remains of medieval domestic architecture; most dwellings, being of wooden construction, would have burned. The Gloucester Arms (previously known as Dockray Hall) is thought to originate from c.1470 and have been the traditional home of the Duke of Gloucester, later Richard III. The Two Lions Inn was originally constructed in C16, but also has had many later alterations.

The rise of Penrith as a market centre did not occur until 1222, when the Crown granted the town the right to hold a market and a fair.

“Know that we desire that a market be held in our manor of Penred on the Wednesday of every week. And that a fair be held in the same place yearly from the Eve of Pentecost to last until the Monday next after the Feast of the Holy Trinity.”

Extract from the Pipe Rolls of Henry III that takes the form of a letter of command to the Sheriff of Cumberland

In 1223 Henry III also instructed Brian de Insula to supply timber to those who had come to live in Penrith so they could build houses and shops. Burrowgate seems likely as the original site of the market. Later mediaeval industries included tanning and textiles and bakers, saddlers, glovers, cobblers and shoemakers are mentioned in the records. Penrith was also a centre for wool production.

A grammar school was established in 1340 however by the mid fourteenth century the town was in decline. This may have been due to attrition by the Scottish, but this was also a period of recession in the country as a whole aggravated by outbreaks of the Black Death or plague. In the fourteenth century William Strickland diverted the River Petterill to bring a supply of water into the town by building ‘Thaka Beck’, which runs through the centre of Penrith. The beck was largely covered over in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, but is evidenced by place names such as Brook Street.

“In the head of the ancient forest of Inglewood, is seited the famous towne and honor of Penrith; a very fine towne, and great markett and merchants for all kinds of comodities: and a grand fair on Whitson Tuesday; and every fortnight till Lamas; for all things, horses and cattle, and wool and sheep, and lambs and ewes especially.”

Edmund Sandford 1675

Squire of Askham in his account of Cumberland

By the seventeenth century Penrith had become a thriving and prosperous settlement, having become one of the most important market centres in Cumberland. In 1687 Penrith was described as having the best markets in Cumberland for corn, salt, wool and meat as well as also being good for cloth, hemp and wool. A century later in James Clarke’s plan of 1787 we can see the wide variety of markets available, each with their own dedicated location (Figure 4).

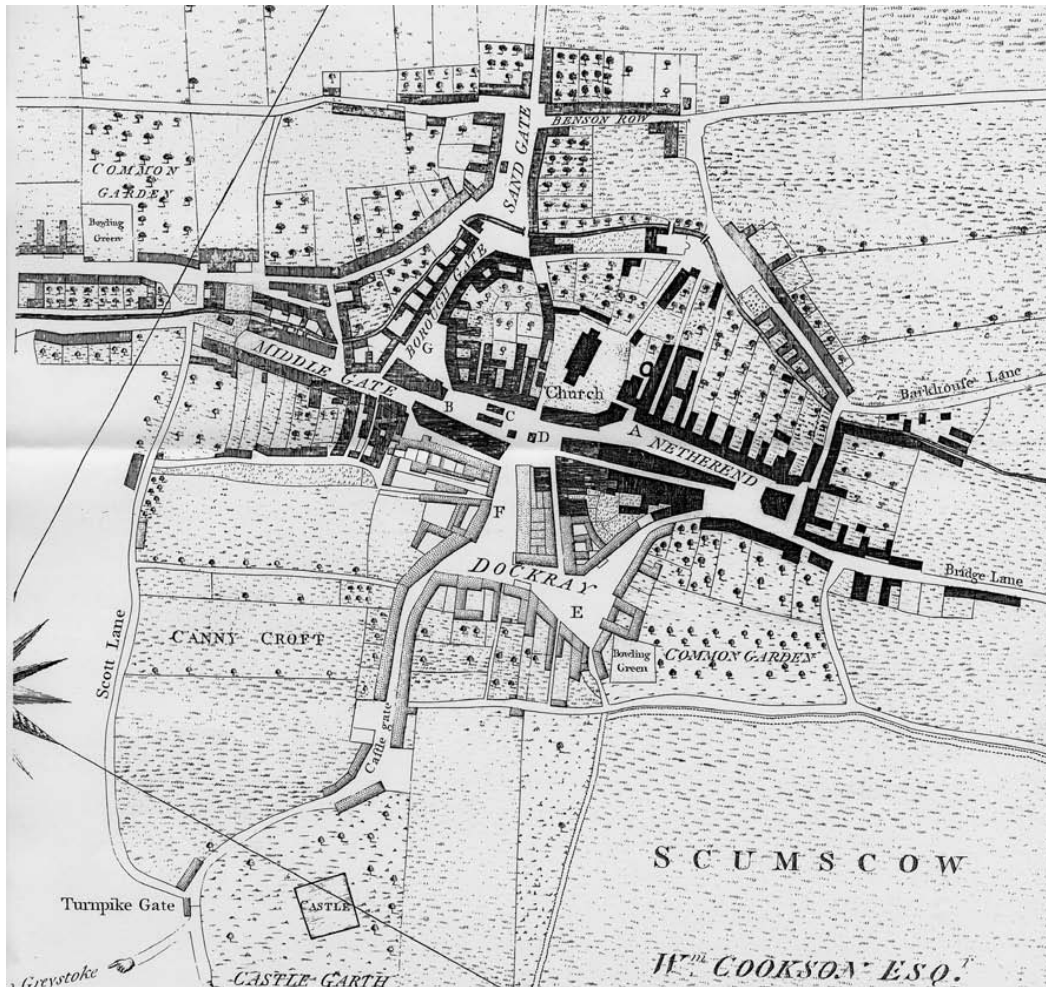


Figure 4 - James Clarke's Plan of Penrith, 1787

- A the Wheat Market
- B the Barley Market
- C the Butcher's Shambles, which extends to
- D the Market Cross Sandgate head
- E the Beast Market
- F the Oat Market
- G the Horse Market

The letters 'C' and 'D' indicate the position of the Butcher's Shambles and the Market Cross in what is now Market Square and Devonshire Street, where there was also a Moot Hall and another building known as The Roundabout, see figure 4.

