

Campaigner waiting on High Court case outcome...which could cost her £50k 'I know people think my battle is foolhardy'

BRAVE, foolhardy and crazy are just some of the words you could use to describe Linda Kendall, a 66-year-old campaigner taking on Rochford council by herself.

Linda, who has a degree in law, is awaiting the result of a High Court challenge to Rochford District Council's plans for 2,785 new homes to be built on green belt land by 2025.

The protracted hearing came to an end on Friday, October 3 and she now faces an anxious wait to find out if she will have to fork out nearly £50,000 in costs from her personal pension pot.

Her case, put by Richard

By PHILIP JONES
phillip.jones@nqpc.com

She said: "I am not wealthy, I have never had a penny off the state and £50,000 is a massive amount out of my pension scheme.

"I was widowed when I was 35 with three children and I brought them up by myself.

"I know everyone probably thinks I am foolhardy and they are quite entitled to think that, but I cannot sit back on this.

"My children aren't too happy that I've done it, but I just think it is so wrong.

"Should I lose then I'll get by, but it won't be easy."

An outline planning application from housing developer Countryside has been submitted to Rochford District Council for a site allocated for 500 homes on green belt land between London Road and Rawreth Lane, to the west of her home town.

Another 500 homes are planned for the small village of Hullbridge, residents of which Linda has had support from in her quest to beat the council.

So far she has managed to raise around £8,000 towards her costs, but still faces a significant financial loss should Justice Lindblom, the High Court judge hearing the case, decide in the council's favour.

Linda added: "To be honest it would have been nice to get £5, which I think the cause is worth, from people across Rayleigh, but

It is simply not acceptable to ignore the vast majority of the electorate as they have chosen to do

I know people think, and have said, that I'm crazy, but I couldn't let this go

Buxton Environmental Public Law, argues the council did not conduct enough public consultation before agreeing its housing plan.

Linda, who is retired, objected to the plans in January 2013 and set up the Rayleigh Action Group, after a meeting with other residents six months later.

A Rayleigh resident for 40 years, she now lives in Lubards Close and does not want to see what she, and many others, consider to be an already congested town in a rural setting, become another urban sprawl.

After the council adopted its housing plan in February, Linda set about investigating a legal challenge and in April she submitted her case, knowing full well if she lost she would be liable for costs.



■ Campaign - Linda Kendall has taken her battle against Rochford District Council all the way to the High Court
Picture: AL UNDERWOOD BA100178

you can't force people to help out.

"I know people think, and have said, that I am crazy, but I couldn't let this go. I don't want to see our town and green fields destroyed.

"I have no regrets.

"I am happy with how the final day of the hearing went and the case my team made, but I do know we are up against it.

"This issue isn't about me fighting a cause though, it is about our town, which is currently in a rural setting, being turned into an urban town and I don't want to see that happen.

"If everyone from the beginning of time had allowed councils and governments to walk all over them, without question we would

still be sending children up chimneys and doffing caps to masters."

The council's housing strategy has taken about eight years to come to fruition, with a "core strategy" document, which identified the need for housing and potential locations for developments, initially being drafted and assessed by Government inspectors.

A second phase of the plan, the allocations document, was then put together to give further details of the selected development sites before again being inspected and passed by a Government inspector.

Linda still feels that the council did not do right by their resi-

dents and failed to consult them enough on the plans.

She added: "Occasionally someone has to call time when wrong is being done, the undemocratic process pursued by our district council had to be challenged.

"It is simply not acceptable to ignore the vast majority of the electorate as they have chosen to do.

"My overriding view is that the people we trusted to protect our town have failed totally to do their duty as expected of them."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
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