



Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group

Press Release

Why do they keep building ugly boxes?

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group, formed to fight Kirklees development plans, which threaten the community, have found that residents are almost as much concerned about what is being built as they are about the potential volume of future development.

A recent housing development on Station Road by Jones Homes, is widely regarded as an eye sore by many residents, as the three storey buildings have been constructed with no attempt to fit into the local environment, or to match the style of houses surrounding them. To add to concerns Bovis Homes has submitted plans to build a further 45 three storey houses almost in the centre of the village, on land currently used as allotments.

Richard Graham Vice Chairman of the action group comments:

" We all accept that some housing development is inevitable, but where it comes as infill, using small plots of land in the middle of existing villages, surely the council has a responsibility to ensure any planned developments are done in a style which is sympathetic to the area. We have to question why the council bothers to have a planning department if buildings like this can be passed?

The old village of Skelmanthorpe is predominantly built of stone and the houses are, in the main, only two stories high. Kirklees, in its attempts to meet housing targets seems to be allowing builders to squeeze the maximum number of homes onto the plots available. As a result they are building more three-storey properties, which allow them to maximise the density of house building. At the same time they are building the houses in blocks, so they look like apartments, or even office buildings, with the result they stick out like sore thumbs from the existing houses.

To make matters worse the materials used for construction and the external appearance of the buildings don't match, or blend in, with the rest of the area either. With the result that far from creating buildings, which enhance the area and are pleasing on the eye, they are creating some of the ugliest boxes imaginable. What a legacy to leave behind when they disappear to count their profits.

Planning departments used to be concerned about what was being built, certainly many people who have tried to extend their homes will have experienced the planning departments concerns about sight lines and the impact of what they planned to build. It seems that no such concerns exist where developers are concerned.

Constructing this kind of housing may be perfectly acceptable in an urban landscape, where there are apartments and office blocks. In such areas they may blend in quite well. But, why does the council have to adopt a one size fits all mentality and allow such

buildings to be constructed in areas where they so obviously don't fit in?

The old textile towns and villages of this area have a distinct character that makes them such attractive places to live in. These new developments pay no regard to that and if allowed to go unchallenged will destroy that appeal. We challenge anyone from Kirklees Council, or the planning department, to take a walk along Station Road, in Skelmanthorpe, and justify to residents the basis on which consent was given for these houses to be built. Everyone who has attended our meetings share the views I have expressed here, its time Kirklees paid attention to the quality of what is being built not just the quantity. People deserve better than ugly boxes.

End

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