"Penrith has an excellent market on Tuesday, and a small one on Saturday... The markets here are disposed in a manner truly astonishing in so small a town: the wheat-market is in one part of the town; rye and potatoes in another; barley in another; oats and pease in another; live-cattle, horses, and hogs have also their distinct markets."

James Clarke 1787

Survey of the Lakes of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire

The Cross was a small square building with a roof supported by four pillars, used as a butter and eggs market and where the hiring of servants took place. It stood approximately where the Musgrave Monument is now. At the northwest corner of the Cross were the town stocks. The Moot Hall was a wood and stone building on the north side of the square and replaced an earlier Hall which was situated where the Arnisons shop is now. The roof sloped at the front where there were four or five small shops, and on the north side there was a flight of stairs to the great room or assembly hall. The Moot Hall was used on Tuesdays as a market house to sell yarn from the countryside. To the north of the Moot Hall stood the Roundabout, which was a two storey building with shops on the first floor. All around the building on the ground floor stood butchers' stalls.



Figure 5 - The Roundabout, Devonshire Street, 1815 by Jacob Thompson. The Moot Hall, Shambles and the Market Cross had already been removed when this was painted.

There were also two rows of fish stones and Butcher's Shambles. The Moot Hall, Shambles and Market Cross were demolished c.1809 and the Roundabout by 1826 on the instigation of the Town Improvement Committee opposed to the cluttering up of the town centre with buildings. Butter and fruit markets were located in Devonshire Street, poultry in Burrowgate, the potato market in Middlegate, pork and wool in Great Dockray, live pigs and sheep in Sandgate. The Corn Exchange took place in the open street in Cornmarket. The Market Hall was founded in 1860.

Prosperity in the late C17 was also accompanied by an important phase of rebuilding. Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Penrith underwent a period of constant rebuilding with the result that much of the built fabric of the town dates from this period. This rebuilding took place however broadly within the existing medieval street pattern. The town contains a number of important buildings from this period such as St Andrew's Parish Church, erected 1720, and the George Inn which can be dated to the early eighteenth century.

The coming of the railways also contributed to Penrith's prosperity, promoting the growth of tourism and assisting in the carriage of goods and the export of farm produce. The line from Lancaster to Carlisle opened in 1846, followed by the Eden Valley Railway in 1862 and the Cockermouth, Keswick and Penrith Railway in 1865. The railway station was originally built by the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway in 1846, with a gothic revival main hall and adjoining station house. The station was enlarged and altered in 1865 when a third platform was added. The Musgrave Monument and clock tower was erected in 1861 in memory of Phillip Musgrave, son of Sir George and Lady Musgrave.

Requirements for the car made the greatest impact in the twentieth century on the town centre, causing the market places to be dominated by traffic and parking. Infill plots and previous orchards and gardens were developed creating a denser urban fabric. The following three maps (Figures 6 - 8) give an indication of the development of the town since the layout shown in the 1787 map.



Figure 6 - Map of 1852



Figure 7 - Map of 1923



Figure 8 - Contemporary Ordnance Survey map

5 Character analysis

A general character analysis of Penrith conservation area as a whole is covered in this section. For a more detailed assessment please see the accompanying Technical Appendix. Penrith's organic development has resulted in a large number of interrelated areas, each with their own micro character. The conservation area has consequently been sub-divided into smaller areas whose townscape, character and buildings are subsequently described in more detail.

5.1 Morphology

The development of central Penrith shows no trace of any deliberate planning in its street pattern. The mass of streets suggest an organic growth, although an oval focussing on the church can be recognised.

Modern Penrith town centre can easily be seen in the earliest plan of the town published in 1787 by James Clarke in his *Survey of the Lakes* (Figure 5). It seems reasonable to assume that this street pattern largely represents the plan of the town in the late medieval period. There is no evidence that the destruction documented in the fourteenth century and the subsequent reconstruction resulted in a significant modification to the town's early medieval topography. It is likely that the street layout has remained unchanged as the medieval building pattern of burgage plots is discernible with its typical narrow street frontages and long depth of land and buildings behind. The town retains a surprising number of its medieval yards which ran perpendicular to the main streets and were used for living, trading and stabling.

The street pattern of the town centre consists of a number of open spaces of varying size linked by narrow streets. It has been suggested that the form of the town assisted in its defence from raiders with these constriction points providing defensible spaces. Some widening of the 'narrows' and streets has taken place over the last two centuries often to accommodate traffic requirements. Whilst the streets and spaces vary in size, in the scale of their buildings and in their individual character, most are either narrow alleyways or elongated rectilinear or triangular open areas.

5.2 Urban Space

Although the historic centre of Penrith is considered to be the site of St Andrew's Church, the current economic and social centre of the town's activity can be identified as Devonshire Street and the Market Square. The shift probably occurred in the late medieval or early modern period, by which time fairs and markets had been banned from church land.

Penrith is a town of many markets. The map of 1787 (Figure 5) shows that different commodities were sold in different parts of the town. This is unusual as most market towns have a single designated market place that may be used for different types of market on different days of the week. Penrith would have had to have been a commercial centre of some standing for it to have had so much trade that it could not be accommodated in a single space. Its growth as a market centre is not surprising, given its strategic location on the junction of the main north-south and east-west routes. The

irregular shapes of the spaces and their unordered distribution through the townscape suggests an organic growth in the requirement for trading space.

