ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LAND SUPPLY

Core Strategy Topic Paper 1
December 2011

Copeland borough council
Proud of our past. Energised for our future.
# EMPLOYMENT LAND

**CORE STRATEGY TOPIC PAPER**

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1 Background

Economic Change in the twentieth century

The traditional industries, mostly extractive, which drove the nineteenth century growth of the main settlements, declined during the 20th century. Early efforts to provide for alternative employment relied on the approach typical from the 1930s to the 1960s. On the one hand there were incentives to firms to move to Development Areas (of which West Cumbria was one) – many of these firms were not long-lived, and the general migration of manufacturing to lower cost countries has taken its toll. On the other, land was made available, but this often relied on availability, for example of former colliery land; as accessibility has become a more and more critical factor in employment location, West Cumbria in general, and particular locations remote from trunk roads, such as Moresby Parks and Leconfield (Cleator Moor), have struggled to compete.

The nuclear sector arrived in the 1947 with the start of work at Sellafield. Today as many as 12,500 people (about 40% of all the employees in Copeland) work at the plant. This means that the area has one of the highest proportions of people employed in knowledge-based industry in the country. The site is also host to 70% of the UK’s nuclear waste; decisions are needed to deal with this legacy and also to consider a new generation of nuclear power stations at potential sites in the Borough. At present some of the reprocessing operations at Sellafield have an uncertain future, and whilst decommissioning is itself a major employer and a potential source of international business, the Sellafield labour force will is expected to decrease steadily in the long term.

The 21st century response

The emerging response to this in Cumbria was the development by Cumbria Vision of ‘Britain’s Energy Coast: A Masterplan for West Cumbria’, which was adopted in 2007 (and was recently reviewed by the ‘West Cumbria Economic Blueprint’). It is designed to build on Copeland’s nuclear and engineering strengths and to create further knowledge-based opportunities, as well as to diversify the economic base, there is also a lesson of history from both coal and nuclear ages not to rely on one single industry. Whilst the Council does not have the authority to make decisions about the future role of nuclear in Copeland, the Local Development Framework has a major role to play in implementing the Energy Coast Masterplan and diversifying the Borough’s economic base.

Other sectors are those associated with a large rural area. Jobs in agriculture have been falling for a number of years, but the sector is still an important contributor to the local economy and the principal means of maintaining the countryside and landscapes which are valued by local people and visitors; new approaches to development in rural areas are needed to support farm enterprises and other rural businesses. Tourism is an important focus of opportunity within the Borough, especially given the overlap with the Lake District National Park and the presence of the Coast-to-Coast footpath. There is identified potential for this sector to grow from the current 1.8 million visitors a year and £95million expenditure, by some 5% each year. This will require new and improved attractions, facilities and accommodation throughout the Borough.
Locational focus of planned development and land supply

Strategic Policy ST2 sets out a settlement hierarchy which underpins all locational choice in the Borough. Employment location is expected broadly to follow this hierarchy, though it will be modified where, for example, activities are of a kind which is not appropriate or a good neighbour in urban/populated areas, or where the benefits of reducing car use are outweighed by the impact of frequent lorry deliveries. In general, though, much of the expected employment growth will be of a kind that could be located in the key centres, and this is the underlying aim. In particular, as the Employment Land and Premises Study observes (p.94), opportunities in Whitehaven town centre can add to supply but require less land-take; they could also respond to a perceived shortage of quality stock in the centre (ELPS p.65).

In fact, notwithstanding the importance of Sellafield, jobs are already strongly concentrated in the towns, as Figure 1 shows.

Table 1: Location of jobs in Copeland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total, Copeland Borough</td>
<td>29,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sellafield</td>
<td>11,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total, non-Sellafield jobs</td>
<td>17,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitehaven*</td>
<td>8,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egremont</td>
<td>2,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millom and Haverigg</td>
<td>1,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleator Moor</td>
<td>1,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Copeland</td>
<td>3,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* 7 Whitehaven Wards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NOMIS 2009

Drivers of Change and the Growth Agenda

The principal over-arching influences on spatial strategy development are:

- Climate change and the drive for greater sustainability
- The ‘Energy Coast’ concept and economic growth
- Household change and housing growth
- Change in the nuclear industry

Climate and Sustainability

For the purposes of employment land designation, the key climate change-related factor is the need to optimise sustainability of location. The distribution of development envisaged by Policy ST2 responds to this. For example, the ELPS notes the potential of central Whitehaven to house office
and other uses more efficiently than out-of-town sites. However, choices are not always straightforward; in Copeland we additionally have to take account the location of our existing sites, which reflect in part their history, but also the difficulties posed by geographical constraints, such as floodplains or topography, around the towns.

