



CPRE Craven

Craven District Council Local Development Plan Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment: Phase 2 Checklist



CPRE Craven in association with KVA Planning
Consultancy



CPRE Craven have prepared a series of reports relating to the Local Development Plan for Craven inside and outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park consisting of

1 Housing numbers

2 Site allocation Criteria

3 Biodiversity

4 Response to the Yorkshire Dales Management Plan (partly within Craven)

This latest report required in depth, professional planning input. CPRE Craven were supported with grant aid from the Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Group of CPRE.

CPRE Craven commissioned Katie Atkinson of KVA Planning Consultancy to work with the committee on the construction of this report.

Katie Atkinson is a member of RTPI and has extensive planning experience having worked as Planning Policy Officer for Northumberland County Council specialising in rural and coastal policy issues working with 7 District Councils and the Northumberland National Park Authority. Katie undertook County Planning Consultations for the District Councils and also wrote regional ones on behalf of the NEA with whom they had a Service Level Agreement. Katie Atkinson was also County representative on a major co-joined wind farm inquiry affecting the National Park and its hinterland. Katie also has extensive experience working at Planning Manager for BAA Scotland based at Glasgow Airport but covering all 3 Scottish BAA owned airports where she was responsible for coordinating the EIA planning application for the Aberdeen Airport runway extension and the production of the 3 airport Master Plans for growth over the next 25 years. She has also worked for the Environment Agency as Planning Liaison Officer and as a Planning Officer for Stirling Council. More recently Katie was Regional Planning Officer for CPRE Y&H.

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Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment: Phase 2 Checklist Report for CPRE Craven

1.0 Introduction

1.2 The purpose of the Strategic Housing Land Availability assessment (SHLAA) is to allow the Council to allocate enough land to meet the housing need for the district of Craven (outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park) over the Plan period.

The SHLAA is a way of gathering information about all of the sites that have been suggested to the Council to see which might be the most suitable for this purpose.

The sites have been suggested to the Local Planning Authority by a wide range of individuals and organisations who either own or manage land, or who know of a potential site which may be suitable for development.

The SHLAA is intended to inform the planning process as to which sites are most appropriate for development and when they may be available for development in order for the Local Plan to meet the Government requirement that housing is adequately planned for in the district over the next 15 years.

1.3 Craven District Council (CDC) has already completed stage one of a two part test against a range of criteria which should determine the appropriateness of a potential site. Certain sites which failed the Part One tests have already been discounted as inappropriate and will not be taken further in the process.

A site which has passed the broad checks in Part One can be viewed as being available for development and in a suitable location and is ready to have further checks applied in Part Two. CDC will require information from stakeholders in order to fully assess the suitability of sites as part of the Phase Two checks.

Only when a site has passed Phase Two, will it be classed as a potential site to be allocated for development and be more widely available for consultation as part of the process in developing a Local Plan.

1.4 This report is intended to form the basis of CPRE Craven's response to the stakeholder consultation undertaken as part of the Phase Two test and will also provide information for comments to be made regarding the Stage Two assessment criteria which forms the basis of the tests to determine the suitability of a site.

2.0 Policy Framework: The National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF March 2012) sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The policies provide a framework for local people and their Local Planning Authority to produce a distinctive and area-specific Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans which reflect the priorities and needs of the communities. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Plans and relevant policy documents.

2.2 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to 'contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' (para. 6) and that the Government's view of sustainable development contains three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

Paragraph 152 states that significant adverse impacts on any of these dimensions should be avoided and, where possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued.

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future sets out five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development: Living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly. It is CPRE Craven's view that these principles and achieving sustainable development should be at the forefront of policy and decision making within Craven.

2.3 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF goes on to state that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. 'For plan-making this means that:

- Local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;

- Local plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:
 - Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in this Framework or taken as a whole; or
 - Specific policies in this framework indicate development should be restricted*.'

