# Residents in Gloucestershire oppose plans for 22,500 new homes on Green Belt land



Local residents in Gloucestershire are expressing strong opposition to new plans from the South Gloucestershire Council aimed at addressing housing shortages by constructing 22,500 homes on Green Belt land over the next 15 years. This initiative, referred to as 'The Local Plan', has sparked outrage among locals who argue that the area does not require such extensive housing developments.

The proposed developments involve converting significant areas of protected Green Belt land into residential properties, with around a third earmarked for affordable housing. This announcement comes as Chancellor Rachel Reeves acknowledged that the government is likely to fall short of its target to build 1.5 million new homes by the end of the current parliament.

The designated locations for these new homes include Bitton, Hanham, Mangotsfield, Oldland Common, Shortwood, Warmley, and Wick. According to local resident Martin Thomas, the need for housing in the area is being overstated. Speaking to MailOnline, he remarked, "What of Keir Starmer's promises that infrastructure comes before housing developments? We aren't seeing that here!" Thomas further indicated that the projected need is based on flawed estimates and suggested that local demographic changes, including migration from abroad, are inflating housing demands.

Darren Lawrence, chair of Save Our Green Spaces South Gloucestershire (SOGS-SG), described the plans as “catastrophic” and bordering on “authoritarian”. The group, actively campaigning against the developments, believes only about 5,600 new homes are necessary over the next fifteen years, based on local population trends related to births and deaths. Lawrence pointed out that many new arrivals would primarily be coming to the Bristol area for work rather than to meet local housing demands.

Local residents, including Ros Pyle and Julian Jones, have raised concerns about the inadequate infrastructure in the area to accommodate the projected increase in population. Pyle highlighted that the local healthcare services are already under strain, with current facilities unable to cope with rising demands. "This area attracts an older population and we are just at our limits with our surgeries at full capacity," she said. Jones added a personal dimension to the impact of traffic congestion, recounting an experience where he spent 90 minutes in traffic for what should have been a 20-minute journey.

While the council has stated that the housing plans will create new opportunities, including schools, GP surgeries, and public transportation improvements, many residents remain sceptical about these promises. They argue that the proposed projects will lead to significant disruption, increased traffic, and environmental degradation.

Concerning the environmental impact, several residents expressed dismay about the potential destruction of wildlife habitats. Marilyn Thomas warned that current developments could lead to a further erosion of the Green Belt, stating, "they're changing green belt to Grey belt".

Additionally, properties currently occupied by residents face potential demolition to make way for new road access associated with the developments. Charlie Bierman shared his concerns about being misled during the rental process, revealing that his current home is scheduled to be demolished. "It would be a real shame to go," he said, expressing his frustration over the future of his family’s living situation.

Plans are in the final stages of public consultation before being submitted to the government's planning inspector for examination. Local political reactions have varied, with the Conservative Group opposing the plans based on their potential to damage the local environment, while Lib Dem Councillor Chris Wilmore acknowledged the challenges presented by the government's housing targets, which he labelled as "arbitrary".

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has stated that the country faces a severe housing crisis, which necessitates aggressive action to meet housing demands while committing to protect natural landscapes. The dialogue continues as local advocacy groups and residents advocate for sustainable and appropriate development practices and await further updates from the planning authorities.

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