The ‘Energy Coast’ and economic change

There is a strong connection in Copeland - stronger than in most places - between the issue of climate change and the issue of economic change. This reflects the importance of the energy sector in the local economy; and its potential to respond to climate change and a low-carbon strategy. The ‘Britain’s Energy Coast’ Master Plan sets out how Copeland and Allerdale could take advantage of the potential of nuclear, wind, and water energy to become a very important player in this strategy.

It is a strategy both for energy generation and for economic growth. The energy sector is clearly the key driver in economic terms, and is likely to become more so. Sellafield’s 12,500 employees - the great majority of them West Cumbria residents - are predominant in an economy with about 66,500 jobs (Copeland and Allerdale Boroughs). The forecasts suggest that what happens to this total jobs figure over the next 20 years will very much depend on what happens in the energy sector.

Research has been carried out to update the assumptions underlying the Energy Coast Master Plan (Projections Paper – Projecting Employment and Housing Change November 2011) to inform the ‘Blueprint’. This looks at three scenarios – a ‘baseline’ which concludes that, due primarily to decommissioning, the Borough would lose substantial numbers of jobs by 2026; ‘nuclear new build’, which predicts a smaller loss (with peaks during power station construction, and up to 1,000 employed after commissioning); and ‘nuclear investment’, with a range of other processes which may emerge at Sellafield, and the job supply remains broadly static.

Table 2: The Range of Employment Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario (West Cumbria)</th>
<th>Employment 2011</th>
<th>Employment 2026</th>
<th>Change 2011-26 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>59,573</td>
<td>57,737</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear new build</td>
<td>59,573</td>
<td>59,345</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear investment</td>
<td>59,576</td>
<td>62,663</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Copeland)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>26,566</td>
<td>23,384</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear new build</td>
<td>26,566</td>
<td>24,784</td>
<td>-6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear investment</td>
<td>26,569</td>
<td>27,793</td>
<td>+4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The paper refers to a policy “challenge” – to be able to react to the ‘baseline’ position whilst also allowing for the full potential of nuclear investment. The Core Strategy aims to do this by ensuring a supply of land, and other strategic policies, which encourage diversifying inward investment and at the same time create an environment which will allow the nuclear industry to reach its full potential.

**Household change and housing growth**

This subject is covered in more detail in the Housing Topic Paper. For the purposes of this paper it should be recognised that in Copeland the housing stock is particularly intimately linked with economic development prospects. The ECMP and the ‘Blueprint’ have noted that the Borough is not well provided with ‘aspirational’ housing, which supports perceptions that, notwithstanding the high quality jobs on offer at Sellafield and other nuclear-related sources, a large proportion of managerial and professional staff are not attracted to live in Copeland and are prepared to commute substantial distances instead.

Thus, policy for economic diversification and growth is supported by policies

- designed to encourage the improvement of the range of housing on offer in Copeland;
- in terms of numbers, ensuring that there is enough land available to support growth and, correspondingly, adapt to a reversal of the trend of population decline;
- developing the attractiveness of the towns, especially Whitehaven (which already demonstrates that high quality housing development can succeed in the town).

**Change in the nuclear industry**

The nuclear industry accounts directly for about 40% of the jobs available in Copeland, and indirectly for an estimated further %. The ‘Blueprint’ analyses a set of future scenarios markedly different from the assumptions in force when the Energy Coast Master Plan and Local Plan were produced, for the following reasons.

1. Expectations of the future of decommissioning, alongside other operations at Sellafield, are evolving and the forecast rate of job contraction is now much slower than it was in 2008.
2. The proposed power station at Sellafield will bring an estimated 4,000 temporary jobs during construction, with almost a thousand permanent operational staff when it is complete.
3. New nuclear investment streams are being developed. There is not enough detail or certainty about these to enable this round of plan preparation to take them into account - if necessary, a review or partial alteration of the Core Strategy can cater for them at an appropriate time. However, they are a factor in planning for housing in the medium to long term, and that is why the Local Development Framework plans for a housing figure based on forecast need, whilst also making sure there is flexibility for an aspirational level of development.
2 Taking forward the Local Plan

The background to producing the Local Plan (2001-2016, adopted 2006) was strongly similar to the continuing context outlined above. In particular:

1. the background socio-economic characteristics of the Borough have not changed significantly;
2. Sellafield job projections were pessimistic, implying a loss of 7,000 jobs, 27% of the Copeland labour force, by 2015.

The approach was based on retaining a portfolio of employment land catering for ‘high end’ development (mainly, at Westlakes Science and Technology Park) but also for smaller-scale and locally-based manufacturing and commercial development on the existing stock of industrial estates and other sites. In general little demand was identified to re-allocate land for other uses such as housing, though Devonshire Road in Millom was the subject of one such change.

