

PRESS RELEASE

Monstrous New Town plan is overthrown amid anger at secrecy and behind-closed-doors deals.

Residents of Church Fenton and the surrounding villages came together last night after Freedom of Information requests brought to light secret plans for a monstrous new town in the Selby district. The village hall was overflowing as hundreds of concerned individuals viewed the hitherto secret plans to develop a huge urban sprawl covering a staggering 1520ha, obliterating the whole area stretching from Barkston Ash to Selby, and containing at its completion 40,000 houses. This is roughly the total number of houses in the whole of Selby district now, about the size of Harrogate, thereby doubling the population of the district and urbanising a vast swathe of our countryside and farmland. The submission acknowledges that there is no need for a development such as this within the Selby district, but that it is being pushed to supply the Leeds City Region.

The plan has been submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency as part of a government scheme to select areas around the country to build a series of New Towns. However, the plan has been devised and submitted in total secrecy. The interim CEO of Selby District Council has confirmed that the proposal has never appeared on any agenda and there are no minutes relating to the scheme whatsoever. The government's criteria for submissions clearly states that any expression of interest in the scheme must be able to demonstrate local support. This plan has never been put to the elected members at either SDC or NYCC, even though the FOI shows that the submission claims the support of councillors. The local MP Nigel Adams was also kept in the dark, and has now made representations to the Housing Minister to oppose the plan on behalf of residents.

As well as local fury that the democratic process has been completely bypassed by rogue individuals responsible for submitting this plan in an underhand manner, the elected council members are also shocked and enraged by the handling of this issue.

The councillors have now been given access to the plan, thanks to the perseverance of the affected parish councils, and many are incensed at the lack of consultation and the flagrant disregard of government guidance on openness and transparency in local government. The leading conservative group at SDC have now met and have voted by an overwhelming majority to remove the council's support for the plan. We are expecting that NYCC councils will make the same move and the Local Enterprise Partnership has pledged to withdraw its support due to the vote against the submission.

As the government scheme requires submissions to be led by the relevant local authority, and must also demonstrate local support, we are confident that this monstrous proposal will be withdrawn and the district will be saved from wholesale urbanisation. We are awaiting confirmation from HCA that this has occurred.