It is possible that the markets shaped the development and physical structure of Penrith more than the need for defensible spaces. The combination of large open spaces and narrow connecting alleyways might have served a defensive function, providing areas to contain livestock that are protected by narrow defensible passage, but it seems unlikely that it was the principal reason for their construction. More likely is that they are a reflection of Penrith's mercantile economy and were readily adapted to improve the town's defensibility.

The original settlement would have been centred on the church and, as requirements for space increased or as it became illegal to trade on church land, the trading may have moved outwards to Burrowgate and Devonshire Street. Additional trading might have occurred in the main arterial routes into the centre, Cornmarket and King Street. As the town expanded, the spaces between the market spaces would have been densely built up. Additional market space would then have to be located on the town's periphery, establishing Sandgate and Great Dockray.

The interconnected series of irregular spaces create a particular character and provide a very interesting streetscape through which to pass. Penrith developed organically responding to new needs and changes in an unplanned manner without regard to the town's overall structure.

A key characteristic of Penrith's townscape is its permeability. Within the limits of the town centre it is possible to walk from any one place to any other by a number of different routes, none of which might be chosen as being significantly more convenient than a number of others. This quality of permeability is an asset to Penrith for a number of reasons. It prevents the townscape being dominated by any single 'high street' or divided between streets of primary, secondary or tertiary status. Although centred on the Market Square, the town's layout is more democratic and facilitates a dispersal of pedestrians. Much of Penrith's townscape is allocated to circulation (Figure 9) which creates the potential for a much more interesting experience.

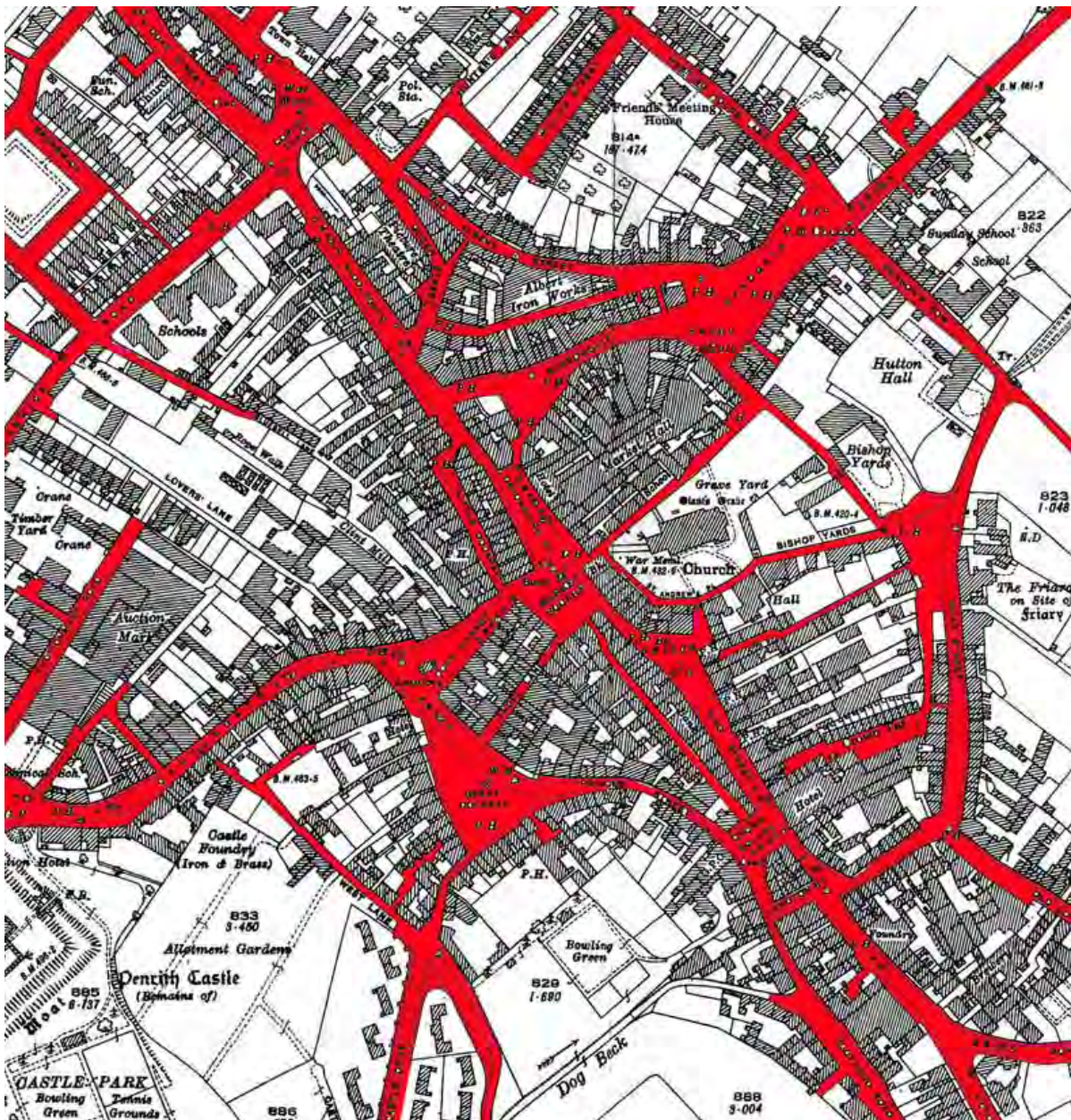


Figure 9 - Traffic Circulation (OS map of 1923)

Another key component of Penrith's urban form is the yards and courtyard areas accessed from the main thoroughfare by alleyways whose openings were often incorporated into buildings. The number of these yards is much greater than is at first supposed. Many are not now obvious as the alleyway has been assimilated into the building making the rear yards effectively land locked.