The approach has had limited success. This can be attributed to four factors.

1. As a peripheral area, distant from main routes, West Cumbria has to work hard to attract the kind of investment need to diversify.
2. In an increasingly competitive environment, the quality of much of the Borough’s employment land is problematic.
3. Development prospects have been blighted, during half of the time since the Plan was adopted, by the aftermath of the ‘credit crunch’ – as usual, the economic slowdown has impacted most on areas of low development value, of which West Cumbria is one.
4. The demise of the Regional Development Agency, and the advent of a more fragmented approach to Government funding in which regeneration is explicitly not prioritised, leaves West Cumbria at a disadvantage when the distribution of growth-directed public funds is concentrated on areas which are already successful.

However, there are encouraging signs. Westlakes has been successful in showing that a quality science park can grow in West Cumbria. In addition, a number of developments of great potential look to be on the way to fruition, notably the package of sites at Pow Beck (guided by the SPD adopted in 2009); Whitehaven’s first modern office development at Albion Square; and the mixed use development on the Mark House site on the harbourside.

These signs of incipient success, the continuing broad-based support among stakeholders, and the lack of suggestion that there is another way, indicate that this broad strategic direction continues to be valid, and the Core Strategy is thus based on that foundation. However, the loss of key sources of gap funding will make securing development more challenging.
3 Responding to regional and national policy

Regional and sub-regional strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is now in the process of being revoked, but at the time of drafting, planning authorities are still required to conform to it. Much of the production period of the Core Strategy has taken place while the RSS was still in force, and the strategy has therefore been drafted to conform with it.

West Cumbria was singled out as a priority for investment addressing regeneration and worklessness (policies RDF1 and W1), with Whitehaven (along with Workington) singled out as a location for regionally significant economic development (W2). Although policy W4 advocates the de-allocation of surplus employment land, it makes an exception for sites that “provide, or have the potential to provide, an important contribution to the economy of the local area”. (This supports the Borough Council’s position that, although there is a surplus of land compared to historic take-up rates, and some sites are expected to be de-allocated in the site allocation process, most sites have particular characteristics that mean they have that potential to contribute.)

The Core Strategy also recognises the Cumbria Sub Regional Spatial Strategy (adopted in 2008), part of the Community Strategy for Cumbria. This has an approach to development which flowed from the (no longer extant) Structure Plan, and is based on a hierarchy of ‘major’ development in Whitehaven (along with Workington and Maryport across West Cumbria); ‘moderate’ development in Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom (along with Aspatria, Cockermouth, Silloth and Wigton); and ‘small scale’ development in local service centres and other locations identified in local development frameworks. The spatial approach of Core Strategy policies ST2 and ER6 reflects this.

The strategy supports provision for high value business development, along with further and higher education to develop skills (especially nuclear-related) at Westlakes, identified as a strategic investment site by the Regional Economic Strategy (as was Lillyhall). It advocates economic diversification including development of the tourism industry.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF is the most up-to-date expression of national planning policy. It carries forward, in a more concise form, policies which are essentially in continuity, as far as economic development is concerned, with the predecessor Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4). The Core Strategy is based on the policies previously consulted upon in the Preferred Options report, which were drafted to comply with PPS4. Having tested the Core Strategy against the NPPF, the Borough Council is confident that the Core Strategy’s economic development policies, along with the rest of the plan, remain compliant with national guidance.

The NPPF states that the local plan (correctly, the Local Development Framework) “should include strategic policies to deliver ... economic development requirements”. The background and evidence base sections above indicate what these are for Copeland. They continue an approach to regeneration developed relatively recently, with wide stakeholder support, to respond to a situation which has not fundamentally changed in the few years since the Energy Coast Master Plan and Local
Plan were adopted. They are supported by the evidence base, as independently reviewed most recently in the West Cumbria Economic Blueprint.

**Collaborative working (NPPF para. 29)**

This section of the strategy has been drawn up in consultation with Cumbria County Council, Allerdale Borough Council and business interests, as consultees. (The strategy has also been tested against the Lake District Core Strategy and is accepted by the National Park Authority.) That consultation has been bolstered by the continuing partnership approach of strategy development for the Energy Coast, which involves those authorities and key elements of the business community.

**Assessing economic development land supply and demand (NPPF para. 30)**

Requirements have been extensively investigated, by independent consultants, in the preparation of the Employment Land and Premises Study and in the review of that and other evidence for the Blueprint. The supply has been assessed as more than enough to meet demand.

