# Labour’s housing pledge faces uncertainty amid soaring demand and slow supply



I have become increasingly accustomed to the sight of construction projects sprouting across the UK, particularly in urban centres. Each site, marked by the cacophony of machinery and the shadow of towering cranes, evokes a sense of anticipation represented through meticulously staged show flats. Pictures on the hoardings depict vibrant thirtysomethings sipping coffee in stylish settings, accompanied by optimistic slogans like “live, work, relax, dream.” However, these images often stand in stark contrast to the reality many face, as public scepticism emerges: “Who’s this for? Not me.”

This sentiment resonates in statistical realities. As of now, over 1.3 million households in England are on council housing waiting lists—the highest figure since 2014. Disturbingly, around 164,000 children find themselves in temporary accommodation, a reflection of a broader crisis wherein average rents in the private rental sector have surged to a record 9.2%. The Home Builders Federation disclosed that new homes granted planning consent in the first quarter of 2025 reached a worrying low not seen since 2012, a trend exacerbated by the absence of government support for first-time buyers. In this context, newly built apartment complexes serve as symbols of exclusion, igniting frustration among the very communities they are meant to serve.

Historically, housing issues have long infiltrated political discourse. Fifteen years ago, I reported on the dire conditions in areas like Barking and Dagenham, where council house sell-offs contributed to chronic housing shortages. A bakery owner’s bitter account of her daughter’s struggle for decent housing encapsulated the urgency of the situation: “But every time... she’s, like, number 200 or 300.” At that time, the connection between housing inadequacies and political extremism felt peripheral; today, however, as mainstream parties grapple with these persistent issues, it is clear that the housing crisis intertwines with the social fabric, influencing dialogues around immigration and broader national stability.

In this complicated political landscape, voices within Keir Starmer's government are increasingly aware of the imperative to address housing shortages. Labour has pledged to construct 1.5 million new homes throughout this parliament, a promise recently reiterated by the Chancellor as part of the “biggest boost in social and affordable housing in a generation.” Yet, the vagueness surrounding these plans adds uncertainty. With a pivotal spending review approaching, calls from figures such as Greater Manchester’s Mayor, Andy Burnham, urge the unlocking of public land to stimulate council home construction, reminiscent of the post-war Labour government’s housing initiatives.

Despite a recent £2 billion allocation for the government’s affordable homes programme outlined in the March budget, the government description likened it to merely a "down payment.” Angela Rayner, the Minister responsible for housing, is reportedly engaging in last-minute negotiations with the Treasury, fighting for increased funding essential to meet the ambitious target of 1.5 million homes. Observers note a concerning trend where housing is becoming sidelined in favour of investments in defence and public transport—issues that, while important, risk overshadowing the desperate need for secure, affordable housing.

The implications of failing to address this crisis are profound. The necessity for revitalised social housing is not only urgent for the millions currently in need but is also critical for Labour if they are to achieve their housing targets. Historically, achieving 300,000 new homes annually last occurred in 1977, when local authorities contributed significantly to new builds. Today, many councils lack the resources necessary to drive such a revival, compounded by a construction skills crisis. The government has plans to train a substantial number of new construction workers; however, industry experts caution that without recruits from overseas, meeting housing demands will remain elusive.

In a recent visit to Aldershot, I encountered the stark contrasts epitomised by new developments like Union Yard, which comprises primarily luxury and student housing, with only 18 units classed as "affordable." The waiting list for council homes in Hampshire alone has swelled to 30,000, highlighting the disconnect between recent developments and the pressing housing needs of local residents. Conversations with local young people reveal a mixture of disillusionment and urgency, encapsulated in repeating refrains of, “Who’s that for? Not me.”

Ultimately, addressing the housing crisis must take precedence not only as a social imperative but also as a litmus test for political viability. Failing to engage meaningfully could precipitate further disillusionment among voters, reinforcing extremism and social discord. The promise of a brighter housing future may hinge on immediate action—a confrontation of the urgent need that many in the UK face daily.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/08/labour-housebuilding-plan-england), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-house-price-index-for-february-2025)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/08/labour-housebuilding-plan-england), [[4]](https://www.propertybusinessinsights.com/uk-house-prices-and-rents-surge-amid-supply-pressures-and-inflation-march-2025-snapshot/), [[5]](https://www.samconveyancing.co.uk/news/housing-market-report/december-2024)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.morningstar.co.uk/uk/news/262436/uk-housing-crisis-is-the-missing-piece-of-the-stagflation-puzzle.aspx), [[7]](https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/insights/what-can-we-expect-from-the-uk-housing-market-in-2025.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/08/labour-housebuilding-plan-england> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-house-price-index-for-february-2025> - The UK House Price Index for February 2025 reports a 5.4% annual increase in house prices, up from 4.8% in January 2025. On a non-seasonally adjusted basis, average house prices remained unchanged between January and February 2025. The highest annual growth was observed in the North West, where prices increased by 8% in the year to February 2025. The report also highlights a 28.1% year-on-year increase in property transactions, with 108,000 residential properties sold in February 2025.
3. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing> - The Office for National Statistics provides comprehensive data on housing in the UK, including property prices, private rents, and household statistics. Recent publications detail trends in private rent and house prices, with average UK monthly private rents increasing by 7.7% to £1,332 in the 12 months to March 2025. The data also covers housing affordability, noting that in 2024, the median average home in England cost 7.7 times the median average earnings of a full-time employee.
4. <https://www.propertybusinessinsights.com/uk-house-prices-and-rents-surge-amid-supply-pressures-and-inflation-march-2025-snapshot/> - This article discusses the UK's housing market as of March 2025, highlighting rising house prices and rental costs amid supply pressures and inflation. It notes that average UK private rents rose by 8.1% in the 12 months to February 2025, reaching £1,326 per month. The article also points out regional disparities, with London and the South East experiencing the highest rent inflation, while house prices rose fastest in Wales.
5. <https://www.samconveyancing.co.uk/news/housing-market-report/december-2024> - A December 2024 report reveals that only 10% of English households can afford an average-priced home, requiring 8.6 years of average disposable income. In London, even households in the top 10% of local earners may struggle to afford an average-priced property. The report emphasizes the need for policies addressing the capital’s unique housing challenges and highlights the impact of affordability issues on the rental sector, with annual rents for newly let properties now £3,240 higher than in 2021.
6. <https://www.morningstar.co.uk/uk/news/262436/uk-housing-crisis-is-the-missing-piece-of-the-stagflation-puzzle.aspx> - This article examines the UK's housing crisis within the context of stagflation, noting that 8.4 million people are living in unaffordable, insecure, or overcrowded housing. It highlights that the average house price in England has risen by 56% over the past decade, while wages have risen only 20%. The article also discusses the challenges of private renting, with the average UK monthly rent payment being £1,100, and the broader economic implications of the housing crisis.
7. <https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/insights/what-can-we-expect-from-the-uk-housing-market-in-2025.html> - Lloyds Banking Group's 2025 housing market outlook discusses the ongoing demand for housing, noting that the UK's population is projected to reach 73 million by 2036, up from 63 million in 2011. The article highlights the challenges of meeting this demand, including the need for accessible housing and retirement living options, and the implications of an aging population on housing provision.