It is imperative to note the footnote that is attached to this policy which CPRE Craven believe is essential to plan-making:

'*for example, those policies relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directive (para. 119 of NPPF) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast or within a National Park (or Broads Authority); designated heritage assets; and locations at risk or flooding or coastal erosion.'

CPRE Craven would wish to highlight the primary importance given to this policy within the NPPF and the fact that it is seen as the 'golden thread' which should guide plan-making. The example given in the footnote should also be considered with great significance, therefore CPRE Craven would urge CDC that potential sites within or adjacent to a location protected under a designation, either internationally, nationally or locally, or a site which is at risk of flooding should not be considered suitable for development, ergo, should not pass the Part Two test.

2.4 The 'core planning principles' detailed within the NPPF (para. 17) should be pivotal to the plan-making process and should therefore provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency. These core principles instruct Local Planning Authorities to:

- take account of the different roles and characters of different areas, promote the main urban areas,
- protect Green Belts,

- recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and support thriving rural communities within it,

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- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment,
- allocations of land should prefer land of lesser environmental value,
- encourage the effective reuse of previously developed land (brownfield), recognise that some open land can perform many functions (for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage or food production),
- conserve heritage assets,
- take account of and support the improvement of local health, social and cultural wellbeing for all.

These principles sit alongside other equally as important principles, however, CPRE Craven believe it necessary to remind CDC of the importance of the ones highlighted above. The Craven area, as a district, is distinctive from other areas of England and thrives on being so. The Yorkshire Dales is renowned for its unique features, traditional market towns and beautiful pockets of open countryside. Consequently tourism and agriculture (including agri-tourism) are primary activities associated with the area.

The CDC Local Development Framework needs to support and protect the area's vibrant and rural character in order to keep attracting the thousands of visitors every year who visit the area and use the services provided locally.

Should the potential site allocations be in the least appropriate areas, then Craven will be at risk of urban sprawl and loss of rich habitat, thus degrading the reputation the area has and subsequently discourage visitors to the area for which so many people depend. It is, therefore, essential that the CDC Local Development Framework is locally distinctive and not one that could relate to anywhere else in the country.

2.5 Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes should be a key feature of any Local Development Framework. Paragraph 47 states that Local Planning Authorities must:

'use their evidence base to ensure that the Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for markets and affordable housing in the housing market area..'

CPRE Craven supports the use of the 160 minimum figure identified by CDC in earlier studies. According to the CDC Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) 160 is in

line with the average build over the past twenty years, therefore CPRE Craven believe that a higher target figure is not justified and will not stand up to scrutiny

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at Examination in Public.

Chapter 6 of the NPPF, relating to housing figures goes on to state that windfall sites may be included within the first five-year supply if compelling evidence exists that sites have consistently become available for development within the local area.

CDC's AMR and the results of the SHLAA should provide information as to the status of windfall sites. The NPPF also encourages Council's to bring back into usage redundant and vacant homes. CPRE Craven would urge the Council not to discount these important elements of housing.

2.6 Craven district is rural by character. CPRE Craven strongly supports the principle that within rural areas, housing developments should be directed to where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities (para. 55).

The NPPF uses the example that development in one village may support services in nearby villages, where there exists a group of smaller settlements in principle. CPRE Craven does not wish to see the proliferation of housing developments on every available piece of land in Craven.

CPRE Craven accepts that the area must have new housing, however, wishes to see it located in places where it will support existing thriving centres, re-uses brownfield land and as much as possible where the development will not depart from the existing development limits of a settlement.

2.7 It is a fact that climate change is having a direct impact on our environments. Local Plans must therefore take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk and changes to biodiversity and the landscape.

Paragraph 100 of the NPPF clearly instructs Local Planning Authorities that: 'inappropriate development in areas of risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk..'

Sites which are put forward for development in the Local Plan need to be supported by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, undertaken by a neutral body (not at this stage a developer with an interest in the site).

