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# Pretty English village wins High Court battle to stop new housing

By [AOL Travel](#), Jun 13, 2014

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Campaigners have won a High Court battle against plans for new housing in a famously picturesque [village](#).

Residents in Penshurst, [Kent](#), have succeeded in quashing plans for six affordable homes at Forge Field and the matter will now have to be reconsidered.

The landowner is Viscount De L'Isle, a descendant of Elizabethan poet, and soldier Sir Philip Sidney, who also owns Penshurst Place, one of Britain's grandest [stately homes](#).

The villagers accuse him of behaving in a "feudal" manner.

They formed the Forge Field Society, which has won a judicial review of Sevenoaks District Council's decision to grant planning permission for the houses on the two acres of green space south-west of Penshurst High Street. *Source: PA.*

Villagers claim that the development, applied for by the West Kent Housing Association, would "forever alter" the character of the historic village, which has more than 30 listed buildings.

Mr Justice Lindblom, sitting in London, agreed with the society's legal team that council planners failed properly to apply planning law and that there had been a failure properly to consider alternative sites.

He ruled the council's assessment of alternatives in October 2013 "deficient".

Ruling that the application for judicial review must succeed, the judge said: "This is one of those cases in which the decision was one that no reasonable local planning authority could have made."

At a two-day hearing of the case in March, James Strachan QC, for the society, said Penshurst had "the great fortune of being one of those relatively rare villages where that sense of history and the intrinsic beauty of the surrounding area can still be experienced today".

He said this had been achieved through the preservation of its medieval character and the protection of its rural surroundings.

It benefited from "being watched over" as part of the Green Belt and was an important part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as being a tourist attraction.

The residents wrote directly to Lord and Lady De L'Isle, urging them to consider selling a different part of their 2,500-acre estate for leaseholds.

Mark Leader, the development director of West Kent Housing Association, has described the Forge Field scheme as a response to a local need for more affordable housing.

Rob Rees, chairman of the Forge Field Society, said outside court: "There has been massive objection. This case is of some importance."

It is about a green field site which has one of the highest levels of protected status in the land. If you can build here you can build anywhere."

Mr Rees said there was an alternative local site at Becket's Field where there are already bungalows.