

PRESS RELEASE

Penrith Neighbourhood Development Plan: Local Green Space designation and Beacon Hill

Identifying and protecting green spaces is a central part of The Penrith Neighbourhood Development Plan (PNDP). As part of this exercise, the hill on which Penrith Beacon stands was identified as one of the important green spaces, very early in the process, that contribute to the quality and distinctiveness of the local environment. Embryonic plans to develop part of the Hill had been suggested as part of the Eden District Council's (EDC) Penrith Masterplan, however these plans have since been withdrawn by the landowner. (*The Herald* 20th October 2018).

Legal criteria central to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) specifies that each dedicated green space must be close to the community, demonstrably special to the community and also local in character, for example, an area of native woodland that is a) a habitat for wildlife, b) is enjoyed by residents for walking their dogs, or c) is enjoyed as a play area by children. The green spaces listed for protection in Penrith were highlighted in the draft PNDP before it was launched for informal public consultation in June 2018.

Many constructive comments were received. It is clear that residents and visitors have a great deal of affection for Beacon Hill. Penrith Town Council wishes to represent these opinions as best it can.

Advice from the Town Council's Planning Consultant indicates that, if the PNDP does conflict with the NPPF and/or the Eden Local Plan (2014 to 2032), EDC could withdraw their support. Such a withdrawal would be to the detriment of the town and its residents. Likewise, the Planning Inspector, who will be asked by EDC to examine the PNDP after it has been to two more public consultations, will reject any plan that is not in compliance with the NPPF.

On the advice of the Planning Consultant, the PNDP Steering Group has decided to focus on protecting a less extensive area of Beacon Hill, specifically the iconic backdrop, visible from the town and its approaches.

Penrith Town Council is aware that residents and visitors hold a great deal of affection for Beacon Hill and wishes to represent these opinions as best it can. The Hill is just one element of the Neighbourhood Development Plan that, if approved by residents, will help determine planning applications for years to come.

ENDS