

Balerno Local Place Plan

Working Group

Theme: Pentlands

Balerno Local Place Plan - All (Responses) 16042026.xlsx

Spreadsheet

Can you summarise the attached spreadsheet with the key elements relating to the Pentlands and suggest proposals suitable for a Local Place Plan

I reviewed the spreadsheet and pulled out the responses most directly related to the **Pentland Hills** and the **Harlaw Reservoir / Threipmuir Reservoir** area.

Key Pentlands themes from the consultation

1. Strong support for safer active access from Balerno

On the question about safer off-road walking/cycling access to Harlaw and Threipmuir:

- **167 of 195 respondents** said *“Yes, a great idea and I would most likely use it.”*
- Only a very small minority opposed it.

Main implication: there is clear support for better non-car access from Balerno into the Pentlands.

2. Path improvements are the dominant priority

When asked what would improve enjoyment of the Pentlands, the most frequent responses were:

- **Better paths linking Balerno to the hills** – about **140 mentions**
- **Better paths within the hills** – about **66 mentions**
- **Waymarked routes** – about **84 mentions**

Main implication: access quality matters more than major new development.

3. Basic visitor facilities are wanted — but not heavy urbanisation

Most common requested facilities:

- **Toilets** – about **133 mentions**
- **Café** – about **102 mentions**
- **Visitor centre** – about **65 mentions**
- **Car parking improvements** – about **57 mentions**
- **Rangers / visible management presence** – about **53 mentions**

At the same time, many open-text comments stressed:

- retain the hills' **peaceful character**
- avoid overdevelopment
- keep the area feeling **natural, open and rural**

Main implication: respondents generally support **light-touch visitor infrastructure**, not destination-style commercialisation.

4. Landscape protection is a very strong value

Open responses repeatedly referred to protecting:

- open views and hill character
- natural habitats
- woodland and tree cover
- wildlife
- avoiding damage from litter, fires and overuse

Common phrases were essentially variations of “**leave it as it is**” or “**protect what makes it special.**”

5. Car parking charges are unpopular

For Harlaw and Threipmuir car parks:

- **91 respondents** said **no charge**
- **54 respondents** preferred a **local resident annual permit**
- Smaller numbers accepted day charges

Main implication: if charging is ever introduced, a local resident concession would likely be much more acceptable than standard day charging.

6. Camping is accepted only with tighter management

Common responses included:

- designated camping areas
- no open fires / no barbecues
- more monitoring / ranger presence
- concerns over litter and damage

Main implication: there is little appetite for unrestricted camping.

Local Place Plan proposals suitable for Balerno

These are realistic proposals that fit both the consultation evidence and the sort of actions a Local Place Plan can credibly support.

1. Balerno–Pentlands Active Access Corridor

Create a formal proposal for a **safe off-road walking and cycling route** linking Balerno with **Harlaw Reservoir** and **Threipmuir Reservoir**.

Could include:

- upgraded surfaced paths where appropriate
- safer crossings where roads interrupt routes
- accessible gradients where feasible
- links from residential areas and schools

Why it fits the LPP: strongest single area of clear public support.

2. Pentlands Access Improvement Programme

Support a programme of **incremental path upgrades** rather than major new infrastructure.

Could include:

- drainage and erosion repairs
- path widening only where needed
- improved accessibility for older people and families
- maintenance-first approach

This aligns strongly with the “improve access but retain character” message.

3. Wayfinding and Interpretation Network

Install a coordinated network of:

- route markers from Balerno to the hills
- walking-time signage
- low-key interpretation on ecology, heritage and responsible access

This is relatively low-cost and fits Local Place Plan delivery well.

4. Low-impact visitor facilities at gateway locations

Rather than facilities deep in the hills, focus facilities at **gateway points** such as **Harlaw Reservoir**.

Possible measures:

- public toilets
- drinking water
- bike parking
- seating
- modest seasonal refreshment provision

This avoids spreading built development into sensitive hill areas.

5. Landscape and habitat protection policy statement

Include a clear Local Place Plan principle that the **Pentland Hills** should remain:

- visually open

- ecologically rich
- rural in character
- protected from incremental urbanisation

That gives a useful planning basis when commenting on future proposals.

6. Camping management framework

Support a local management approach for the Pentlands based on:

- designated camping areas only (if any)
 - no fires / no disposable barbecues
 - seasonal ranger enforcement
 - clearer visitor information
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7. Parking management with local resident protection

If future parking controls are considered, the consultation suggests support for:

- resident permit / local annual pass
 - parking management aimed at congestion reduction rather than revenue generation
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Best Local Place Plan wording (my recommendation)

If you want one concise Pentlands priority for the Balerno Local Place Plan, I'd recommend this:

Prioritise safe, attractive, low-impact active access between Balerno and the Pentland Hills, while protecting the hills' natural character, landscape quality and biodiversity.

If useful, I can also turn this into a **draft Local Place Plan policy section** (worded in planning language), or extract **the strongest Pentlands-specific evidence quotes** from the spreadsheet for use in the final Balerno submission.

Turn this into a draft Local Place Plan policy section

Draft Local Place Plan Policy Section: Pentlands Access, Landscape and Recreation

Pentlands and Reservoir Gateway

The **Pentland Hills** form one of Balerno's defining landscape assets and are highly valued by residents for walking, cycling, informal recreation, wildlife, scenery and wellbeing. The **Harlaw Reservoir** and **Threipmuir Reservoir** area functions as an important gateway between Balerno and the wider Pentlands.

