Description of Sustainability Appraisal for Residential Site Selection Process

1. The proposed residential sites put forward by landowners and developers for inclusion in the SHLAA have undergone a series of analyses to judge their suitability for housing allocation. In order to facilitate this process description, the analyses can be divided into three stages, as follows:

(a) Initial Screening Analysis of site (as part of the Sustainability Appraisal);
(b) Selection of site, or not, in the 'Pool of Sites' (also as part of the Sustainability Appraisal);
(c) From the available pool, selection of site, or not, in the list of Preferred Sites (as part of what is referred to as the District Level Analysis).

2. In the description of the sustainability appraisal process, the following sections detail the initial screening analysis, and selection of the sites for the 'pool of sites', and finally, from this pool, the selection of the preferred sites. Therefore, the initial paragraphs below describe the process where firstly the sites are taken from the original SHLAA list of sites and put through the preliminary screening appraisal. The remaining sites which emerge from the initial screening are then analysed under twenty sustainability objectives in the sustainability appraisal. Both of these processes are now discussed in more detail below.

<u>Initial Screening Appraisal</u>

3. All of the sites presented to the Sustainability Appraisal process from the set of sites contained in the SHLAA were included and recorded in the Sustainability Appraisal analysis sheets, in terms of their site number, address and size. To decide if these sites warranted further analysis, all of these sites put forward were then subject to the initial screening appraisal. This appraisal contained four criteria tests, which are considered the most essential criteria for the potential residential site to pass. If the site was deemed to fail at least one of these tests, it then did not go forward for further analysis under the Sustainability Appraisal process. The four test criteria are as follows:

- The site is located within, adjoining or adjacent to a principal town, key service centre, local service centre or service village identified in the local plan settlement hierarchy;
- The site is at least 0.1 hectares in size and is capable of accommodating at least five dwellings;
- The site has an initial advantage because it contains at least 0.1 hectares of land that is at the lowest risk of flooding (flood zone 1);
- The site is located outside areas protected nationally or internationally for key habitats and plant and animal species (i.e. Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation & Special Protection Areas).

4. The first test criterion involves the need for spatial sustainability in terms of the proposed site being within, or adjoining existing built up areas in the plan's settlement hierarchy. This approach therefore is aimed to avoid the negative landscape and accessibility effects of isolated developments in the predominately rural and countryside environs of the plan area. The local plan's settlement hierarchy consists of the principal town (Skipton), key service centres (e.g. Settle), local service centres (e.g. Ingleton), and finally service villages (e.g. Bradley). The settlement hierarchy is based on

the role and service capabilities of each settlement. There are numerous small villages in the plan area which cannot offer the necessary services or play an existing sufficient role at present in the plan area, and hence for reasons of sustainability are then not included in the hierarchy.

5. The second test looks at the size of the site and how many dwellings the site is most likely capable of delivering if it was selected. The site must have a suitable size threshold of at least 0.1 hectares and a capacity to deliver at least five dwellings in order to be considered for a local plan housing allocation. This allows for a mix of small, medium and large sites to be considered. Very small sites of below 0.1 hectares or yielding less than 5 dwellings may be developed for housing without being allocated, provided they satisfy policy criteria for non-allocated sites.

6. The third test considers the level of threat from flooding. It requires that there must be at least 0.1 hectares of the site in Flood Risk Zone 1, so that the site can at least contain a minimum area that is suitable for residential development, related to the second test criterion above. One of the key objectives of this local plan's site selection process is to avoid building dwellings on areas of land where there are Flood Risk Zone 2 and Flood Risk Zone 3 designations in evidence, as the risk of flooding gets progressively higher under these zones. The designations of flood zone for each SHLAA site within the Craven Local Plan process are taken from the most up-to-date evidence from the Environment Agency's flood risk maps and the Council's 2017 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, both of which are available online.

