

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group welcomes halt to house building plans.

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group along with other groups across Kirklees are celebrating the decision by Kirklees Council to delay any decisions on future house building plans until next year. We are delighted that Kirklees has listened to the wave of objections from residents to the options put forward in the LDF. This is the second time Kirklees Council has had to defer a decision and reconsider its plans because it ignored the widespread opposition to the original proposals two years ago.

Thanks to all the local people who objected to the LDF proposals.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the local people who responded to our call for objections to the options put forward in the LDF, your actions made all the difference. It proves that when a community works together it is possible to make the council sit up and take notice. Kirklees Council has admitted it was the scale of objection to the LDF, which made them decide to think again.

Kirklees Council seems to forget that the needs of the more rural communities in Kirklees are vastly different from those of the larger conurbations. The smaller towns and villages on the fringes of Kirklees risk getting swamped by a wave of commuters attracted by the green spaces and the quality of life they offer. Developers are ever eager to build in these areas, but they want to build large estates of detached homes rather than the small numbers of affordable houses needed to allow young people to stay in the villages, or the kind of retirement homes needed by the older members of our communities.

The LDF proposals would have destroyed Skelmanthorpe.

The number of houses Kirklees proposed to build in our area, under option three, would have changed our village into a town and destroyed large areas of attractive green land that surrounds the village. The result would have ruined the quality of life for all the people who live here. The other options were only a little better since they would have called for a near 30% increase in the size of our village.

Given that all the major industries have disappeared there is no prospect of the occupiers of all these new houses finding work in the area, they would simply join the thousands of other commuters travelling to Huddersfield, Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester along our already inadequate road system.

We hope that in making future decisions the council will take these factors into account and work to preserve the small villages and the green areas surrounding them, for the enjoyment of future generations. It seems obvious to us that the houses should be built where they are needed, close to the sources of employment, not in the middle of the countryside where the infrastructure to support them doesn't exist.

Local MP Mary Creagh failed to support local residents.

We know we are not alone in holding these views as the growth of community action groups in Slaithwaite, Linthwaite, Golcar, Honley, Holmfirth and Fixby has shown. These groups have developed because many voters no longer trust their elected representatives to act in the interests of the communities they are supposed to represent. Sadly all too many Councillors and MP's are inclined to follow the party line rather than stand up for the people they are supposed to represent. Local MP Mary Creagh admitted, after repeated questioning by SCAG, that despite repeated appeals for her to support the campaign against option three of the LDF she didn't raise any objections to the proposals. It would seem all too many MP's and councillors still haven't understood that they are elected to represent their constituents and that this should

come before party loyalty.

This is not a time to relax our vigilance.

One of the good things to come out of this struggle is that all the local action groups are now in contact with each other, and there is a real commitment to work together to fight any future plans that threaten the areas we live in. We are in a far stronger position now than we were two years ago, and we certainly don't intend to drop our guard now that the decision has been delayed. We hope the people of Skelmanthorpe will be ready to support us again next year when the next set of proposals is put forward. We may have won this round but the threat to our village is far from over. Watch this space for future news.