

## **Matter 13 Connectivity**

***Issue – Whether the approach towards connectivity is justified, effective and consistent with national policy?***

***Relevant Policies: SP CO1PU; SP CO2PU; SP CO3PU; SP CO4PU; CO5PU; CO6PU; CO7PU***

*Communications (Policy SP CO1PU)*

### **13.1 Is policy justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

13.1.1 The purpose of the policy is to provide a positive framework that, enables and attracts investment to deliver improved digital connectivity in Copeland. This will help support the economic growth projects in high tech sectors, business and leisure opportunities and make Copeland a more attractive place to relocate to. It will also help to offset the relative physical remoteness of the borough and support wider strategies and plans such as the Cumbria Digital Infrastructure Strategy 2020-2025<sup>1</sup>, Project Gigabit - Cumbria<sup>2</sup>.

13.1.2 The policy is effective as it outlines the matters that will be taken into consideration when considering digital infrastructure proposals.

13.1.3 The policy accords with Paragraph 114 of the NPPF which states: “...*Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments (as these connections will, in almost all cases, provide the optimum solution).*”

*Transport (Policy SP CO2PU; SP CO3PU; SP CO4PU; SP CO5U)*

### **13.2 Do Policies CO2PU and SP CO3PU provide an effective strategic framework for the improvement of transport networks/links within and to and from the borough? Are the transport priorities listed in Policy CO2PU shown on the draft proposals map for safeguarding? Are the policies justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

13.2.1 The policies identify and promote the key routes through and to the borough for investment and improvements (Policy CO2 criteria a-d and f, Policy CO3 criterion a) to support the borough’s communities and also help deliver economic growth and the growth scenario projects identified in the EDNA (EB15). They also identify priorities to support increased use of public transport (Policy CO2 criterion f, Policy CO3 criterion b), and active travel (Policy CO2 criteria e and g).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/536/6487/44147115119.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-broadband-rollout-for-cumbria-begins-as-part-of-100-million-plan-to-connect-thousands-of-rural-premises>

- 13.2.2 A number of the same priorities such as the Whitehaven Relief Road are included in the Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan 2022-2037<sup>3</sup> (pages 36 and 78) which has been produced by Cumbria County Council and Cumbria LEP.
- 13.2.3 Having these projects identified in the Local Plan, as well as other documents such as the Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan 2022-2037 helps provide a strong basis when developing business cases for funding. The Council's work to develop options for the Whitehaven Relief Road, where the Strategic Planning team supported National Highways draft a Stage 1 (Options Identification) for the project highlights its importance even further, as informal feedback when the scheme was not taken forward in Road Investment Strategy 2<sup>4</sup> (RIS 2) was that its status was not clear in the Local Plan.
- 13.2.4 RIS 2 does highlight the Whitehaven Relief Road as part of the pipeline for RIS 3 (covering 2025-2030) on page 113, so its position in this policy is very important. It is also important to recognise the A595 as a whole through the borough as the Council has continued to support National Highways as they produced a study that considered options for the junctions on the A595 between Whitehaven and Egremont to enable some smaller improvements to take place in advance of the Whitehaven Relief Road and meet some of the Council's priorities in Policy CO2PU.
- 13.2.5 The transport priorities are not safeguarded on the draft proposals map, as the majority of them relate to improvements to existing networks, and most of these improvements are expected to be possible within the 'envelope' existing highways and verges. If, as projects develop, safeguarding is required the Local Plan will seek to provide those protections in the future.
- 13.2.6 The main project that is likely to require safeguarding in the future is the Whitehaven Eastern Relief Road once a preferred route is identified. As the scheme is not in RIS 2, any such preferred route is likely to take 5 years or so to be identified if the project is included in the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS3), and a route can be safeguarded as part of a Local Plan review. This timeframe may be accelerated if large scale developments take place at the Moorside site or the Clean Energy Park which would need the Whitehaven Eastern Relief Road.
- 13.2.7 The above paragraphs demonstrate that the policies are justified and effective, and they accord with Paragraph 104 of the NPPF: *"Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:*
- (a) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;*
  - (b) opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/544/38296/44603132558.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/951100/road-investment-strategy-2-2020-2025.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951100/road-investment-strategy-2-2020-2025.pdf)

*(c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued”*

**13.3 Does Policy SP CO4PU provide an effective basis to encourage sustainable transport? Is it consistent with national policy?**

13.3.1 The policy requires safe direct connections to routes that promote active travel in developments, and Travel Plans supported Transport Assessments for developments likely to generate a large number of trips.

13.3.2 It also identifies a range of types of development proposals the Council would wish to see and the Local Plan support to increase walking, cycling and the use of sustainable transport. It also seeks to protect disused railway lines, which could provide such opportunities in the future.

13.3.3 These two elements are designed to give certainty and confidence to investors and developers.

13.3.4 This aligns with Paragraph 104 c of the NPPF which states: *“Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that: c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;...”*

**13.4 Does Policy CO5PU provide an effective basis to promote sustainable and inclusive modes of transport? Is it consistent with national policy?**

13.4.1 By explicitly providing the hierarchy of users for new developments, with pedestrians highest priority, the policy will provide an effective basis to promote sustainable development as it makes this clear to developers at the start of the design process. This then supports Policy DS6, criteria d, e and f.

13.4.2 This aligns with Paragraph 104 c of the NPPF which states: *“Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that: c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;...”*

*Countryside Access (SP CO6PU)*

**13.5 Is Policy SP CO6PU justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

13.5.1 The purpose of this policy is to increase opportunities for access to and enjoyment of the countryside in Copeland, and it identifies a number of measures that can help to achieve this.

- 13.5.2 identifying these options provides a policy 'hook' in the plan that can be very effective when projects and funding bids are being developed. This could be those identified in paragraph 17.10.4 of the Plan (CD1) and the Cumbria Coastal Community Forest<sup>5</sup>.
- 13.5.3 It supports paragraph 98 of the NPPF which states "*Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change....*"

*Parking Standards (Policy CO7PU)*

**13.6 What's the basis for the parking standards referred to in Policy CO7PU? Should they form part of the Local Plan?**

- 13.6.1 As outlined in paragraph 17.11.3 of the Local Plan Publication Draft (CD1) the parking standards are based upon the Appendix 1 of the Cumbria Design Guide 2017. Council Officers did consider including this within the Plan as an appendix, but decided to keep it as a reference to enable the policy to remain up to date if the Cumbria Design Guide is refreshed.

**13.7 Bearing in mind part S of The Building Regulations 2010 which took effect 15 June 2022, is the third paragraph of Policy CO7PU relating to Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure necessary?**

- 13.7.1 The third paragraph of the policy was drafted while there was still uncertainty around what the actual requirements for electric vehicle charging infrastructure would be nationally, and we kept our standards in the Publication Draft to show Copeland's aspirations whilst also seeking to be deliverable.
- 13.7.2 The policy was drafted in two distinct parts in case changes were needed or that part of the policy should be removed. Upon reflection, the third paragraph is probably no longer necessary given the introduction of Part S.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/planning-environment/CCCF.asp>