7. Finally, the fourth test aims to ensure that all sites chosen are outside of areas of special biodiversity interest and importance. Key examples are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which help to preserve designated habitats of importance, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) that assist to protect important wildlife species. Both SACs and SPAs in England are designated under European Union law in terms of the Habitat Directive. Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSIs) are of national importance in England, and also protect important biodiversity interests. It is therefore highly preferable that no residential development under the local plan selection process is based within the boundaries of these special areas of environmental protection.

8. It must be noted that some sites put forward under the SHLAA since the beginning of the local plan period in 2012 gained planning permission for housing in the intervening time between 2012 and the analysis of the Sustainability Appraisal during 2016 and 2017. These sites were also included and recorded in the Sustainability Appraisal sheets in terms of site number, address, site size, and also the details of the planning application. In these cases, the site's individual row in the sheet was coloured orange to distinguish it from other studied SHLAA sites and the site was not taken forward, because the grant of planning permission negates the need for a local plan housing allocation.

<u>The Pool of Sites</u>

9. From the above paragraphs, it is seen that SHLAA sites that did not meet one or more of the aforementioned four test criteria remained at Level 1 of the Sustainability Appraisal, and they hence did not proceed further in terms of been a viable housing site option. The sites which passed all four of the tests were then subject to evaluation under the various social, environmental and economic elements of the sustainability objectives. These sustainability objectives were derived based on

having an appropriate mix of socio-economic and environmental objectives, in addition to covering all the key individual social, economic and environmental elements that are relevant to a residential site in North Yorkshire. For example, these elements included site accessibility, conservation heritage, potential to improve community cohesion, prudent use of land resources, and the extent of Flood Risk Zones 2 or 3 on the site or in proximity to it, if they are evident.

10. Each site underwent a marking system in the Sustainability Appraisal, ranging from a double negative to a double positive, in terms of the influence or effect on each sustainability objective analysed. There are five marking possibilities, which means the remaining marking options in between are negative, neutral or positive. In the case of neutral, this means that the influence or effect on the sustainability objective in question is either negligible, or that minor positive and negative effects largely balance each other.

11. In general, a site that received a double negative marking, or an excessive number of single negatives ('excessive' depending on the discretion of the marker where positives also may need consideration), was judged not to be suitable for further advancement, and so it stayed at Level 2. Whilst the assessment exercise necessarily requires some balancing of positive and negative effects, it must be pointed out that some double negatives cannot be balanced out by positives elsewhere. An example would be where a double negative is received in terms of access to an adopted road, which means that access cannot be physically or safely achieved. In such circumstances, a site cannot be taken further forward.

12. Each site under analysis has commentary within the Sustainability Appraisal discussing the key points relevant to the marking of the sustainability objectives in terms of influences or effects on them, with respect to that settlement. An adjacent column in the sustainability appraisal suggests any required mitigation measures and associated recommendations, numbered from a prepared list. These inform and feed into the development principles for the site if it is ultimately selected amongst the local plan's preferred sites. The list of mitigation measures and also the description of the sustainability objectives are included below.

13. It must be noted at this point that the degree to which individual sustainability objectives have a determining effect on site selection can sometimes vary, based on the settlement in question and what the pressures on it are. A good comparison in this respect is the relatively large settlements of Settle and Bentham (both key service centres in the settlement hierarchy). Both of these settlements under the hierarchy were apportioned a little over 10% of the overall housing growth and both settlements are subjected to heritage conservation pressures. However, Settle is also subjected to significant flood risk pressures, whereas Bentham is not. This means that the balance between heritage conservation and flood risk can be a strong determining factor in Settle, whereas, in Bentham, heritage conservation alone can be a strong determining factor. Historic England and the Yorkshire Dales National Park provided input to assist with this process, particularly in the balance of considerations leading to the determination of Settle's preferred site list (which is a stage beyond the scope of this SHLAA report).

14. Overall, the various analyses described up until now are aimed at producing a suitable list or pool of sites in each of the settlements. In general, a typical marking score for a site which advanced through the twenty sustainability appraisals and to the pool of sites might include two to three double positives, and the rest divided into a mix of positives, neutrals and some negatives. The inclusion of some negatives in appraisals of sites which made it through to pool stage is almost

inevitable, as there can be conflict between social, economic and environmental objectives in particular cases. As referred to previously, where such conflicts produce one or more double negative markings, the site would find it quite difficult to progress further to pool stage.

