# UK housing projects stagnate amid regulatory hurdles and investment uncertainty



The UKREiiF conference recently illuminated the frustrations plaguing the UK construction industry, with the most common words echoing through discussions being ‘viable’ and ‘unlock’. This sentiment echoed a growing concern among architects and investors that a significant number of projects currently on the drawing boards may remain stagnant until financial uncertainties are resolved. The discussions indicated a considerable sentiment that governmental policies need to be more accommodating if the UK is to see any meaningful development in its housing projects.

A pressing issue raised during the conference was how regulatory measures, particularly rent caps in Scotland, were inadvertently restricting private-sector investment in residential projects such as build-to-rent homes. Industry leaders noted that these well-intentioned tenant protections were causing hesitation among financiers, stalling essential housing developments. Tom Wagner, an American financier and chairman of Birmingham City FC, underscored the urgent need for barriers to be dismantled to retain investment within the UK's property sector, warning that lack of encouragement could drive capital abroad.

While hope was found in anticipated drops in interest rates and optimistic discussions surrounding planning adjustments, a palpable frustration prevailed among attendees who reported stagnated projects. Jay Morton of Bell Phillips encapsulated this sentiment, stating that the state of the industry could be described as “sticky”, where decisions were delayed despite assurances from clients. Attendees expressed anxiety over maintaining their workforce in an environment where projects could commence indefinitely on the horizon.

The challenges faced by housing advocates are underscored in a recent publication entitled *Good Homes for All*, which highlights twenty innovative housing models aimed at addressing the urgent need for affordable housing. Released in collaboration with Architects’ Action for Affordable Housing (AA4AH), the guide stresses that good design must be prioritized in delivering housing schemes. Luke Tozer of AA4AH expressed a fundamental belief that the essence of quality housing design should be preserved, particularly as economic pressures threaten to defer essential projects.

During the event, the issue of Section 106 planning deals arose, with many newly completed housing developments remaining empty as a result of financial constraints faced by housing associations. Tozer remarked on the critical need for a renewed focus on design quality even amid these pressing housing demands, advocating for a proactive approach to navigate the significant drop in construction starts and completions. Such sentiments drive home the urgency for the industry to address systemic challenges head-on.

One of the most universally acknowledged hurdles pertains to the Building Safety Regulator (BSR), which has been criticized for its slow processing times concerning project approvals. Recent reports revealed that the BSR is taking nearly six months on average to approve high-rise developments—well beyond the expected timeframe. These delays compound the pressure on the construction sector, further complicating the path towards meeting government housing targets. The BSR has acknowledged these inefficiencies, stating it is implementing measures to recruit more staff and enhance processing capabilities.

Additionally, firms are facing the challenge of evolving their service offerings as client needs shift. A panel discussion organized by Vincent & Partners addressed the undefined nature of roles that exist within the development process. The firm highlighted that it often fills gaps left between their responsibilities and those of other professionals, suggesting a necessary evolution in the architecture profession to adapt to emerging demands.

The conference also touched briefly on themes related to climate resilience and sustainable practices, although there remains scope for greater dialogue. Notably, innovative discussions led by Rasmus Astrup from nature-based design studio SLA aimed to bridge the gap between urban design and public health, challenging the perception that integrating natural features into urban planning conflicts with business interests. Astrup highlighted how transparency in communication could foster public understanding, thereby facilitating greener projects that benefit both communities and the environment.

