

Locals 'outraged' by new Sussex town poll

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A poll commissioned by Mayfield Market Towns which highlights that more people are in favour of 'building new homes' has been criticised by residents who claim questions were 'not impartial'.

Mayfield Market Towns - which has proposed building 10,000 homes just a few miles from Henfield - commissioned an outside company, Meeting Place Communications (MPC), to organise a telephone poll.

Conducted by Ipsos Mori, the research company contacted residents living close to the proposed site to attain opinions on housing supply options across Mid Sussex and Horsham.

The results, provided to the County Times by MPC, shows that 31 per cent of those who were questioned about the provision of new houses agreed that they should be 'built in a single new town'; with 24 per cent believing that they should be raised 'on the edge of many existing towns and villages'; and 29 per cent stating they would like 'neither to happen'.

During the poll, it was not



MPC was employed by Mayfield Market Towns to organise the survey

revealed to residents that it was commissioned by Mayfield Market Towns.

However, following the phone call many residents assumed it was, in light of the developer's proposal, and flocked to the 'Mayfield Protest' Facebook page to share their dismay.

Jacky Sayers posted: "Got quite cross because there was no way you could answer the questions unless it came out in their favour. Could only say neither agree or disagree on most of them, but was able to say an emphatic no to the town."

Ralph Spurrier posted: "I got a call this weekend asking the very same questions. Questions were loaded: 'Do you agree that more homes are needed for your children?' 'Do you agree that more jobs are needed in the district?' etc. Beware."

Hurstpierpoint resident

Laura O'Grady was contacted for the poll and told the County Times that she was 'outraged' and felt people were being taken for 'fools'.

She said: "The questions weren't impartial. They asked do you agree that this would create local jobs? Well, that's obvious."

"They asked nothing about the community, or the impact on the surrounding area, infrastructure and environment, and nothing on the alternative. I was a bit outraged. I felt like they were taking local residents for fools."

MPC works for many developers across the South East, specialising in community engagement and public consultation.

Director of MPC, Anna Sabine, told the County Times that the poll was conducted anonymously so as not to influence public opinion.

The results are based on

the 'idea' of new housing in the area, not Mayfield's proposal.

She said: "This poll is simply to find out, in principle, people's preferences for new housing in Mid Sussex and Horsham."

"It has been made clear that those who support the option of a new town for providing new homes simply support the idea and not Mayfield's proposals specifically."

In relation to the developer's proposal, Mrs Sabine said the information will be used to inform the application process that is yet to be submitted to the council for consideration.

She said: "The results of this poll are scientific data which will be used to inform our proposals throughout the planning stage."

"We acknowledge that this poll does not evidence support or opposition for our specific proposals."

The results are available to view at www.mayfieldtowns.co.uk.

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