

COPELAND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

**EXAMINATION OF CORE STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT
MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

**BOROUGH COUNCIL
STATEMENTS:
MATTER 10**

OTHER STRATEGIC MATTERS

March 2013



10.1. Will policy SS4 safeguard and improve services and facilities and ensure provision is forthcoming in the most appropriate locations?

10.1.1 The intention of SS4 is three fold;

- to set out what is needed (to be developed, enhanced or retained) and where;
- to act as a statement of policy to support resource bids and direct the spending of resources coming into the Borough to the places that need them;
- to guide negotiations over developer contributions, and inform prospective developers of what might be sought from them.

10.1.2 The policy is rooted in the settlement hierarchy and the policy aim of nurturing the vitality and viability of the Borough's larger and smaller centres, but also with reference to needs arising from concentrations of deprivation.

10.1.3 The success of the policy is contingent on the continuation and, we hope, improvement of the level of resources which can be brought to bear (including local government finance), and on the uplift in the market which we hope will come about as a result of national economic recovery and/or economic growth resulting from nuclear industry growth. As long as the conditions are right, it should work. If they are not, it may act as a guide to decisions as to where it is most important for facilities to be retained.

10.2. Does the Plan provide sufficient clarity on developer contributions and how viability issues will be taken into account?

10.2.1 Policy ST4 lays out the criteria for seeking developer funds to provide infrastructure. We have not picked up any signals from consultees that it is unclear, though the County Council has suggested that it could be improved.

10.2.2 The County Council's position is that the policy should be made more specific by laying out a list of the infrastructure requirements that the policy might cover. The Borough Council has not amended the policy in this way for three reasons. Firstly, it would be difficult to make the list exhaustive, which might compromise negotiations for items not included in the policy. Secondly, there would be a risk that any list might be interpreted as suggesting a hierarchy of priorities – which might be the case, but would be vulnerable to changes over time. Finally, flexibility might be compromised. The preferred approach is to set that out in the SPD currently in production, which can be more comprehensive and more specific, and is much more flexible.

10.2.3 The issue of viability is complex in Copeland. Historically the Borough has not been vigorous in seeking contributions because the Council is well aware that the rewards of development in this area are lower than elsewhere. It is additionally difficult to take a specific line in the Core Strategy when current market conditions are so uncertain. Taking development viability into account is well-established in practice and in Government policy, and will continue to be a strong consideration in negotiations.

10.2.4 To be more specific, the policy makes it clear that a SPD will be adopted to guide the process and this is at a stage of drafting sufficiently advanced for the Council to be able to state with confidence that it can be published for consultation soon after the Core Strategy is adopted. This will provide a clear, flexible line on viability which, being SPD rather than additional detail in the Core Strategy, will enable it to be more readily updated as economic conditions evolve. The Borough Council submits that this is a proper relationship between statutory policy and supplementary guidance.

10.3. Are there any outstanding issues in relation to infrastructure provision that undermine the credibility of the Plan?

10.3.1 The Borough Council has not been made aware of any.

10.3.2 The following particular infrastructure deficiencies might, if serious problems had emerged, have undermined the strategy.

10.3.3 **Transport.** Limitations on road and rail capacity are something we have to live with. Whilst they may act as a deterrent to inward investment, and leave Copeland beyond the attention span of national volume house builders, they have never discouraged an interested developer.

10.3.3 The Moorside nuclear power station development will place a strain on the road network and the Cumbrian Coast rail route. Discussions on this theme have been going on for some time; actions such as rail and road capacity improvements, and measures to optimise use of different modes, are being developed and will inform the Development Consent Order process along with mitigatory investment funded by the developer.

10.3.4 **Water supply.** United Utilities are constructing boreholes near Egremont, to be connected to existing treatment infrastructure at Ennerdale, which will take pressure off the water supply in the short term. In the longer term the establishment of a connection from the regional supply network at Thirlmere is being actively pursued.

10.3.5 **Drainage.** A series of discussions between Copeland Borough Council with United Utilities has enabled both parties to be able to say that overall (albeit not in the short term in the Cleator Moor area, where improvement of the treatment works is programmed) development at the level planned should be able to proceed, on the assumption that local capacity issues can be dealt with as individual developments bring them to the fore.

10.3.6 **Social infrastructure.** The infrastructure deficit work has enabled the Strategy for Infrastructure to set out a clear picture of deficiencies that the Council will seek to address with developer support, or any other resource streams available (such as Britain's Energy Coast, and community benefit funds). There is no deficiency that will be acute enough to stop any development happening or fatally compromise achievement of the plan's objectives. The worst foreseeable consequence of deficiencies not being met is that the overall quality of life will not improve to the extent that the community would wish, and that communities will have to be creative in looking for other ways to fill gaps in provision.

10.3.7 In short, there are likely to be issues and deficiencies, but they are not on a scale that could conceivably undermine the credibility of the plan.

10.4. Are the monitoring criteria comprehensive and measurable and is there sufficient information on the level and source of finance to demonstrate that policy objectives are deliverable?

- 10.4.1 The monitoring criteria are designed to be realistic. This means that, taken together, they should be able to inform anyone who wants to know whether the implementation of the plan is successful or not. It also means that they should be expressed in a way which is comprehensible and able to be reported on annually. What they should not do is drown the reader in such a volume of statistics and analysis that comprehension becomes difficult.
- 10.4.2 Monitoring should also not be an excessive drain on resources. There is no point in making a monitoring framework so comprehensive that we will not be able to complete annual reports.
- 10.4.3 Wherever possible the indicators are numerically measurable, but some indicators are best expressed in narrative form, that is, by answering questions like 'is performance moving in the right direction?' and 'are things better than last year?' Such non-statistical indicators are doing their job, although it must be acknowledged that they should be as few as possible.
- 10.4.4 So the criteria adopted are intended to give as full a picture we need to demonstrate plan implementation. In the interests of being comprehensible, they are couched with reference to plan objectives, rather than to each individual policy. The indicators are also cross-referenced to the Sustainability Appraisal Framework objectives to give an added dimension.
- 10.4.5 Finally, the range of indicators adopted is deliberately framed in terms consistent with the format of the Annual Monitoring Report, so that it will be easier to produce regular reports easily comparable from year to year.

Finance

- 10.4.6 In a small, poorly resourced rural district in a low demand area, it is not feasible to formulate a plan contingent on specified levels of development finance. The resources available do not permit us to produce a delivery plan in the normal sense of the term.
- 10.4.7 The advantage of development anticipated at, by national standards, a fairly low level is that we can state with some confidence that the level of development that is expected and provided for can happen within current infrastructure capacity without placing intolerable strain on the operation of the Borough's infrastructure. The Monitoring Framework clearly indicates that most policies can be pursued within existing budgets. The main sources of development finance will be developers themselves, the County Council in its Local Transport Plan and other budgets such as education, and the capital programmes of statutory undertakers (mainly, United Utilities in their Asset Management Plan for drainage and water supply). All these interests have been involved in the preparation of the plan. There is no major investment project on which the success of the plan depends, and no 'showstoppers' have been identified.
- 10.4.8 The main difference to this will be if Moorside goes ahead. In that case, it can be assumed that the developer will finance the development itself and infrastructure consequences will

be addressed in the DCO process via the Local Impact Report, along with infrastructure work and/or community benefit funding as negotiated and stipulated by the Inspector. As far as can be anticipated, these potential impacts have been considered by the West Cumbrian districts in discussion with the County council, and are picked out in the Annex to the Strategy for Infrastructure (Doc. 1.7).