

Planning for the best

LAST night, ratepayers of Luddenden met their ward councillors to protest at the way the centre of the village is being developed. What a pity the villagers and their elected representatives did not get together before decisions were taken.

Luddenden, in its older part by the stream, is a planners' nightmare. Its narrow and twisting streets are a menace to modern traffic, and quite a lot of traffic uses them nowadays. The old buildings bordering them are a motley collection—some over-ripe for demolition, others still making good residences and shops, a few of historical and architectural interest.

The whole forms a section which has been called quaint and which certainly has a quite exceptional character, a character which must command affection and respect. It used, in fact, to be something of a show piece in this locality, but in recent years it has, frankly, been getting into a more and more disreputable state as buildings have been demolished and others become unoccupied. And now have appeared, in the very centre of this area which could be so attractive, four new garages which are undoubtedly in themselves both smart and useful, but which are also undoubtedly quite out of keeping with their surroundings.

It is a fair question to ask if the planning authority has not failed in its chief duty of safeguarding local amenity and checking unsuitable building by approving this particular development.

Ideally, the character of this bit of Luddenden village should be preserved. In practice, much of it could be, but the ratepayers would have to meet a very considerable bill. In the event, what will happen—to the garages, and to the rest of the area, the fate and future of much of which still have to be decided?

The lesson of the present protests is, surely, that councillors have a very special responsibility to their wards when particularly difficult problems of demolition and redevelopment arise in their area; and that local people concerned for their districts would do well to keep a keen eye on council committee minutes lest something of which they would certainly disapprove becomes irreparable. The value of the protests is that the remaining redevelopments in Luddenden village will get a lot more study than would otherwise have been the case, with, we hope, good results.