

Response by Ashover Parish Council to NEDDC Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation on the Strategic Approach to the Location of Development and Refined Sites (April 2026)

Ashover Parish Council appointed a Planning Consultant to consider the Public Consultation in relation to Ashover Parish resulting in the following report being supported by Members at its meeting on 21 April 2026.

I am writing to make you aware of the strong objections that the Parish Council and the wider community have regarding the unwarranted inclusion of the whole of the site – Land at the Junction of Narrowleys Lane and Moor Road (Ref: 45745) in Ashover village. A proposed allocation which, if developed would cause substantial harm to the landscape and visual amenity and the appearance of the local area. Further, the site is not suitable, sustainably located and does not provide access to the facilities meeting the day-to-day needs of future residents. There are better more sustainable options for development in the district.

Can we start by saying that we have serious concerns about how North East Derbyshire Council has sought to distribute the housing need across the district not only in terms of Ashover settlement, but more generally. It is flawed and unsound. In particular as:

- Firstly, it does not make sufficient provision for housing growth in and around Chesterfield and the other Level 1 and Level 2 Settlements as detailed in the Settlement Hierarchy Topic Paper (March 2026) and associated documents.
- Secondly, it does not make as much use as possible of brownfield sites, previously developed land and grey belt sites in the Green Belt to accommodate future housing and other development housing needs, as required by national and local planning policies. This includes paragraph 24 of the NPPF, which states “*Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land*”. The approach taken by the District Council focuses too heavily on the development of greenfield sites in villages as such not only does this not represent sustainable development but is also contrary to national and local planning policies.

The approach requires a fundamental re-think that ensures that housing allocations are distributed much more proportionately and sustainably across locations.

The proposal would have a harmful impact on the scenic value, landscape, setting and appearance of the area

Policies SS1, SS2 and SS7 in the North East Derbyshire Local Plan address development within and beyond the defined Settlement Development Limits. These policies identify those forms of development that would be permitted in principle within Settlement Development Limits. Beyond Settlement Development Limits clause 8 of Policy SS2 states:

“Land which lies outside a Settlement Development Limit and is not allocated for development, will be treated as ‘countryside’ where development will only be permitted in accordance with Policies SS1 (Sustainable Development) and SS9 (Development in the Countryside)”.

There does not appear to be any dispute that the site is outside the Settlement Development Limits associated with Ashover village and is in the countryside in planning terms.

This is borne out by the site itself, which with its agricultural use together with boundary dry stone walls and to a lesser extent hedges create a strong rural character and feel.

By itself and in association with the wider area to the south and west the site is much cherished by residents and the many visitors to the parish. This is for a variety of reasons including its

scenic beauty, the views it offers to the surrounding countryside, the wildlife it supports and the vital contribution it makes to the area's distinctiveness and sense of place.

While it is recognised there is some built development to the north and east of the site across Narrowleys Lane and Moor Road respectively, these roads provide a strong visual and physical barrier to the more urban development. Anyone viewing the site and from any direction would consider it as being in the countryside functionally and physically.

The importance of this site as part of the wider high-quality landscape in and around Ashover Village, and the need to protect this, has been recognised through a range of national and local policies and designations.

This is illustrated by one good example. Policy SDC3 of the North East Derbyshire Local Plan deals with Landscape Character. Informed by, and building on, the Derbyshire Landscape Character Assessment, this policy broadly sets out a hierarchy of importance in terms of landscape in the district with the Areas of Multiple Sensitivity (AMES) being at the highest after the Peak District National Park. This and associated policies seek to protect important landscapes and will be used to determine the sensitivity of the landscape and the likely impact of development. The site is an Area of Multiple Sensitivity (as well as a Special Landscape Area), which has, therefore, been identified as of high and sensitive landscape value.

Additionally, at the national level, the site is located within the Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent National Character Area (NCA) – No 50. This is described as “a picturesque transitional area between the natural beauty of the Peak District National Park to the west and the largely urban, formerly mined Derbyshire Coal Measures to the east. Often referred to as the Gateway to the Peaks”...“it was seriously considered during the original boundary selection in 1950 and remains a landscape of extremely high quality”¹.

