

Skelmanthorpe Community Action Group.

Kirklees development plans causing major concern.

Last month we urged everyone to object to option three of Kirklees latest development plan for our area, which proposed that 2400 additional houses should be built in the village. Further investigations revealed the figure was even worse, in reality Kirklees are proposing to build 2800 houses in Skelmanthorpe. It seems they got the figures wrong in their own document!

These proposals come despite local opposition to the original proposals two years ago, when record numbers of people in the village voiced their strong objections. Kirklees is persisting in putting forward a plan to more than double the size of the present village.

Strong local opposition to the development plan.

This has of course aroused great opposition from local people supported by many of our local councillors and even by Shalik Malik MP. SCAG has also been active in urging people to make their opposition known, not least by launching an Email and poster campaign to make people aware of the new proposals. In addition members of SCAG recently attended a Parish Council meeting to make their views known.

Is option three a smoke screen to allow the other options to slip through, unchallenged?

While everyone has been focussing on option three, which is obviously the greatest threat to our village, we have begun to wonder if there is something else going on here? Is option three just a smoke screen to distract our attention and allow one of the other options to slip through, unchallenged?

All three of the other options propose 500 hundred houses should be built. This would still mean Skelmanthorpe would grow by over 25% in the years ahead. In fact the four options presented provide only two choices in reality. We can have 2800 houses or 500, not a lot of choice when you stop to think about it. Is the real agenda in fact to get us to accept 500 houses by taking our eye off the ball?

No one in Kirklees Council can argue that Skelmanthorpe needs 500 houses. We certainly need some affordable houses for our younger people and possibly more accommodation for older residents. These are the very houses that never get built of course, because developers aren't interested in building them. But, we certainly don't need 500 additional houses to meet these local needs.

A development of this size would create many of the problems we have highlighted before, including a huge increase in road traffic in an area already congested with parked vehicles at nights and weekends. Not to mention all the other infrastructure problems it would bring. Most importantly it would change the nature of our village forever, since these houses too would be built on green land.

These houses are not for the benefit of local people.

So the real reason for these proposals is to meet central government targets, not to meet the needs of local people. Kirklees may certainly need more houses but it seems to be determined to build them in the wrong place. Shalik Malik confirmed at a local meeting that there is a real need for more houses in Dewsbury than Kirklees proposes to build there. So why does our Council persist in its efforts to force more houses on a village where they are neither needed nor wanted?

The council is even flouting central government guidelines in making these proposals, which clearly state that developments should first be concentrated on brown field sites and then on the expansion of the main centres of population. The proposals for Skelmanthorpe ignore both of these principles.

Don't be complacent housing development will start again.

It's up to all of us to continue to make our opposition known as these plans develop. Don't be complacent just because the building industry has collapsed right now. In time the pendulum will swing back again and housing developments will be back on the agenda. We have plenty of examples around us of the impact badly planned developments can bring. A glance at the hillside in Shelley gives a good impression of what our valley will look like if these planners get their way. Just imagine what even 500 houses would look like spreading into our valley.

Take action today.

There is still time to let the planners know we don't want 500 houses any more than we want 2800. Email your objections to local.development@kirklees.gov.uk or write to Core Strategy Consultation (DPI), Planning & Building Control Services, Kirklees Council, PO Box B93, Civic Centre III, Off Market Street, Huddersfield, HD1 2JR.

Please ask your friends and neighbours to take action too; it could make all the difference.