

Transcript

Introduction

BBC - On the Programme tonight – a village at war with its neighbours. These villagers have been accused of taking NIMBYism to a whole new level.

Tony Dixon - We have no beneficial interest at all. We are doing this because we believe it's the right thing to do.

BBC - They're actually suggesting the houses get built in someone else's back yard instead.

Member of Public – It's amazing that they're still sticking to it because local people here are so upset at what they've done.

Main item

BBC – Now for our next story we're back on dry land and a battle between two villages over a housing development that's in danger of taking NIMBYism to new heights.

BBC – Ah, the delights of Aldingbourne in West Sussex. Despite its peaceful appearance it's a village like many others fighting to save its rural character from the threat of new homes. But here the locals may have come up with a unique way of deflecting development.

Now your traditional NIMBY opposes development in their own back yard, but these villagers have been accused of taking NIMBYism to a whole new level by actually suggesting the houses get built in somebody else's back yard instead.

And the place they want them built is the village down the road. The Aldingbourne villagers are supporting plans for a new town just 5 miles away.

It would see 5,000 homes being built on greenfield and a disused airfield in the neighbouring village of Ford. The idea for this new town didn't come from a developer or a landowner but from three men with close links to Aldingbourne.

John Penfold is Chairman of the Aldingbourne Parish Council. Tony Dixon used to be Aldingbourne's District Councillor and Harold Hall used to be its County Councillor. They've spent years planning the new town even though they won't make a penny from their work.

BBC – Am I right in thinking you three have no financial interest in this site?

Harold Hall – Absolutely right.

John Penfold – None.

Tony Dixon – We have no beneficial interest at all – we are doing this because we believe it's the right thing to do for the district.

Harold Hall – The need is so enormous and the opportunity here is so great we decided we should take a holistic approach to these issues, at Ford.

John Penfold – Here we are on a disused World War 2 airfield – huge concrete runway - 260 acres of brownfield land which is 30% of the total site area. So it made sense that this is where development should be – so we put together a plan.

BBC – Now these might sound like genuine motives but people living in Ford simply don't believe them.

Geoff Dixon - CAFE – I think it's inevitable that people are surprised that people who are not immediately connected with the area should propose something so vehemently and put so much of their own time into it particularly when the rest, most of the rest of the population so much disagree with them.

Victoria Newman - CAFE – All of the housing is going on green fields so Ford Enterprise Hub are not promoting development on brownfield they are promoting housing development on greenfield which would never be designated for housing under any other circumstances.

BBC – There certainly seems to be a lot of opposition to the new town.

Member of Public - I find it disgusting that these developers can come in and take our village it should stop now. Tell them to go home.

Member of Public - They say they are going to be doing this on a brownfield site but in fact 80% of the land is in fact farmland.

Member of Public - I've lived in that bungalow there for 30 years, I've got that when I look out of my kitchen window. I don't want to look out on houses. I was born in the country. I want to die in the country.

BBC – The idea of a new town at Ford has been rejected by the local council and a government inspector - but now its back. The Aldingbourne Three have joined forces with a developer and the site has been shortlisted by the government for a possible Eco-Town.

Ben Fogle – I'm here to march for our green fields which sadly have no voice.

BBC – TV Presenter and environmental campaigner Ben Fogle was brought up in Ford, and he's come home to lead the protests.

Ben Fogle – The word eco is simply being used to make us feel guilty for opposing it and the government feels guilt free for imposing it. This is not green its whiter than white. This is a con.

BBC – Despite this opposition the developers claim Ford is the most popular choice for new housing. They base their claim on public consultations which were supposed to include all local parishes but the council which conducted the research thinks it was skewed by the response from one particular village. I'm heading back to Aldingbourne to find out more.

Ricky Bower - 50% of the responses came from one parish namely Aldingbourne and of those responses something like 91% of those who responded from Aldingbourne all said that Ford should be in the top three of their choices. It made us sit up and think – has this been an organised response? Was this something that there was an organisation behind perhaps?

Harold Hall – Oh, I think the people at Aldingbourne were alerted to the discussion that was going on and were encouraged to respond but then I would have expected that from the other 20 or so parishes as well.

BBC – The Aldingbourne Three insist they are only thinking about what's best for the wider community. They say the town will create 2,000 affordable homes and 4,000 jobs – but, of course, it won't be in their back yard.

Harold Hall – We shall have a new station here, just a few hundred yards back which will be within short walking distance of the houses that are located right over here and many more people will walk and cycle to work.

John Penfold – With the enhancement of the bio-diversity the Eco-Town will produce a balanced amount of housing and green open space.

Tony Dixon – Over there we have an MRF currently being built, a Materials Recycling Facility, which will take waste in from across the county and that's a golden opportunity to create energy and in terms of Eco-Town waste equals fuel.

BBC – If the Eco-Town doesn't get the go ahead then the pressure to build will return here, to Aldingbourne.

Ricky Bower - It is my understanding that there is a developer looking at this particular field here but there are other development sites around Aldingbourne and the Westergate area.

BBC – How likely is it that this would be developed.

Ricky Bower – Well, I think there is a strong likelihood that it will be developed at some point in the future.

BBC – Back in Ford they're not going to give up without a fight. The government will make a decision on the Eco-Town in the next few months. Whatever the result relations between the two villages are now decidedly strained.

Victoria Newman - CAFE – I think it's very sad that three individuals from a different village haven't been able to look at the overall community and see what would be the right approach for the whole community.

Member of Public – It's amazing that they're still sticking to it because local people here are just so upset about what they have done.

Victoria Newman - CAFE – We wouldn't attempt to try and put something in Aldingbourne because we don't know the issues that would be involved – why would they do that at Ford?

BBC – But there is one resident who's crossed the village divide and is now rallying opposition to any house building.

Mr Burgoyne – I am actually from Aldingbourne and my feeling is that if we let any form of large development happen anywhere it will just spread and so that is why I'm here today singing this song, because its just as important that we stop it here, as it is for me, because ours will be next.

BBC – Well let's hope relations between the two villages soon improve – hmmm.