CPRE Craven would urge CDC to apply the sequential test to all potential sites in order to determine whether or not a location is suitable for development and

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to also take into account the increasing number of flooding events which have occurred this past few years.

2.8 Protecting the natural environment, habitats and biodiversity in general is a key policy theme running throughout the NPPF. Chapter 11 is dedicated to giving Local Planning Authorities the tools to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Plans should allocate land with the 'least environmental or amenity value' (para. 110).

The chapter reinstates the importance of encouraging the effective use of brownfield land (even asking Council's to consider setting a target for the use of brownfield land). CPRE Craven would support CDC in encouraging this and believe developing brownfield land first should be a priority.

2.9 Local Planning Authorities should 'set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged' (para.113).

CPRE Craven would welcome the use of these criteria based policies when determining the suitability of potential sites being proposed in the SHLAA.

In a similar way, CPRE Craven believes that principles set out in paragraph 118 of the NPPF should be applied to potential sites during the Part Two tests of the SHLAA, particularly:

'Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweighs the loss.'

It is essential when determining whether a site is suitable for development whether a habitat which is indeed irreplaceable will be damaged or lost and of equal importance should be the setting of that habitat.

2.10 CPRE Craven welcomes the recognition afforded to the importance of tranquillity and the need for 'quiet places' to be maintained within the NPPF (para. 123).

CPRE nationally fought for the inclusion of tranquillity within the NPPF and the Craven branch would welcome its use in determining whether potential sites put forward in the SHLAA are indeed appropriate locations as part of the Part Two checks.

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2.11 Historic heritage assets contribute hugely to the distinctiveness of an area and the Craven district has a wealth of historic assets which need preserving for generations to come.

When determining a site's appropriateness during the plan making process, Local Authorities should:

'identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise...Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or damage to a heritage asset the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision' (Para's 129-130).

Heritage assets in Craven district contribute to the character of the district as a whole, therefore CPRE Craven urge CDC to protect and conserve sites which include or are adjacent to a heritage asset or those which could detrimentally affect the asset.

3.0 Policy Context: Yorkshire and Humber Regional Spatial Strategy

3.1 The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly published the Government's Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in 2008. It provides a regional planning framework to 2026 as to where development should be located, target figures as to how much development should occur and a regional transport strategy. In July 2012, the Government announced the immediate revocation of RSS's through the 'Localism Act 2011'.

3.2 At the moment, the RSS remains part of Region's Development Plan. That means, together with the saved policies of the Local Plans and the North Yorkshire County Council Structure Plan, it will still form the basis for determining planning applications. After a number of court cases involving developers and the Government, the latest ruling is that the intention to abolish RSSs is a material consideration. Nevertheless, the preparation of plans, such as the Local Development Framework, must still be in conformity with the existing RSS (until it is evoked in September 2013).

3.3 Policy RR1 of the Yorkshire and Humber RSS refers to environmental quality and states that Local Planning Authorities should:

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- '1. Protect and enhance the unique character, heritage and biodiversity of the sub area's upland natural environment, including the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks, the Howardian Hills, Nidderdale and Forest of Bowland AONBs, and protect the integrity of internationally important biodiversity sites;
2. Safeguard the sub area's unique built environment in settlements and upland farming features;
3. Encourage appropriate planting and management measures in the sub area to ameliorate downstream flood risk and enhance biodiversity.'

CPRE Craven would urge CDC not to discount the need to conform to the Yorkshire and Humber RSS as its policies are still relevant at this time. The fact that the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Forest of Bowland AONB were given primacy in the RSS's first policy relating to the remoter rural areas of the region highlights their regional importance and their need to be safeguarded from inappropriate developments, alongside their setting.