Outside the historic town core there was considerable residential development in the conservation area mainly dating from C19 with some earlier C17 and C18 development in the north. Even within the heart of Penrith there is a surprising amount of residential use with scope for more, particularly over ground floor retail and commercial uses.

5.3 Buildings

Whilst the buildings of Penrith vary in age and style they nevertheless exhibit some architectural coherence in materials and detailing. Many of the medieval and post-medieval buildings of Penrith have been lost, in particular the large number of inns, however a small number remain such as the Gloucester Arms and the Two Lions PH in Great Dockray. Others have been altered, but their original form and detailing can still be traced, particularly in upper storey windows and in rear yards.

Before the major rebuilding of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the predominant characteristics of buildings in the town were low, two and sometimes three storey steeply pitched stone and later slate roofed buildings with small stone-mullioned leaded fixed, casement and later timber sashed windows, often paired or in threes. Curved bay windows at ground floor level were common in shop fronts and grander buildings had features such as two storey gabled porches, like that of the Tudor Restaurant in St Andrew's Churchyard (Figure 10). Other notable features included external stairways to first floor level.



Figure 10 - Tudor Restaurant



Figure 11 - George Hotel

While rebuilding tended to take place within the established street frontages, some streets and gateways or narrows were widened by the demolition of buildings, such as at the north end of King Street. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rebuilding and adaptation took place and buildings of increased height were constructed, particularly in the central core. Here formal Georgian style buildings were built and detailing in the form of sash windows with dressed stone surrounds, ashlar walls with stone quoins and pedimented doors and windows were introduced, predominantly using the local materials of red sandstone and the now common Westmorland Green slate (Figure 11).

While some of these buildings themselves have since been lost and later Victorian, Edwardian and more modern buildings introduced, the predominant building style and detailing in the town centre remains Georgian with vertical twelve and sixteen paned sliding sash windows and raised stone window surrounds. Many of the buildings are

rendered, predominantly with smooth render or stucco, colour washed to mimic or contrast with the natural stone.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, plainer architectural detailing such as sash windows without glazing bars and Welsh slate roofs appeared alongside the construction of a number of new individually and politely styled buildings culminating in buildings such as the imposing Tudor style Barclays Bank. Such buildings saw the introduction of a number of non-local materials.

In addition to the general heightening of buildings and the introduction of classical design details, the other principal change through the nineteenth and early twentieth century was the removal of small bow windows at ground floor level and the introduction of full size shop fronts, a number of fine examples of which still remain. This in itself necessitated the heightening of some buildings and alterations to the fenestration patterns on the floors above.

Y^e stones and slatt about Peroth Look'd so Red y^r at my Entrance into the town thought its buildings were all of brick, but after found it to be the Coullour of the stone w^{ch} I saw in the Quarrys Look very Red, their slatt is the same w^{ch} Cover their houses. Its a pretty Large town-a good Market for Cloth that they spinn in the Country-hempe and also woollen. Its a great Market for all sorts of Cattle, meate Corne & &. Here are two Rivers one Called y^e Emount w^{ch} parts Cumberland and Westmoreland
Celia Finnes
1698 Tour Lancaster to Carlisle

5.4 Building hierarchy

People perceive hierarchy in the built environment often without being conscious of it - front is higher status than back, top higher than bottom, big higher than small, ornamented higher than plain, smooth higher than rough and orderly higher than disorderly. There is also a clear differentiation in hierarchy between the front and back sides of a building. The front is open to public inspection so needs to express a more refined appearance than the sides and rear. Factors which differentiate between front and sides and rear elevations are:

- The quality and refinement of the materials used
- The orderliness of the placement of windows and doors
- The degree of decorative detailing
- The quantity and orderliness of rainwater and wastewater pipes

In terms of materials ashlar stone occupies the top position in the hierarchy of building materials and issued to face buildings of high status. Often local red sandstone is used and sometimes render has been manipulated to mimic the form, if not the colour, of ashlar stone. Examples of rendered buildings such as the Georgian townhouses in

Bishops Yards tell us that render was traditionally used without any of the stigma it has developed in more recent years. A building with an ashlar or rendered front will often

have unrendered random rubble side and rear elevations, which are brought into a closer unity with the front by corner, window and door surrounds detailed in the same ashlar stone that is used for the principal façade.

Buildings of lower status often exhibit less differentiation between front, side and rear elevations than high status buildings. Windows and doors might be placed less regularly and the same facing material, such as render or roughcast, might be used for all sides. Innumerable variations of character and hierarchy can be conveyed within the local architectural tradition.

5.5 Yards

The hierarchical relationship between main streets (such as King Street) and back lanes (such as Rowcliffe Lane) is reproduced in the relationship between main street frontages and back yards. Yards are a significant characteristic feature of Penrith's townscape and result from the town's medieval layout based on long narrow burgage plots. Yards run perpendicular to the direction of a street and are accessed via alleyways that pierce the main street elevation with an archway or doorway, usually pedestrian in scale but often large enough for carriages. An alleyway is evidently as long as the depth of the building through which it passes. Beyond that, a yard is usually defined by long, usually one or two storey, buildings to left and right and terminated by either a tall wall or by a building constructed across the width of the yard, parallel to the main street.

The architectural treatment of buildings facing yards is often of a higher status than would be expected for a hidden alleyway. However many of these yards were used intensively for both residential and commercial purposes. They would have functioned more like small streets with buildings facing the yards and exhibiting an orderly fenestration pattern and formal detailing. Today the yards have more of a backland character with many of the buildings are underused. There is nevertheless still a significant amount of residential use remaining.

