# UK government eyes ambitious timeline for new towns ahead of next election



The UK government has announced a shortlist of 12 potential locations for the next generation of new towns, highlighting three priority sites in Bedfordshire, London, and Leeds that could progress to development before the next general election. The selected sites—Tempsford in Bedfordshire, Crews Hill in Enfield, and the South Bank in Leeds—have been earmarked for their strong potential to boost economic growth and deliver large-scale housing quickly. This move forms part of a broader commitment to initiate construction on at least three new towns during the current parliamentary term.

These shortlisted locations emerged from the work of the New Towns Taskforce, led by Sir Michael Lyons and Dame Kate Barker, which has been tasked with identifying sites capable of providing significant housing capacity and driving sustainable development. In total, these 12 sites hold the potential to deliver up to 300,000 homes over several decades. Alongside the three priority locations, others include Adlington in Cheshire East, Brabazon and the West Innovation Arc in South Gloucestershire, Heyford Park in Oxfordshire, Victoria North in Manchester, Marlcombe in East Devon, central Milton Keynes, Plymouth, Thamesmead in Greenwich, and Worcestershire Parkway in Wychavon.

The government emphasises that no final decisions have yet been made on locations, pending the conclusion of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) expected next spring. This process will ensure environmental and sustainability factors are adequately considered, and it could lead to changes in the preferred sites. A public consultation on the draft proposals and the SEA findings is planned for early next year, with final site selections due by spring 2026.

New towns are planned to be well-rounded, self-sustaining communities, designed to incorporate a minimum of 40% affordable housing, half of which would be designated for social rent. The developments aim to prioritise walkability, access to active travel routes, public transport, green spaces, and essential local services such as schools and GP practices. The government is considering development corporations as the principal delivery model, though variations involving mayoral and public-private partnerships will be explored based on local circumstances.

A significant aspect of the strategy includes leveraging compulsory purchase powers for land acquisition, with a targeted removal of "hope value" compensation where affordable housing provision justifies this approach. Funding will be sourced from existing government housing budgets, including the £39 billion Affordable Homes Programme and capital managed by the National Housing Bank. Integration with broader government spending on infrastructure—such as roads, energy, and health—is also planned to support these developments comprehensively.

This initiative is part of a wider government response to England’s housing shortage, aiming not only to build homes but to drive sustainable economic growth and create vibrant, well-connected communities. Over 100 potential sites across England were originally proposed for consideration, each capable of delivering at least 10,000 new homes and equipped with necessary infrastructure like schools and healthcare facilities, according to government statements.

The New Towns Taskforce, established to oversee the programme, comprises eight industry experts who are also focused on agreeing principles and standards for quality placemaking and exploring innovative funding mechanisms to attract investment. This approach draws on lessons from previous new town developments, emphasising sustainability, affordability, and integrated infrastructure to meet contemporary demands.

Political backing for new towns has been strong, with opposition leaders, such as Labour’s Keir Starmer, pledging that work on up to 12 new towns will commence before the next general election. This bipartisan approach underscores the urgency and broad recognition of the housing crisis in England.

While enthusiasm for the programme grows, a recent inquiry launched by the House of Lords Built Environment Committee seeks to assess the effectiveness of new towns as a housing solution. The inquiry examines the legal, political, and economic challenges involved in delivering such large-scale projects to ensure that commitments translate into successful outcomes on the ground.

