

Copeland Local Plan 2021-2038 Examination

Council Opening Statement

Tuesday 31st January 2023 -9.30am

We would like to welcome the Inspector, and all future participants and observers to Whitehaven for the Public Examination of the Copeland Local Plan 2021-2038.

There have been a number of challenges and changes during the production of the Plan, including:

- Covid-19 which changed the way we had to work, consult with communities, and the impacts it has had on the economy and society
- a consistent changing of focus and policy at national policy level
- New requirements for the Local Plan such as Biodiversity Net Gain (the Local Plan's policy is currently considered as an exemplar), nutrient neutrality, the pilot Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Copeland is a very diverse place, with beautiful landscapes (two thirds of the borough lies within the Lake District National Park), stunning coastlines, strong heritage including industrial heritage and a settlement pattern that has been informed by that.

The Local Plan area is also defined strongly by the Lake District National Park, with most of the borough's settlements and industry to the north of the National Park, while there is also a strong community centred around Millom to the south of the Park.

There are a number of distinctive features about the borough, including:

- The borough has high average incomes, primarily linked to employment at Sellafield, but also a high proportion of lower income households and areas of deprivation
- House prices in the borough are relatively low, which together with the high average income makes Copeland one of the most affordable places to live in England
- Copeland is a largely rural borough outside of the 4 main towns, but contains Sellafield nuclear site, which is one of the most complex nuclear sites in the world with approximately 12,000 people working on the site
- Sellafield and employment around the nuclear sector is the major employment sector in Copeland which can provide some protection from wider macroeconomic issues, but this can also mean the local economy is heavily impacted by and reliant on government decisions
- The high quality environment within the borough, including the Lake District National Park, two World Heritage Sites (*The English Lake District* and *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*), coastline, Heritage Coast, which together with local

environmental assets all provide opportunities for social, health and economic benefits through their protection, management and enhancement

Copeland is Open for Business, and this Local Plan will be a key tool in enabling the growth and opportunities for the borough, as it will seek to support the Copeland Growth Strategy '*Copeland Vision 2040*' and the *Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus 2020* which will build on our strengths while helping to diversify the economy.

The borough is already attracting funding into the borough with £20m+ Towns Fund in both Millom and Cleator Moor, which is being matched locally to deliver key projects in both of those towns. Egremont is a focus for funding from the Borderlands Fund.

Cleator Moor has also been successful in attracting an additional £20m of Levelling Up funding for Phase 2 of the redevelopment of Leconfield Industrial Estate to deliver the Industrial Solutions Hub (ISH).

The Local Plan aims to maximise the opportunities for future economic growth and major developments over the next 15 years and deliver these, and other local strategies.

It aims to provide high quality places, with housing and services that meet communities' needs and aspirations, where people working in high quality jobs will live and enjoy the great environment Copeland has to offer.

The Local Plan has been positively prepared, with robust and proportionate evidence and public consultation. The Plan is designed to be deliverable and give a clear focus for development while retaining sufficient flexibility to support and enable additional growth and opportunities, and also protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

We hope for positive discussions over the coming weeks that will enable the Council to adopt the Copeland Local Plan later this year.

Chris Hoban
Strategic Planning Manager
Copeland Borough Council