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Rochford Council Leader Calls for Local Say on Housing Targets

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— Categories: Real Estate



A council leader has urged ministers to let local authorities with a proven track record on development set their own housing targets, warning that current central figures are disproportionate and risk undermining local heritage and infrastructure.

Danielle Belton, the Conservative leader of Rochford District Council, has written to Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner to express serious concern over the Government's house-building demands. In her letter, she questioned the basis for the annual target of 689 new

homes for Rochford, which would equate to nearly 14,000 properties over a 20-year Local Plan period.

Citing figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Mrs Belton argued that expected population growth in the district does not justify the scale of development the Government is pushing for. The ONS forecasts a population increase of just 5,500 between 2022 and 2025, which Belton said would only necessitate 2,300 new homes over the next decade.

Infrastructure Pressure

The council leader stressed that while Rochford recognises the need for new homes, the district's unique characteristics require a more flexible and realistic approach. "Rochford isn't your typical district. We are steeped in history and heritage," Mrs Belton said. "We do not support housing at this scale, certainly not on our green belt, and not without significant infrastructure improvements to support such growth."

In recent months, the district has seen a wave of major planning applications, including proposals for more than 1,000 homes in Great Wakering and 2,000 homes at Rochford Park. An expression of interest has also been submitted for a proposed new town of 10,000 homes between Southend and Rochford.

Mrs Belton maintained that Rochford has consistently delivered homes to meet local demand and should now be trusted to manage future development according to its own needs and constraints. "We are asking the Government to reconsider using their standard approach to calculating housing targets before it's too late," she said. "Local authorities like Rochford should be allowed to set a realistic and achievable level of new homes for their district."

Responding to the concerns, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) insisted that all parts of the country must contribute to solving what it described as "the worst housing crisis in living memory."

"Our revised housing targets have been set in line with the needs of local areas, so more homes will be built in the right places alongside the necessary infrastructure, and not at the expense of the environment," the spokesperson said.

MHCLG also defended its housing strategy as part of a wider “Plan for Change,” which aims to deliver 1.5 million homes across the country and help families achieve homeownership. Despite pushback from local leaders like Belton, the Government appears committed to its national approach, leaving councils to argue their case for local flexibility.