Each yard is unique with its own character ranging from quite small yards off Angel Lane to the spacious areas, such as to the rear of the Gloucester Arms or the George Hotel. Some of the larger yards have the character of courtyards, with a number of buildings of different uses and characters facing in to the shared space.



Figure 12 - Fig Pear Tree Yard c1895



Figure 13 - Yard entrance, Devonshire Street

5.6 Shop Fronts

Penrith retains a number of high quality shop fronts that significantly contribute to the character of the town centre. Broadly speaking, Penrith's historic shop fronts can be divided into two types, which relate to how the shop front is integrated into the ground floor. Some are inserted as part of the structure of the ground floor storey and others are applied as an additional architectural device, like a portico.

The type of shop front that is integrated into the structure of the ground floor is less common than the applied type. This may be due to the fact that in order for the ground floor to look massive enough to support the upper storeys a relatively large amount of the ground floor elevation needs to be allocated to structure. This reduces the area that can be allocated to glazing and display areas, which has commercial implications. These kinds of massive shop fronts are particularly suited to Penrith's architectural character, which tends to be robust and free of superfluous decoration.

The alternative arrangement is to treat the shop front as an applied portico. This enables its form to be treated independently of the above ground storeys and it is freed of the responsibility of supporting them, structurally or through formal language. This enables the degree of structure to be reduced relative to the amount of glazing. Figure 14 is an example of the portico type of shop front. The upper floors show an austerity and massiveness characteristic of Penrith's traditional buildings and the ground floor is light and decorative, which inverts the usual hierarchy of building lighter storeys on top of more massive ones. However, by the shop front being built just proud of the line of the façade, it is interpreted as an applied portico.



Figure 14 - Portico type shop front
(Craig Hamilton 2005)



Figure 15 - Single building with several shop fronts
(Craig Hamilton 2005)

A single building might accommodate a number of shop fronts and it is usual for the divisions between the shop fronts to relate to the fenestration pattern. However, this is not a strict rule and in some cases shop fronts have been inserted into older buildings without an overt attempt to create a unified composition with the order of the whole façade (Figure 15).

The historic character and interest of the shop is also strengthened by the awnings, which can give the shop front greater depth and interest. They also function as signs or advertisements. Historic photographs show that it used to be common for shops to advertise at both ground and first floor levels. Signage can be very successfully combined with architecture as in Arnisons (Figure 17) where the shop sign within the entablature is treated very formally and the glazed sign makes it more visually prominent, conveying an upmarket impression.



Figure 16 - Grahams (Craig Hamilton 2005)



Figure 17 - Arnisons (Craig Hamilton 2005)

5.7 Windows

The windows of Penrith's buildings are primarily characterised by a simple square-cut projection around head and jambs and on to the cill. Quoins and door and window dressings would have been built up by a mason in worked stones, the remainder being raised by the waller. This window type, which is usually a sash window, was introduced in the eighteenth century. Other kinds of windows can be found, such as earlier mullioned windows in some of the yards and various Victorian and Edwardian designs, but these have a lesser impact on the character of the conservation area.

The variable elements of window design include shape, division, mouldings and glazing. When, after about 1550, buildings of two storeys started being built, rooms were almost inevitably low and consequently windows were made horizontal with several lights. Larger medieval windows were divided into upright lights by mullions and graced by tracery. In smaller houses mullions remained in use to divide long and square windows until late in the seventeenth century (Figure 18). The mullions of these windows have deep splayed mouldings. About the turn of the seventeenth century square cut mullions and transoms were adopted and remained in use for over eighty years in houses and in positions of lower and lower status. Double windows, divided by a square cut mullion, are a characteristic feature of Penrith buildings (Figure 19). Mullions returned to fashion in the early nineteenth century with the Gothic Revival (Figure 20).



Figure 18 - (Craig Hamilton 2005)



Figure 19 - (Craig Hamilton 2005)



Figure 20 - (Craig Hamilton)

Under Renaissance influence in the late C17 and early C18, large compact multi-storey houses, such as those in Bishops Yards, were given tall windows to light tall rooms (Figure 21). Contemporary smaller houses still had low ceilings and, perhaps as a compromise the square window became popular (Figure 22). Rooms, ceilings and windows began to rise in height again as the Renaissance influence penetrated to the lower status buildings. The local building tradition adopted these influences to a degree and for a sufficient period that the majority of buildings in the Conservation Area have windows with similar characteristics. The Classical architraves were refined until nothing remained but a simple square-cut projection around head and jambs and on to the cill.



Figure 21 - (Craig Hamilton 2005)



Figure 22 - (Craig Hamilton 2005)

Windows tend to be arranged regularly over the facades of buildings, although the fenestration pattern can vary considerably between buildings or within the same building. It is quite common to find windows of several types and ages in the same building, the most up-to-date being used on the front and more obsolescent types on the rest of the building.

The double hung or vertically sliding sashes that were installed in large houses soon after 1700 gradually found their way into lower status buildings towards the end of the century. They are the most common type of window found in Penrith's historic buildings. The improvement of glass-making techniques over the C19 enabled larger window panes to be made. Sash windows are very prevalent throughout the conservation area however a great many have been replaced in recent decades by unsympathetic top opening casements or mock sash windows, often in uPVC materials.

5.8 Doorways

Most of the doorways within the study area are of a plain square-headed type with a square-cut or slightly chamfered set of projecting stone jambs. However, doorways are prominent and high status building elements and tend to be celebrated more than others. The default position for doorways is in the middle of the ground floor elevation. However, this general rule is complicated by two factors; by the need to accommodate large shop windows and to provide access to rear yards through vehicular or pedestrian alleyways. These requirements are met by a range of creative responses, all of which harmonise with the overall form of their buildings through a clear logical ordering or symmetry.