15. When a site reaches the pool of sites, it is referred to in the sustainability appraisal as 'Level 3 (Pass)'. The pool of sites is therefore a list of sites which are deemed satisfactory for site selection if required in the settlement. All of the above described work to get to a pool of sites in each settlement is referred to the Settlement Level Analysis. There are some settlements in the hierarchy where there are sites deemed satisfactory for the pool of sites, but the percentage of housing growth allocated, combined with planning permissions since 2012, means that Preferred Sites are not required from each of their pools.

16. In many other settlements, the number of sites in the pool is greater than the number of sites required to meet housing targets, based on a prescribed average density applied to each site in the plan area. This meant there is a choice available to determine what are deemed the best sites, or Preferred Sites, in each of these settlements. This stage is referred to as the District Level Analysis and is described in the Environmental Report accompanying the Local Plan.

District Level Analysis

17. If the residential site was deemed to be suitable for the pool of sites, it was then determined if the site in question would be a preferred site if there was a surplus of sites available in the settlement. This was based on four analyses, based on the following:

- Viability of Affordable Housing Provision

18. There are three options here for the site, with either of the first two options allowing the site to proceed. Option one means the site is likely to deliver 11 or more dwellings and affordable housing on the site is obtained (irrespective of being in a designated rural area or not). Option two means a site is likely to deliver 6 or more dwellings and a financial contribution towards affordable housing is obtained, as the site is in a designated rural area. Option three means the site is unlikely to deliver affordable housing (either less than 11 dwellings is likely and the site is not in a designated rural area, or less than six dwellings is likely in a designated rural area).

- Site Proximity to Designated Landscape Features

19. The second analysis looks at whether the site is likely to have potential harm the special qualities of the designated landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales National Park or the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is not likely if the site is not situated inside the boundaries of these two designations. It also looks at the location of the site in the context of the settlement (i.e. northwest, southeast, etc. of the settlement's central area). This gives an indication of relative proximity to the National Park or AONB boundary. All other considerations been equal between sites in a settlement, those sites would generally be chosen where they are located furthest away from these designated boundaries to minimise any visual impact, recreational disturbance and other potential urban edge effects. The Planning Policy team has prepared a Landscape Study to assess the visual impact of the preferred sites chosen.

- Site Proximity to Designated Natural Environmental Features

20. The second analysis looks at whether the site is likely to have potential harm the special qualities of the designated landscapes of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar site. This is not likely if the site is not situated inside the boundaries of these designations. It also looks at the location of the site in the context of the settlement (i.e. northwest, southeast, etc. of the settlement's central area). This gives an indication of relative proximity to the boundaries of the designated areas. All other considerations been equal between sites in a settlement, those sites would generally be chosen where they are located furthest away from these designated boundaries to minimise recreational disturbance and other potential urban edge effects.

- Site Position in relation to Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Zone

21. HSE is a statutory consultee for planning applications around major hazard sites and pipelines and on applications for hazardous substances consent. HSE's advice is aimed at mitigating the effects of a major accident on the population around a major hazard site. It is preferable that the site lies in the outer Health & Safety Executive zone, or not in an HSE zone. If the site lies in the middle zone or in the inner zone, the site would require further review in terms of this analysis to determine the exact influence of the zone, if the site is to progress to the stage of preferred sites.

22. If the site passes on all four District Level Analyses, the site can be considered suitable as one of the Preferred Sites in this settlement. A narrative of the site analysis was given for each preferred site chosen, with a net developable area, number of dwellings generated, and development principles.

23. As referred to earlier, lists of the sustainability objectives and the mitigation measures utilised in the sustainability appraisal process are now included below.

