# UK’s housing push sparks renewed focus on flood resilience and sustainable infrastructure



The UK faces a pressing housing shortage with decades of under-building compared to other countries hampering economic growth, deepening inequality, and restricting quality of life. To counter this, the government has set an ambitious target to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the current parliament, a plan that necessitates faster planning application approvals. Yet this acceleration raises concerns about possible environmental trade-offs, especially regarding flood risk management.

Flood resilience is emerging as a crucial consideration among prospective homeowners. Public awareness about flooding risks has increased, with insurance schemes like Flood Re providing affordable cover only for homes built before 2009, leaving buyers of new-build properties more exposed. Planning authorities currently assess development proposals with input from bodies such as the Environment Agency to weigh factors including flood risk, ecological impact, and infrastructure. However, there is growing industry consensus that flood resilience in new housing requires more robust policy implementation.

Sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS) are recognised as effective mechanisms to manage surface water runoff and reduce flooding. Contrary to developer concerns, SuDS are neither prohibitively complex nor expensive. Many developments implement these systems but frequently delegate ongoing maintenance to private companies through one-off fees, which can lead to poor upkeep and infrastructure failures. This ultimately burdens homeowners with high fees or substandard flood protection.

Legislation passed in 2010 under Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act mandates that SuDS be included in all new developments with designs adoptable by local authorities. This shift promotes long-term flood resilience rather than short-term cost saving. However, despite steady calls from experts—including an open letter to the Prime Minister endorsed by senior figures from the Institution of Civil Engineers—Schedule 3 remains unimplemented after 15 years. The government’s current housebuilding ambitions present an opportune moment to act on this.

Beyond SuDS integration, expert analyses emphasise linking new housing developments with wider infrastructure, including flood defences, transport, and utilities, to create sustainable, future-proof communities. The ICE has highlighted the necessity of infrastructure to make homes truly liveable. National planning policies could also be strengthened to allow councils to refuse proposals lacking comprehensive flood resilience measures and to encourage natural flood management techniques that enhance biodiversity and public spaces. Future-proofing these developments against climate change impacts is another essential policy frontier.

The government’s recent planning overhaul aims to accelerate housing delivery through mandatory targets for councils, review of greenbelt land, and introduction of ‘golden rules’ that promote affordable homes alongside local services and green spaces. A £100 million funding injection and recruitment of 300 planning officers further seek to expedite decision-making, addressing the housing crisis while stimulating the economy.

Balancing the necessity for increased housing with environmental sustainability is feasible but requires smarter planning, enhanced coordination, and commitment to resilient infrastructure. The integration of housing and infrastructure from the outset can help build communities that are not only large in number but also safe, sustainable, and prepared for future climatic challenges.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/building-homes-flood-resilience-go-hand-in-hand), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-overhaul-to-reach-15-million-new-homes), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again), [[7]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/building-homes-flood-resilience-go-hand-in-hand)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/building-homes-flood-resilience-go-hand-in-hand)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/building-homes-flood-resilience-go-hand-in-hand)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/building-homes-flood-resilience-go-hand-in-hand)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/building-homes-flood-resilience-go-hand-in-hand)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/building-homes-flood-resilience-go-hand-in-hand), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-overhaul-to-reach-15-million-new-homes)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ice.org.uk/news-views-insights/inside-infrastructure/building-homes-flood-resilience-go-hand-in-hand> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-overhaul-to-reach-15-million-new-homes> - The UK government has announced a comprehensive overhaul of the planning system aimed at accelerating housebuilding to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the current Parliament. This includes setting mandatory housing targets for councils, defining lower-quality 'grey belt' land for development, and introducing 'golden rules' to ensure new developments provide affordable housing, local services, and green spaces. Additionally, £100 million in funding and 300 new planning officers are allocated to expedite decision-making processes, thereby addressing the housing crisis and stimulating economic growth.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-targets-increased-to-get-britain-building-again> - The UK government has increased housing targets for councils in England to deliver 1.5 million new homes, aiming to tackle the housing crisis and boost economic growth. The new rules set mandatory housing targets for councils, require the review of greenbelt boundaries to meet targets, and introduce strict requirements for developments on greenbelt land. The approach reflects the ambition necessary to address the housing crisis and meet the government's commitment to building 1.5 million homes.
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