The importance of the site to the local landscape has been underlined by other studies. This includes a detailed assessment of the landscape and visual effect commissioned in NEDDC in 2016 when the site subject was the subject of a planning application for housing development. This concluded that development should not be permitted in this location, especially as it would detract from the visual amenity of the area and would have an adverse impact on the unique long reaching views across Ashover that the local landscape is famed for. A view echoed in other reports and studies, including the approved Ashover Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

In addition to its harmful impact on the landscape, it would also result in the loss of important and cherished views. The site is relatively flat, gently sloping towards the south west, this provides for extensive and spectacular long distance views of the surrounding countryside. These views would be blocked and replaced by a highly urban residential estate.

As such the introduction of significant urban development comprising of up to 26 dwellings, with parking, roads etc. would result in significant and permanent harm to the landscape, scenic value, setting and appearance of the area. What is presently attractive open countryside offering important views to the wider area would be replaced by highly visible and heavily developed urbanisation that encroaches and is unrelated to and detracts from this predominantly rural and open landscape.

While it is recognised that the proposals are in a very early stage of development, with little detail about potential mitigation measures such as landscaping, we fundamentally disagree that any landscape could meaningfully ameliorate and integrate the development into the landscape.

The change would be substantial, noticeable and adverse.

¹ Source: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5048261324832768>

Furthermore, the west side of Narrowleys Lane and south of Moor Road provides a logical, established and natural physical boundary to this part of the village. Development across it would breach this sound boundary and would result in pressures for the continuation of housing along these roads.

It does not represent sustainable development

Ashover has limited services and infrastructure. This is recognised in the North East Derbyshire Local Plan which classifies it as a Level 3 Settlement, which are described as settlements with limited sustainability.

This is further borne out by a recent study (Settlement Hierarchy Topic Paper - March 2026) undertaken in NEDDC, which amongst other things, looked at the various settlements in the district on access to key services. This gave the settlement of Ashover a score of 2 out of 10 for Public Transport and 3 out of 10 for Facilities and Services, scores which were amongst the lowest of the 47 settlements in the district.

This means that residents of the development will need to access other services, such as secondary schools, medical facilities, shops and employment in nearby larger settlements.

This is likely to require access by a private car, public transport or cycling.

However, the frequency of buses is poor. The site, and wider Ashover settlement, is served by a small number of bus services mainly between Chesterfield and Matlock, which collectively provide a very limited daytime service (about one every two hours), with no services in the evening or on a Sunday and Bank Holiday.

Further, the distance to the nearest towns, Chesterfield and Matlock (both about 4 miles), compounded by the hilly and often unlit nature of the main routes, which would mean that walking and cycling are not realistic options for accessing such services.

As such the future occupiers would be likely to be reliant on private vehicles to access services, which is contrary to national and local policies that seeks to focus development on sustainable locations.

Nor is it in accordance with the overall approach set out in North East Derbyshire's Settlement Role and Function Study (March 2026), which seeks to assist in directing developments to the most sustainable locations within the hierarchy, which in this instance it does not.

Adverse Impact on biodiversity

While the site does not contain any national or locally designated wildlife habitats, this does not mean that it is not of biodiversity value. Its open and undeveloped nature and the presence of hedgerows, trees and other environmental features provide important and much-valued habitats for a variety of wildlife and wildflowers. Indeed, it is home to, and supports, a variety of species, some protected. Further, an arboriculture survey identified the importance of trees forming the boundary of the Bourne field and an Area Tree Protection Order is in place to protect these.

Its biodiversity importance was underlined by ecology reports presented at the 2016 planning inquiry relating to the site that provide detailed scientific evidence of risk to protected species if development takes place on it. This included a bat survey, which showed bat activity and roosting concentrated, especially around the trees and hedges that form the westerly border to the Bourne field. It also identified that a large active badger sett is close to the site and a population of great crested newts in nearby ponds. These animals forage and feed on the site. We contend that the evidence contained in these ecology reports remain sound.

Whilst it is recognised that the final proposal may include some measures to mitigate its impact on biodiversity, which are welcomed, these, it is considered cannot compensate for the damage it will cause to local biodiversity in terms of retention, enhancement or compensation for any losses proposed, as required by local and national planning policies.