Penrith's doorways can be divided into three categories, within which there is considerable variation affected by factors such as age, status and use:

Carriage Doorways: Many of Penrith's traditional buildings are pierced by large doorways which provide access to the building or the land at the rear. Although the doorway form varies significantly between structures, most share a similar design (Figure 23). They have flattened arches and are defined by square-cut surrounds, much in the same way as most windows and pedestrian doorways. This design is embellished

to varying degrees with keystones, springing stones and voussoirs and may be executed in render or ashlar.



Figure 23 - Typical carriage doorway (Craig Hamilton 2005)



Figure 24 - Classical doorway with fanlight (Craig Hamilton 2005)



Figure 25 - Typical doorway (Craig Hamilton 2005)

Renaissance or Classical doorways: Penrith has some fine Classical doorways, which are found on high status C18 and C19 century buildings (Figure 24).

Lower status pedestrian doorways: Perhaps the most common of Penrith's doorways is the square-headed type with square-cut projecting stone jambs (Figure 25). There are also a number of medieval doorways in Penrith. Following the introduction in the late C18 of a lobby between the front door and staircase, it was common for a fanlight to be provided in an arched or square head above the door and frame (Figure 24). Doorway forms proliferated during the Victorian era and many different designs are visible. It is a common feature of Penrith buildings for doorways to be linked in pairs.

5.9 Skyline: roofs, chimneys and rainwater goods

Penrith's roofscape has a quite uniform character in terms of its form and materials. The traditional roofing materials are red sandstone tiles and Westmorland slate, although cheaper materials such as Welsh slate and man made tiles are now common. The local street form, consisting of independent buildings constructed gable-to-gable, results in a characteristic roofscape (Figure 25). Most of the traditional buildings of Penrith are constructed with their roof pitch running parallel to the direction of the street. This method of building, combined with the creation of terraces from a series of independent and unrelated buildings, gives the overall impression in Penrith streetscapes of a "jagged" skyline, with buildings of various heights and ridgelines adjoining one another. These irregular juxtapositions create interest and variety.

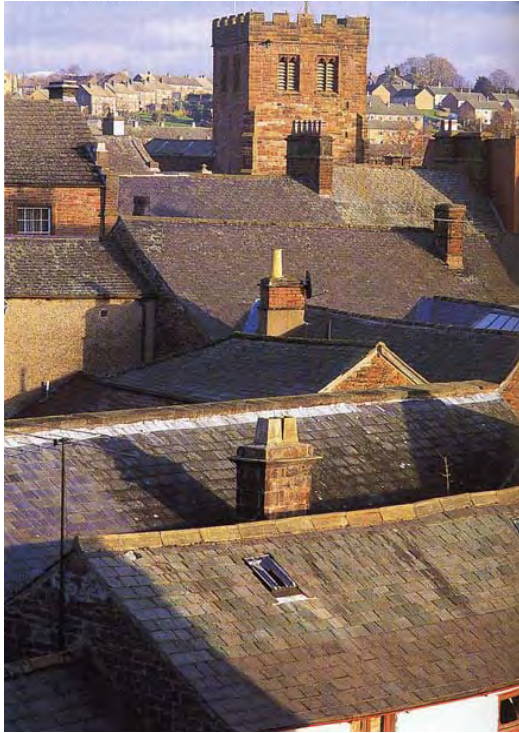


Figure 25 - Jagged skyline



Figure 26 - Bottom stone roofing slate courses
(Craig Hamilton 2005)

Dormer windows are not a strong characteristic of the conservation area, only occurring on occasional buildings. Ridges are either stone, clay tiles of various type or lead on timber rolls. As slates and stone flags were the predominant roofing materials used in the area it is not surprising that most roofs are gabled and that few had dormers or valleys. Hipped roofs were also relatively few. Those that do exist respond to the fashion for hips in the nineteenth century. There are numerous instances where roofs have been only partially re-covered in slate; retaining stone tiles at the edges (Figure 26). Gables are often finished with a plain close verge and parapets finished with a projecting kneeler. Parapets do appear in places mainly on eighteenth century buildings. Rainwater goods are generally out of painted cast iron or lead, often dated.

Chimneys are very prominent features on Penrith's skyline and are found at gable ends, on ridges and rising from eaves. Chimney stacks are usually constructed out of stone with some brick. These often include weatherings and drips, known as water tabling, above the flashing line and projecting copings/cornices of varying sophistication.

5.10 Public realm

Much of Penrith's public realm consists of a variety of hard landscaping with greenery being largely confined to churchyards and private gardens. That being said the green spaces are nevertheless valuable habitats for local flora and fauna and make a contribution to the area's biodiversity.

Many different approaches have been taken in terms of public realm hard landscaping with varying degrees of success. The design ranges from the standard utilitarian solutions familiar to many British towns to the well considered streetscape of Market

Square/Devonshire Street. The lack of a consistent palette of materials and landscaping forms throughout the town contributes to a sense of fragmentation and the detachment of spaces from each other. Historic precedents show that traditional solutions were much less complicated, with fewer changes in surface treatment and fewer signs and street furniture. Penrith's town spaces appear larger in historic photographs due to the absence of clutter and the consistent treatment of surfaces over large areas.

The public realm is considered in more detail in each of the character areas in the Technical Appendix however one common characteristic feature is the large red sandstone stone wall used as a boundary. This form may originally have had a defensive function but has clearly passed into the local building tradition. Some of the walls are built of uncoursed random rubbles and others from square cut random rubble.

