



Rochford District Council

13 November 2025

Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities &
Local Government

Sent via email only:
Steve.Reed.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP

I am writing following your recent interviews on national morning television, in which you criticised Rochford District Council for refusing a planning application for 660 homes which was later approved on appeal. In the same interviews, you stated that local residents should be able to raise concerns about highways, NHS provision, education, and other infrastructure issues linked to planning proposals.

The two positions you outlined are difficult to reconcile. On one hand, you appeared to suggest that planning authorities should simply approve applications recommended for approval; on the other, you encouraged local voices to be heard. Under the current system, both cannot happen simultaneously.

Your comments on the Bloor Homes application for Ashingdon Road, overlooked the genuine and legitimate concerns of both residents and councillors. To deny the opportunity for those matters to be examined at appeal would have been undemocratic.

You also failed to acknowledge the significant backlog within your own Planning Inspectorate, which is one of the principal causes of delay in the appeals process - a fact clearly shown in statistics published on your department's website.

Cont../

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Furthermore, your government's current housing targets for Rochford District - more than double the number identified as necessary by your own Office for National Statistics - demonstrate a lack of understanding of local needs and constraints.

As one local resident put it regarding our transport infrastructure: "If Anne Boleyn were alive today, she'd still know her way around, because the roads haven't changed since her time", (Anne Boleyn lived locally). Expecting developer contributions alone to deliver the substantial upgrades required, without adequate direct funding from central government, is unrealistic. What we are witnessing is a continual moving of the goalposts to meet political ambition rather than the delivery of sustainable, nationally supported infrastructure.

Discussions with local housing associations also highlight serious financial challenges. With the expectation that they will absorb a greatly increased proportion of 'affordable' homes - including those built on former green belt land and subject to a 50% affordability requirement - your government's assumptions appear misplaced. The Affordable Homes Programme, with its £11.5 billion budget, will not come close to meeting the scale of need implied by your current housing targets.

For context, planning applications currently progressing in Rochford District alone would produce around 3,500 'affordable' homes, valued collectively at approximately £1 billion. Extrapolated across hundreds of local authorities nationwide, it becomes clear that the funding available is nowhere near sufficient to achieve your government's ambitions.

The recent BBC Panorama programme 'The Race to Build 1.5 Million Homes' reflected the concerns of many professionals across the housing and planning sectors - concerns that mirror our own locally. Not a single expert interviewed expressed confidence that your government's target of 1.5 million homes in this Parliament is achievable.

The notion that increasing housing supply at this pace will reduce prices demonstrates a misunderstanding of the UK housebuilding market. In reality, rapid, large-scale development often drives up costs due to pressure on materials, labour, and land.

While we agree that additional housing is needed, the current approach - both in scale and speed - is neither evidence-based nor deliverable. Reforming the planning system through a 'steamroller' strategy risks undermining local democracy, damaging the economy, and ultimately failing to meet genuine housing needs.

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I urge you and your colleagues to base housing requirements on robust, data-driven analysis rather than politically convenient targets. A realistic, sustainable, and locally informed approach would deliver far better outcomes for communities, developers, and the country as a whole.

If you would be willing to come to Rochford, we would welcome a visit from you to meet us to discuss and see the issues in our area.

Yours sincerely



Councillor D L Belton
Leader of Rochford
District Council



Cllr S E Wootton
Chairman of the Planning
Policy Committee



Councillor A H Eves
Chairman of the
Development Committee

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