

Copeland Local Development Framework

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Summary and Recommendation:

Council is asked to approve two documents as part of the Copeland Local Development Framework (LDF):

Preferred Options Report on the Core Strategy and Development

Management Policies: This report sets out the policy direction for dealing with development over the period to 2027. Council approval is sought for the document to go out to public consultation for 8 weeks from 6th May.

Local Development Scheme: A revised work programme and timetable proposed for work on the LDF. An up to date Local Development Scheme is a legal requirement of the Council.

The production of both documents has been steered by the LDF Members' Working Party and the recommendations here are from the Working Party.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 One of the Council's major statutory responsibilities is to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF). This is a suite of documents which set out our planning policies to deal with new development over the next 15 years or so. They cover only the part of the Borough over which the Council has planning jurisdiction – i.e. outside the Lake District National Park. When formally adopted these documents will replace the existing Copeland Local Plan (2016)
- 1.2 Two of the most important documents in the LDF are the Core Strategy and the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD). To save time and costs in production work has progressed in tandem on these along with a good deal of background studies to create an "evidence base" which will support them through the legal process of examination. Last year we undertook an extensive consultation with the Copeland public and other stakeholders looking at the range of issues and options which our planning policies should cover. The LDF Members

Working Party has reviewed the responses to that consultation and agreed a draft Preferred Options report to come forward for Council approval. If approved this document will go out to a further round of consultation during May and June and the results of this round will be the basis for producing the first formal drafts of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD later this year.

- 1.3 Council's approval is also sought for revisions to the Copeland Local Development Scheme (LDS). This is another statutory document which sets out all the material which will make up the LDF, how it is to be prepared and the timetable for production.
- 1.4 The Council's mid-term financial strategy sets out the additional resources set aside for the LDF programme and the budget is set in accordance with the LDS.

2. PREFERRED OPTIONS REPORT

- 2.1 Part 1 of the Preferred Options is the Core Strategy section which consists of a vision, objectives and a set of high level policies and proposals. Within the introductory chapter there is a discussion of the context for the work – particularly Britain's Energy Coast Master Plan, the West Cumbria Community Strategy and the Council's own Corporate Plan – and of the growth scenarios which have been developed. Chapter 3 sets out some key, cross-cutting policies followed by four thematic chapters dealing with: Economic Opportunity and Regeneration; Sustainable Settlements; Accessibility, Transport and Communications; and Environmental Protection and Enhancement. Chapter 8 outlines the potential implications of the preferred policy options for the Borough's Localities and what they might mean on the ground. Nuclear and other energy-related issues feature significantly and Members' attention is drawn especially to Policies ST2-4 and ER1-3. It should be stressed that this is not a draft Core Strategy in itself but rather a "direction of travel" for the Council take and the justification for this approach.
- 2.2 Part 2 of the Preferred Options Report is made up of suggested Development Management Policies. These are the more detailed requirements the Council would expect developers to comply with in terms of design and general provisions when making planning applications. Many are extensions of policies in the current Local Plan which have stood the test of time but there are also new and revised policy treatments. All relate back to the strategic policies in Part 1 of the report and are arranged in the same thematic order.

- 2.3 Part 3 is a Monitoring Framework where each policy in the previous two parts is tracked against a timeline for implementation showing principal parties responsible and likely resource implications. Appropriate indicators and targets are also flagged up to help measure progress over the lifetime of the documents.
- 2.4 In addition there are three appendices: a note on the economic and housing scenarios used in the Core Strategy; a glossary of terms used; and a list of reference documents (with links in the electronic form). There is also a separate Sustainability Appraisal which identifies in general terms whether the policies in the two documents are likely to move the Borough towards or away from greater sustainability in the long term. The tests of sustainability are based on the Scoping Report the Council commissioned and consulted on last year with the objectives grouped under the following aims:
- Social progress that recognises the needs of everyone
 - Effective protection of the environment
 - Prudent use of natural resources
 - Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
- 2.5 Subject to Council approval it is the intention to conduct an 8 week consultation on the Preferred Options Report from the second week in May. This will involve a wide circulation of the full document and summary leaflets together with presentations, public meetings and events. Member involvement in this process will be welcomed. All Members will receive a paper copy of the Preferred Options Report and the Sustainability Appraisal when the consultation begins. In the meantime there is a paper copy of the material for reference in the Members' Room and an electronic version available on the Council's Internet web-site.

3. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

- 3.1 There is a need to revisit the overall work programme and timetable for production of LDF documents. There was already slippage in the programme from having to procure new consultancy support last year but changes are now required to coordinate the timetable and document-production with the duties the Council will have to perform in relation to the recent national energy policy statements and the 2008 Planning Act. The Act has brought into being the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) which will make decisions about major development projects like nuclear power stations and grid connections. The Council has a role to play in preparing impact assessments and other material for the IPC and the Copeland LDF must reflect this role and incorporate an understanding of appropriate infrastructure and community benefit requirements. All this

takes time to build in and it would be unwise to commit to a timetable which does not allow for the necessary work to be developed.

- 3.2 The actual programme of documents being produced remains the same as the last LDS (approved by the Council on ~~XX~~ December 2008). The main items are the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies document which are scheduled for submission to government in June 2011 and the Sites Allocations document now due for submission in December 2011. Two Supplementary Planning Plan Documents (SPDs) are included in the programme – one for Whitehaven town centre and harbourside development and the other on Planning Obligations. These types of plan are not subject to formal examination so they do not require the same length of production-time as three Development Plan Documents. We hope to have them ready for the Council's approval by the middle of 2011.