Adverse Impact on Highway Safety

There are already highway issues in the local area and the proposal will only make this worse.

As the approved Ashover Neighbourhood plan states at page 50, "The road and street pattern in the parish, however, has developed over many centuries, and is not suited to modern traffic". This remains true for the parish, and the site in particular.

In particular, the approach roads to this site are sub-standard and do not meet recognised standards, including the 7.5m width required by Derbyshire Highways. This includes Crompton Lane, which is single track with steep inclines and blind bends.

Additionally, there is a high and unsafe level of on-street parking on Moor Road and Narrowleys Lane, which is causing traffic congestion and highway safety issues. This is mainly generated by nearby residential properties but also due to Moor Road currently serving the Primary School and Grove House care home.

Therefore, the proposal would have an unacceptable and unsafe impact on highway safety especially given the sub-standard nature of the road network in the local area, existing parking issues and over-reliance by the occupiers of the proposed dwellings on the car for transport journeys as previously referenced.

Contrary to Ashover Parish Neighbourhood Plan

The site is in the area covered by the Ashover Neighbourhood Plan. This Plan was subject to a referendum (with an impressive 94% vote in favour) and forms an integral part of the Local Development Plan.

The proposal is at odds with the aims and provisions of this Neighbourhood Plan process, which seeks to develop a shared vision for the development of the parish, and ensure development meets local needs and takes place in the most appropriate and sustainable locations. Specifically, Policy AP2 with its emphasis on that land outside the defined Limits of Development (which this is) will be treated as countryside and any development that place within it will be carefully controlled and only allowed in very special circumstances that are not relevant here. Also, Policy AP13 which requires development proposals to demonstrate that they respect the distinctive landscape character of the area as identified in the Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent Landscape Character Area.

Out of Scale

It should be stressed that the Parish Council is not opposed to new house building as well as other forms of development. Far from it. The settlement of Ashover and the wider parish has already experienced significant house building in recent years with more in the pipeline (including the site Land South West of Grange Farm Milken, which has permission for ten homes).

Indeed, it is considered that the local area has already made its proportional and sustainable contribution to meeting housing supply. There are already concerns about the adverse cumulative impact these developments will have on the character, sustainability and services. The new proposal is too much. It represents over development and is out of scale and disproportionate with the local area.

Planning History

We are aware that the site has some planning history. It has been the subject several planning applications and was granted (on appeal) permission for 26 dwellings in 2016. This planning permission is unimplemented and, in our opinion, has lapsed. While we recognise that North East Derbyshire District Council state, 'that a material start on site has been made but no dwellings had been completed', we do not share this opinion. We dispute that the sufficient works have been undertaken to meet the 'substantial work' threshold for the application to be viewed as live. Further, that the applicant has had ample time to progress the permission and they have failed to do so may indicate that there are severe constraints with the site which means that it is not 'deliverable' for development.

Further, we do not consider that the all or part of a site has an unimplemented planning permission is enough to justify its inclusion. This permission was granted some time ago, and what may have been acceptable in planning terms then may not be now. The site needs to be fully assessed and justified in light of current planning standards and policies, national and local. Standards and policies it fails to meet by a wide margin.

For these compelling reasons the whole of site should be removed from the list.

Further comments supported by Ashover Parish Council at its meeting on 21/04/2026

Our local water utility company, Severn Trent, describes their two key future challenges as Climate Change and the potential impact of new housing developments. Their key request is that new housing developments should be built in a way that prevents rainwater from entering the sewer system unnecessarily. In general terms, Severn Trent feel they have enough capacity for sewage; the difficulty is the sheer volume and intensity of rainwater entering the network, largely attributed to climate change.

Ashover Parish Council fully supports their conclusions and asks that in future, developers are asked:

1. What is your assessment of how much rainwater will run off the roofs and hard surfaces in your development, and what impact will this have on the local area, including on sewage infrastructure?
2. What measures have you considered to prevent that rainwater causing problems elsewhere? Are you looking at Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems? Are you considering rainwater harvesting for toilet flushing? Green roofs? Permeable paving?