

Dear Sir

The Nidderdale Society is a charitable body established in 1964 with the stated aim of working for “the preservation of the natural character of Nidderdale”.

The Society is becoming increasingly alarmed as to Harrogate Borough Council’s proposals for numerous and, in some cases, large housing developments across the Dale.

To be clear, we are not opposing development per se, but the volume and range seems to suggest that the unique character of this area is not being taken into account. Not only from an aesthetic point of view, albeit that is important, but also from the consideration of other matters such as infrastructure, public transportation provisions, increased personal transport usage, schooling, medical support and the general safety of residents.

It is our understanding that Nidderdale AONB, Natural England and many local commentators and residents have put forward genuine, detailed and practical comments on the proposals.

An example response to one such enquiry regarding plans for the village of Darley came from Kathryn Daly (Head of Planning and Development HDC):

*“Referencing The National Planning Policy Framework NPPF; proposals in line with this for new developments within the AONB are considered very carefully with great weight given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty. Nevertheless, this does not preclude development in the AONB. Some new development within existing settlements in the AONB is important in order to ensure that services and facilities within these existing communities can be sustained and continue to prosper.*

*The NPPF para 116 is clear that proposals for major development within the AONB should be refused except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest*

*With appropriate mitigation, it has been concluded that, in principle, development can be considered at this location”*

The inference in this response is that the “public interest” will always override other considerations. Quite how the “public interest” is measured is unknown. Presumably through some opinion polling approach, although we do not know of any such polling taking place. The suggestion that new development is required to sustain existing services and facilities misses the critical point that existing services and facilities will be stretched unbearably given the plans.

In another local village, Hampsthwaite, the proposals are for numerous developments, including two separate ones of over 100 houses each. This is a village which has a population of 1083 (2011 census), is a designated conservation area and is recognised as an “area of great landscape value”.

And other developments are planned for Dacre Banks, Summerbridge, Pateley Bridge and other hamlets in the area.

The Society has always accepted the need for properly managed change and development and will continue to do so. Unfortunately, however, local knowledge and requirements appear to be ignored in the rush to facilitate unprecedented levels of development.

We await your speedy response.

Kevin Sheard

Chair, Nidderdale Society