# London’s iconic red phone box auction highlights superficial approach to housing crisis



A Grade II-listed red telephone box in Winchmore Hill, North London, has been put up for auction with a guide price of £10,000, igniting a wave of social media commentary that it could be repurposed into “affordable housing” — a stark illustration of the government’s failure to tackle housing affordability in the capital. Covering just nine square feet of land, this historic kiosk, believed to date back to 1936, stands 8ft tall and sits precariously at a junction, symbolising how the city’s iconic structures are being exploited as makeshift solutions to an ever-worsening housing crisis.

Many have cynically remarked that such a small structure could serve as a home, exposing the dire state of London’s housing market where affordability has become an illusion for the average citizen. Instead of tangible, long-term solutions, the policies of the current government and local authorities appear to be content with cosmetic fixes — such as auctioning off heritage-listed structures — rather than addressing the urgent need for affordable, family-sized homes. The idea of turning a telephone box into “residential accommodation” only underscores how far political rhetoric has fallen short from tackling real housing shortages.

According to the auction listing on Rightmove by Strettons Auctions, potential new uses for the kiosk are broad, including commercial ventures like advertising space, a coffee or ice cream shop, or even a miniature art gallery. However, these options are constrained by strict planning regulations, given its status as a Grade II-listed structure. Any alterations would be heavily restricted, effectively preserving the kiosk’s heritage status while limiting the likelihood of meaningful redevelopment that could serve the housing needs of Londoners desperate for affordable homes.

This absurd auction follows a broader trend across London where other heritage-listed red phone boxes are being sold at prices far above what ordinary people can afford, often in affluent districts such as Hampstead and Chelsea. These iconic kiosks, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935 to commemorate King George V’s Silver Jubilee, are now often sold at prices ranging from £30,000 to £60,000 — well beyond the reach of those in genuine housing need. The fact that these boxes are often connected to electricity and sometimes repurposed as small shops or cafes highlights how they have become commodities for the wealthy rather than functional parts of the city’s fabric.

Further afield, in Stamford Hill, a Grade II-listed kiosk is on auction with a guide price of £15,000. This particular structure has planning permission granted by Hackney Council in 2019 to be converted for retail use — but only with further consent required. While it offers a fleeting glimmer of entrepreneurial hope, it also exemplifies how heritage status continues to restrict innovative solutions for affordable housing and community use at the expense of genuine needs.

The ongoing debate about these diminutive, heritage-listed phone boxes highlights the deep-seated crisis of housing in London. Government figures now reveal that more than 2% of the population lives in temporary accommodation, a tragic indicator of how little progress has been made. Yet, the selling of these iconic pieces of London's history as potential “housing solutions” reveals the policymakers’ reluctance to face the real issue — that the city is fundamentally failing its most vulnerable.

In this context, the modest price tag of £10,000 for a red telephone box is less a symbol of innovation and more a reminder of how superficial attempts to address London’s housing problems have become. As the powers-that-be continue to treat heritage and aesthetics as obstacles rather than assets, ordinary Londoners are left feeling increasingly disenfranchised and financially squeezed. While suggestions of converting these iconic structures into mini business spaces are floated online, there is little hope that such measures will alleviate the housing crisis or provide genuine solutions for those most in need. Instead, these structures are more likely to serve as relics or marketing gimmicks than meaningful housing options, with the government and councils showing woeful neglect of the real, urgent needs of Londoners.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/property/article-15034919/red-phone-box-sale-Rightmove-affordable-housing.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/21329608.hampsteads-heritage-red-phone-boxes-sale/> - Five historical red telephone boxes in Hampstead, London, are up for sale, with prices ranging from £30,000 to £60,000. These 'K6 Jubilee' kiosks, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935 to commemorate King George V's Silver Jubilee, are listed by English Heritage. Potential buyers are permitted to sell them but cannot alter their location or exterior. The kiosks are connected to electricity and have been repurposed in the past as libraries, bakeries, and coffee shops.
3. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/london-phone-box-sale-business-space-b1843734.html> - Five red telephone boxes in London are on the market for up to £45,000 each, with an auction set to take place later this month. The iconic kiosks – which cover nine square feet – are being billed as offering potential buyers the chance to 'run their own business' or use the phone box as an advertising space by property company BidX1. The ones for sale are located in Bloomsbury, EC2, Chelsea and Waterloo, and the property company has set guide prices between £30,000 and £45,000 for each.
4. <https://www.housepricecrash.co.uk/forum/index.php?%2Ftopic%2F252034-grade-ii-listed-red-telephone-box-in-stamford-hill-up-for-auction-for-%C2%A315000%2F=> - A vacant Grade II-listed red telephone box in Stamford Hill, London, has been put up for auction with a guide price of £15,000. The structure is connected to the electricity mains and has planning permission to be converted for retail use. Hackney Council approved a planning application made in 2019 to transform the telephone box for retail use, although the new owner would need to obtain any relevant consents, particularly given the heritage status of the structure.
5. <https://metro.co.uk/2024/04/08/iconic-red-london-telephone-box-goes-market-15-000-20608092/> - An iconic red London telephone box in Stamford Hill is on the market for £15,000. The Grade II listed building is protected by Historic England, so owners cannot move its location or change the exterior. The box has planning permission for retail use and is connected to mains electricity. The original K6 phone boxes were designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935 to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V.
6. <https://www.newsshopper.co.uk/news/24055189.can-red-telephone-box-london-15-000/> - A vacant Grade II listed red telephone box in Stamford Hill, Hackney, London, is on the market with a guide price of £15,000. The structure is connected to electrical mains and has planning permission to be converted into a retail opportunity. The planning application was approved by Hackney Council in 2019 for commercial use, but a new owner would still need to get relevant consent. The box is located near Seven Sisters tube station and Clapton overground.
7. <https://www.inkl.com/news/red-london-telephone-box-goes-on-the-market-with-a-guide-price-of-45-000> - A red telephone box in Chelsea, London, is set to go to auction with a guide price of £45,000. The sale is billed as an exciting opportunity to run your own business or explore the kiosk's advertising potential. The property description on Rightmove reads: 'Historic listed 'K6' red phone boxes or 'Jubilee' kiosks, commemorating the Silver Jubilee of the coronation of King George V.'