3.4 Areas within the Craven District are also recognised for its high landscape values within the RSS. Policy ENV10 specifically relates to landscape and states that:

'The Region will safeguard and enhance landscapes that contribute to the distinctive character of Yorkshire and the Humber. Plans, strategies, investment decisions and programmes should safeguard and enhance the following landscapes and related assets of regional, sub-regional and local importance: Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks and the Nidderdale, Howardian Hills, Forest of Bowland, North Pennine and Lincolnshire Wolds Areas of Outstanding National Beauty...'

Therefore, CPRE Craven would support any policy or a criterion which actively seeks to safeguard and enhance the areas landscape.

4.0 Policy Context: North Yorkshire County Structure Plan

4.1 The North Yorkshire County Structure Plan (Oct 1995) was the statutory planning policy document guiding and controlling development in England's largest

County. It brought together all the relevant strategic planning policies and fulfilled the County Council's duty to prepare and publicise the County Structure Plan. The Secretary of State issued a Direction in 2007 to abolish the Structure Plan, the only Policy saved was Policy ENV8 in relation to the York Green Belt.

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Other policies were deemed to be sufficiently covered by national and regional planning policies that they were not required.

5.0 Policy Context: Craven District Council

5.1 The Craven District (Outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park) Local Plan was adopted July 1999. In September 2007, the Secretary of State issued a Direction to save a number of policies and related chapters within the Plan which were not sufficiently covered by policies contained within other Planning Policies at either a County wide or National level. Therefore the saved Local Plan Policies are currently what are being used to assess planning applications and offer planning advice by CDC alongside the North Yorkshire Structure Plan, the Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber (until Sept 2013), and the NPPF.

5.2 The introductory paragraph of Chapter 3: the Rural Environment, of the saved Local Plan explains that:

'the rural environment of Craven District is one of its most valuable resources. It is a place of employment and food production, a wildlife habitat and a source of recreation. People derive a great deal of satisfaction from seeing, and being in, the countryside, however, the countryside is a finite resource and it is essential therefore that it is used and managed wisely.'

CPRE Craven applauds this sentiment and wish to see it at the heart of the plan-making process for the Craven District. When CDC assess the potential sites in the Part Two checks, it is imperative to the character of Craven as a district that the Local Planning Authority remember that the countryside is indeed a finite resource and once it is developed and habitats lost, it cannot be undone.

In terms of its special landscape quality, 10% of the Craven area (out with the National Park) is designated as part of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The rest of the area outside the AONB was identified as a 'Special Landscape Area' in the County Council's Conservation Strategy. Craven is renowned for its outstanding landscape qualities as demonstrated by the large quantities of literature produced about the area and it is vital that this precious resource is not entirely built upon but preserved.

CPRE Craven understands the need for new housing but would seek to encourage the use of the 'brownfield first' policy identified in the NPPF.

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5.3 The Saved Local Plan Policy ENV1: Development in the open countryside, states that the Council will protect the character and quality of the open countryside from being spoilt by sporadic development by defining development limits.

CPRE Craven urges CDC that when evaluating potential sites within the SHLAA process, the Council should actively encourage the sites available within village development limits to be deemed as the most highly appropriate before promoting development in the open countryside which will adversely affect the character of the District. Saved Policy ENV10: Protection of Trees and Woodlands, also states that the Council will safeguard an area of recognised Ancient Woodland, of which there are many in the Craven District. It is also important to remember that the setting of these woodlands should be preserved in line with Policies in the NPPF.

5.4 Chapter 4: the Built Environment, in the saved Local Plan states that open spaces: 'between buildings and particular landscape features often form a setting or backdrop to settlements and important buildings.

It is essential that such open spaces are offered protection from development (para. 3.2.1)'. Saved Policy BE3 refers to green wedges and states that 'development will be resisted where it would compromise the gap between settlements'.

These are policies which CPRE Craven strongly support and hope that these sentiments will be carried forward in the plan-making process to the SHLAA in order to aid the determination of appropriate sites.

