

## **Kirklees development plans threaten local villages.**

With the economy in crisis, a collapse in the housing market and most building companies laying off their workers it may seem a strange time to raise concerns about the threat of development to the countryside. Yet despite the current recession Kirklees is pressing ahead with its plans to meet central government targets for 37,000 more houses in Kirklees over the next 15 Years.

The recently published Local Development document "Land use where you live" sets out four options for meeting these house-building targets and for the development of a further 600 acres for industrial and commercial purposes.

This document is already spreading alarm amongst residents of South Kirklees since one of the options proposes a massive expansion of house building and industrial development in the green belt surrounding Skelmanthorpe, Scissett and Clayton West.

### **Proposals to double the size of Skelmanthorpe.**

Option three in the document proposes to more than double the size of Skelmanthorpe by building an additional 2400 houses. At the same time this option proposes an addition 800 houses for Scissett and Clayton West plus nearly 90 acres of industrial development, all to be sited on green land.

### **Green belt at risk of industrial development.**

Chris ward a spokesman for Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group, formed three years ago to fight large scale development plans in the area comments: " These plans would signal the end of Skelmanthorpe as we know it. Not only would the green land around the village disappear but also, the quality of life for everyone who lives here would be ruined. The infrastructure to support this level of development simply doesn't exist; it struggles to cope with the present population so its impossible for it to cope with twice the number of people.

### **Traffic volumes trebled.**

With the proposed housing development road traffic would double, add in the industrial expansion and it's likely to treble. How can the narrow roads and lanes around here cope with that, especially as there is little scope to improve them? Most of the roads are already jammed with parked cars at nights and weekends, as most people have nowhere else to park their vehicles. The system will grind to a halt with the increases proposed.

These problems will become even worse since option three also calls for 1000 houses to be built in the Holmfirth area, 1700 in Honley and 300 in Denby Dale an expansion of over 6000 houses in our area. The increase in commuter traffic to the M1 at Calder Grove and West Breton would be huge. All of it would have to pass through Scissett and Clayton West and make the queues at the Breton roundabout and at the Calder Grove access to the M1 even worse than they are now.

## **Who will pay for the infrastructure needed?**

Everything from schools to medical facilities would have to be expanded massively to meet the demand, not to mention basic things such as the provision of water, gas, sewage disposal and electricity. Skelmanthorpe people would be living in the middle of a massive building site for years.

Given that money hasn't been made available through the last 20 years of economic boom to mend the local roads, clear the obstructions that cause local flooding, install badly needed school crossings, provide support for the growing population of elderly people who need it, or police our community effectively, where will Kirklees find the money to build all the new infrastructure necessary to support these proposals?

## **Minimum proposals call for villages to grow by 30%**

The other options are also unacceptable, as they all call for an additional 500 houses to be built in Skelmanthorpe, with another 400 in Scissett and Clayton West. These sound small numbers compared to the 2400 in option three, but 500 houses still represents a 25 to 30% expansion of our village and will bring many of the problems I have already commented on.

## **This scale of development isn't necessary.**

The one thing the proposals don't mention is why all this development is necessary. This is an area of relatively low unemployment. Many of the industrial units built in our area remain unoccupied, where will all the businesses needed to fill a 90-acre business park come from?

People who have moved into the area and who commute to work elsewhere have occupied most of the houses built over the past 10 years. They haven't been for the benefit of local people. There is a need for a relatively small number of affordable houses, but despite developers promises these are the very houses that don't get built.

Nor has there been a big influx of immigrants seeking work and accommodation. They tend to gravitate to the larger towns where the work is available. So where is the demand for all this development? It certainly isn't coming from the people who live in this area and these proposals will only serve to make this a worse place to live not a better one.

## **Residents are urged to object.**

We are urging everyone to go to the Kirklees web site to look at these proposals and to raise their objections to all of them. People might think that with building having all but stopped for the moment, the threat to our communities has gone. But, if we don't fight these proposals now, we will wake up in a few years time to find the bulldozers digging up the fields and trees that surround us to replace them with houses and factory units. We simply can't allow that to happen."

Anyone wishing to read and comment on the local development plan can do so by visiting

the Kirklees web site [www.kirklees.gov.uk/localdevelopment](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/localdevelopment). Comments on the consultative document must be made before Friday 3 April 2009.