



Planning Policy Team
South Derbyshire District Council
Formal Response to South Derbyshire
District Council

County Hall
Matlock
Derbyshire DE4 3AG

Sent via email

Ref: AG/
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To Whom It May Concern,

As Leader of Reform UK at Derbyshire County Council and Councillor for Aston Division, I am committed to ensuring that planning policy across Derbyshire reflects the priorities of local residents rather than centrally imposed targets or ideological objectives. Planning should be practical, fair, and rooted in local circumstances, with a clear focus on value for money, infrastructure capacity, environmental stewardship, and democratic accountability.

Too often, local plans are driven by pressure to meet national housing numbers or abstract policy goals, at the expense of community character, countryside protection, and public confidence in the planning system. Reform UK believes that development must work for the people who live here now and for future generations, not undermine the very qualities that make our communities desirable places to live.

This response reflects those principles and is offered constructively to help shape a Local Plan that is locally led, realistic, and fair.

Part 2 Local Plan Review: Issues and Options

I welcome the opportunity to respond to the South Derbyshire District Council Part 2 Local Plan Review: Issues and Options. I support a planning approach that

prioritises local decision-making, sustainable and proportionate development, local employment, and the protection of our countryside, while ensuring that housing and infrastructure policies remain practical, affordable, and accountable to residents.

My comments below address the key issues raised in the consultation document.

1. Local Plan Review Approach

I support the preparation of a single, comprehensive Local Plan under the new planning system. A unified approach provides clarity for residents, developers, and decision-makers, reduces duplication, and allows policies to respond coherently to changes in national planning policy and local government reorganisation.

A single Local Plan also provides an opportunity to reset priorities and ensure that future development in South Derbyshire is shaped by local need and local consent, rather than piecemeal or reactive decision-making.

2. Housing Needs and Allocations

I recognise the need to address housing demand in South Derbyshire. However, housing delivery must be driven by local circumstances, infrastructure capacity, and community character, not solely by nationally imposed housing targets.

I strongly support a brownfield-first approach, prioritising previously developed land and vacant or underused employment sites before any consideration is given to greenfield or countryside locations. The protection of rural landscapes and green spaces is vital, both environmentally and socially.

I also encourage a focus on smaller-scale, community-led developments that integrate with existing settlements. Such an approach supports sustainable rural communities while avoiding the harmful impacts of large-scale, disconnected housing estates in sensitive locations.

3. Retail and Economic Development

I support a review of the retail hierarchy to ensure it reflects current economic realities and changing patterns of use. Local planning policy should actively support independent businesses and local enterprise, rather than reinforcing reliance on large national or multinational operators.

I also support redefining Swadlincote Town Centre as a commercial centre, allowing for a broader mix of uses, including residential accommodation. This flexibility will help improve vitality, footfall, and long-term economic resilience.

4. Green Belt

I strongly support the protection of Green Belt land and agree that development within the Green Belt should only occur in genuinely exceptional circumstances.

Unnecessary encroachment must be resisted, and brownfield alternatives fully exhausted first. I also support the inclusion of a locally specific Green Belt policy, with clear definitions of terms such as “*limited infilling*” and “*disproportionate development*”, to provide certainty and prevent policy misuse.

5. Infrastructure

Development must not outpace infrastructure. Too often, communities are left dealing with congested roads, overstretched schools, and inadequate healthcare long after housing is built.

I recommend that the Council explore alternative infrastructure delivery mechanisms, including public-private partnerships and community-led models, to ensure infrastructure is delivered up front or alongside development, not retrospectively.

I also support a policy requiring the long-term management and maintenance of open spaces, SUDS, and communal infrastructure by public authorities, rather than transferring excessive and ongoing charges to homeowners through private management companies.

6. Gypsy and Traveller Sites

I recognise the requirement for the Local Plan to address the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities. This must, however, be done in a way that is evidence-led, fair, and consistent, while maintaining public confidence in the planning system.

Any provision for Traveller sites should adhere to the following principles:

- Site provision must be based on robust, up-to-date local evidence of genuine need.
- Sites should not be allocated on Green Belt land, high-quality agricultural land, or in locations that place disproportionate pressure on local infrastructure or services.
- All sites must have safe highway access and appropriate provision for utilities, drainage, healthcare, and education.
- Planning rules must apply equally to all, and unauthorised development should be addressed promptly and consistently.

- Meaningful engagement with local communities should take place before any allocations are finalised.

The Local Plan should prioritise clearly identified, well-managed sites, avoiding vague or open-ended policies that undermine trust and create conflict.

7. Community Involvement and Environmental Considerations

Local communities must have a genuine and influential voice in shaping planning decisions. Public consultation should be transparent, accessible, and meaningful, with feedback clearly reflected in final policy choices.

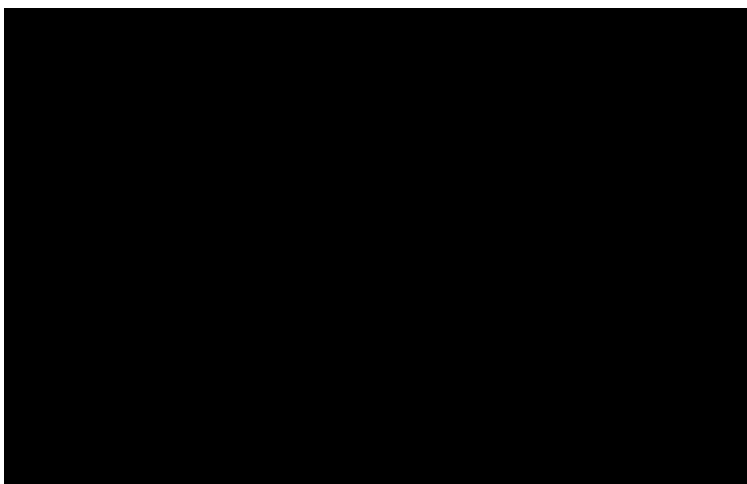
Environmental responsibility is important, but it must be pursued in a proportionate and cost-effective way. The Local Plan should support clean energy where appropriate while avoiding rigid or costly Net Zero targets that risk increasing housing costs, constraining growth, or limiting local flexibility.

Conclusion

I hope these comments assist in the development of a Local Plan that is locally led, balanced, and credible, delivering the homes and infrastructure South Derbyshire needs while protecting the environment and maintaining public confidence in the planning system.

I remain committed to supporting policies that put residents first, respect local character, and ensure that development works for existing communities as well as future generations.

Yours Sincerely



County Councillor for Aston, South Derbyshire