6 Problems, pressures and capacity for change

6.1 Negative issues

Penrith's development has been largely incremental and that is both its strength and its weakness. Whilst it has formed the town's organic character it has also resulted in a slow, insidious loss of historic buildings and features that collectively have undermined the quality of the town's historic environment. This erosion covers the loss of significant buildings over the thirty five years since conservation area designation, such as the Royal Hussar Hotel on King Street and its replacement with the bland Somerfield supermarket. Much of this redevelopment has taken place on a site by site basis without due regard to its impact on the townscape overall. It has also covered the loss of small scale traditional details such as loss of original windows, doors and roofing materials, that cumulatively has made an adverse impact to the character of an area. Penrith was considered to be a Conservation Area at Risk by English Heritage in 2008 and this document is the starting point to redressing the situation.

One inescapable legacy of the medieval street pattern is that it is not designed with vehicular traffic in mind. Whilst there is some limited pedestrianisation in the town centre much of the conservation area is dominated by traffic and this is most acute in the Narrows, Devonshire Street and Market Square area where it inhibits the enjoyment of what would otherwise be the centre of an outstanding historic market town. This in turn affects the quality of the visitor experience, which impacts on the economic viability of Penrith. Any alterations to traffic flow in the town centre clearly have knock on implications elsewhere and any proposals need to be formulated within the context of a traffic impact assessment for the whole town as a whole.

There are an unusually high number of separate market places, which presents us with a challenge in terms of town centre management now that their original use is long defunct. Many are used for highway and parking purposes and inappropriate, small scale landscaping schemes. Historical significance can be used as a means of establishing a hierarchy of public spaces within Penrith that can be used to inform management regimes, direct resources and development.

The town centre today faces economic challenges and Penrith is currently not capitalising on its assets. This is in part due to the national recession, but also because of local uncertainty. At the time of writing the Penrith New Squares development

scheme, which abuts its southern boundary of the conservation area, has been temporarily halted. This has left the Princes Street area in a state of limbo with a block of buildings demolished that were intended to be replaced by the creation of a new public square. The relationship and physical link between the town centre and Penrith New Squares has always been crucial and this document should inform any revised scheme.

6.2 Future

Penrith was originally settled because of its strategic location on the intersection of the north/south and east/west trading routes. Over a thousand years later this remains one of the town's assets and it is still a centre for a wide rural hinterland. With excellent communication links Penrith is set to grow as a town with substantial new residential extensions sites being considered. At its heart is the conservation area, with its very human scale and permeability, which can be used positively to make the town a more dynamic and thriving centre than it is today. Far from being an obstacle to progress Penrith's historic environment can be very much part of its future creating a distinctive, rich town centre that both residents and visitors can enjoy.

7 Boundary Review

We are required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review the boundaries of conservation areas from time to time to ensure that they include those "areas of special architectural or historic interest". Since its original designation 35 years ago Penrith conservation area has changed and the boundary needs to reflect this. The conservation area boundary was amended on 4 May 2010 and the following alterations were made (Plan 1):

Deletion **Grove, Beatham and Lowther Courts** were excluded from the conservation area. These late C20 developments have a suburban layout and are at odds with the historic grain of the area.

Addition **South side of Brunswick Road:** The northern side of the street already lies within the conservation area. Including the largely late C19 building on the southern side of Brunswick Road balances the row of terraced properties and shops on the northern side. Together these two sides of C19 development create a sense of constriction and arrival into the north end of the town centre.

Agricultural Hotel and Penrith Station: Castlegate is an ancient thoroughfare and links the castle with the town centre. The arrival of the railway to Penrith fundamentally altered the town's subsequent development. This listed C19 building together with that of the Agricultural Hotel would strengthen the historical character of the conservation area. Altering the boundary to include them has, of necessity, involved including some late C20 buildings (MacDonald's and NFU).

Appendix A National, Regional and Local Policies

A.1 National Planning Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 69 requires that local planning authorities shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall designate those areas as conservation areas. The Act therefore places a duty on the local planning authority to designate conservation areas in areas which they consider meet the criteria.

Section 72 of the Act places a duty on the local planning authority in the exercise of their planning functions, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

Section 71 of the Act requires that from time to time, local planning authorities shall formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.

Section 73 of the Act requires the local planning authority to publicise proposals which would in their opinion affect the character and appearance of a conservation area. Such proposals need not be within the conservation area and PPG 15 (Paragraph 4.14) further advises that in the Secretary of State's view, the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area should also be a material consideration when considering proposals which are outside the area, but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area.

Planning Policy Guidance

PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment – March 2010

A.2 Regional Planning Guidance

Regional Spatial Strategy North West

See documents at North West Regional Assembly website www.nwra.gov.uk

A.3 Local Planning Guidance

Eden LEF Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2010r)

Relevant policies are:

- CS17 Principles for the Built (Historic) Environment

The principles for the built (historic) environment are to:

1. Conserve and enhance buildings, landscapes and areas of cultural, historic or archaeological interest including conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, areas of archaeological interest and listed buildings and their settings.
2. Promote the enhancement of the built (historic) environment through the use of high standards of design and careful choice of sustainable materials for all development (see Policy **CS18**).
3. Encourage the sympathetic and appropriate re-use of existing buildings, especially those which make a contribution to the special character of their locality.
4. Promote design that ensures a safe and secure environment.
5. Promote improvements in accessibility in the built (historic) environment for all people regardless of disability, age, gender or ethnicity.
6. Promote the development of public art, particularly as part of significant new developments.

- **CS18 Design of New Development**

The District Council will support high quality design which results in usable, durable and adaptable places which reflect local distinctiveness.

New development will be required to demonstrate that it;

1. Shows a clear understanding of the form and character of the District's built and natural environment, complementing and enhancing the existing area.
2. Protects and where possible enhances the District's distinctive rural landscape, natural environment and biodiversity.
3. Reflects the existing street scene through use of appropriate scale, mass, form, layout, high quality architectural design and use of materials.
4. Optimises the potential use of the site.
5. Protects the amenity of existing residents and provides an acceptable amenity for future occupiers.
6. Maximises opportunities for the use of sustainable construction techniques, sustainable drainage systems, renewable energy generation on site, incorporates water efficiency and conservation methods and maximises opportunities for the re-use and recycling of waste.

