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# Councils may lose say on homes

By Tom Rees

ROBERT JENRICK, the Housing Secretary, is threatening to strip local councils of planning powers as he ramps up the pressure to meet the 300,000 homes a year target.

Councils have hit out at rising housing targets after South Oxfordshire council was threatened with government intervention and other worried local leaders requested an emergency meeting with Mr Jenrick, letters seen by *The Sunday Telegraph* reveal.

Marianne Overton, head of the Independent Group of Councillors, said local authorities were facing a "new pressure" to build since the election af-

ter being set "unrealistic" targets by the Government. "The new Government has come in and said 300,000 houses no question," she said. Other

sharp jumps in their targets were too ambitious with some raising concerns about the type of housing being built and protection of the green belt. Tensions over a hike in building to tackle the crisis is pitting Tory-controlled councils against the Government.

Sevenoaks, a Tory council where 93pc of the land is designated green belt, has requested an urgent meeting with Mr Jenrick after its plan was rejected despite committing to a 300pc surge in housing. The ministry of housing, communities and local government declined to comment on South Oxfordshire but said that "councils must deliver the numbers of new homes their communities need".



Robert Jenrick, the Housing Minister, is threatening to strip councils of planning powers in a bid to meet housing targets

councils could also soon face the threat of a "local plan intervention" after their housing proposals were rejected. Local leaders affected said