It is acknowledged that much of the supply has constraints of quality and accessibility. But these reviews of the supply have demonstrated, firstly, that the Westlakes Science and Technology Park should provide a good supply of quality ‘B1’ land well into the plan period; and secondly, that there are no better candidates available for employment allocation. (From a sub-regional perspective, Copeland also benefits from the Lillyhall strategic site close to its northern boundary.) Complementing this, the Council is acting, with support from Sellafield, to create a supply of high quality office space in Whitehaven town centre (another Master Plan objective).

**Supporting economic development (NPPF paras. 73-75)**

The Core Strategy recognises, and sets out in spatial terms, the economic vision and strategy of the ECMP and its update in the Blueprint. The partners are satisfied that West Cumbria is supplied with (pre-existing) strategic sites at Lillyhall and West Lakes, along with proposals to develop the strategic significance of south and central Whitehaven; and that these are a realistic focus for promotion of inward investment. The strategy is in place both to support the critically important nuclear sector, and to nurture and develop other sectors, notably renewable energy, tourism and (probably energy-linked) knowledge and information technology industries. Priority areas have been identified for regeneration (primarily, in Whitehaven and the three smaller towns); infrastructure needs have been identified; and the Council is open to the development of new working practises, though this is contingent on the development of a high quality broadband network, in which the Council is actively supporting the County Council’s Connecting Cumbria initiative.

**Promoting the vitality and viability of town centres (NPPF paras. 76ff.)**

Town centre development is not actively considered here. But it should be noted that development in Whitehaven (as referred to above) is an integral part of the ECMP approach. It is backed up by a strategy for Whitehaven in the Whitehaven and Harbourside SPD, which has been brought forward in parallel with the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy also prioritises regeneration and growth in Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom.
4 Sub-regional strategic context – the Energy Coast Master Plan

The Energy Coast (originally West Cumbria Spatial) Master Plan, adopted in 2007, articulated a vision for the economic development over 20 years, and acts as a guide for public investment to realise that vision.

The ECMP sets out **strategic themes** as follows.

1. Business and enterprise; building on West Cumbria’s strengths associated with nuclear and renewable energy, supporting diversification, and increasing the value of the tourism sector.
2. Skills and research; a globally competitive energy and environmental technology cluster, backed up with similar quality research operations, and a growing supply of the requisite skills to take advantage of changes in the nuclear sector and new markets.
3. Connectivity and infrastructure; improving the capacity of main rail and road routes, along with the Port of Workington, and access to Carlisle Airport.

Under the last heading is a commitment to strengthen the sub-regional portfolio of development opportunities, whose priorities are

- the strategic sites at Westlakes Science and Technology Park (and Lillyhall in Allerdale),
- Whitehaven harbour and town centre (as well as Workington town centre and Maryport harbour in Allerdale),
- short term priority employment areas at Bridge End in Egremont and Leconfield in Cleator Moor,
- longer term investment at Moresby/Whitehaven Commercial Park and Pow Beck (plus various sites in Allerdale),
- housing market renewal, accompanied by new housing development in north, east and south Whitehaven, (along with sites in Workington and Maryport), and
- ‘aspirational’ housing in central Whitehaven, St Bees, and sites not at that time identified around Egremont and Cleator Moor (as well as in Workington).

In 2011/12 the ECMP has been updated by the West Cumbria Economic Blueprint. The Blueprint concludes, in effect, that the original vision remains broadly valid, and the partners involved agree that the key principles should be

1. Excellence in energy;
2. Diversification and innovation;
3. Connected West Cumbria;
4. Quality of Life, Quality of Place – this last representing a new stress on a theme picked up but given less prominence in the ECMP.

In terms of prioritising sites, the Blueprint singles out the following.

- Westlakes Science and Technology Park.
- Albion Square, Whitehaven, to increase the number of workers in the town centre and set it up as a place for investment in town centre office space.
• ‘secondary’ employment sites at Egremont and Cleator Moor.
• nuclear new build and, potentially, Sellafield extension.
• leisure opportunities near Cleator Moor.
• Whitehaven town centre investment.
• housing sites in south and north east Whitehaven, and around Egremont and Cleator Moor.

(Along with, in Allerdale, Lillyhall, Workington Port, ‘secondary’ employment land at Maryport, further investment in Workington town centre, Derwent Forest as a leisure sector opportunity, and housing at Workington, Maryport and Wigton).

This list compares closely with those which were focused on by the ECMP, and referred to specifically in the Core Strategy ‘Preferred Options’ Report. It also demonstrates the continuation of the sub-regional approach which underlies Core Strategy preparation in both Copeland and Allerdale.
5 Evidence base research

The West Cumbria Employment Land and Premises Study (ELPS), 2008

This (DTZ for Allerdale and Copeland Councils) was published in October 2008. Its conclusions advocated an employment land portfolio comprising a mix of sites appropriate to current and future demand of a range of occupiers whilst allowing a degree of flexibility.

