

'Fantasy scheme dreamed up by remote planners'

Action group LAMBS (Locals Against Mayfield Building Sprawl) is mainly comprised of residents living close to the proposed site where Mayfield plans to build.

In June it organised a meeting about Mayfield Market Towns' intention to build 10,000 homes and attract more than 400 residents at St Paul's Catholic College in Burgess Hill, where a panel of MPs, councillors and representatives of other organisations were present.

Richard Howard, is challenging the Mayfield Representation report and said: "There has been no 'community engagement'. From the very start they have sought to undermine local democracy in the preparation of this unsustainable proposal.

"The mountains of Appendices submitted along with this Representation reveal a fantasy scheme which could only have been dreamt up by remote city planners creating a theoretical model, with no proper understanding of the local area.

"Their claim to have consulted with the local residents is farcical. They have even had the gall to rename Sayers Common 'the new Sayers' in pro-

posals for a 'split settlement' - completely without the knowledge or permission of the villagers living there.

"The housing numbers they want to impose on Horsham District are ridiculous; many thousands more houses than can be accounted for by their unwanted proposal. This makes nonsense of the claim that it would be instead of the so called 'add-ons' to existing towns and villages. That was just a spurious ploy designed to hoodwink people into supporting the unnecessary destruction of thousands of acres of beautiful Sussex countryside.

"This plan is in no way sustainable. The site is an important wildlife habitat, on a flood plain seven miles from the railway line - Mayfield's own study states that it will generate tens of thousands new car journeys every day; how can that be green?

"If Mayfield got its way, the iconic view from Devils Dyke would be one large urban sprawl peppered by new sewage treatment plants, power stations, wind farms, retail and industrial parks and an expanded road system; and Brighton's 'lungs' would be gone forever."

'Threat is very real' says campaigner

Dr Roger Smith, speaking for CPRE Sussex-Horsham District, told the County Times: "Mayfield Market Towns' submission in response to Horsham District Council's Horsham District Planning Framework is a significant step in their attempt to gain approval for their proposed new town.

"To justify their proposal they are seeking to convince the Planning Inspectorate that a house-building target of at least 20,000 new houses - far in excess of the 13,000 considered to be just-about-sustainable by HDC - be imposed on the district.

"The threat posed by Mayfield is therefore very real, and it is not confined solely to the area targeted for their new town.

"This is because 15,000 of the 20,000 houses would be built on countryside elsewhere in Horsham district, including north of Horsham and Southwater, though Mayfield is also pressing for a new settlement of 5,000 at an unspecified location elsewhere in Horsham district.

"Mayfield and the other developers who are also seeking to impose huge house-building targets on the district are doing so in the belief that the Planning Inspectorate will decide in their

favour - and that public opinion and opposition will probably count for nothing in the decision-making process.

"Cynicism and concerns about the quality of decision-making is understandable and for good reason - because the planning system often seems to be skewed in favour of developers.

"It is vital therefore that all who are concerned for the future of our district, the countryside and the natural environment, ensure that elected representatives - MPs and district councillors - are fully aware that the outcome of the forthcoming Examination in Public (EiP) of the Horsham District Planning Framework and the unprecedented threat to the district's countryside is of major consequence and that the house-building targets now being pressed for by developers are excessive and unacceptable.

"It is essential, too, that all organisations and action groups formed to defend communities against inappropriate and harmful development challenge the huge targets at the EiP. And, the don't-build-in-my-backyard build-in-someone-else's approach favoured by some will play into the hands of developers, so best not employ it."

'Redevelop derelict buildings for housing'

Henfield resident Kenneth McIntosh said: "I do much prefer organic growth to meet local housing needs and do support local sustainable development, and Mayfield's proposals do not float my boat.

"Our unique Sussex Low Weald and its villages need to be protected for those in our surrounding towns and tourists to breathe in and take in the peace and beauty that is theirs for ever to enjoy for ever.

"To describe the 10,000 home a 'garden city' when it is only through building high-density housing in order to recoup land purchase costs and achieve the high profit margins demanded is laughable.

"Green spaces do not create profits to a developer. Visit Crawley (New Town) and see how much has gone under concrete and tarmac through infilling of the original de-

Low Weald deserves better than this.

"Serious threats do loom: The 1946 New Towns Act has not been removed from the statute book and can be used with relative ease and impunity.

"To counter these threats we do have to work with our local authorities when they ask for support to their plans. We have to find out how our politicians and not just those currently in office stand on Mayfield's proposals and on housing issues.

"To better protect our natural and built environment we need to lobby for existing policy frameworks on housing development and their guiding principles to be upheld.

"We need to better support exiting policies on the use of derelict land and the redevelopment of derelict buildings



LAMBS spokesperson Richard Howard