Local Government and Communities Committee

Planning (Scotland) Bill

Submission from Alexander Cragg

The new planning bill is all about building houses. Yes, people need houses, but where I live all our parks and green spaces are getting built on.

How are children going to get fit? Kids keep being told that we're supposed to get out & exercise - but where can we go? The people who move into the new houses won't want a bunch of noisy teenagers kicking a ball about - especially as the one bit of grass we will have left (which we need to share with dog walkers, and all the people in the new houses) is at the level of their upstairs windows.

Some bits of Dundee do not have any play areas because people in new houses complained. My Mum & Dad started asking about play areas here (there's a council play policy saying we should have several different types) when I was 8. I am now 14.

We're supposed to go & hang about on the grass behind Asda. There are lots of weird people - like the guy who keeps driving his car on to the grass and shouting at kids. I laughed at him once and he threatened to punch me in the face. There's big security cameras pointing at us all the time. It's like a prison yard.

I have read through your pages called 'Engagement of children and young people in the planning system'. You say that it is good to get kids involved in planning - so why do you ignore us?

I know there are bits in planning where kids HAVE to be asked their opinion. The council just goes to one particular group and asks them - so it can say that they've done what they're told to. I don't think this is fair because they get to pick what group to ask and they should have a wide variety of people. When they wanted to build the sports centre, they asked children who were in the sports clubs which they said would benefit. They didn't bother to ask anybody who liked nature, or it as a park.

I've helped to try and stop our field being sold off by Dundee City council and built on by Persimmon. I went round the doors and asked people if they wanted to sign the petition.

Old people said: "Yes I will sign - we love the field and our kids played there when they were young". Other kids said: "I can sign? cool". They take their dogs for walks or just hang out. And my friend was upset when I told him about this because it was the first place he flew a kite. The council didn't tell anybody there was lots of water on the site, even though they knew.

There is lots of mud on the site and there is running water under the hill, the swamp rushes look nice at least.
The council are also building a huge sports centre in the park near us. It's for proper teams & not for normal people.

When they went to Caird Park to do the Ecology survey they found "two bird nests," and 'no sign of any squirrels'. Later I went out and found hundreds of half and fully eaten pine cones and it took me 10 minutes to fill a big bag with them. I took them to the council meeting where they were talking about building the sports centre. After revising several times and sweating three buckets of sweat, I stood up and spoke to the council and showed them the bag of pinecones. The Executive Director of City Development said there weren't any squirrels there - and if any were there they were lost and would make their way further into the park.

I wonder why you would want kids to be involved with planning if they will not be believed and just ignored? Why should young people bother to make the effort?

Being involved with planning has not 'encouraged' me. After that meeting it put me off modern studies and the council in general! Our councillors are supposed to represent us - they didn't. They just believed everything the planners told them.

Nobody is bothered about Dundee City Council breaking the law by not protecting biodiversity. If I ever broke the law I would get put in prison but when the council do it, no-one bats an eye. They knocked down an old bridge & rebuilt it - beside where there was otter poo. Nobody would do anything unless several people actually saw an otter being upset!

I really hope no one builds on our fields but the developers will keep on asking to build houses. Even if the councillors say no, the Scottish Government can say yes. So they won't help us, but the big companies get as many chances as they want? I don't think this is fair and if we didn't put in all the work we have, there would be flooded houses built beside us.

If you want to get children and young people involved in planning you would have to treat us as well as you treat the developers!