The following policy interventions were recommended. All of these themes are picked up, insofar as the planning system is able to address them, in the Core Strategy, as indicated by policy references in brackets.

1. Raise the quality of public realm to enhance investor perceptions, focusing particularly on sites identified as priorities for investment. (ERS)
2. Improve the quality of life by promoting development of higher value housing at appropriate locations and enhance cultural facilities in the towns. (SS1 and SS3, supported by site allocations, and SS5)
3. Secure better build quality. (ERS supported by development management policies DM10 and DM11, and the proposed design quality SPD)
4. Encourage home working and ‘work hubs’. (ER6)
5. Promote alignment across public sector agencies. (Not a specific policy aim, but sub-regional working underpins many aspects of implementing the Core Strategy)
6. Support business start-up and growth, for which availability of appropriate accommodation is essential. (ER 4-6 supported by the Council’s economic development function)
7. Support the nuclear industry, with a land portfolio which meets its needs. (ER1 and ER3, ER4-6)
8. Site-based policy interventions; de-allocation where appropriate (ER4, site allocations DPD), protecting needed employment land against loss (ER4), refurbishment and reconfiguration (ERSB, ER6D, supported by application of economic development funds), town centre accommodation (being pursued at Albion Square in Whitehaven initially).

The ELPS also classifies the existing site portfolio, with

- Westlakes, Leconfield and Bridge End extension identified as priority investment sites,
- a number of others as ‘management sites’, with one, Whitehaven Commercial Park, needing a more proactive approach,
- Pow Beck and Cleator Mills suitable for alternative uses if they emerge,
- seven sites, in total about 19m hectares, recommended for deallocation (which will be considered in detail in the site allocation DPD),
- the portfolio of Whitehaven town centre sites (all referred to in the Core Strategy) recommended for mixed use development with a stress on tourism and/or office use.

These conclusions have informed, and generally been followed in, Core Strategy preparation, and site allocation issues will be picked up as that Development Plan Document is produced.
The ELPS has been re-evaluated during 2011, in the light of changing circumstances, by the ‘Blueprint’ work, and in particular the Employment Land Review Update (December 2011).

Employment Land Review Update conclusions, 2011

The Update concludes that the diagnosis of the ELPS remains valid.

A more detailed assessment of viability concludes that under current market conditions only Westlakes and Bridge End among Class B1/B2 sites, and Quay Street and the twin bus station/bus depot sites in Whitehaven, are definitely commercially attractive. At the other end of the scale those considered not viable are much the same as the list recommended by the ELPS for de-allocation. The remainder are classed as marginal, including Pow Beck and other sites in south Whitehaven, Leconfield and Whitehaven Commercial Park.

B1 land supply. An assessment of the ‘B1’ land supply, dominated by Westlakes but also including a number of small sites in and around Whitehaven town centre, concludes that these can be expected to provide a suitable supply of high quality land for the whole Plan period.

B2/B8 land supply. At recent rates of take up there is a substantial surplus of land available for the general supply to meet local need for indigenous growth and warehousing/manufacturing. (about 25 hectares, if the sites recommended for de-allocation are discounted, against projected demand for 8 ha.) Due to the location and character of these sites, the majority are suitable for B2 rather than B8 use. However, if market conditions and the highway network improve, there may be increased scope for B8 use of some of these sites, particularly in the north of the Borough.

Some of this land is likely to be suitable for uses associated with nuclear new build (six sites, total area 10.77 ha., mostly suitable for B2 manufacturing, within 15 minutes’ drive of the Sellafield site, in addition to Westlakes).

Future scenarios

The ‘Blueprint’ research has incorporated scenarios for the future, based on different employment outcomes –

1. a ‘baseline’ dominated by employment contraction related to nuclear decommissioning,
2. ‘nuclear new build’ which is self-explanatory, and
3. ‘nuclear investment’, relying on the fulfilment of possible new activities at Sellafield.

These have enabled a more detailed look at the possibilities for house building requirements. Analysis of likely demand for employment land relies on two scenarios. The first, or ‘low range’, relates to the ‘baseline’ position; the second, or ‘high range’, assumes nuclear-related growth, such as the site requirements referred to in the previous paragraph. (Note that in this context, the power
station itself, and activity within the Sellafield site, are outwith the land supply as that land is not openly available on the market.)

**Adequacy of supply**

According to the ‘low range’ scenario there is, on the face of it, a sizeable surplus of employment land in the Borough (54 hectares, or about 35 hectares if all sites analysed as unattractive are de-allocated). However, if the predictions related to nuclear investment come to fruition, the picture changes significantly. In total there would remain enough land, and the ‘B1’ supply is adequate. However, ‘general’ B2/B8 supply might be taken up. Thus, possible nuclear-related demand will be a consideration in the site allocation process and a cautious approach to de-allocation may be justified. The balance between supply and demand is shown numerically in Table 3 below.

