2. PENRITH: A HISTORIC TOWN
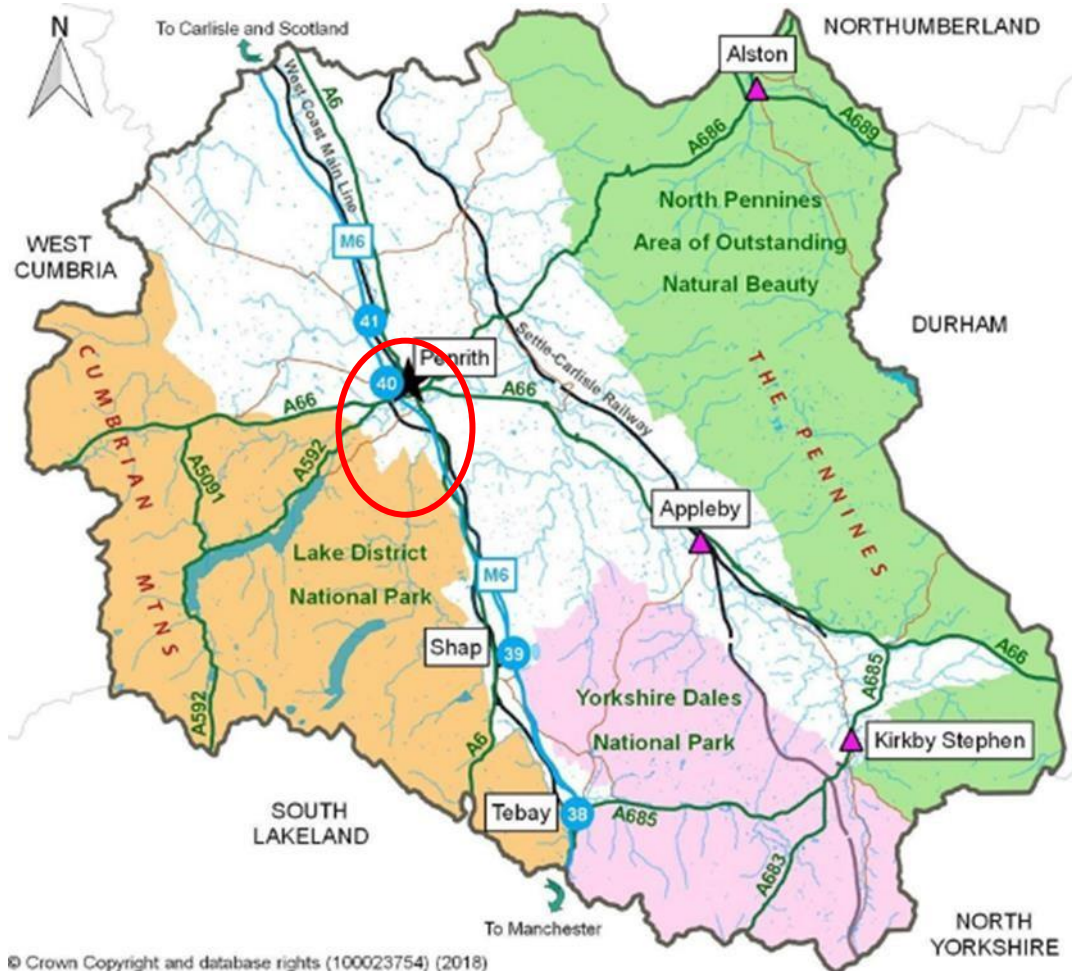
2.1 Penrith lies in undulating countryside on the edge of the Eden Valley between the rivers Eamont and Petteril and, today, with its population of about 15,700 (2011 Census 15,200), is the largest of the four towns (the three other towns are Alston, Appleby-in-Westmorland and Kirkby Stephen) in the Eden District.

2.2 The historic legacy of the market town of Penrith has developed around its strategic position at the junction of four routes entering from the north, south, east and west.
Today, Penrith is strategically located adjacent to the M6 Motorway at its junction with the A66, the main east-west trunk road in the north of England. The motorway is the main north-south route linking the south and Midlands with the north of England and Scotland. In addition, Penrith is served by the West Coast Mainline Railway serving London and Scotland. (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Strategic Context (Source: Eden Local Plan 2014-2032)

2.3　　Over the centuries the settlement was the focus for invasion and, too often, destruction. First the Romans (110 AD), followed by the Saxons (616 AD), the Scots (945 AD) and in 1092 the Normans who, in the 1100s, granted Penrith back to Scotland.
The town remained a Scottish possession until 1295 when Penrith was seized by Edward I and restored to the jurisdiction of the English Crown. Evidence of the town's Scottish heritage is carried on the original 12th Century brass town seal which bears a saltire-like symbol.

2.4　　The origin of markets in Middlegate and Dockray can be traced back to Medieval times (500 AD to the 15th Century). In 1223 Henry III granted Penrith its Market Charter, giving it the right to hold a market, the source of the town's prosperity over subsequent centuries.

2.5　　The town is defined by its historic street layout which has survived despite constant redevelopment during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The town is further defined by its Westmorland slate roofed, red sandstone buildings.

2.6　　The town boasts a number of notable buildings including the remains of a 14th Century castle once home to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the future King Richard III; the 14th Century Pele Tower of the former Hutton Hall; the 15th Century former merchant's house now known as The Two Lions; Dockray Hall (c1470) which also has links to Richard III; the Grade I Listed Beacon Tower constructed in 1719 on the site of earlier Beacons; and St Andrew's Church (1720).

2.7　　More detail on the history and development of the town is provided in