

Darley Dale Town Council's position and recommendations

What did Darey Dale Town Council say in its formal reply to the Regulation 19 consultation?

Darley Dale Town Council (DDTC) supports the draft plan in terms of housing numbers as it believes that adoption of this plan will be in the best interests of the residents of Darley Dale in the long term.

DDTC offers this opinion to assist residents of Darley Dale in making their feelings about the draft plan known to the District Council and ultimately the Planning Inspector, during the consultation period.

After DDTC opposing it throughout the process, why the change of direction?

DDTC has been actively and in its opinion, justifiably critical of the district council during the development of the draft plan and in particular over its later stages of development. It still feels that the draft plan could certainly have been developed more satisfactorily with more consideration of contemporary evidence and data that DDTC provided.

However the government introduced, with immediate effect, a new National Planning Policy Framework on August 17th 2026 (NPPF 2026) which materially changed how future planning will be addressed and assessed. The changes in NPPF 2026 have altered DDTC's position from a 'no objection' stance to a 'support with conditions' one.

But the allocated sites in Darley Dale aren't in good locations?

Like many local planning authorities countrywide, our District Council were given a Herculean task of finding suitable land to build around double the quantity of houses per year district wide, for the next 15 or so years, that it has ever built before. This is to meet the government's house building targets. The revised draft Local Plan informs how many and where these houses will be built, district wide, over the 15 year plan period.

Suitable land for house building is in short supply across the district and the 'Call for Sites' request in the early part of developing the revised draft Local Plan, produced a poor range of options for the district council to choose from. Darley Dale emphasised the problem with the 'best of a bad bunch' of sites finally being allocated in the draft plan. These 'bad' allocated sites will all have significant issues to overcome at planning application stage, such as drainage, flooding and access.

Why allocate them in the plan if they are going to be difficult to complete?

It was related to the 5 year housing land supply (5YHLS) figure under the 2024 NPPF. If the district council couldn't find enough land to show there was sufficient allocated land for the next 5 years, what's called a 'tilted balance' in favour of development is applied to any new planning application from developers.

The district council hadn't been able to show a 5YHLS for several years and this had contributed significantly to their losing the large majority of recent developer appeals. Effectively, under the 2024 NPPF, no 5YHLS allowed a developer driven free-for-all and a planning authority more or less helpless to prevent it.

These allocations therefore relate to the draft plan being able to show it has a 5 YHLS. The district council will then hope they can get planning permission on these sites so that the housing numbers in the plan are deliverable.

The draft plan shows a 5 year housing land supply so is that problem averted?

Yes, unless the draft plan is rejected by the inspector after the Regulation 19 consultation. If the inspector feels that the draft plan isn't sound, legally correct, correctly produced or undeliverable and rejects it, the whole 5 year Local Plan review process restarts leaving the district without a 5YHLS.

Under the new NPPF 2026 the 'tilted balance' protocol has been replaced with the applicant site's proximity to the settlement boundary replacing it. Within the settlement boundary unless a development would cause significant harm, it will almost certainly be approved, whereas outside the boundary approval is not so secure.

If everyone supports it, why would the Inspector not approve it?

The town council feels that due to the acute lack of available developable sites Darley Dale saw a much lower housing allocation than it expected, meaning other towns and villages have had significantly higher allocations than were expected applied to them to balance the numbers.

In particular, Tansley and Ashbourne will be strongly opposed to the draft plan as they have received particularly high house building allocations. They will undoubtedly present strong evidence-based cases against the draft plan to the inspector.

If enough, well argued cases are presented against the draft plan, the inspector could reject it.

DDTC's representations to the Regulation 19 Consultation now contain some points that question the soundness of the draft plan – one of the inspector's critical tests. The points in question could add to those raised by other communities resulting in rejection of the plan at inspection.

DDTC believes that under the new NPPF 2026, the significant changes in terms of an applicant site's location relative to the settlement boundary gives DDTC more argument options in objecting to the applications, particularly now that the 'tilted balance' protocol has been removed.

What support information is DDTC providing for its residents?

DDTC will not be conducting any special Local Plan events such as open days at the Whitworth, petitions, or similar, in opposition to the draft plan.

A one-off Community Voice Local Plan Special Edition was been printed which highlights some of the issues surrounding the allocated sites and was be delivered to most households in Darley Dale in early August. This special edition offered an overview of the draft plan and how it could affect Darley Dale, and its recommendations on how residents should get involved.

DDTC complied this in June, before publication of the final draft plan in mid-July due to print lead times. Subsequently there are some discrepancies with the final version of the draft plan which was released after printing. For example, the St Elphin's allocation was removed in the July final plan draft. The Special Edition was correct at the time it was sent to print.

The new NPPF 2026 has however made some of the recommendations obsolete as the 'bigger picture' has changed substantively as now the applicant site's location relative to the settlement boundary has replaced the 'tiled balance' protocol.

DDTC now recommends that residents question the infrastructure, and in particular the drainage issues DDTC have highlighted earlier in the plan's development, the use of the anti-coalescence policy PD10 to protect the Hackney hillside, and access issues to some of the allocated sites.

So how do DDTC recommend residents to engage with the Regulation 19 consultation?

DDTC therefore recommends that residents state their own views direct to the district council via:

- 1) the official consultation page of the Derbyshire Dales District Council website is [here](#)
- 2) by [email](#)
- 3) in writing to: Planning Policy
Derbyshire Dales District Council
Town Hall
Matlock
DE4 3NN

The full DDDC draft local plan supporting evidence base is [here](#).

DDTC are of course happy to help should you require assistance:

DDTC telephone number: 01629 735248

DDTC [email](#): David Chapman, Chair of Planning Committee