**Table 3. Employment land supply and demand (in hectares)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Low range’ land requirements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices/‘hi tech’ (Class B1)</td>
<td>35.74</td>
<td>25.26</td>
<td>10.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry/warehousing (B2/B8)</td>
<td>52.26</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>43.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88.00</td>
<td>33.54</td>
<td>54.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘High range’ land requirements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices/‘hi tech’ (Class B1)</td>
<td>35.74</td>
<td>27.23</td>
<td>8.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry/warehousing (B2/B8)</td>
<td>52.26</td>
<td>21.93</td>
<td>30.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88.00</td>
<td>49.16</td>
<td>38.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Employment Land review Update GVA for Allerdale and Copeland Borough Councils December 2011*
6 Going forward: the Core Strategy and beyond

Despite a strong focus on Whitehaven, it is important to maintain a geographic spread of employment opportunities, particularly in view of the rural nature of Copeland and consequent accessibility and transport realities. The ELPS (p.94) recommends ensuring that there is adequate employment space to support rural areas, and that places like Cleator Moor and Egremont, which are at risk of job losses resulting from contraction in the nuclear sector, continue to be seen as important albeit smaller-scale employment locations. At the same time, the Council recognises the national trend towards more home-based working, and will generally seek not to obstruct proposals which involve work from home, conversions, and similar localised requirements, providing they comply with other planning considerations.

Most respondents have supported this preferred approach to locating employment sites, stating that the geographical spread of land allocations should reflect the settlement hierarchy. There is also full support for encouraging home working in the Borough, because it would provide more flexible working and help boost the local economy; respondents suggested that policy should facilitate the development of live-work units and small scale employment uses in residential areas.

Westlakes Science and Technology Park: one special requirement that will be met outside the immediate centre (though within the wider town area) of Whitehaven is the provision of high-quality premises for Research & Development (R&D), and especially inward investment, at the Westlakes Science & Technology Park. The vision for this site is to combine higher and further education, research and production with a specific emphasis on the nuclear and energy sectors. The ELPS (p.100) stresses the importance of maintaining the site’s differentiation - as a knowledge-based campus - from other locations: notably Lillyhall, which despite its ‘strategic’ label is in danger now of becoming a default business location for activities which could perfectly well be located in the town centres (ELPS, p.17).

Respondents have also supported the continuation of the Local Plan’s use restrictions at Westlakes, so that it could continue as a flagship site for high-value business, attract inward investment, and be complementary to Lillyhall. As part of this approach it will be important to maintain high standards of design and landscaping on the site.

The strategic focus

The core of the spatial strategy is in Core Strategy policy ST2, which sets out a clear general principle that the main focus for development should be Whitehaven, with growth also supported in Cleator Moor, Egremont and Millom.

The supporting policy ST3 identifies the specific locations whose development is fundamental to both the spatial and economic development strategies:

- Sellafiel, including the land to the north identified for the power station;
- the group of sites in south and central Whitehaven;
- the three smaller town centres;
- Energy Coast Master Plan sites additional to those in Whitehaven.
Economic regeneration policy ER6 supports this approach and contains criteria for evaluating smaller scale proposals in smaller settlements, safeguarding Westlakes for the right kind of development, and the promotion of home working.

Policies ER1 to 3 relate specifically to the distinct requirements of the important energy sector, with a focus on the continuing development of Sellafield, the more open approach (subject to environmental and amenity considerations) necessary for renewable energy, and an additional focus on associated development where ST2 is more applicable.

Evidential work (particularly the ELPS) indicates that the existing supply is, in quantity and quality, likely to be able to meet foreseeable needs. It is not likely, therefore, that additional employment land will be allocated at this stage. There are, however, locations with potential for strategic scale development, which can be regarded as a reserve which could emerge if needed. These are the Marchon site in Whitehaven (see below) and Hensingham Common on the north eastern edge of Whitehaven, which could play a role supporting nuclear new build, and would offer particular potential if the Whitehaven Eastern Bypass (not currently programmed) were brought forward.

**WHITEHAVEN AND THE HOWGATE/DISTINGTON LOCALITY**

Whitehaven is a key focus for sites fulfilling strategic regeneration priorities. They include key gateway and harbourside sites in Whitehaven town centre with the following identified as a strategic portfolio of development sites (previous Local Plan site identification numbering in brackets):

- **Harbourside sites** - Quay Street Car Park (WTC1), Gough’s Car Park (Strand Street/Marlborough Street) and Mark House, the former Victorian public baths and the Paul Jones Pub, Strand Street (WTC2), recently given planning permission for a mixed residential and office development.

