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# Copeland Local Plan 2021 – 2038 Examination Hearing Statement

## Matter 19 – Implementation and Viability

December 2022  
Respondent ID81

OFFICIAL

## Preface

Homes England is the Government's housing agency, responsible for increasing the number of new market and affordable homes that are built across England as well as the supply of housing on public land, and to accelerate the rate at which this land can deliver new homes; helping to stimulate economic growth and to attract private sector investment in local areas, especially outside of London.

This Statement is concerned with Matter 19 (Implementation and Viability) of the Matters, Issues and Questions published on 11 November 2022 by the Inspector appointed to examine the Copeland Local Plan 2021 – 2038. It should be read in conjunction with Homes England's further Statements regarding Matters 10, 14 and 15, along with the Representations made by Homes England at the Preferred Options, Pre-Publication Focussed Consultation, and Publication Draft stages, submitted in November 2020, October 2021, and March 2022 respectively.

All correspondence with Homes England for the purpose of the Copeland Local Plan Examination should be sent to:

***Homes England***

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## Matter 19 – Implementation and Viability

Issue – Taking account of the cumulative scale of obligations and policy requirements, is the Plan deliverable?

**19.1 - Has Stage 2 Local Plan Viability Study (EVA2) 2022 (and predecessor documents) been subject to consultation/stakeholder engagement to 'sense check' the assumptions and approach used? How has any feedback been taken into account?**

1. Homes England notes that the Local Plan Viability Study (LPVS - EB20) has been subject to consultation but is not satisfied that the Council has responded fully to this consultation, nor used this to sense check the assumptions made in the Study or the approach it has taken to its assessment. As a stakeholder, Homes England has not been engaged with directly, however we have drawn to the attention of the Council several issues that we have with the Study, and the IDP which informs it, and has offered to work with the Council to help refine its assessment.
2. Homes England also notes that EB20 is still marked Draft "to allow stakeholders a further opportunity to feed into the viability process". It is unclear how and when EB20 will be made final and the extent to which it will consider submissions made through consultation / stakeholder engagement. It is not clear how the Council accounted for feedback received at the Reg 19 consultation (or otherwise) between February 2022 and the submission of EB20 with the Local Plan, neither is the programme for finalising the LPVS clear.
3. Finally, in Homes England's Reg 19 representations; high-level comments were offered on the LPVS insofar as it relates to Site HWH2, including offering to assist with a refinement of cost assumptions. The Council has not contacted Homes England to have this discussion, nor has any other approach been made to Homes England to gather intelligence to inform the LPVS's finalisation.

**19.3 - Are the site assessments set out in section 7 robust? How have the costs per dwelling been arrived at?**

4. Paragraph 7.1.4 of EB20 makes clear that the report has been drafted based upon the experience of its author rather than through active engagement with relevant stakeholders. Homes England has highlighted to the Council several errors and inconsistencies that flow through the site assessments which do not appear to have been considered. These are further explained below by reference to Homes England's proposals for the development of Site HWH2.

### Infrastructure Requirements

5. As noted in Homes England's Matter 14 Statement, there are critical differences between the types of infrastructure the IDP says are required to enable the delivery of Site HWH2, and the infrastructure that has been deemed necessary through Homes England's planning application for the site, recommended for approval by the Council. The IDP states that the Site requires: traffic calming on Harras Road; the provision of shared paths on Harras Road and Red Lonning, a new bus stop on Red Lonning and a new bus service. The planning application has confirmed that the development requires: two highway junction improvements (at Main Street / Cleator Moor Road and A595/Homewood Drive); a sports pitch contribution; a biodiversity net gain contribution; and affordable housing<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Note: planning permission was refused by the Council against Officer recommendation in the light of concerns Members had about highway safety and congestion in the Harras Road / Park View / Victoria Road / Albert Terrace / Soloway View / Hilton Terrace and Wellington Road area to the west of the site. These are not parts of the highway network referred to in the IDP. Homes England is to appeal the refusal in February 2023.

6. LPVS is informed by the IDP and allocates more than £1.695m of highways contributions (presumably to be secured by s106 agreement) to the Harras Moor scheme. These contributions are much higher than what has been agreed through Homes England's planning application and illustrate a mismatch between the way mitigation has been identified and costed through the planning application process, and the assumptions made in the LPVA as a high-level assessment of viability; the IDP is not as accurate as the site-specific work that has been undertaken in consideration of Homes England's planning application for site HWH2. Informed by the IDP rather than detailed consideration of Homes England's planning application and its associated infrastructure requirements and mitigation; the LPVS cannot be considered reliable.

### **Abnormals**

7. The LPVS makes a number of assumptions about the costs that should be attributed to Sites to cover 'abnormals' (e.g. utilities, ecology, drainage, tree protection works, playing pitch contributions, foundations / retaining walls). Homes England has noted that the abnormal costs assumed for Site HWH2 are very low when compared with the assumptions made in respect of, say HWH1 and HWH4 (£6,794/dwelling compared to £27,958/dwelling and £27,369/dwelling respectively). These differences are not explained in the Study and neither is the very low figure adopted for HWH2 which is a site that has very challenging topography and will require extensive enabling infrastructure. If the Study's assumptions in respect of abnormals are not robust, the results of the Council's viability assessment will be unreliable.
8. Homes England requests the ability to respond further to any updated or revised sections of the LPVS that the Council makes available as part of the Examination process.

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