# London's affordable housing target remains elusive as policies fall short



While the goal of increasing affordable housing in London might sound laudable on paper, it’s hard not to see these initiatives as more symbolic than effective. The capital is grappling with a severe shortage of decent, affordable homes—an issue that has been championed by Mayor Sadiq Khan since his earliest days in office. Yet, despite the lofty targets set in 2016 and repeated promises, the reality paints a starkly different picture of failure and frustration.

Khan’s ambitious aim to deliver one-third of new developments as affordable housing has proven largely unachievable. A 2019 analysis exposed the truth: fewer than a quarter of approved developments actually met the 35% affordability target. Out of 1,540 projects, only 376 hit this mark—delivering a mere 48,000 affordable units against a shortfall of 20,000. Critics have long argued that national legislative loopholes and developers’ strategic use of viability assessments are used as excuse to shirk their responsibilities, effectively undermining the very policies designed to help ordinary Londoners.

The recent opposition to a £1.1 billion residential project at the Stag Brewery site in Mortlake once again laid bare Khan’s obsession with enforcement over actual delivery. Despite council approval, the Greater London Authority dismissed the proposal, which included just 15% affordable homes out of 1,075 units, as ‘unacceptable’. While this may seem like a stand for social justice, it actually delays progress at a critical time when London’s housing crisis demands pragmatic solutions—not ideological rigidity.

Official figures reveal the grim reality of what’s been achieved. In 2024/25, only 3,991 affordable homes were started—one of the worst records since Khan took office. Recognizing the dire state of affairs, the government slashed the initial targets from roughly 24,000 to fewer than 20,000 new starts, citing ‘challenging conditions’ in London. Over 12,000 homes that were meant to be built remain on hold, underscoring how little progress has been made despite all the rhetoric.

Khan’s proposed £3.5 billion housing plan to deliver 40,000 new council homes by 2030 sounds ambitious, but it’s hard to ignore the warnings from 2019, when the Planning Inspectorate urged him to revise his targets downward. Their concern? Overly optimistic expectations on small sites and a failure to realistically account for economic and regulatory hurdles. As a result, expectations remain disconnected from achievable outcomes.

Ultimately, Khan’s relentless rhetoric about “building more homes” rings hollow when his policies continue to falter due to developer resistance, bureaucratic red tape, and ineffective national policies. The truth is that without fundamental reforms and a serious reconsideration of how to incentivize real delivery, London’s housing crisis will only deepen. Meanwhile, the push for more activist regulation and symbolic gestures distract from the real need for pragmatic, market-based solutions that actually work for hardworking families struggling to find affordable shelter.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/sadiq-khan-affordable-housing-target-developers-b1250924.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/sadiq-khan-challenges-mortlake-development-over-lack-of-affordable-housing-b1163738.html> - In June 2024, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, opposed a £1.1 billion development at the Stag Brewery site in Mortlake due to its insufficient provision of affordable housing. The Greater London Authority (GLA) deemed the proposal, which allocated only 15% of the 1,075 homes as affordable, as 'unacceptable'. The developer, Reselton Properties, had received approval from Richmond Council, but the Mayor's intervention highlighted the ongoing challenges in meeting London's affordable housing needs.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/housing-crisis-affordable-homes-sadiq-khan-mayor-2024-25-angela-rayner-b1227661.html> - In May 2025, it was reported that the number of affordable homes started in London during the 2024/25 period was the second lowest on record, with only 3,991 properties initiated. This led to the government reducing Sadiq Khan's affordable housing targets for the end of the current financial year, from a range of 23,900 to 27,100 starts, to between 17,800 and 19,000, citing the 'difficult conditions London currently faces'.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/mayor-failing-londoners-as-developers-dodge-35-per-cent-affordable-homes-target-a4203856.html> - In August 2019, analysis revealed that less than a quarter of new developments approved under Mayor Sadiq Khan met his 35% affordable housing target. Of 1,540 developments, only 376 projects (24%) complied, resulting in 48,000 affordable units approved, 20,000 short of the policy's requirement. Critics attributed this shortfall to national loopholes and developers' use of viability assessments to reduce affordable housing commitments.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/sadiq-khan-council-houses-affordable-housing-40-000-city-hall-b1240943.html> - In July 2025, Sadiq Khan announced a £3.5 billion housebuilding programme focusing on social and affordable homes, aiming to build 40,000 new council homes by 2030. Despite this ambitious plan, City Hall acknowledged the significant challenge in meeting London's housing needs, with a target of 87,992 new homes annually from 2026, as set by the government.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/affordable-homes-housing-crisis-sadiq-khan-interactive-map-b1237429.html> - An interactive map published in May 2025 highlighted that, with a year remaining, work had yet to start on more than 12,000 affordable homes in London. By March that year, only 5,188 homes had been initiated, including 3,991 in 2024/25, marking the second-lowest total since Sadiq Khan became mayor in 2016. The government had previously reduced the mayor's affordable housing targets due to challenging conditions in the capital.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/sadiq-khans-65-000-homesayear-plan-criticised-as-undeliverable-a4248531.html> - In September 2019, it was reported that the Planning Inspectorate advised Mayor Sadiq Khan to revise his housing target from 65,000 to 52,000 homes annually, deeming the original goal 'undeliverable'. The inspectors cited overestimation of potential housing on small sites as a key factor in their recommendation, potentially impacting the mayor's ability to secure government funding and support his 2020 re-election manifesto.