

**The Rt Hon Nicholas Soames MP  
The Rt Hon Nick Herbert MP**



**House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA**

Lee Newlyn  
Director  
Mayfield Market Towns  
1 Love Lane  
LONDON  
EC2V 7JN

24 June 2013

Dear Mr Newlyn

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the plan which Mayfield Market Towns is promoting for a new town of up to 10,000 houses near Sayers Common. We object both to the proposal itself and to the manner in which you are pursuing this agenda.

You are well aware that Mid Sussex District Council has made clear that it has no desire for, or need of, a new town as you propose. Its proposed District Plan, published on 7 May, sets a housing requirement of 10,600 homes between 2011 and 2031. Outside the strategic sites identified, of which yours is not one, it states that "the homes to be provided elsewhere in the District will come forward through Neighbourhood Plans."

Your strategy is clearly to persuade the Planning Inspector to overturn the District Plan, including by encouraging other councils to invoke the duty to co-operate. Your own letter to Mid Sussex District Council of 4 March warns them that the "writing is on the wall" and that their plan may be rejected. We consider it to be entirely unacceptable for you to pressurise local councils in this way. You admit in your letter to us that you will be making representations to local plan examinations "to explain the need for more housing." We should like to remind you that, under the Localism Act, the South East Plan has been scrapped and that our district councils have the right and the responsibility to determine the correct level of housing for their areas. You are not helping this process; you are setting out to undermine it.

We are unclear whether any of your directors has a local connection with West Sussex. You appear merely to have a commercial interest in developing this area. However, it is the elected local councils who speak for West Sussex communities. Lord Borwick, one of your directors, states in your brochure that "the excitement of starting a New Market Town is that we can listen to the people who will live nearby ...." If you are indeed listening, you will be aware that there is very considerable opposition to your proposals in the villages of Henfield, Sayers Common and the wider Mid Sussex area, which would be ruined by this development. Merely listing the

meetings which you have had is meaningless. If you ignore the views expressed then your claim to be listening is humbug.

Your proposed new town would not be a "market town", since there would be minimal local employment. It would, as the CPRE have observed, be a commuter town, since almost all of its residents would in fact travel to other areas for work. Nor can it be dressed up as a sustainable proposal. Apart from the destruction of beautiful countryside and agricultural land, the development is not on a railway line. Your suggestion that residents would "work where you live" or be "leaving the car at home" to walk, cycle or take the bus is risible. With 25,000 people living in the new town there would clearly there would be a huge pressure on local infrastructure. There are already serious flooding issues in the area. As the CPRE has said:

"The scheme appears to be a relaunch of a proposal rejected as unsustainable in the 2010 Horsham District Council, Mid Sussex District Council & Crawley Borough Council New Market Town Study Final Report commissioned by the Councils from consultants G.L. Hearn. That report concluded that 'Drawing on the lessons from earlier development of new towns, it is clear that a development of 10,000 homes will not create a self-sufficient community'."

Your case is that a large planned town is a better alternative than adding houses to villages. Whether or not that is true, this is a matter for the district councils to decide. Mid Sussex has rejected the approach, and its plan explicitly calls for development which "reflects the distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence." Horsham has yet to publish its plan.

It is not enough to state that there is a need for more housing in the South East, as though that is sufficient an argument for a new town in the location you propose. It is commonly agreed that more housing is needed and will be built. The issue is at what level and where. We are concerned that proposals for excessive housing numbers and imposed strategic developments damage the promising new process of neighbourhood planning which is already underway.

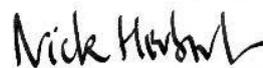
Finally, we are surprised that one of your directors, Lord Taylor of Goss Moor, is involved in promoting a new town against the wishes of local councils while leading the Government's review of the planning guidance to be issued under the National Planning Policy Framework. This appears to be a conflict of interest and we have written to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to ask that this issue is investigated before the guidance is issued.

You have asked us for a meeting. We would happy to meet your directors at the House of Commons to explain why your approach and proposal are entirely unacceptable.

Yours sincerely



**NICHOLAS SOAMES**  
MP for Mid Sussex



**NICK HERBERT**  
MP for Arundel & South Downs