

# KIRKBY RESIDENTS ACTION GROUP

**In the Community, for the Community**

After the news of Tesco cancelling their proposed building a retail to the south of Kirkby's town centre, we were surprised at the response of the labour Council leader Ronnie Round that the council were looking for a new developer to replace Tesco and complete the project. This statement went against the

Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy Examination

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EX26

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION

INSPECTOR'S INTERIM FINDINGS FOLLOWING HEARING SESSIONS

TOWN CENTRES/ RETAIL

15. The approach to Kirkby town centre in policy CS10 is appropriate if the retail units proposed south of Cherryfield Drive in the extant permission (or any further amendment to it) are built. **If this development does not take place, however, policy CS10 should not simply be taken as justifying town centre expansion whatever its scale. Any new scheme should be examined critically and, if town centre expansion is again proposed, a new sequential assessment should be undertaken to determine whether the need could more appropriately be met within the existing town centre in accordance with national policy.**

16. To achieve this, the Plan might be modified in the following way:

Re-word policy CS10 1c: If necessary to create sufficient capacity for retail- led regeneration, designation of land to the south of Cherryfield Drive to permit expansion of the town centre and primary shopping area.

Additional sentence at end of paragraph 6.22: **If this development South of Cherryfield Drive is not built, any future proposal involving town centre expansion will be required to justify such expansion by satisfying the sequential test of national policy.**

Martin Pike, Inspector, 15 January 2014

We ask the council to put on record if they intend to carry out a new sequential assessment and declare their intentions publicly.

We ask for an updated SHLAA on all possible sites in Kirkby, in particular the All Saints site, with the ownership clarified (has the arch diocese, who owned this land been compensated from being moved to a less central site).

The land adjacent to this site belongs to Tesco Plc and Knowsley College, has any talks taken place with these organisations about combined selling of this land.

How come land on St Andrews in Tower Hill come onto the market proposed by

LHM and the Sedburn site of the now empty adult resource centre apparently been bought by KHT, with no notification from the previous local core sessions.

There appears to be a hidden agenda by Knowsley Council to surreptitiously dispose of substantial various sized parcels of land in addition to those identified in the SHLAA table.

Our concerns are two fold:

1. Kirkby already stands to lose a considerable amount of Green Belt land within the existing plan.

The proposed increase in housing and hence population projected increases will put more pressure on the existing support infrastructure for education, Health services provision and adequate shopping facilities, with Tesco actively looking to dispose of ownership of our Town Centre.

We feel that within the plan for Regeneration there has to be a true mix of developments, carried out at the same time, as in the service provision for Education.

Our biggest concern is that House building is the number one priority because it is an immediate income source for Knowsley council and all other projects within the plan will not be fully delivered

Regards

John Fleming

Chair, Kirkby Residents Action Group

# Evening Read: Why is Kirkby still having to fight for a fair deal?

- 17:07, 9 JANUARY 2015
- BY PADDY SHENNAN

## A special report on the town's fluctuating fortunes after Tesco bombshell

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Kirkby residents are angry after Tesco announced it was pulling plans to redevelop the area around Cheryfield Drive - despite nine years of making their lives 'hell' and forcing many people out of their homes via controversial compulsory purchase orders Photo by James Maloney

In the wake of Tesco's decision not to build a new store in the town, Paddy Shennan looks at [Kirkby's](#) fluctuating fortunes

It was created amid a spirit of optimism and real hope for a bright and prosperous future, but all these decades on a battered and bruised Kirkby is still fighting for a fair deal.

The latest piece of bad news saw Tesco reveal it will not be opening its planned store in the town – a store that was to be a part of Kirkby’s much-needed, and long-awaited, regeneration.

Those living in the town have previously complained about how long the regeneration is taking as talks about Tesco coming to Kirkby had been going on since 2006.

Now, understandably, many feel totally let down.

Just over five years ago, [Everton Football Club’s](#) plans to build a new stadium in Kirkby alongside a major Tesco supermarket were thrown out by the government, with then communities secretary John Denham deciding the Destination Kirkby project would breach shopping policies.



Everton Kirkby Stadium

This vast scheme was hugely-controversial, but it wasn’t just about a new 50,000-capacity stadium for the Blues – the plans, we were told, would see £400m being pumped into the region and 7,000 short-term, long-term and supply jobs being created.

Kirkby has experienced so many economic ups and downs over the years, and some saw this as a moment from which it may not be able to cover.

A football-related development in the town could even have happened long before the Tesco-related plan – and, again, it would have changed Kirkby forever. In 1990, there was talk of a shared “super stadium” being built on the city council-owned Kirkby Golf Course on the Liverpool/Knowsley border. Stadium Mersey Ltd (the organisation behind the plan) said it would be the finest sporting venue in the country.

Had the two clubs been as enthusiastic as the developers and Liverpool city council, Everton and Liverpool could have been playing there since the start of the 1993-94 season.

Later in the decade, then Everton chairman Peter Johnson revisited Kirkby Golf Course – although, again, nothing came of it.

Kirkby has so much going for it, not least thanks to its strong sense of community and the fierce independence of spirit that exists among its residents, but the feeling remains that they have continually been let down by outside forces and that they, and their town, have not been given a fair crack of the whip.

To understand the Kirkby of today you have to go back to when it all began: a post-war era when promises were made about a brave new world. The dedication and determination which is part of the campaigning Kirkby character hails from this time – the time its first residents, shipped out from inner city areas like Scotland Road “for a better life”, had to fight to build a better future for themselves.

