# Residents unite against Green Belt housing proposals in South Gloucestershire



In a troubling development for South Gloucestershire, local residents are uniting in fierce opposition to ambitious proposals aimed at constructing a staggering 22,500 new homes over the next 15 years—primarily on land currently designated as Green Belt. This plan, referred to as 'The Local Plan', is being driven by the South Gloucestershire Council and stands poised to disrupt several cherished rural areas, including Bitton, Hanham, Mangotsfield, Oldland Common, Shortwood, Warmley, and Wick. While proponents claim this initiative seeks to tackle the growing demand for housing, a chorus of community voices is asserting that such extensive development is unnecessary and detrimental.

Following an alarming admission from Chancellor Rachel Reeves regarding the government's failure to meet its target of building 1.5 million new homes by the end of this parliamentary term, residents are becoming justifiably outraged. Martin Thomas, a local resident, expressed his disbelief at the lack of infrastructure planning accompanying the proposed housing developments, sharply questioning the veracity of Keir Starmer's earlier commitments that promised infrastructure would come before housing. “What of Starmer's promises? We aren't seeing that here!” he emphasized in remarks to MailOnline.

Darren Lawrence, chair of the community group Save Our Green Spaces South Gloucestershire (SOGS-SG), called the plan 'catastrophic,' asserting that only around 5,600 houses are truly needed when reflecting on local demographic changes. He pointed out that the expected influx of newcomers is primarily linked to job-seekers flocking to the Bristol area rather than catering to the needs of current residents—a stark contrast to the promises made by the new Labour government.

Local residents are increasingly voicing their fears about the strain these developments would place on already overstretched local services. Ros Pyle, a 66-year-old resident, raised her concerns regarding the healthcare system's ability to cope with the impending wave of new inhabitants, particularly as local surgeries struggle to meet current demand.

Traffic congestion is another pressing issue; residents such as Julian Jones and Caroline White have shared anecdotes of daily inconveniences they endure, indicating that the new housing developments could worsen these predicaments. An estimated influx of approximately 7,000 additional cars on local roads has residents questioning the reliability and capacity of public transport options that are already deemed insufficient.

The council has attempted to quell concerns by citing proposed provisions for new schools, GP surgeries, improved roads, and public transport, alongside renewable energy initiatives aimed at achieving carbon neutrality. A spokesperson touted a vision that supposedly provides affordable housing opportunities for all generations. However, the justification of the plans through calculations dictated by the central government, aimed at limiting Green Belt impact to just 2.53%, has done little to alleviate growing skepticism.

Many residents are refusing to accept the local government’s characterization of their issues as mere “NIMBYism.” Mr. Lawrence lamented that this dismissive attitude serves only to stifle substantive public discourse—a sentiment echoed by numerous citizens who are vehemently opposed to the erosion of their community and environment.

Amidst escalating housing pressures and a government seemingly detached from local concerns, the planned developments are currently in a final public consultation phase before being submitted for examination next year. Political responses have highlighted a divided council, with Conservative leaders condemning the proposal for jeopardizing the Green Belt while advocating for more innovative strategies that don’t compromise invaluable green spaces.

The Labour government’s aggressive housing mandate is generating palpable tension in the region, illuminating a stark dichotomy between top-down policy and grassroots realities. As the controversy rages on, residents are rallying together, determined to push back against what they perceive as a reckless disregard for their quality of life and the sanctity of their environment amidst relentless housing demands.

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

## References

* <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/development-allowed-first-time-greenbelt-surrounding-bristol/> - This article discusses the Local Plan in South Gloucestershire, which involves building 22,500 new homes, partly on Green Belt land. It explains the council's efforts to balance housing needs with environmental concerns.
* <https://www.southgloslibdems.org.uk/news/news-article/lets-end-the-nightmare-of-speculative-development> - This piece highlights the approval of the Local Plan by South Gloucestershire Council, aimed at curbing speculative development while increasing affordable housing and dealing with recent government planning changes.
* <https://sites.southglos.gov.uk/newsroom/housing/new-south-gloucestershire-local-plan-approved-for-public-consultation/> - This article provides details on the Local Plan's focus on sustainable developments, infrastructure improvements, and environmental standards, as well as its implications for the Green Belt.
* <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/development-allowed-first-time-greenbelt-surrounding-bristol/> - This article also mentions the government's housing targets and how they impact local planning decisions, including the potential for increased development on Green Belt land.
* <https://www.southgloslibdems.org.uk/news/news-article/lets-end-the-nightmare-of-speculative-development> - It further emphasizes the need for affordable housing and the council's efforts to address housing demand while protecting local environments and preventing unregulated development.