6.0 Craven District Council SHLAA Part Two Site Checklist

6.1 Sites for potential development have been put forward to CDC by a number of stakeholders who either own or manage land or who know of a potential site. Part One tests have already been conducted by CDC as part of the SHLAA process; those which failed the tests have been discounted and will not be progressed further.

CDC are currently applying Part Two tests to sites which passed the preliminary sweeps undertaken in Part One. The objectives of the Part Two tests are to look

at those sites in greater detail. CPRE Craven has already sent comments to CDC regarding their opinion on the Site Allocation Criteria. This report forms the basis of CPRE Craven's response to forthcoming consultations on the Part Two checklist.

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6.2 Delivery Point

6.2.1 CPRE Craven believes that the landowner/developer should be responsible for providing this information to CDC.

The Local Planning Authority should pay regard to Chapter 6 of the NPPF when recommending sites for delivery in the initial 5-year period of the plan and take into account potential windfall opportunities. CPRE Craven would support CDC using the 160 minimum figure as identified in the Council's AMR.

6.3 Food Production

6.3.1 Craven district as a whole contributes enormously to national food production. Craven consists predominantly of grazing land and its importance must be recognised. It is CPRE Craven's opinion that this grazing land is vital to the agricultural related industry (business, agriculture and agri-tourism) in producing some of the best quality lamb and beef in the country, a fact which has been supported by Jeremy Eaton of Craven Cattle Mart.

CPRE nationally will soon be discussing whether or not to campaign for grazing land to be awarded the same status as arable land in terms of the Best and Most Versatile grading system.

Pressure from the housing industry on the agricultural land within Craven outside the national Park, will impact and devastate farming by placing high land values on green field (agricultural) sites and restrict farming further. Paragraph 3.4.1 of the CDC Saved Local Plan refers to farming as being intrinsic to part of the District's economy and by far the largest land use.

CPRE would urge CDC Craven to keep it that way through sensible land allocation.

6.4 Brownfield Land

6.4.1 CPRE Craven is fully supportive of encouraging the effective re-use of brownfield land, provided it is not of high environmental value. The NPPF gives

scope to the Local Planning Authority to set brownfield targets within their Local Plan to encourage its usage.

CPRE Craven would actively support CDC in doing this and believe that there would not be local opposition to the re-use of redundant sites or buildings. The NPPF has removed the 'brownfield first' common sense approach to planning.

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However, CPRE Craven ardently supports the principle and believe that if CDC were to set brownfield targets as set out in the NPPF they would achieve its sustainable development principles. It would also help to make the region distinctive which would support the idea of localism.

6.5. Economic Development

6.5.1 The theory behind this test is sound that land available for housing development should be checked for economic development/mixed use potential and vice versa. If sites have been previously allocated for economic development and have not been delivered and is a suitably appropriate location for housing, i.e. within development limits of an existing settlement, close to facilities, transport networks and utilities, then it should be considered as a potential housing site before green field and edge of settlement sites are allocated thus ensuring the protection and conservation of the open countryside, tranquil places, wildlife habitats and heritage assets.

6.6 Relationship to Existing Built-Up Areas

6.6.1 The core principle of this test is that

'it would be' an advantage if development of a site could be carried out in a way that relates well to the form, character and density of the existing settlement'

CPRE Craven believes that the wording of this criterion needs to be much more specific and therefore tighter. The wording should state that all developments on a site must be carried out in a way that relates well to the form, character and density of the existing settlement.

In order to retain the distinctive character of the Craven District area it is imperative for CDC to produce tight and meaningful policies which clearly instruct decision makers when assessing planning applications. Concise policies setting out exactly what must be achieved on new developments in order to preserve and enhance existing settlements and built up areas are. Therefore,

vital. Potential sites that do not relate well to existing settlements should therefore be discounted as part of the Stage Two checks.

6.7 Ground Conditions

6.7.1 It is imperative that groundwater sources are safeguarded. The wording in this criterion needs to be much less vague.