Kirkby became the fastest-growing town in the UK in the 1950s. Liverpool Corporation had a housing crisis and saw Kirkby as part of the solution, leading it to buy more than 4,000 acres of land from the Earl of Sefton in 1947 for £375,000.

Transport links came via a railway line and the East Lancs Road, while a Royal Ordnance factory – ROF Kirkby – helped kick-start Kirkby’s own industrial revolution.

But the famous war time spirit had to be borrowed from in the 1950s, as Kirkby grew faster than facilities could keep pace with – houses and tower blocks sprang up, but shops, pubs and other community facilities were few and far between, and mobile shops became a familiar sight on the streets.

For many people, the problem, then and now, has been geographical – that seven or eight mile distance between Kirkby and Liverpool city centre. And yet, Kirkby – which is, of course, part of Knowsley – has a strong enough identity not to need to hang onto its neighbour’s coat-tails.

Indeed, many will remember the fierce battle that was waged by people throughout Kirkby (and neighbouring parts of Knowsley) in 1990, when the Boundary Commission planned to wipe Knowsley off the map. It would have meant Liverpool city council taking over areas including Kirkby, Huyton and Halewood – but Knowsley wasn’t having it.

Back then, the people of Kirkby made their voices heard – and they are doing so again today, as the town reels from its latest blow.

**KIRKBY’S** industrial history is a chequered one, made up of good news stories and calamitous factory closures.

One particularly dark day in its history provided the most devastating of punchlines.

March 10, 1989 the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher made one of her rare visits to Merseyside.

She was here to promote job initiatives, but her visit coincided with the announcement that Kirkby’s Birds Eye factory was to close – with 1,000 job losses.

Many parts of Merseyside suffered badly from factory closures throughout the 1970s and 1980s and Kirkby was among them. Well-known international firms which left Kirkby included Fisher-Bendix, Hygena and Massey Ferguson.

More recently, in 2007, Kodak off-loaded its factory site in Kirkby as part of its restructuring programme. And in 2012, Delphi, formerly AC Delco, pulled out of Kirkby after 40 years in the town, with the loss of 175 jobs.

Despite such a devastating closure, Kirkby people again showed what they were made of – the axed car parts workers donated thousands of pounds from their redundancy pay-outs to Merseyside charities.

Also in 2012, meanwhile, Kirkby’s troubled Sonae plant closed with the loss of up to 220 jobs. It had been blighted with problems following the deaths of two workers in 2010.

On the other side of the industrial coin, Kirkby has provided a happy home for many companies which decided to move to the area – not least the QVC home shopping channel which employs around 1400 people, and Dairy Crest, which makes the famous Clover Lighter, Utterly Butterly and Vitalite brands in the town.

## **Kirkby residents react to the news of Tesco's pull-out from the town**



**Kirkby residents are angry after Tesco announced it was pulling plans to redevelop the area around Cheryfield Drive - despite nine years of making their lives 'hell' and forcing many people out of their homes via controversial compulsory purchase orders Photo by James Maloney**

**John Fleming, 61, from Kirkby Residents Action Group:**

For the past two years we've been suspicious that Tesco were never going to come here, that's why we've been asking where the detailed planning application was.

I've lived here since 1960. The 1960s were the boom time, our troubles began in the '70s when we became part of Knowsley because everything we had in Kirkby was transferred to Huyton.

The council is saying 'Tesco have been really great and it's really unfortunate'. Why aren't they screaming and shouting? It's like walking out on a marriage. If your missus ran off with the milkman you wouldn't just say 'oh, but she was a lovely girl'.

We've had no control and no consultation, it's just been a case of 'trust us, trust us' and now look where we are.

**Cllr Ron Round, leader of Knowsley Council:**

“Since receiving the news yesterday, we have been focused on contacting Tesco and other potential developers and partners to find an alternative solution to deliver this scheme. Tesco has given us a commitment that they will support us in this process, even to the extent that they would be prepared to sell the land to a rival retail company. In terms of retail development this is an unprecedented approach.

“Knowsley council has not given up on this scheme, and the people of Kirkby should not listen to those who would like to give up.

“It is completely untrue and misleading to claim that Tesco bought land from the council at an extremely low rate. In fact, the council has not sold any land in Kirkby town centre to Tesco. Independently, Tesco purchased land in Kirkby town centre from a number of independent private sector land owners.”

**Christine Finnegan, 59, a carer:**

“We’ve been saying for months that something was wrong. If all the residents could see what was happening, why couldn’t the council?”

“They were shutting stores that were open so it stands to reason that it would happen.

“The houses are all boarded up. It’s a disgrace. All the roads are congested and the market is losing money because people don’t want to shop there.

“Everybody’s saying ‘so what are we going to be left with now’? Tesco have owned our town centre for six years.

“We wanted a town centre. The shop should have been done before anything else.”

**ECHO reader Craig Earley:**

“It’s an absolute disgrace the way Kirkby has been allowed to decay by Knowsley Council and the Huyton-centric mafia.

“Olympic-sized swimming pool and baths - GONE, world class sports centre, athletics stadium, outdoor cycle track all left to go to rack and ruin and now - GONE. Council chamber in municipal buildings, GONE. Even Kirkby Industrial Estate has been deleted from memory getting called KNOWSLEY! Kirkby would be better off becoming part of either West Lancs or Liverpool than playing second fiddle to Huyton.”