

Independent Examination of Copeland Local Plan 2021-2038

Matter 16 – Employment Site Allocations

Cleator Moor Innovation Quarter at Leconfield (Policy SP E4PU) Responses to Questions 16.10 – 16.18

Prepared for Copeland Borough Council

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Question 16.10

What is the background to the site allocation? How was it identified and which options were considered?

- 1.1 The Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus¹ sets out the strategy for the creation of an “Enterprise Campus and Innovation Hub”. The Cleator Moor Innovation Quarter (CMIQ) Local Plan allocation provides this facility and is being progressed by the Industrial Solutions Hub (iSH). iSH is an intervention and entity led by Copeland Borough Council (CBC) with the support of key stakeholders including the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), Sellafield, Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (CLEP) and private sector supply chain partners. The key objective is to create a diverse and sustainable economy for West Cumbria, one which is less dependent on Sellafield.
- 1.2 This strategy supports Sellafield to accelerate the movement of activities off-site, enabling supply chain organisations to work more closely with Sellafield teams, effectively commercialise capabilities gained at Sellafield, and grow their share of nuclear and non-nuclear markets.
- 1.3 In 2019, a Business Case was prepared for the development of the campus, including the identification and assessment of options for the campus site listed below (appraisal and scoring of options included in Appendix A).
 1. Acquire the under-utilised Leconfield Industrial Estate.
 2. Negotiate a partnership with Leconfield’s then current owner, to co-develop the site.
 3. Fill and extend the Westlakes site.
 4. Unused land at Lillyhall.
 5. Unused land at the Port of Workington.
 6. Extend Moresby Park (Whitehaven Commercial Park).
 7. Re-purpose the Bus Station/Watershed developments in Whitehaven.
 8. Re-purpose the Whitehaven Northshore project.
 9. Use existing facilities close to Beckermest.
 10. Use NDA owned land around Sellafield.
 11. Take a non-campus approach, using a combination of the available locations.
 12. Let the market decide, leave the securing of facilities up to re-locating organisations.
- 1.4 After assessing options, Leconfield Industrial Estate was identified as the only location able to meet the objectives and requirements for the new business cluster. Leconfield Industrial Estate is a large former industrial site within one of the borough’s Key Service Centres, with scope for expansion if demand grows as planned.

Word Count: 338

¹ The Cumbria Nuclear Prospectus (2020) produced on behalf of Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership
https://www.copeland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/cumbria_nuclear_prospectus.pdf

Question 16.11

What is the current planning status of the site in terms of planning applications, planning permissions and completions/construction? How much residual land is there for development? Does this site contribute towards the employment land requirement or is it additional to it?

- 2.1 The relocation of the existing BOC Yard has been granted permission, in addition to refurbishment of existing units onsite. Outline permission for the Hub building and overall masterplan are pending determination. A summary of the current planning applications is provided below.

CMIQ Masterplan Application

- Outline application (4/22/2308/001) validated 20 July 2022
- Comments received from public and statutory consultees currently being reviewed and addressed.
- Application scheduled to be determined in Q1 2023.

Existing Unit Refurbishments

- Permission granted 6 July 2022 for units 1A, 15A-H and 20A-B:
 - 4/22/2211/0F1
 - 4/22/2212/0F1
 - 4/22/2213/0F1

BOC Yard Relocation

- Permission granted 4 August for applications (full and advertisement):
 - 4/22/2161/0F1
 - 4/22/2170/0A1

CMIQ Hub Application

- Outline application (4/22/2184/001) validated 26 April 2022
- Application scheduled to be heard at January Planning Committee with recommendation for approval.

- 2.2 The Council in their response as the Local Planning Authority have outlined the status of the site with respect to the Local Plan evidence base. See Appendix B for site layout identifying the quantum of current developed area and residual land available for development.

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Question 16.12

What status do the Growth areas have? Are they allocated in this Plan? Have they been subject to Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment and any other assessments?

3.1 It is considered this is a matter for the Council as Local Planning Authority.

Word Count: 15

Question 16.13

What is the basis for the scale and mix of uses proposed? Is this justified? How would an application for ancillary, and in particular town centre uses be assessed? How would student accommodation relate to other uses on the site?

- 4.1 The primary uses proposed will be limited to Use Class B2, Use Class B8 and Use Class E(g) only. This does not represent a change to the uses currently occupying the existing Leconfield site. The demand for these uses is demonstrated in the various business case and funding documents prepared by the project partners.
- 4.2 Use Classes E(b), E(d), E(f), F1(a) and F1(e) are identified as appropriate ancillary facilities in Policy E4PU which would be supported within a single building or small cluster of buildings. Some of these uses are considered main town centre uses. As they are identified in the Policy as appropriate uses and the scale of these elements of the development would be restricted and of a small scale, it is not considered necessary to provide a sequential or retail impact assessment when considered against the NPPF.
- 4.3 The aspiration for Area 2 is for accommodation to serve the CMIQ project. Businesses are likely to have requirements for temporary accommodation for those visiting or working at the site. The inclusion of an accommodation component would increase the sustainability of the scheme by minimising the need to travel away from the site. At this stage flexibility is required on what form this accommodation will take, whether a "student accommodation" model or a more flexible "hotel accommodation" model.