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CPRE Craven believes that if the criteria in the initial SHLAA are not tight enough at the preliminary stage, potential sites could be laid open to development which could damage and harm groundwater sources.

It is a fact that some of Craven's waterways are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for example, Pan Beck Fen. If contaminated substances were allowed to be deposited on adjacent sites and then leached into the water this could be disastrous for the SSSI and the A-Class River it flows into.

6.8 Flood Risk

6.8.1 Flooding is occurring at a much higher rate than in the past as a result of changing weather patterns and climate change. Therefore it is essential that flood risk should be avoided in new developments. Sites at the greatest risk of flooding should therefore be excluded as part of the Part Two tests. Potential sites which are located in areas of medium flood risk should be carefully assessed by an external neutral body with a specialism in Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in line with paragraph 100 of the NPPF.

CPRE Craven would not recommend an over-reliance on mitigation techniques given the more frequent extreme events that the Craven District has been experiencing. It should also be borne in mind that the Government has delayed new legislation with regard to Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs). Given the increase in surface water flooding events that the District has experienced in recent years, flexibility should be written into this criterion in order to comply with new policies once published. Inappropriate sites which would encourage surface water flooding (where it is deemed SUDs would be ineffectual) should be discounted as part of the Part Two tests.

6.9 Biodiversity/Geodiversity

6.9.1 CPRE Craven firmly believes that this criterion should be included within the Part One Checks. If a site is designated with high environmental value and recognised as an SSSI, Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of

Conservation (SAC), or Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) they must be safeguarded from development and ergo, discounted as an 'appropriate site' immediately as part of the SHLAA.

CDC's Part Two checklist also refers to the fact that non-designated sites of known environmental value (e.g. potential SINC) 'may' also need to be safeguarded.

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CPRE Craven again believes that this wording should be strengthened and altered to reflect the fact that these sites 'must' also be safeguarded.

CDC's own Craven Biodiversity Action Plan (2008) identified the Hellifield Flashes as a potential SINC therefore this area must be safeguarded from any kind of development. Although this has not yet been officially designated, its high environmental value has still been recognised and should be protected. Section 40 of the NERC Act (2006) endorses CPRE Craven's views: 'every public body must in exercising its functions, have regard, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.'

6.9.2 Paragraph 118 of the NPPF states that Local Authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

'[...], proposed development on land within or outside a SSSI likely to have an adverse effect on the SSSI (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted... [...].'

It has also been officially recognised that development outside the boundary of an 'area of importance' can impact adversely on the character and tranquillity of that site. Therefore the possibility of amending the site boundary to remove this constraint should not be considered

(NE243 – England's statutory landscape designations, a practical guide to your duty of regard).

This should clearly be applied to the boundary with the YDNP and the Forrest of Bowland AONB as well as any sites designated under national and European law for environmental value. This is a view supported by the RSPB and the NYCC Ecologist amongst others. Inappropriate development could adversely impact the setting of any of these remarkable areas and sites with this potential must be discounted as part of the SHLAA.

This would also be supportive of the 'golden thread' of sustainable development, for which the NPPF clearly states, should be at the heart of plan-making. This report in paragraph 2.3 has already highlighted the importance of the footnote attached to the policy in paragraph 14 of the NPPF, that development should be restricted for those sites protected by designations such as SSSI, Local Green Space, AONB, National Park, heritage assets and land at risk of flooding, amongst others.

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6.10 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

6.10.1 This criterion although sound in principle must be tightened in order to avoid the felling of mature trees which should be safeguarded from development. For example, a development in Abbeyfield, Skipton damaged trees which resulted in felling and the removal of hedgerows and trees located in Long Preston Conservation Area. Wording within the criterion, therefore needs to become stronger i.e. 'should' needs to become 'must'.

CDC Saved Policy ENV10 relates to the protection of trees, ancient woodlands and hedgerows and CPRE Craven would support a reflection of this Policy when assessing sites as part of the SHLAA.

