# Southend-on-Sea council faces uphill battle to meet 24,000 home target amid green belt concerns



Southend-on-Sea faces a significant challenge as it grapples with government mandates to construct 24,000 new homes over the next two decades. Despite an effort to identify suitable land, the council has only outlined space for approximately 9,500 homes, leading to urgent calls for community engagement and development strategy reassessment.

The remit set by the government requires an ambitious target of 1,200 homes annually, which council leaders acknowledge exceeds current construction rates more than fourfold. This disparity raises questions about the feasibility of these targets. Daniel Cowan, the council leader, expressed concerns regarding the "algorithms used by several governments" that dictate such targets without consideration of local realities. The council plans to conduct a second public consultation on its draft local plan, which outlines housing, employment, and leisure land use over the coming years.

A critical aspect of the council's strategy is the possibility of developing green belt land, which has sparked apprehension among residents and officials alike. The current draft plan includes potential developments in areas known for housing, such as Fossetts Farm, which could accommodate up to 1,200 homes, in addition to developments at Queensway and Elm Road. Cowan emphasised the need for a balanced approach, stating that while the council has a duty to deliver housing, it must also align this with existing infrastructure capacities and geographical constraints.

Concerns are further echoed by James Courtenay, leader of the Conservative Group, who stated that the capacity for such a significant build poses logistical questions. He highlighted the necessity of appropriate services and infrastructure to support any new developments, particularly in areas like the city centre, which may see a higher density of building. Similarly, Tony Cox of the Reform Group indicated a general reluctance amongst residents regarding the use of green belt land, suggesting a broader community sentiment against further encroachment on these areas.

In addition to the proposed local plans, an emerging joint initiative between Southend-on-Sea City Council and Rochford District Council aims to create a new town between the two areas, potentially adding 10,000 homes. This plan seeks to establish a self-sustaining community that integrates essential infrastructures, such as schools and healthcare facilities, alongside new housing. The proposal is currently under consideration by the Government’s New Towns Taskforce, pending additional assessments and public consultations.

However, overall infrastructure challenges loom large, with many local officials voicing concerns that the current facilities, including transport links and educational resources, may not cope with the anticipated influx of new residents. This dilemma underscores the pressing need for comprehensive planning that balances housing development with the preservation of community services. Council members are aware that without the development of greenfield or green belt land, they stand to fall far short of the housing requirement, with estimates suggesting a shortfall of approximately 60%.

The city's ongoing efforts to refine its local plan demonstrate a commitment to adapting to these challenges through continuous public engagement and the exploration of various spatial strategies. The council's approach emphasises the necessity to ensure that any housing developments are sustainable and considerate of environmental impacts, so community needs and sentiments remain central to the decision-making process.

As Southend-on-Sea prepares for significant growth, the interplay between housing demands and infrastructural viability will determine the success of its local plan and ultimately shape the future landscape of the city. This balancing act is crucial not only for meeting government targets but also for fostering a thriving, integrated community for all residents.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/government-says-southend-must-build-24000-new-homes/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=government-says-southend-must-build-24000-new-homes), [[4]](https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/23431434.southend-needs-houses-infrastructure-struggling/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/government-says-southend-must-build-24000-new-homes/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=government-says-southend-must-build-24000-new-homes), [[2]](https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/local_news/19278820.southend-council-must-build-1-200-new-homes-every-year/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.yoursouthend.co.uk/new-town-proposal-could-see-10000-new-homes-built-between-southend-and-rochford/), [[6]](https://oc2.southend.gov.uk/readdoc/31/searchrepresentations/945)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://oc2.southend.gov.uk/readdoc/31/searchrepresentations/945), [[5]](https://localplan.southend.gov.uk/spatial-strategy)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://localplan.southend.gov.uk/spatial-strategy), [[2]](https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/local_news/19278820.southend-council-must-build-1-200-new-homes-every-year/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.yellowad.co.uk/government-says-southend-must-build-24000-new-homes/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=government-says-southend-must-build-24000-new-homes> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/local_news/19278820.southend-council-must-build-1-200-new-homes-every-year/> - Southend Council is required to build 24,000 new homes over the next 20 years, equating to 1,200 homes annually. Council officials acknowledge that meeting this target solely within urban areas is challenging and are considering developing greenbelt land to accommodate the housing demand. A public consultation on the local plan is planned for the summer to gather community input on these proposals.
3. <https://www.yoursouthend.co.uk/new-town-proposal-could-see-10000-new-homes-built-between-southend-and-rochford/> - Southend-on-Sea City Council and Rochford District Council have jointly proposed a new town development between Southend and Rochford, aiming to build 10,000 homes. This initiative seeks to address the housing shortage by creating a self-sustaining community with essential infrastructure, including roads, schools, and healthcare facilities. The proposal is currently under consideration by the Government’s New Towns Taskforce, with further assessments and public consultations planned if it progresses.
4. <https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/23431434.southend-needs-houses-infrastructure-struggling/> - Southend-on-Sea faces a significant housing shortage, with the Government mandating the construction of 24,000 new homes over the next 20 years. While developments like the 221 affordable homes at Fossetts Way are underway, concerns persist about the strain on existing infrastructure, including roads, schools, and healthcare services. Councillor Carole Mulroney emphasises the need for balanced development that addresses housing demands without overburdening the city's infrastructure.
5. <https://localplan.southend.gov.uk/spatial-strategy> - Southend-on-Sea City Council is developing a new Local Plan to guide the borough's growth over the next 20 years. The plan aims to deliver between 18,000 and 24,000 new homes and 10,000 to 12,000 new jobs. The council is seeking public input on various spatial strategy options to determine the most sustainable and effective approach to meet these targets.
6. <https://oc2.southend.gov.uk/readdoc/31/searchrepresentations/945> - The Southend-on-Sea City Council's New Local Plan identifies a need for 18,000 to 24,000 new homes and 10,000 to 12,000 new jobs over the next 20 years. The plan acknowledges that without developing greenfield or Green Belt land, the council will fall significantly short of meeting local housing needs, with approximately 60% unmet. The council is considering reviewing and altering Green Belt boundaries to accommodate housing growth, provided exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.
7. <https://localplan.southend.gov.uk/refining-plans-option-faq-glossary> - Southend-on-Sea City Council is in the process of refining its Local Plan to meet the Government's housing requirements. The council is considering various spatial strategy options, including the development of greenfield and Green Belt land, to address the identified housing need. Public consultation is ongoing to gather feedback on these options and to ensure that the plan aligns with community needs and environmental considerations.