Word Count: 220

Question 16.14

What are the potential adverse impacts of developing the site and how could these be mitigated for example in terms of transport/traffic, nature conservation, landscape and countryside, heritage assets, flood risk etc. Would policy safeguards and proposed mitigation be sufficiently effective?

- 5.1 It is considered that other policies of the emerging Local Plan should mitigate potential adverse impacts of development for this and other sites.
- 5.2 Planning applications have been submitted for various elements of the development. Each application is supported by technical reports and surveys which demonstrate that the development proposals will meet relevant policy requirements relating to the avoidance and mitigation of any adverse impacts. The CMIQ Masterplan planning application evidence relates to the whole CMIQ allocation, while other applications are supported by site-specific evidence.
- 5.3 The site-wide supporting evidence documents cover the impacts listed in question 16.14 and beyond. These can be found as part of the submitted application on the Copeland planning portal or can be provided upon request (CMIQ Masterplan Application (4/22/2308/001)). It is considered that the impacts associated with the scheme are reasonable to expect on a site of this scale – all impacts can and will be mitigated in line with the various assessments submitted with the planning applications listed under the response to Question 16.11.
- 5.4 We consider that the emerging policy safeguards and the mitigation proposed as part of the planning application are sufficiently effective.

Word Count: 192

Question 16.15

What are the infrastructure requirements/costs and are there physical or other constraints to development including those from nearby land uses/proposed developments? How could these be addressed?

- 6.1 The key infrastructure / enabling costs for each phase are set out in the table below (Phases defined in response to Question 16.18).

Cost item	Value
Phase 1	
Site clearance and remediation	£1.54m
Relocation of BOC yard	£2.6m
Total infrastructure / enabling costs (Phase 1)	£4.14m
Phase 2	
Site clearance and remediation	£3.04m
Upgrade of existing / internal roads	£0.90m
Ducting to enable full fibre digital	£1.0m
Town Spine (high quality pavement route)	£1.0m
Total infrastructure / enabling costs (Phase 2)	£5.94m
Phase 3	
Road Infrastructure	£3.04m
Offsite road and junction improvements	£1.47m
Sitewide landscaping	£5.47m
Sitewide ecological mitigation and SuDS infrastructure	£0.56m
Total infrastructure / enabling costs (Phase 3)	£10.57m

- 6.2 Phase 1 will be direct development led by the Council, so that it can tackle key barriers such as market failure, legacy mining challenges and enabling infrastructure needs. CBC has secured funding from the Government's Towns Fund and NDA Strategic Alliance which will fund the infrastructure required to enable delivery of Phase 1, development of the Hub building and sitewide landscaping. CBC has secured over £21m in funding to kickstart the Leconfield development. CBC has submitted a Levelling Up Fund bid for a further £20m to help deliver Phase 2.

Word Count: 202

Question 16.16

Is the development proposed viable and deliverable within the Plan period? What is the situation in relation to land ownership and developer interest?

- 7.1 There is a shared understanding between CBC, the NDA and Sellafield Ltd that additional public sector interventions are needed to support the future West Cumbria economy. These three stakeholders agreed in 2019 to work collaboratively to determine the options for intervention.
- 7.2 In 2019, Cleator Moor was invited to develop a proposal for up to £25m as part of the UK Government's Towns Fund initiative. The Town Deal bid successfully secured £7.7m for the first phase of the Leconfield redevelopment.
- 7.3 A further £10.3m had been secured from the NDA / Sellafield in addition to the £2.4m that was spent on acquiring the site using funding from the Cumbria LEP and CBC. In total, over £21m has been secured to kickstart the Leconfield redevelopment.
- 7.4 In addition, CBC has submitted a Levelling Up Fund ("LUF") bid for a further £20m to support the redevelopment of the remaining land within the Leconfield site boundary. An announcement is due in early 2023. This funding will ensure that the Leconfield site and eastern expansion land is fully developed.
- 7.5 CBC has undertaken market testing prior to the LUF bid submission and secured letters of interest from several institutional investors keen on providing finance and undertaking the developer role. Discussions are ongoing with several large 'blue chip' potential tenants willing to invest in new build facilities. Should negotiations come to fruition with all parties, areas 1 and 2 will be built out and occupied within a 5-year timeframe. Interest has also been expressed by an established investor/partner.
- 7.6 On the basis of the above the proposed development is considered to be viable and deliverable within the Plan period.
- 7.6 The landownership situation is summarised as follows:
- Area 1 – Owned by CBC.
 - Area 2 - partly owned by CBC (Heather Bank Site) and partly owned by the Diocese of Carlisle. The Diocese are willing to transfer the land in their ownership to CBC and negotiations are underway
 - Area 3 - This land is currently in third party ownership and CBC are engaging with the landowner with a view to acquiring the land to support the third phase of development of CMIQ.