Consultation responses show strong support for improving access to the Pentlands, particularly through safer off-road walking and cycling links, better path quality, clearer wayfinding and modest visitor facilities. At the same time, respondents consistently emphasised that the Pentlands' open landscape, rural character, biodiversity and tranquillity should be protected from overdevelopment.

Policy Objective

To strengthen Balerno's connection with the **Pentland Hills** by improving access and enjoyment in ways that protect landscape quality, biodiversity and the area's distinctive rural character.

Local Place Plan Policy

Development, investment and land management proposals affecting Balerno's relationship with the **Pentland Hills** should support the following principles:

1. Active access connections

Priority should be given to creating and improving safe, attractive and accessible walking, wheeling and cycling routes between Balerno and the **Harlaw Reservoir / Threipmuir Reservoir** gateway.

This should include:

- safer off-road links wherever feasible;
- improved crossings where roads interrupt routes;
- better connections from residential areas, schools and village facilities;
- path design that is inclusive for a wide range of users, including families, older people and less confident walkers or cyclists.

2. Path quality and wayfinding

A continuing programme of path maintenance and incremental improvement should be supported throughout the Balerno–Pentlands approach.

Measures should include:

- drainage, surfacing and erosion repair;
- better route definition where paths are unclear;
- low-key signage, route marking and walking-time information;
- interpretation that promotes understanding of landscape, heritage, ecology and responsible access.

3. Low-impact visitor facilities

Any additional visitor infrastructure should be concentrated at established gateway locations, particularly around **Harlaw Reservoir**, rather than dispersed into sensitive hill landscapes.

Appropriate provision may include:

- toilets;
- seating;
- cycle parking;
- drinking water;
- modest seasonal refreshment facilities where compatible with landscape character.

4. Landscape, biodiversity and rural character

Proposals should protect and enhance the special qualities of the **Pentland Hills**, including:

- open views and skyline character;
- habitats, woodland and biodiversity;
- the sense of tranquillity and escape from the urban area;
- the overall rural and natural setting.

Development that would urbanise, visually intrude upon or cumulatively erode these qualities should be resisted.

5. Recreation management

Recreational use of the Pentlands should be managed to minimise damage to landscape and habitats.

Support should be given to:

- responsible access information;
- ranger presence or local management measures where appropriate;
- camping controls based on designated areas, clear rules and fire prevention;
- measures to reduce litter, path erosion and visitor pressure at sensitive locations.

6. Parking management

Any future parking management measures at **Harlaw Reservoir** and **Threipmuir Reservoir** should prioritise managing congestion and protecting local access rather than maximising revenue.

Consideration should be given to resident-friendly arrangements such as local permit or annual pass systems.

Delivery Priority

A key priority for the Local Place Plan is:

To deliver a safe, well-connected and low-impact active access corridor between Balerno and the Pentlands, while safeguarding the landscape, biodiversity and rural character that make the area distinctive.

If you want, I can also turn this into a **more formal planning-policy version aligned to City of Edinburgh Local Development Plan language**, or a **shorter community-facing version suitable for direct insertion into the Balerno Local Place Plan document**.

Turn this into a shorter community-facing version suitable for direct insertion into the Balerno Local Place Plan document

Pentlands Access and Landscape

The **Pentland Hills** are one of Balerno's most valued local assets. Residents use the hills and the **Harlaw Reservoir / Threipmuir Reservoir** area for walking, cycling,

informal recreation and access to nature. Consultation responses showed strong support for improving access, while also protecting the landscape, wildlife and rural character that make the Pentlands special.

The Local Place Plan supports:

- safer and more attractive walking, wheeling and cycling routes between Balerno and the **Pentland Hills**, particularly towards **Harlaw Reservoir** and **Threipmuir Reservoir**;
- ongoing improvement and maintenance of paths, including drainage, erosion repair and clearer wayfinding;
- low-impact visitor facilities at established gateway locations, such as toilets, seating and cycle parking;
- protection of open views, biodiversity, tranquillity and the overall rural character of the **Pentland Hills**;
- better management of visitor pressure, litter, fires and camping in sensitive areas.

Priority action:

Create a safe, well-connected active travel link between Balerno and the **Pentland Hills** that improves access for residents while protecting the landscape and natural environment.

Balerno Local Place Plan – Pentlands

Draft Proposals

Pent 1	Create a formal proposal for a safe off-road walking and cycling route linking Balerno with Harlaw Reservoir and Threipmuir Reservoir .
Pent 2	Support a programme of incremental path upgrades rather than major new infrastructure
Pent 3	Install a coordinated network of: route markers from Balerno to the hills; walking-time signage; low-key interpretation on ecology, heritage and responsible access
Pent 4	Low-impact visitor facilities at gateway locations, facilities such as toilets; bike parking; seating; modest seasonal refreshment provision
Pent 5	Development that would urbanise, visually intrude upon or cumulatively erode the Landscape, biodiversity and rural character qualities should be resisted.
Pent 6	Recreational use of the Pentlands should be managed to minimise damage to landscape and habitats.
Pent 7	Parking management measures at Harlaw Reservoir and Threipmuir Reservoir should prioritise managing congestion and protecting local access rather than maximising revenue.
Pent 8 – Manage camping	Support a local management approach for the Pentlands based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designated camping areas only (if any) • no fires / no disposable barbecues • seasonal ranger enforcement • clearer visitor information
Pent 10 – Ban camping	Camping to be restricted in the Pentland Regional Park

