

Opposition to Kirklees development plans gathers momentum.

Last month four local community groups, Save Our Scissett (SOS), Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group (SCAG), Denby Parish Community Action Group (DPCAG) and Keep Our Rural Spaces (KORS) called a meeting to raise awareness of the impact the current Local Development Framework (LDF) would have on local communities. Following the meeting the Groups have decided to join forces to fight the proposals, which would have such a devastating impact on the local area.

Opposition is spreading throughout Kirklees.

Publicity about the response to the meeting, where 200 local people voted against all four options put forward by Kirklees for developments in our area, attracted the attention of other community groups in Kirklees. It has now become apparent that opposition to the LDF is widespread throughout Kirklees, especially in the smaller towns and villages in the more rural areas. Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group has been contacted by other groups in Linthwaite, Golcar, Honley, Holmfirth and Fixby who are all protesting against the development plans.

Local councillors ignore the voice of the public.

This growing opposition to the LDF is yet another indication that the local authority is out of touch with the wishes of the people they are supposed to represent. Despite the strong messages the public delivered in recent elections it is sad to see that some local councillors continue to follow the party line in refusing to object to the LDF. It would seem that some people have still not got the message that they are supposed to represent the views and interests of local people not act in direct opposition to what they want.

At a meeting on 8 June the four local action groups agreed to lobby local politicians in an attempt to draw their attention to the strength of feeling among local people on this issue. In addition they intend to join with the other action groups across Kirklees to form a stronger voice of opposition.

The current LDF proposals would devastate the local communities.

All the local action groups have common concerns about the LDF proposals:

- The proposed numbers of houses to be built massively exceed the needs of the local communities.
- The proposed numbers are not based on any assessment of local needs.
- Building on such a scale would change the nature of the communities affected forever.
- The proposed developments would be built largely on green land.
- The local infrastructure is inadequate to cope with such large-scale developments.
- There is no local employment for the increased population such developments would bring, adding to the problems of commuting, which already affect all the communities.

In putting forward these proposals Kirklees is responding to pressure from central government to provide 37,000 additional houses. This is despite the fact that their own housing needs survey and assessment carried out in 2006 produced a dramatically lower figure, and seems to ignore both the 6000 unused houses in Kirklees and the brown field sites that can accommodate up to 14,000 new homes.

The proposals have been put forward with no consideration of actual housing needs or of the impact the proposals will have on local infrastructure. They even ignore central government guidelines, which call for housing to be focused on the larger centres of population and brown field sites.

Given this situation it is hardly surprising the LDF is creating widespread opposition. The local community groups intend to develop this opposition into a major force for change over the coming months.

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group is a non-political organisation.

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group is a non-political organisation formed to fight large-scale developments in our community and to campaign for improvements to the quality of life of everyone living in Skelmanthorpe. We feel that our community needs an independent voice to campaign for improvements in Skelmanthorpe, that Kirklees seems reluctant to provide. Over the years we have campaigned for, among other things, a school crossing, improved road junctions, repairs to local roads and for help to prevent flooding.

Shahid Malik MP does not have our support for his campaign.

We understand Shahid Malik MP has been distributing a leaflet that implies that SCAG and SOS support his campaign, even containing a photograph of members of both action groups. This leaflet has been produced without our knowledge or our consent and we wish to make it clear we do not support his campaign. All the local action groups have meetings with Councillors and MP's, of all parties, to try to win their support for our campaigns. But, we do not support any specific political party.