# Tempsford residents face uncertain future amid UK Government’s plan for new town development



A rural village in Bedfordshire, Tempsford, faces a looming transformation that has ignited concern and frustration among its residents, as the UK Government advances plans to build a new town potentially housing up to 350,000 people. Housing Secretary Steve Reed is set to announce the commencement of construction on three new towns—Tempsford, Leeds South Bank, and Crews Hill—before the next general election, as part of a broader initiative to alleviate the national housing crisis by building 1.5 million homes over the next five years.

Tempsford, a village of 600 residents with around 300 houses, is notably ill-prepared for such a huge expansion. David Sutton, chair of the parish council and landlord of the local Wheatsheaf pub—the only business open daily in the village—voiced the community’s exasperation at being left in the dark. “Nobody’s come to talk to us at all," Sutton told the PA news agency. The villagers are deeply uncertain about what the future holds, with widely varying rumours about the scale of development—from around 10,000 homes to as many as 125,000—yet no official details. Sutton acknowledged some support for "sustainable development" but highlighted major existing challenges, including a lack of basic infrastructure such as phone signal, shops, gas supply, and schools. Flooding is an annual crisis, with residents regularly facing sewage flooding in their homes, especially during Christmas, underscoring the urgent need for infrastructure improvements before development proceeds.

The challenge of accommodating a large new settlement in an area with such pressing environmental and infrastructure issues was further underscored by reports that Tempsford is a flooding hotspot, raising questions about the wisdom of site selection for a major new town. The village’s recurring sewage problems tied to flooding have been noted by The Telegraph, prompting concerns about the suitability of such a location for significant urban expansion.

The government’s broader vision includes establishing a “new towns unit” designed to attract both public and private investment into essential amenities such as transport links, GP surgeries, schools, and green spaces—commitments that local leaders like Sutton say feel hollow without meaningful dialogue. “If they’re not even talking to us at all, how can we be sure that when they’re promising they’re going to build stuff, how do we know they even know what we need?” Sutton remarked.

Tempsford’s historical and cultural significance adds another layer of complexity. The village’s historic RAF Tempsford airfield—once a secretive World War II base from which many of Britain’s spies embarked on missions in Nazi-occupied Europe—is threatened by the development. Adam Hart, a historian whose great-grandfather served at RAF Tempsford, warned that building over the airfield would mean “losing a unique piece of British history.” He stressed the importance of preserving this heritage to maintain public engagement with the Second World War, particularly poignant given the current conflict in Europe. Hart, a London resident and young person struggling with housing costs, also qualified his concern by recognising the need for additional homes but urged for a balance that respects history.

The push for new towns aligns with Labour’s commitment, articulated by deputy leader Angela Rayner, to accelerate housing development and expand homeownership. Labour’s manifesto highlights the importance of including local voices in the planning process, yet at Tempsford, this engagement appears sorely lacking. Nationally, the New Towns Taskforce has selected 12 locations—including sites in Cheshire, Manchester, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Plymouth, and London—each projected to have at least 10,000 homes, potentially amounting to 300,000 new houses across England.

A report from the think tank UK DayOne positioned Tempsford as an ideal site for a new city due to its strategic connectivity, sitting at the junction of the East Coast Main Line and the planned East-West Rail line. However, residents argue that transforming a small village into a “megacity” would irrevocably alter their community’s character and strain already limited local resources.

Local MP Richard Fuller has engaged with the parish council chair, acknowledging the potential for growth around the new train station planned for Tempsford. Fuller emphasised the necessity for careful and sustainable planning, with genuine community consultation to ensure the development meets the needs of existing and future residents.

As the government moves forward with its ambitious new towns agenda, Tempsford stands as a microcosm of the tensions between the urgent national need for housing and the preservation of local communities and heritage. Without open communication and addressing critical local issues like flooding and infrastructure deficiencies, the promise of development risks becoming a source of division rather than progress.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/may/20/labour-aim-reveal-new-town-sites-first-year-power)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/), [[7]](https://www.richardfuller.co.uk/news/richard-discusses-potential-housing-tempsford-parish-council-chair)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/property/buying-selling/village-350000-person-city-flooding-hotspot/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/)
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* Paragraph 8 – [[3]](https://www.gbnews.com/news/bedfordshire-news-houses-tempsford-megacity), [[7]](https://www.richardfuller.co.uk/news/richard-discusses-potential-housing-tempsford-parish-council-chair)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/may/20/labour-aim-reveal-new-town-sites-first-year-power), [[7]](https://www.richardfuller.co.uk/news/richard-discusses-potential-housing-tempsford-parish-council-chair)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town-A3YYHAEVLRJJHFVCVNEVGGT7QE/> - The article reports on criticism directed at the UK government for not consulting residents of Tempsford, Bedfordshire, regarding plans to develop a new town. The Housing Secretary is expected to announce the construction of three new towns, including Tempsford, Leeds South Bank, and Crews Hill, before the next election. David Sutton, chairman of Tempsford Parish Council, expressed concerns over the lack of communication and the scale of the proposed development, highlighting issues such as annual flooding and inadequate infrastructure in the village.
3. <https://www.gbnews.com/news/bedfordshire-news-houses-tempsford-megacity> - This article discusses local residents' opposition to plans that could transform Tempsford, Bedfordshire, into a new city housing up to 350,000 people. The proposal, put forward by the think tank UK DayOne, suggests that Tempsford is an ideal location for such a development due to its connectivity. However, locals argue that the plan would drastically change their rural community and strain existing resources, as the village currently has a population of 600 and limited amenities.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2024-07-19/could-a-rural-village-turn-into-a-giant-new-town-for-350000-people> - ITV News Anglia reports on proposals to transform the small village of Tempsford into a new town accommodating up to 350,000 residents. The think tank UK DayOne identifies Tempsford as a prime location for such development due to its strategic position at the intersection of the East Coast Main Line and the planned East-West Rail line. Local residents, including Parish Council Chairman David Sutton, express concerns about the scale of the development and its impact on the community.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/may/20/labour-aim-reveal-new-town-sites-first-year-power> - The Guardian reports on Labour's commitment to unveiling new town sites within the first year of power. Angela Rayner, Labour's deputy leader and shadow housing secretary, announced plans to create new towns as part of the party's strategy to build 1.5 million homes over five years. The initiative aims to address housing shortages and includes the establishment of a new towns taskforce to select suitable sites, considering factors like local views and infrastructure.
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/property/buying-selling/village-350000-person-city-flooding-hotspot/> - The Telegraph highlights concerns about the proposed development of a new city in Tempsford, Bedfordshire, which is prone to flooding. The article discusses the potential impact of building a large urban area in a location that frequently experiences sewage issues due to annual flooding. The proposal, suggested by the think tank UK DayOne, aims to address housing shortages but raises questions about environmental and infrastructural challenges.
7. <https://www.richardfuller.co.uk/news/richard-discusses-potential-housing-tempsford-parish-council-chair> - Richard Fuller MP discusses the potential housing development in Tempsford with the Parish Council Chair. The conversation touches upon the government's plans for a new train station at Tempsford, which could serve as a catalyst for substantial housing development. The MP acknowledges the village's potential for growth but emphasizes the need for careful planning and community consultation to ensure sustainable development.