

APPENDIX I – Content of Housing Clarification Statement

1. *Scope of the Statement*

The Statement, in accordance with the legislative framework, would emphasise that it cannot create new policies to either restrict or direct development in the rural area, as new policy can only be created by a new Local Plan.

However, it would seek to provide a consistent and up-to-date evidence base that Development Management and Planning Policy can use to support professional judgements on what is a sustainable location.

2. *Policies relating to the supply of housing and sustainability*

The Statement would list all policies together with a statement on whether the policy relates to the supply of housing for the purposes of paragraph 49 of the NPPF or not. A commentary on the implications for decision making would also be provided. This would help to clarify the weight that any policy can be given. The Statement could serve a purpose in reiterating that Green Belt policy still stands and has significant weight in decision making. Beyond policies relating to the supply of housing land the Statement could provide further definition of what constitutes 'sustainable development' – i.e. the national and local policies which are unaffected by the 5-year housing land supply issue and still carry sufficient weight to guide decision making. For example: heritage; ecology; landscape and design policies.

This aspect of the Statement is not intended to bring about a significant change in decision making rather it is intended to provide a clear and transparent basis for decision making. The Clarification Statement would offer further clarity over which policies would be capable of being given weight in determining planning applications in the rural area. It is considered that this would aid transparency by setting this out in a single easy-to-access document. This ultimately may have the added benefit of assisting the preparation of less technical, more focussed, development management reports.

3. *Key evidence which will inform judgements about sustainable locations for development in the rural area*

The Statement would set out key evidence which the Council will use to judge the relative sustainability of a development's location in the rural area both in the development management process and in the preparation of the Joint Local Plan. The aim will be to offer some clarification as to how the Council will use new evidence emerging from the Local Plan process to determine if a development proposal is in accordance with relevant national policies, such as the need to promote sustainable development in rural areas set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF. This will assist in a consistent appraisal of proposals.

These could include:

(a) Rural Services update 2015/16

A review of the Planning Policy Team's 2011 Rural Services Study will be updated as part of the Local Plan process to record the level of local facilities available in each of our rural settlements. This study will identify the presence of key local facilities within walking distance of a proposed scheme and can help to demonstrate, or otherwise, the sustainability of a

scheme. The study would have limitations as it would not consider the capacity of key services as this is the role of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which will not be available until the Draft Plan stage of the Local Plan process.

(b) Rural access to services mapping 2015

The objective would be to present evidence which is being used in the preparation of the Local Plan to help identify sustainable locations so that this can be factored into the decision making process in the interim period before the Local Plan is adopted. This evidence involves accessibility mapping showing access to key facilities from settlements in the rural area and includes consideration of factors such as walking distances to local schools, public transport distances to employment and town centres etc. The County Council's Accessibility Team would also provide a summary of each settlement's access to facilities but it would not state whether the accessibility of a development proposal is acceptable or not. This type of information is important as access via sustainable transport measures to wider facilities, particularly employment, appears to be a consideration in Inspectors' decisions regarding sustainability, although it is by no means the only consideration given the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, environmental and social factors.