7. Uses locally sourced materials wherever practically possible.
8. Achieves energy reduction and efficiency through siting and design.
9. Provides safe access to the site by a choice of means of transport and meets the access needs of all users, particularly pedestrians, cyclists, disabled people and the elderly.
10. Protects air quality and does not result in environmentally unacceptable levels of traffic.
11. Does not contribute to unacceptable levels of noise and light pollution.
12. Protects features and characteristics of local importance.
13. Incorporates appropriate crime prevention measures.

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents

- An Inclusive and Accessible Environment (2007)
- Shopfront and Advertisement Design (2006)

Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Eden Design Summary (1999)

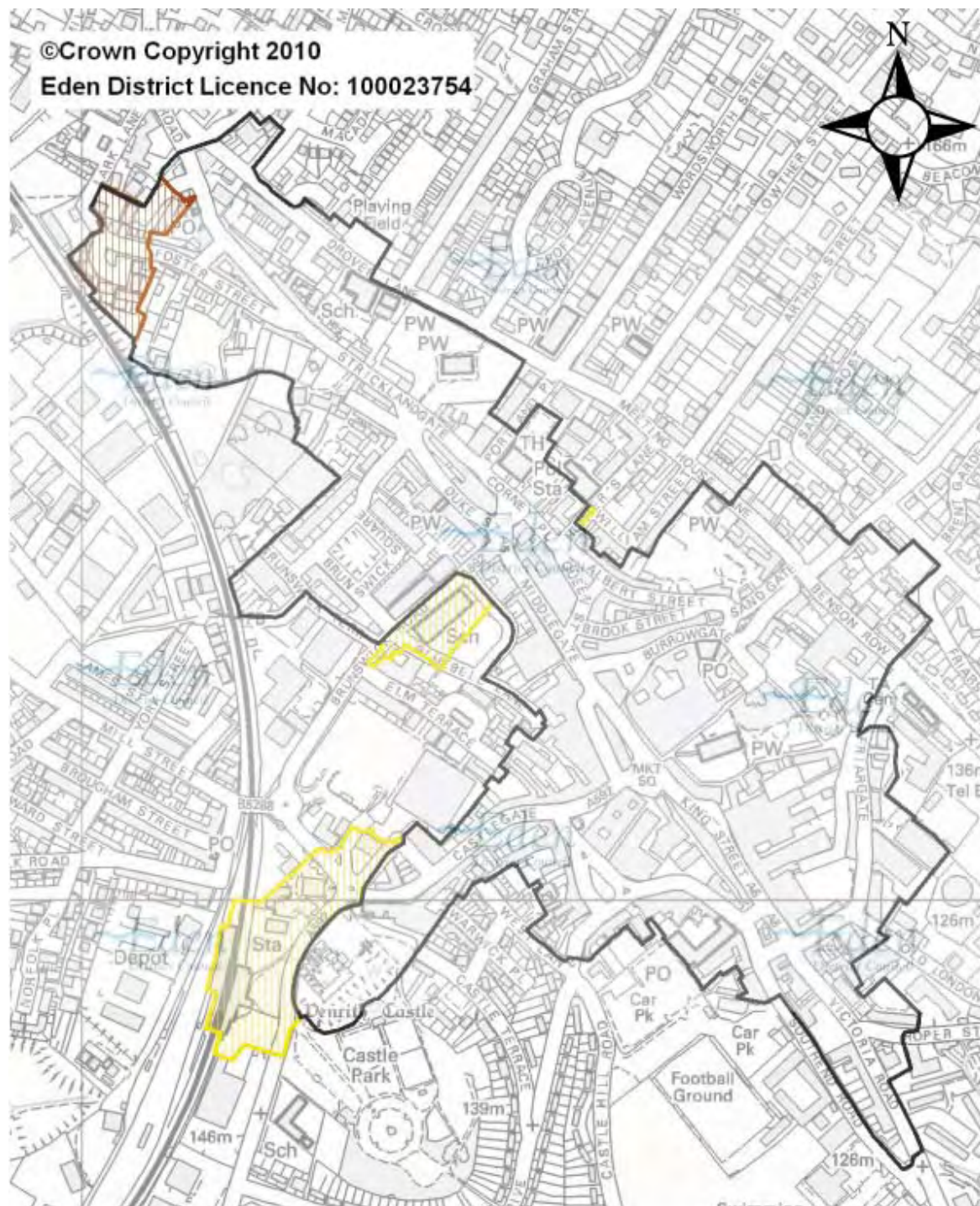
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Craig Hamilton Architects Ltd	2005	An Assessment of the character of the commercial centre of Penrith's Conservation Area
Department of Communities and Local Government	2010	Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment
Department of the Environment	1990	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act)
	1995	Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (as amended)
Eden DC	1996	Eden Local Plan
	2006	Shopfront and Advertisement Design SPD
	2007	An Accessible and Inclusive Environment SPD
	2010	LDF Core Strategy DPD
English Heritage	2006	Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals
English Heritage	2006	Guidance on the management of conservation areas
Pevsner N	1967	Cumberland and Westmorland
RCHM	1936	Cumberland
Towler J	1997	Yards of History

Useful Websites

www.communities.gov.uk
www.eden.gov.uk/historic-environment
www.english-heritage.org.uk
www.helm.org.uk
www.naturalengland.org.uk
www.nwra.gov.uk
www.opsi.gov.uk

Plan 1 – Proposed alterations to conservation area boundaries



Key



Deletion

Addition

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