

AMBER VALLEY GREEN PARTY

APRIL 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR AMBER VALLEY

We understand that many people are concerned about plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the impact it might have on us, here in Amber Valley. We share your concerns.

Greens are very much against the plans for Local Government Reorganisation. The Labour government requires the existing two tiers of local government to merge into super councils serving approx 500,000 residents. In Derbyshire, this would mean two councils where we currently have 10 (county, city and 8 boroughs/districts). We think that's not local enough. It's anticipated that councillor representation would be cut by two thirds. Greens work really hard in their communities and see the value this has and we don't know how a councillor could contribute in the way that we do when spread so thinly.

<https://greenparty.org.uk/2024/12/16/greens-say-local-government-reorganisation-steals-power-away-from-local-people/>

Any council can put forward a LGR proposal to the Government. Legally, the Government can accept any of the submitted options but it doesn't have the primary legislation to impose its own choice. So, there was an option to not propose any change in Derbyshire. That may have been the better route.

But, the Conservative-led County Council immediately put in its proposal, for a single unitary council on the current county footprint, with Derby remaining in its current form as a city unitary council, even though this didn't meet the Government's LGR requirement of each new council serving around 500,000 residents. Their proposal would see one council for the 800,000 people who live in Derbyshire, leaving Derby City to serve approximately 330,000 residents.

The Labour and Lib Dem led borough and district councils have since developed their own joint proposal, which would split the county into a North/South divide. They submitted two options, 1) Amber Valley in the north; and 2) Amber Valley in the south with Derby City, Erewash and South Derbyshire. Both meet the Government's LGR requirements.

Labour-led Amber Valley Borough Council also submitted its own proposal to combine with Erewash and Bolsover in an M1 economic corridor. This doesn't fit the Government's rules about population size.

Green Amber Valley Borough and Derbyshire County councillors have spoken out against the proposed changes including, amongst many other issues, the reckless pace of the decision making. Cllr. Alison McDermott has had meetings with AVBC's chief executive and other senior officers and has spoken with the Labour leader. She expects AVBC's leadership is trying to avoid joining Derby City, believing that Amber Valley's needs would be lower priority when in competition with the city.

The next step is for the impact of these four options to be worked up and communicated before a public consultation. These will then be submitted to the Government in November for the Government to make its choice.

Greens are very concerned about Amber Valley becoming an extension of Derby City. We have consistently spoken out against local Conservative and Labour plans to use Amber Valley's green fields for car-dependent housing estates on behalf of Derby City. Cllr. McDermott is an architect and stood as a councillor in order to influence a better local development plan. She knows that brownfield sites in Derby City will remain undeveloped if we offer builders the easier, more profitable greenfield sites.

The area of Amber Valley most affected by a merger with Derby City is, of course, that which borders the city, from Quarndon to Mackworth. Quarndon is currently represented on the Borough Council by Green Cllrs Eva Long and Alison McDermott and on the County Council by Green Cllr Gez Kinsella. Conservative Councillors David Taylor and Jane Orton represent Mackworth on the borough council, and Cllr David Taylor represents the village on the County Council. Neither Cllr Taylor nor Cllr Orton attended Amber Valley Borough Council's debate in March 2025 about the proposed changes.

The Conservatives were in control of Amber Valley Borough Council (and Cllr Taylor was Mayor) when it was agreed that 2,000 houses should be built on good quality farmland between Mackworth and Kirk Langley to meet Derby City's housing need. In contrast, Green councillors spoke against the proposal at every opportunity and submitted their views to the Planning Inspectorate.

In December 2024, with the council now under a Labour administration, we understand that the Planning Inspectorate agreed with the Greens that Amber Valley did not need to take on this housing for Derby City. The inspectors also demanded the council provide further evidence to show how it can achieve its housing numbers for our villages after Greens highlighted that the proposals for Duffield would risk building in flood plains and on the greenbelt. The city needs regenerating and we know that the way to revitalise the centre is to build high quality, urban housing on its brownfield sites. This is also the environmentally sound way to build.

Greens strongly oppose the Labour Government's attack on the Greenbelt. Greenbelt's purpose is to stop settlements merging into each other. Whether it looks grey or green, the purpose of the greenbelt is to prevent sprawl. The housing crisis certainly needs urgent attention but we don't think giving up the greenbelt will increase the number of houses being built; it will just put housing in the wrong places.