- **The northern gateway sites**; the former Bus Depot and Garage, Bransty Row (WTC4) and former Bus Station and Works, Bransty Row (WTC5)

- **Albion Street North and South** (WTC8 and 9); now with planning permission for offices intended to house staff moved off the Sellafield site.

- **Former YMCA Building, Irish Street**

- **Sites on the south side of the town centre**; Jackson’s timber yard and adjoining land, Newtown/Catherine Street (WEOS2) and West side of Preston Street (WEOS3)

- **Sites at Ginns/Coach Road** (WEOS4, west side and WEOS 5 & 6 on Coach Road)

Development of these sites will be guided by a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which is currently in production, with a draft subject to public consultation in 2012. This will particularly relate to the important design and Conservation Area issues involved. The SPD is informed by the Conservation Area Assessment work carried out for the Council, and the Broadway Malyan “Development Framework” (2007). The Council would expect appropriate uses or mixes of use on the sites appropriate to town centre or edge-of town centre locations. These will be primarily office, retail, tourism and/or leisure uses aimed at increasing the commercial performance of the town centre and substantially increasing its employment base. Some additional housing could be incorporated in suitable mixed use developments.
Two other locations, each previously identified as an ‘opportunity site’ in the Local Plan, feature in the strategic sites list:

- **Pow Beck Valley.** Planning permission has been granted for a new stadium and associated rugby and football facilities for the town’s main clubs, in association with a sports village complex, housing and limited commercial redevelopment guided by an already adopted Supplementary Planning Document.

- **The Marchon site.** This large site, alongside spectacular scenery on the coastal footpath route to the town centre, and close to other regeneration areas in south and south west Whitehaven, is still the subject of plans to deal with contamination from previous chemical and coaling activities. Whilst a considerable area within it should be used to contribute to and improve the appearance and accessibility of the coast, it is large enough also to accommodate a mixture of other uses, such as tourism development and offices.

  In the short term Marchon may be suitable for development associated with nuclear new build, such as off-site accommodation or training facilities; other sites within Whitehaven are considered by the Council to be suitable for other associated development with ‘ legacy’ potential, such as permanent housing and hotel accommodation. Uncertainty as to when its contamination risks will be dealt with, and its potential for a range of uses, mean that it is not included in the employment land supply.

- **Hensingham Common.** There is a further area of land, physically suitable for employment development though not within the Whitehaven boundary, on the former Keekle Head opencast site to the north east of the town. This is not at present likely to be attractive to the market owing to its relative inaccessibility by road, and is not currently included in the supply. However, the line of the Whitehaven Eastern Bypass runs along its southern edge. If that were completed the site would offer about 20 hectares of level land in a potentially strategic location, not far from Lillyhall and readily accessible to Sellafield. Development would require consideration of sustainability implications and a travel plan.

Regeneration and development on these sites complements the continuation of housing market renewal, via partnerships between the main Registered Social Landlord (Home Housing Group) and private developers, in south and west Whitehaven

**Economic Opportunity and Regeneration**

The Employment Land and Premises Study has already flagged up a need to improve the quality and marketing of existing sites in the locality, notably the Whitehaven Commercial Park at Moresby Parks. It has also noted that some poorer quality sites, like Furnace Row (Distington) and Red Lonning at Whitehaven, should no longer be designated for employment in the Sites Allocations DPD. The focus instead should be on investing in the strategic sites mentioned above, and Westlakes Science and Technology Park. Although there is still a superficial surplus of employment land, the continuation of a supply for smaller and expanding local firms remains important. It should be noted that there is no evidence of demand for residential development on the Commercial park, which is in any event not in an appropriate location for housing.
Elsewhere there is a need for a flexible approach including working from home subject to normal protection of residential amenity.

Complementing this, the Core Strategy encourages, and other Local Development Documents will provide for, improvement of the retail ‘offer’ in Whitehaven, based on the existing shopping area but recognising the potential for appropriate edge-of-centre development and improvement along with support for remodelling of existing shops to provide units more suitable for modern retailing, without detracting from the Georgian character of the main shopping frontages. Additionally, the trend for greater tourism in the town should be consolidated, and better hotel provision would be a major step forward.

In terms of skills development and education the locality is well placed between Lillyhall and Westlakes Science and Technology Park and with the largest secondary school provision in the Borough concentrated at Red Lonning/Hensingham. In all cases there is sufficient land available for likely expansion requirements over the plan period. However it will be important to improve access to the sites especially from the more deprived wards like Sandwith and Harbour in Whitehaven and Distington.