As the UKREiiF conference wrapped up, there was a prevalent sense that optimism must be coupled with decisive action if the construction industry is to thrive amid the current challenges. There is an urgent call for stakeholders to rally around solutions that not only respond to immediate financial pressures but also aim to enhance the design quality and environmental stewardship of the built environment.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/what-we-learned-from-ukreiif-the-industry-is-frustrated), [[6]](https://www.costar.com/article/126966774/the-big-takeaways-from-ukreiif-industry-looks-for-opportunities-in-challenged-market)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/what-we-learned-from-ukreiif-the-industry-is-frustrated), [[2]](https://www.irwinmitchell.com/news-and-insights/newsandmedia/2025/april/regulator-taking-twice-as-long-to-approve-high-rise-developments-in-england), [[5]](https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/real-estate/ukreiif-uk-real-estate-sector-2022-challenges/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.savills.us/research_articles/256536/362441-0), [[6]](https://www.costar.com/article/126966774/the-big-takeaways-from-ukreiif-industry-looks-for-opportunities-in-challenged-market)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.ukreiif.com/nomination-01/), [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/what-we-learned-from-ukreiif-the-industry-is-frustrated)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.buildingsafety.campaign.gov.uk/building-safety-regulator-making-buildings-safer/building-safety-regulator-is-now-the-building-control-authority/), [[2]](https://www.irwinmitchell.com/news-and-insights/newsandmedia/2025/april/regulator-taking-twice-as-long-to-approve-high-rise-developments-in-england)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/real-estate/ukreiif-uk-real-estate-sector-2022-challenges/), [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/what-we-learned-from-ukreiif-the-industry-is-frustrated)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://www.buildingsafety.campaign.gov.uk/building-safety-regulator-making-buildings-safer/building-safety-regulator-is-now-the-building-control-authority/), [[6]](https://www.costar.com/article/126966774/the-big-takeaways-from-ukreiif-industry-looks-for-opportunities-in-challenged-market)
* Paragraph 8 – [[4]](https://www.savills.us/research_articles/256536/362441-0), [[5]](https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/real-estate/ukreiif-uk-real-estate-sector-2022-challenges/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/what-we-learned-from-ukreiif-the-industry-is-frustrated> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irwinmitchell.com/news-and-insights/newsandmedia/2025/april/regulator-taking-twice-as-long-to-approve-high-rise-developments-in-england> - An April 2025 report by Irwin Mitchell reveals that the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) is taking nearly six months on average to approve high-rise developments in England, more than double the stipulated timeframe. This delay is attributed to staffing issues and process inefficiencies, raising concerns about the impact on the construction industry and the government's housing targets. The BSR has acknowledged these challenges and is implementing measures to improve efficiency, including recruiting additional personnel and streamlining processes.
3. <https://www.buildingsafety.campaign.gov.uk/building-safety-regulator-making-buildings-safer/building-safety-regulator-is-now-the-building-control-authority/> - As of 1 October 2023, the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) has become the Building Control Authority for all higher-risk buildings in England. This change means that developers must apply to the BSR for building control approval before starting construction on new residential buildings over 18 metres or seven storeys, as well as hospitals and care homes of the same height. The BSR's role includes overseeing safety and standards, improving industry competence, and leading the implementation of the new regulatory framework for high-rise buildings.
4. <https://www.savills.us/research_articles/256536/362441-0> - A May 2024 report by Savills highlights the UK's low business investment compared to other OECD countries, leading to slow productivity growth. The report emphasizes the need for up-to-date local development plans that integrate infrastructure, employment, and development. It also calls for decision-making processes at the appropriate level to give investors confidence in delivering major development and regeneration projects. The analysis suggests that without sufficient new commercial and residential space, the UK's growth potential may not be fully realized.
5. <https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/real-estate/ukreiif-uk-real-estate-sector-2022-challenges/> - An article from Investment Monitor discusses the challenges facing the UK real estate sector, as highlighted at the UKREiiF conference. Industry leaders emphasize the need to simplify and expedite procurement processes to encourage private sector investment. The article also notes that public sector partners often take time to understand the issues, leading to delays. Additionally, there is a lack of consensus on what constitutes 'sustainable' in the building sector, which further complicates development efforts.
6. <https://www.costar.com/article/126966774/the-big-takeaways-from-ukreiif-industry-looks-for-opportunities-in-challenged-market> - A report from CoStar outlines key takeaways from the UKREiiF conference, focusing on the industry's search for opportunities amid a challenging market. Homes England announced a £16 billion strategy to deliver more affordable homes, calling it both a 'call to arms and an offer' to the housing and regeneration sector. The article also highlights debates on housing strategies, with experts discussing the need for long-term infrastructure approaches and more funding to be allocated without micro-management by central government.
7. <https://www.ukreiif.com/nomination-01/> - The UKREiiF conference agenda includes discussions on various topics, such as the role of different residential typologies in contributing to social mobility, urban regeneration through housing-led renewal, and the impact of the Building Safety Act on the construction industry. These sessions aim to address current challenges and explore opportunities for growth and improvement within the sector.