

Matter 9: Rural Economy and Tourism

Issue – Whether the approach to the rural economy and tourism is justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

Relevant policies: RE1PU; RE2PU; RE3PU; SP T1PU; T2PU; T3PU

Agricultural Buildings (Policy RE1PU)

9.1 Is the policy justified, effective and consistent with national policy? Are the suggested Main Modifications (MA-LP58-LP59) necessary for soundness?

9.1.1 Policy RE1 is justified as it provides an important framework to ensure that agricultural businesses remain viable by allowing the development of new buildings to support the business where they do not cause harm to the landscape, amenities or the environment.

9.1.2 The policy is effective as it clearly sets out the criteria that new agricultural buildings will be considered against. It is consistent with national policy, in particular paragraphs 84a and b and 85 which state respectively:

“Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;”

“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist”

9.1.3 The Council considered Policy RE2PU to be sound at the point of submission. Main modifications MA-LP58 and MA-LP59 improve the legibility of the policy outlined above. In particular, MA-LP58 provides clearer wording. MA-LP59 is more substantive and ensures consistent wording to secure a positive strategy for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment as suggested by Historic England.

Equestrian Related Development (Policy RE2PU)

9.2 Is the policy justified, effective and consistent with national policy? Is the suggested Main Modification (MA-LP60) necessary for soundness?

- 9.2.1 Policy RE2 is justified as whilst equestrian related developments can help support the rural economy, they also have the potential to harm the rural landscape and biodiversity where not effectively controlled.
- 9.2.2 The policy is considered to be effective as it clearly sets out the criteria that will be considered when determining applications for such uses.
- 9.2.3 The policy is consistent with the NPPF which outlines the importance of supporting the rural economy and farm diversification, alongside the importance of landscape protection. RE2PU provides a strategic framework for enabling appropriate development in accordance with these requirements. In particular it supports paragraphs 84a-c which states the following:
- “Planning policies and decisions should enable:*
- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
 - b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*
 - c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside;”*
- and paragraph 85 which is shown in paragraph 9.1.2 above.
- 9.2.4 The Council considered policy RE2PU to be sound at the point of submission. Main Modification MA-LP60 improves the legibility of the policy and ensures sufficient protection of Copeland’s heritage assets as recommended by Historic England.

Conversion of rural buildings to commercial or community use (Policy RE3PU)

9.3 Do the criteria in Policy RE3PU provide clear and effective guidance for the consideration of proposals to convert rural buildings to commercial or community use?

- 9.3.1 A crucial element of maintaining sustainable rural areas is allowing for the conversion of appropriate rural buildings to commercial or community use where appropriate. These changes of use can allow a space to develop holistically in accordance with needs. However, it is also important that such conversions are, in themselves, sustainable. Policy R3 provides a clear and effective principle of consideration for such changes in space.

Tourism Development (SP Policy T1PU)

9.4 Do the criteria in SP T1PU provide clear and effective guidance for the consideration of proposals to convert rural buildings to commercial or community use? Is the policy justified and consistent with national policy? Is the suggested Main Modification (MA-LP91) necessary for soundness?

- 9.4.1 A crucial element of maintaining sustainable rural areas is allowing for the conversion of appropriate rural buildings to commercial or community use, this includes for purposes involved with tourism development. These changes of use can allow a space to develop holistically in accordance with contemporary economic needs. Policy T1PU provides an

effective strategic framework that outlines the conditions a prospective conversion would be subject to; it is supported by other policies in the Copeland Local Plan such as RE3PU.

- 9.4.2 The Council considered policy T1PU to be sound at the point of submission. Main Modification MA-LP91 provides a greater degree of clarity to the policy and consequently is justified on the grounds of increasing the legibility of the policies intention. This modification, informed through consultation with Historic England, also ensures sufficient protection of Copeland's heritage assets.

Coastal development along the developed coast (Policy T2PU)

- 9.5 Do the criteria in SP T2PU provide clear and effective guidance for the consideration of proposals for coastal development along the developed coast? Is the policy justified and consistent with national policy? Are the suggested Main Modifications (MA-LP92-LP99) necessary for soundness?**

9.5.1 Copeland's coastline is one of its unique tourist assets. Development along the coastline can help support the tourism and rural economies but can also result in harmful effects on landscape and ecology where not effectively controlled.

9.5.2 Policy T2 identifies the types of tourist development that will be supported in principle along the developed coast and lists the criteria that such development will be judged against at planning application stage. The criteria, following modification, is considered to be effective.

9.5.3 The policy is consistent with national policy, particularly paragraph 84c (copied above in paragraph 9.2.3).

9.5.4 The Council considered policy T2PU to be sound at the point of submission. Modification MA-LP92-LP99 improves the legibility of the Policy, whilst Modification MA-LP99, informed through consultation with Historic England, will ensure sufficient protection of Copeland's heritage assets.

Caravan and camping sites for short-term letting (Policy T3PU)

- 9.6 Do the criteria in SP T3PU provide clear and effective guidance for the consideration of proposals for caravan and camping sites for short-term letting? Is the policy justified and consistent with national policy? Is the suggested Main Modification (MA-LP100) necessary for soundness?**

9.6.1 The policy supports new caravan and camping sites for short-term letting in locations close to other services in order to reduce the need for travel, subject to certain criteria. Criteria i to v are relevant to such proposals but also those which involve extensions to existing sites; their purpose is to ensure developments do not harm the landscape, biodiversity or highway safety. The criteria is considered to be clear and effective.

9.6.2 The policy is justified for the reasons set out in the above paragraph and is in accordance with particularly paragraph 84c (copied above in paragraph 9.2.3).

- 9.6.3 The Council considered policy T2PU to be sound at the point of submission. Modification MA-LP100 has been developed through consultation with Historic England, and will ensure sufficient protection of Copeland's heritage assets. It is not considered to be required for soundness as the Local Plan already contains policies relating to heritage assets (BE1-BE4) which will ensure the Council meets its duties under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.