Word Count: 357

Question 16.17

How is it intended to bring the site forward for development? What mechanisms will there be to ensure a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to development, ensuring that infrastructure requirements are provided?

- 8.1 The current £21m funding secured will enable the Council to deliver Phase 1 which constitutes development of the Hub and undertaking a programme of refurbishing several units within the existing industrial estate, in addition to the relocation of the existing BOC Yard to unlock this site for the development of the Hub. It is considered that facilitating these developments will act as the catalyst and stimulate market demand in the site.
- 8.2 It is considered that delivering the landmark Hub Building, infrastructure improvements, and first group of refurbished buildings will generate a critical mass which would see private sector investment deliver the development of the remaining plots and occupy vacant units.
- 8.3 CBC will lead the delivery of Phase 1 (i.e. initial infrastructure works, development of the Hub and refurbishment of units). It has brought in external project management support to mitigate risks of cost overrun and delay and is procuring contractors through open tendering processes.
- 8.4 CBC expects to procure an investment partner to support the development of phases 2 and 3. The timing of phase 2 and 3 partnering will be informed by ongoing assessment of project economics and private sector interest by CBC and its professional advisers.

Word Count: 200

Question 16.18

What is the expected timescale and rate of development and is this realistic?

9.1 The project programme and rate of development is considered to be realistic. The CMIQ Masterplan is proposed for delivery across three distinct phases:

- Phase 1 – Relocation of BOC Gases, new build Hub & refurbishment of specific existing units on the Leconfield Industrial Estate (1A, 1B 15 & 20).
- Phase 2 – New build construction to remaining Leconfield development plots including associated car parking and site wide landscaping and road infrastructure to the existing Leconfield Industrial Estate, together with development of the eastern expansion land for research and development facilities.
- Phase 3 – New build construction including associated car parking, landscaping and road infrastructure to the northern expansion land of Leconfield Industrial Estate.

Phase 1

9.2 Phase 1 works are underway. Individual projects have been procured and CBC's preferred construction partners identified. CBC / iSH funding is also secured based upon a Q1 2022 Town Fund Initiative business case with a spend deadline of 31 March 2026.

9.3 Current programme suggests BOC Gases will be relocated and the hub completed during Q1 2025. Refurbishment of existing units are anticipated for completion Q1 2024.

Phase 2

9.4 Phase 2 new build on the remaining Leconfield development plots and the eastern expansion land is subject to confirmation and receipt of Government Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 2 funding, decision due Q1 2023. All Phase 2 projects are programmed for completion by Q1 2026.

Phase 3

9.5 Phase 3 new build, car parking, landscaping and road infrastructure to the northern expansion land will only come forwards once Phases 1 & 2 are complete with occupying tenants and further demand from potential Phase 3 tenants and private sector funding secured. This is programmed Q4 2026 through to Q4 2029 but will be refined as Phases 1 & 2 near completion.

Word Count: 294

Appendix 1

Business Case – Critical Success Factors Options
Appraisal

Option Numbers as Listed in Response to Question 16.10 (Leconfield is option 1)

Option	Campus benefits	Attractive location	Pace	Price	Access	Value uplift	Environment uplift	Social synergies	Ranking
1	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	1
2	●●●	●●	●●	●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	3
3	●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●	●	●	2
4	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●	●	●●	●	4=
5	●●●	●	●●	●●	●●●	●	●●	●●	4=
6	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●	●	●	10=
7	●	●●	●●	●●●	●●	●	●●	●●	6=
8	●●	●●	●	●●	●●	●●	●	●●	8=
9	●	●●	●●●	●●	●	●●●	●	●	6=
10	●●●	●●	●	●●	●	●	●	●	10=
11	●	●	●●	●	●●	●●	●●	●●	10=
12	●	●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	8=

Critical Success Factors Assessment Description and Weighting

CSF	Description	Weighting
Campus benefits	This is a measure of the option's ability to meet the requirements of a campus, in terms of size and layout.	High
Attractive location	The attractiveness of the location for supply chain tenants, looking to re-locate their own employees and impress visitors.	High
Pace	It is important that the campus is created and marketed early in the process of Sellafield Ltd increasing its use of the supply chain, to prevent the region missing out on creating an attractive set of cluster benefits. Fragmented ownership, conflicting interests, large numbers of decision influencers and complex decision-making processes would all slow down the option's implementation.	High
Price	The likely cost of the initial land purchase and subsequent development.	Medium
Access	The ease of access to the location plus the impact of the option on local transport, traffic levels or the cost of mitigating any negative impacts.	Medium
Value uplift	Value uplift is the value added to the land by the option. It includes an assessment of the expected increase in land value and whether the land could be better used in a different way.	Medium
Environment uplift	Cumbria LEP vision is to grow exceptional industry and innovation whilst maintaining a breathtakingly beautiful and productive landscape. Environmental uplift is an assessment of the option's potential to increase or decrease the beauty of the land and surrounding area for the benefit of local residents and the regional community.	Low
Social synergies	An assessment of any wider socio-economic benefits of the option for local residents and the regional community.	Low

Appendix 2

CMIQ – Residual Land for Development Plan

Contact details

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