# UK targets rapid housing surge with promises of faster approvals and new towns



The UK government has reaffirmed its commitment to building 1.5 million new homes over the next five years, describing the pledge as a firm goal rather than a mere aspiration. Housing Secretary Michael Gove told the BBC during a visit to a development site near Houghton Regis in Bedfordshire that the government would remove barriers slowing construction and ensure that developers proceed quickly. Gove outlined plans for an "acceleration package" aimed at speeding up the approval of planning applications and putting "spades in the ground" to get housing projects underway.

Gove warned that developers who delayed construction would face sanctions, stressing that building swiftly is in their commercial interests. He added confidence that the partnership between the government and builders would keep momentum going, with a clear expectation that construction progress would be rapid and substantial.

However, the Home Builders Federation has highlighted industry concerns regarding rising regulatory costs, increased taxes, and delays in planning approvals—all of which complicate the delivery of new homes. For smaller builders such as Garry Dixon, who runs a construction firm in Bedfordshire specialising in residential projects, soaring material costs are a significant challenge. He cited an increase in brick prices from around 75–80p to £1.20 per brick over recent years, illustrating inflation pressures impacting the sector. Dixon also called for increased government investment in training and apprenticeships to secure the skilled labour force needed, although recognising such measures are not a quick remedy to current problems.

The pledge to deliver 1.5 million homes is part of a wider government housing strategy promising the biggest boost in affordable housing in a generation. Officials have committed £2 billion to construct up to 18,000 affordable homes by 2029, with construction set to begin in 2027. This funding forms a core part of efforts to tackle the country’s housing crisis while stimulating economic growth, according to reports.

In parallel, the government is undertaking a sweeping overhaul of the planning system, aimed at cutting delays in approvals and unlocking sites for development. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has identified the current planning system as a major barrier to the much-needed expansion in housing supply. Key reforms will prioritise the use of brownfield land and involve reviewing green belt boundaries to ensure sufficient space for new homes, a move expected to accelerate construction timelines substantially.

As part of the drive to build more homes, the government is also encouraging community-led housing projects with a £20 million funding boost. This initiative supports local people in designing and building homes that meet their specific needs, fostering greater local involvement in solving housing shortages.

The scale of ambition is underscored by the government's plan to decide on at least 150 major infrastructure projects during the current Parliament. Alongside housing, this includes green infrastructure such as gigafactories and solar farms, signalling a broader commitment to sustainable development.

Furthermore, more than 100 locations across England are contenders for designation as new towns, following a model that shaped post-war housing expansion. These new communities are expected to deliver at least 40% affordable housing, addressing not only quantity but also quality and accessibility.

Senior ministers have publicly expressed confidence that the 1.5 million homes target will be met, aligning with the government’s broader housing strategy which includes expanded funding for affordable and social rent homes. This demonstrates a sustained political focus on rectifying the housing shortage and fulfilling election promises.

Nevertheless, the construction sector faces ongoing challenges in balancing cost pressures, regulatory requirements, and skill shortages. The success of the government’s ambitious housebuilding targets will hinge on resolving these issues swiftly to convert policy commitments into tangible homes for the public.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn82xnze9l4o), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/government-angela-rayner-building-parliament-sky-news-b1210648.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn82xnze9l4o), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-invest-2-billion-pounds-build-18000-affordable-homes-2025-03-25/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn82xnze9l4o)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-invest-2-billion-pounds-build-18000-affordable-homes-2025-03-25/), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/government-angela-rayner-building-parliament-sky-news-b1210648.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-announces-planning-overhaul-help-meet-15-million-new-homes-target-2024-12-12/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-paves-the-way-for-local-people-to-build-more-homes)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ministers-set-to-unleash-biggest-building-boom-in-half-a-century), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/1b970f2d-d23e-465c-9e30-e2d9fd2d79a8)
* Paragraph 8 – [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/government-angela-rayner-building-parliament-sky-news-b1210648.html), [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn82xnze9l4o)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn82xnze9l4o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-paves-the-way-for-local-people-to-build-more-homes> - The UK government has announced a £20 million investment to support community-led housing initiatives. This funding aims to enable local communities to design and build high-quality homes tailored to their needs, addressing the housing shortage by empowering residents to take control of development projects. The initiative is part of the government's broader Plan for Change, which includes a commitment to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next five years, marking the largest boost in affordable housing in a generation.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ministers-set-to-unleash-biggest-building-boom-in-half-a-century> - The UK government has pledged to decide on at least 150 major infrastructure projects and deliver 1.5 million homes during the current Parliament. This ambitious plan aims to accelerate housebuilding and infrastructure construction, with a focus on green initiatives such as gigafactories and solar farms. The government's commitment represents a significant increase in the rate of construction, aiming to achieve the largest building boom in over 50 years.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/britain-invest-2-billion-pounds-build-18000-affordable-homes-2025-03-25/> - Britain's government has pledged £2 billion to build up to 18,000 affordable homes in England, as part of an effort to deliver 1.5 million properties by the end of Parliament and stimulate economic growth. Construction is set to begin in March 2027, with expected completion by 2029. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour Party is focusing on housebuilding central to its growth strategy, with plans to expedite construction and address the country's housing shortage.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-announces-planning-overhaul-help-meet-15-million-new-homes-target-2024-12-12/> - The UK has announced a major overhaul of its planning system to achieve a target of building 1.5 million new homes in the next five years. Prime Minister Keir Starmer emphasized the need to address the housing crisis, citing the current planning system as a barrier to growth. The new reforms will prioritize building on previously developed 'brownfield' sites, and councils will need to review green belt boundaries to meet housing targets.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/government-angela-rayner-building-parliament-sky-news-b1210648.html> - A minister has expressed confidence that the UK government will meet its pledge of building 1.5 million homes during the current Parliament. The commitment is part of the government's broader housing strategy, which includes additional funding for affordable and social rent homes. The minister emphasized the government's dedication to addressing the housing shortage and fulfilling its promises to the public.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/1b970f2d-d23e-465c-9e30-e2d9fd2d79a8> - More than 100 sites across England are vying to become 'new towns' as part of the government's plan to build 1.5 million new homes over the next five years. The initiative aims to address the housing shortage by developing new communities with at least 40% affordable housing. The proposal has attracted interest from various regions, including London and the south-east, and seeks to replicate the success of post-WWII new towns.