# Oxfordshire villagers unite to block California billionaire’s mansion plan amid fears of lost rural charm



Villagers in the picturesque Oxfordshire hamlet of Little Tew are voicing their concerns over a proposed mansion that they fear could transform their rural enclave into a playground for the ultra-wealthy. Plans submitted by California billionaire Ronald Burkle for a lavish six-bedroom mansion have ignited a fierce local backlash. Residents describe the plans as a “monstrosity” that threatens to disrupt the community's tranquillity and escalate property prices beyond reach.

Burkle, known for his connections to celebrity hotspots and ownership of Michael Jackson's former Neverland ranch, aims to construct a sprawling estate featuring a pool, lake, stables, and even a private gun room. The scale and design of the property—complete with a domed entrance hall inspired by Rome's Pantheon—have locals comparing it to a “Pixie mansion” more suited to Los Angeles than an idyllic Cotswold village.

Little Tew, characterised by its charming cottages and rural pathways, has a history rooted in agriculture and was once a haven for academics from Oxford. The community, which boasts a population of just 253 according to the last census, is markedly different from the high-end lifestyle that a monumental mansion could bring. "It’s obscene. We need more affordable housing, not more houses for billionaires," said Anthony Cripps, a local resident and recruitment consultant who expressed deep concern about the mansion's impact on the village's character.

Local objections centred around the notion that the mansion represents a shift in the area from pastoral simplicity to a realm of conspicuous wealth. “It’s completely out of character,” remarked long-time resident Andrew Dunston, succinctly capturing the sentiment that the proposed development could detract from Little Tew's charm. His neighbour, Margaret Norris, echoed these sentiments, describing the proposed building as a "monstrous carbuncle."

The planning application, initially rejected in 2022, is currently under evaluation by the West Oxfordshire District Council as Burkle seeks to overturn prior refusals. The renewed bid raises the stakes for the local community, prompting residents to rally together not just in opposition but in a collective effort to preserve their way of life—evident in their recent hiring of a barrister to represent their interests.

Compounding the controversy are complications arising from a recent archaeological discovery near the proposed site, which may limit the development even if planning permission is granted. A report from the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service suggests the possibility of an Iron Age fort in the area, necessitating a thorough investigation before any building can commence. The report has led to calls for Burkle to commission a detailed archaeological evaluation, potentially delaying his plans further.

While Burkle has claimed he wishes to be a “good neighbour” and support local initiatives, many locals are sceptical. One worried mother voiced her fears that this would be a case of the richest holding sway over the community’s heritage and lifestyle. The magnitude of the proposed estate, with features including a natural swimming pool and a circular lawn that could function as a helipad, represents a stark departure from the rustic charm that residents cherish.

As the planning committee weighs the merits of the application, local voices are adamant that the development, if sanctioned, would be an inappropriate intrusion into their serene landscape. The ongoing debate reflects broader tensions surrounding rural identity in an era increasingly defined by wealth disparities. Residents aim to protect their village not just from a single development but from a potential influx of similar projects that threaten to erode the character and affordability of rural life.

The outcome of this planning application remains uncertain, creating a palpable sense of limbo in the village. Yet the resolve demonstrated by Little Tew’s residents suggests that their fight is much more than a battle against a single grand home; it embodies a broader commitment to safeguarding the essence of rural England against the tide of modern luxury.

### Reference Map

1. Mention of the proposed mansion and villagers' opposition
2. Background on Ronald Burkle and local history
3. Local residents' quotes and sentiments
4. Archaeological discovery and its implications
5. Broader discussion around wealth and rural identity

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694727/fury-villagers-oxford-billionaires-playground.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data