<u>Sustainability Objectives:</u>

SO1) Maximise employment opportunities within Craven;

SO2) Maximise opportunities for economic and business growth;

SO3) Promote equality and diversity, and foster community cohesion by reducing all forms of poverty;
SO4) Enhance access for all to essential facilities;

SO5) Promote physical, mental and social health and wellbeing;

SO6) Enable all residents to live in suitable and affordable housing;

SO7) Enable everyone to access a good standard of education and the ability to undertake relevant training and augment skill levels;

SO8) Improve connectivity, reduce the need for travel, and ensure proposed developments have safe access;

SO9) Reduce the risk and impacts of flooding on people, property and the environment including through the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage;

SO10) Protect and enhance the natural and agricultural conditions to maintain soil quality and grow food within Craven;

SO11) Ensure the prudent use of land resources;

SO12) Conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment including heritage assets and their settings and areas of identified and potential archaeological interest;

SO13) Protect, and where possible enhance, Craven's biodiversity and geodiversity, particularly protected habitats and species;

SO14) Protect and enhance the open countryside and wider landscape character;

SO15) Promote innovative design which enhances the visual character of Craven's towns and villages;

SO16) Minimise air, noise and light pollution, and where possible improve local air quality;

SO17) Minimise impacts on climate change, including supporting energy production through renewable and low carbon sources;

SO18) Conserve and enhance water quality and resources and improve the efficiency of water use;

SO19) Minimise waste production and increase recycling rates in Craven;

SO20) Safeguard minerals resources and other natural material assets, and ensure the safe management of hazard risks of former mining activity where new development is proposed.

Mitigation Measures:

1a There is an existing business and employment use on the site which has being put forward, and in this case the site should continue as an employment led use;

1b The site should be promoted as predominately or partly ‘employment led’ to ensure the delivery of the Council’s socio-economic objectives set out in the draft Local Plan. This includes sites which are recommended for mixed uses, where it is deemed that at least part of the site is utilised for employment purposes;

2 A Flood Risk Assessment is required, as a significant fluvial and/or surface water hazard has been identified within part of the site area. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) may also be required here. In this case, mitigation measures include a recommendation to divide the site area to include a use mix appropriate to the site, in order to mitigate against localised flood risk;

3 Biodiversity and/or landscape impact mitigation(s) should be built into the design of the scheme. In this case, mitigation measures suggested by the Council can include a recommendation for division of the site area to include a use mix appropriate to the site, in order to protect areas of high biodiversity, landscape and/or recreational value within the site (including Tree Preservation Orders). These areas may also then be thought of as potentially providing part of a wider green corridor route;

4 Opportunity to incorporate social infrastructure related to community parks and other green infrastructure. In this case, the site may have area(s) which are deemed to provide recreational and other community benefits, which can often (but not always) relate to areas of high biodiversity and landscape value, as referenced in measure (3) above;

5a Siting and design of development on the site to conserve the significance of heritage assets (listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments) on the site and their settings where appropriate, including a Council recommendation for sub-division of the site where necessary. Impact on the Conservation Area to be considered and mitigated against where required;
5b Ground work assessment will be required as part of the on-site works to investigate areas thought to be of archaeological significance. A Council recommendation may include sub-division of the site to protect these specific areas within the site’s overall area;

6 The site is viewed as a town/village centre site with very good accessibility to key services and public transport. Such sites offer future occupiers and residents the opportunity to walk and cycle to most key services rather than using a private vehicle. Hence there may be opportunities for the further intensification of use within the site in terms of housing density. Subject to site specific analysis;

7 Air quality, noise pollution and/or light pollution measures to be addressed as far as possible in the design and layout of the scheme on the site. These measures are important considerations especially where the site is adjoining relatively large residential areas, particular employment uses, and/or late night commercial uses in towns and villages, and also where the site is situated close to a major road network, particularly A-roads;

8 The site is viewed as contributing to regeneration opportunities in the local area to improve overall standards of living, with CIL and S106 potentially used to address additional needs likely to be generated;

9 The site is viewed as being in a prominent location, and hence visual character with regards to housing density, building heights, and dwelling design to be considered for this site's potential development. Prominent locations can include sites situated adjacent to a key entrance to a town or village, or sites on raised ground in comparison to surrounding residential and employment development.