With comprehensive planning underway, including environmental assessments, public consultations, and cross-sector collaboration, the government's new towns programme represents an ambitious, long-term strategy to alleviate housing pressures and foster sustainable community growth across England.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/government-backs-12-shortlisted-sites-for-new-towns-in-long-term-housing-plan-28-09-2025/), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-plans-for-next-generation-of-new-towns), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/12/up-to-12-new-towns-will-be-under-construction-in-england-by-next-election-says-starmer)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/government-backs-12-shortlisted-sites-for-new-towns-in-long-term-housing-plan-28-09-2025/), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-towns-taskforce-set-to-deliver-major-housebuilding-push), [[7]](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/02/13/100-sites-england-put-forward-new-towns)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/government-backs-12-shortlisted-sites-for-new-towns-in-long-term-housing-plan-28-09-2025/), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-new-towns-for-the-future/building-new-towns-for-the-future)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/government-backs-12-shortlisted-sites-for-new-towns-in-long-term-housing-plan-28-09-2025/), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-new-towns-for-the-future/building-new-towns-for-the-future)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/government-backs-12-shortlisted-sites-for-new-towns-in-long-term-housing-plan-28-09-2025/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-plans-for-next-generation-of-new-towns), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-towns-taskforce-set-to-deliver-major-housebuilding-push), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-new-towns-for-the-future/building-new-towns-for-the-future), [[7]](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/02/13/100-sites-england-put-forward-new-towns)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/12/up-to-12-new-towns-will-be-under-construction-in-england-by-next-election-says-starmer)
* Paragraph 8 – [[4]](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/03/24/inquiry-news-towns-launched)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/government-backs-12-shortlisted-sites-for-new-towns-in-long-term-housing-plan-28-09-2025/), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-plans-for-next-generation-of-new-towns), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-towns-taskforce-set-to-deliver-major-housebuilding-push), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-new-towns-for-the-future/building-new-towns-for-the-future)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/buildings/government-backs-12-shortlisted-sites-for-new-towns-in-long-term-housing-plan-28-09-2025/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-plans-for-next-generation-of-new-towns> - The UK government has announced plans for the next generation of new towns, aiming to create hundreds of thousands of homes and drive economic growth. Over 100 sites across England have been proposed for consideration, with a focus on developing well-designed, sustainable communities that include affordable housing and essential infrastructure such as schools and healthcare facilities. The initiative seeks to address the housing shortage and provide high-quality living environments for working people and families.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/12/up-to-12-new-towns-will-be-under-construction-in-england-by-next-election-says-starmer> - Labour leader Keir Starmer has pledged that work on up to 12 new towns in England will commence before the next general election. The government has identified over 100 potential locations for these new towns, each capable of housing at least 10,000 residents. The initiative aims to tackle the housing crisis by building affordable homes and essential infrastructure, with a commitment to overcoming bureaucratic obstacles to expedite construction.
4. <https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/03/24/inquiry-news-towns-launched> - The House of Lords Built Environment Committee has launched an inquiry into the practical delivery of new towns and expanded settlements. The inquiry aims to assess whether new towns are an effective means of delivering housing and to understand the legal, political, and economic channels necessary for their successful development. This follows the government's call for evidence, which received over 100 submissions for potential new town sites across England.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-towns-taskforce-set-to-deliver-major-housebuilding-push> - The New Towns Taskforce, established by the UK government, has held its first meeting to identify potential sites for new towns. The taskforce comprises eight industry experts and aims to deliver the next generation of new towns that could provide hundreds of thousands of new homes. The group is tasked with identifying high-potential locations, agreeing on principles and standards for quality places, and exploring new ways to attract funding and investment.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-new-towns-for-the-future/building-new-towns-for-the-future> - The UK government's publication outlines the vision and aims for the next generation of new towns. It highlights the importance of creating thriving communities with affordable homes, essential infrastructure, and sustainable development. The document discusses lessons learned from previous new town programmes and sets out the next steps for the New Towns Taskforce, including identifying potential locations and ensuring high-quality, well-designed, and sustainable developments.
7. <https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/02/13/100-sites-england-put-forward-new-towns> - Over 100 sites across England have been proposed for the government's new towns programme, with each new town having the potential to deliver at least 10,000 homes. The initiative aims to create well-designed, beautiful communities with affordable homes, GP surgeries, schools, and public transport. The New Towns Taskforce is reviewing these proposals to identify suitable locations for development, focusing on areas ripe for early intervention as part of a first initial wave.