CLEATOR MOOR LOCALITY

It is expected that growth in the energy sector will bring opportunities for additional business development in Cleator Moor, such as further relocation of Sellafield jobs where a Sellafield site is not essential (ER1). There may be potential for renewable energy production in the locality including wind and hydro (ER2) and any National Grid connection programme will undoubtedly have some impact on local communities given available routing options which are close to Cleator Moor (ER3). Regeneration and other vacant sites in Cleator Moor could also provide opportunity for temporary accommodation relating to new nuclear power station construction workers. There will be opportunities for office and workshop/warehouse development at Leconfield Street and the Phoenix Centre and encouragement will be given to new business clusters with food processing being particularly appropriate given the wide rural hinterland. Similarly the Council will try to accommodate proposals involving working from home and rural workshops on existing sites like Frizington Road and Rowrah Station so long as no amenity problems are posed (ER6).

EGREMONT LOCALITY

Growth in the energy sector could likewise bring opportunities for additional business development, including relocation off-site of Sellafield jobs not needing to be on the licensed site, as well as opportunities arising from decommissioning (ER1). There may be potential for renewable energy production in the locality including wave power (ER2) and any National Grid connection programme will again have some impact on local communities given available routing options which are close to Egremont. There is land suitable for longer term employment use which could provide opportunities for development associated with nuclear new build. The Bridge End industrial estate and its expansion land adjoining St Thomas Cross are an important part of maintaining quality employment sites locally near Sellafield, and the Beckermet Estate will still provide limited expansion potential for less neighbourly businesses (ER4).
The local labour force will be equipped for future employment opportunities, particularly in relation to opportunities arising from the decommissioning of Sellafield and future nuclear and other energy based industries (ER11). The location of West Lakes Academy (one of whose specialisms is science) in Egremont is an important element in this drive and the Council will ensure that the Academy’s planning needs continue to be met.

**MID COPELAND LOCALITY**

As a location for employment Sellafield dominates mid Copeland. The Cross Lanes site in Seascale and the Beckermet industrial estate offer a limited amount of land which may be attractive to small firms requiring a location near to the site. Otherwise, employment development in mid Copeland, as for rural areas across the borough, will be guided by Core Strategy and development management policy for rural locations.

**MILLOM/SOUTH COPELAND LOCALITY**

The energy sector may also offer employment opportunities to South Copeland residents. Some respondents have referred to major renewable energy potential in the Duddon Estuary, where a barrage could provide significant local employment and economic spin-offs and associated infrastructure improvements could include better transport links. However, this proposal has not demonstrated that is feasible or can co-exist with the extremely valuable natural environment of the estuary, and in view of that, inclusion in the Local Development Framework is premature.

It will be important to facilitate regeneration in Millom. The main focus for this is likely to be the town centre and existing employment areas in need of upgrading. The Employment Land and Premises Study does not suggest new land allocations and actually recommends that the Local Plan Millom Pier employment site is de-allocated. It is a fairly exposed location on the estuary; the Council feels that with careful design this could become a feature development for the town, incorporating tourism and high quality business accommodation, but there is also a case for it continuing in its present use, in accordance with the owner’s wishes and recognising its continuing potential for bulk landing and/or servicing for offshore energy installations.
7 Conclusions

Common sense, as well as national planning policy, place upon the local planning authority two primary duties. Firstly, it must ensure that there is enough suitable land genuinely available to satisfy the needs of the local economy over the next fifteen years. Secondly, it should take care that excess land is not being hoarded for industrial development which is unlikely to happen, when it could be made available for other uses.

On the adequacy of supply, the Borough Council is satisfied that there is demonstrably enough land available, in the right kind of locations for the purposes for which sites have been identified. There is some risk that, if the full range of nuclear development possibilities happens, the supply may come under strain; but that is not likely to happen for several years and can be dealt with either by a review of site allocations, or by bringing forward land (such as that at Hensingham Common) not at present taken into account.

At present there is more than enough land to meet the level of demand that the local economy has generated in the recent past. But there is also a wide range of other possibilities to cater for. Copeland has to balance the requirements of an evolving nuclear sector, be ready to respond to what may be rapid development in that sector, and be able to offer sites attractive to other inward investors who may reduce the Borough’s dependence on the nuclear sector, whilst also keeping a supply of sites for local companies needing more space.

In addition, it has been shown elsewhere (by evidence summarised in the Housing Topic paper) that the portfolio of housing land is big and varied enough to likewise meet Copeland’s needs. That, and the nature of the employment land available, mean that there is little evidence of competing demand.

On this basis the Council concludes that it is entirely sensible to keep a surplus of land available to meet the needs of businesses in or coming to Copeland.

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