6.11 Forest of Bowland AONB and the Yorkshire Dales National Park

6.11.1 Development of a site within, adjoining or adjacent to the AONB and/or National Park must be capable of conserving their special landscape and scenic beauty.

The rural environment of Craven is one of its most valuable resources. Thousands of tourists visit the region every year to witness the unique open countryside and beautiful landscapes it has to offer. The National Park and the AONB each represent large swathes of the Craven District. It is essential to ensure that development outside of these areas does not adversely impact these highly reputed areas. It is widely recognised that the setting of a National Park/AONB plays a pivotal role in protecting the designated area from harmful developments which could impact negatively upon the site either directly or indirectly. CPRE Craven would refer CDC to NE 243, as quoted above in paragraph 6.9.2.

6.12 Heritage Assets

6.12.1 In a similar vein to biodiversity and high environmental value sites, heritage assets including: Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments, parks and gardens, archaeological remains and non-designated heritage assets need to be safeguarded from inappropriate development.

CPRE Craven supports the English Heritage recommendation that sites which include a Scheduled Monument or Grade I or II Listed Building should be removed at the first sieve and to widen constraints at the second stage. This

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could potentially include the setting of a monument etc. to reflect paragraphs 129-130 of the NPPF.

6.13 Infrastructure

6.13.1 CPRE Craven would urge CDC to consider whether development of a site is suitable to be accessed via public transport, bicycle, foot or car (in line with a Green Transport Plan) before the site is put forward for potential development as part of the SHLAA process. In a similar way tests should be undertaken by utility companies to assess the potential advantages of certain sites.

6.14 Topography, Geomorphology, Watercourses, Aspects and Views

6.14.1 It would be unacceptable if development adversely impacted on existing settlements or habitats. Therefore CPRE Craven supports the principle that the development of a site should to be undertaken to ensure that it harmonises with existing features making good use of existing assets, including views into and out of the site.

CPRE Craven believes that in order to safeguard the rural character of the district that so many people derive satisfaction from, it is imperative that development on any site must be done in a way to complement existing development and assets and would welcome a stronger criterion reflecting its importance.

6.15 Open Space

6.15.1 Open spaces often help to define a location's character. It is important to retain corridors of open space within development limits where possible in order to encourage a rich biodiversity to thrive within rural communities. Equally

important is the need to be able to access 'open space' as this has been recognised as being a factor which can contribute towards 'well-being'.

Paragraph 73 of the NPPF states that: 'planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.'

CPRE Craven would not wish potential sites to be developed at the expense of vital open space which is needed for biodiversity and for the public good. Paragraph 3.2.1 of the CDC Saved Local Plan states that it is 'essential' to offer protection to open spaces and CPRE Craven would agree.

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6.15.2 CPRE Craven supports the need to retain 'Green Wedges' and green corridors throughout the Craven district which provide 'gaps' between settlements. If these important areas were lost to development, the amalgamation of settlements would ensure that Craven district lost its unique rural character on which so many livelihoods depend.

6.16 Minerals

6.16.1 Areas which need protecting from development in order to safeguard potential mineral deposits of local or national importance should be discounted as part of the Part Two detailed tests carried out through the SHLAA process.



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7.0 Conclusion

7.1 KVA Planning Consultancy was commissioned by CPRE Craven to produce a report on the SHLAA Part Two criteria produced by Craven District Council. This report will form the basis of the CPRE Craven response to forthcoming consultations on the SHLAA.

7.2 CPRE Craven fully accepts the fact that houses must be built, however the number and location of where these new dwellings must be sited is not straight forward.

CPRE Craven firmly believes that the proposed minimum target of 160 houses per year in Craven District (outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park) should be adopted. It may prove necessary for the target to be exceeded during the course of the initial five year period; however, to adopt a higher figure at the outset would result in inappropriate planning decisions being taken in order to comply with the target. 160 is historically what has been achieved in Craven over the past twenty years in accordance with the CDC AMR which would be upheld at Examination in Public.

CPRE Craven also believes that the opportunity to include windfall developments within the initial five year supply should be utilised in line with the NPPF.

7.3 In terms of 'where' new residential developments should occur, CPRE Craven recommends that the NPPF be adhered to and those policies saved in the current CDC Local Plan.

It is paramount that Craven's biodiversity and special landscapes which are recognised as being high in environmental value are safeguarded.

CPRE Craven ardently believe that any potential site located on or adjacent to a designated site (internationally, nationally or locally recognised) for its environmental significance, and those sites which have been identified but not yet designated, should be discounted as part of the Part One tests and should not proceed to Part Two. Potential sites which could adversely impact the setting of the aforementioned sites, or the YDNP, or the Forest of Bowland AONB should be carefully considered and discounted where appropriate in Part Two. Sites which would damage and destroy protected trees and woodlands should also be safeguarded as part of the SHLAA. It is essential for the area to retain its rich biodiversity for which it is so widely reputed.

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7.4 CPRE Craven would also support English Heritage's recommendation to discount any sites which would be harmful to heritage assets in the first trench of tests.

7.5 CPRE Craven advocates a 'smart growth' approach to development and would urge CDC to achieve Brownfield regeneration by the inclusion of Brownfield targets as implied by the NPPF. The reduction of Greenfield development should be a priority and development within existing village development limits would be welcomed.

CPRE Craven would also encourage CDC to seek to reduce the number of empty homes in the area in accordance with paragraph 51 of the NPPF. Open Spaces between settlements including Green Wedges should be retained as important structures for preventing the merging of settlements and for increasing the wealth of biodiversity in the area.

7.6 Craven's reliance on agriculture should be safeguarded and its importance in national food production acknowledged. Craven exists mainly of grazing land which must be safeguarded in order for the economic prosperity of the area to increase.

7.7 CPRE Craven would like to see all potential sites which are at high risk of flooding be excluded as an appropriate site during Part One of the tests and

that areas of medium risk be carefully considered during Part Two. CDC should rely on Strategic Flood Risk Assessment undertaken by a neutral specialist body (not a developer at this stage) in order to fully gain an understanding of the site in line with Paragraph 100 of the NPPF.

7.8 In order to achieve these core principles in allocating appropriate sites for development through the SHLAA, criteria used has to be robust and able to stand up to scrutiny.

Many of the criteria use vague and ambiguous language, for example: 'may', 'could' and 'should'. In order to undertake the level of detailed checks required to appropriately assess potential sites in Part Two, the language needs to be strengthened: for example: 'need' and 'must'. If a stronger syntax is not used, some sites which are not appropriate for development in reality may 'slip through' and become an allocated site. This could then lead to inappropriate development which may in turn adversely impact upon one or some of Craven's many assets directly or indirectly.

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7.9 The chapters relating to policy context in this report highlight the need for CDC to recognise its rich rural character including its highly valued landscapes and safeguard and enhance it for generations to come. Thus complying with the sustainable development core principles and the 'golden thread' running through the core of the NPPF. Craven District Council's own Landscape Character Appraisal (2002) states on numerous occasions that: 'Craven District is renowned for its outstanding landscape quality'.

7.10 Given the need for the Craven District Council Local Development Framework to be locally distinctive and appropriate for Craven as a District (outside the YDNP) it is imperative that it's heritage assets, woodlands, landscapes, tranquil and quiet places and it's biodiversity are conserved and protected.

CPRE Craven firmly believes that if sites are protected from inappropriate development and located in sensible areas which conform to national and local policies, that the housing allocations will provide sufficient strategic guidance and spatial direction for subsequent Development Plan Documents and development decisions, as well as providing an effective basis for the policies of the Local Plan.



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