# Kevin McCloud warns of UK housing market’s structural failure and advocates for self-building reforms



Kevin McCloud, the presenter of the long-running Channel 4 series Grand Designs, has voiced deep concerns over the state of the UK housing market, describing it as “broken and dysfunctional” and expressing sympathy for those trying to buy homes in the near future. Speaking recently, he highlighted the dramatic escalation in house prices, noting that a modest two-bedroom home he once bought for £60,000 in Dulwich could now command a price up to 20 times higher, around £1.2 million. McCloud pointed out that while historically houses cost three to four times the average annual income, today in London and the home counties they can be priced at up to 14 times the average income, putting homeownership out of reach for many.

According to McCloud, the UK housing market is dominated by a handful of powerful companies primarily focused on maximising shareholder returns rather than addressing the need for affordable and quality housing. He went further to remark that the UK pays some of the highest prices in Europe for housing of comparatively poor quality. This monopoly and lack of competition contributes to inflated prices and a market that is very sensitive to economic downturns.

The concern over affordability is underscored by market data showing the average UK house price reaching a new high of £299,331 in August 2025, with London remaining the priciest area at an average property value exceeding £540,000. However, recent surveys indicate a cooling of the market; a Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) survey in September 2025 revealed the sharpest decline in house prices since January 2024, reflecting weakening buyer demand amid economic uncertainties such as high inflation and ambiguous future interest rates.

In light of these challenges, McCloud has advocated for policy measures and structural changes to improve the housing landscape. He has identified self-building as a potential solution, pointing to countries like Germany and Austria where self-builds constitute a significant share—up to 50%—of new homes, compared to just about 8% in the UK. This approach not only diversifies housing supply but could also moderate price growth. For this to happen, he urges the proper enforcement of the Right to Build legislation, which aims to enable individuals to construct their own homes.

Beyond economics, McCloud has drawn attention to cultural and vocational differences between the UK and some European neighbours. He emphasises how Germany’s housing market benefits from a strong culture of valuing building trades, where builders and carpenters undergo rigorous apprenticeships, driving quality and sustainability in construction. In contrast, he notes the UK lacks formal qualification standards for tradespeople, which undermines the housing sector's resilience and innovation. He has even suggested that struggling UK buyers might consider relocating to countries like Germany, where homeownership is more accessible and supported by state funding models.

Recently, initiatives have been introduced to ease entry into the housing market, such as Newcastle Building Society’s new mortgage product allowing first-time buyers to borrow up to 98% of a property’s value without parental help for the deposit. This comes amid data showing over half of first-time buyers in the UK currently receive some form of parental assistance, illustrating the barriers for those without family support. Nevertheless, such measures may only be incremental in an environment dominated by large housebuilders whose focus remains profit-driven.

Kevin McCloud’s observations signal a critical juncture for UK housing policy and market dynamics. Without significant reform and diversification of housing supply, combined with renewed respect and training for the building trades, the dream of homeownership may remain elusive for many, especially younger generations. The current market environment reflects both persistent affordability challenges and emerging signs of cooling demand, underscoring the complex interplay between economic factors and structural market issues.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/life-style/kevin-mccloud-grand-designs-house-buy-property-b2826700.html), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/grand-designs-kevin-mccloud-says-uk-property-market-broken-and-dysfunctional-b1151412.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/life-style/kevin-mccloud-grand-designs-house-buy-property-b2826700.html), [[6]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-housing-market-slows-buyers-retreat-uncertainty-swirls-rics-survey-shows-2025-09-10/), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/78c6c36f-d477-4f01-a943-34e66bd8fe4d)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/news/kevin-mccloud-claims-self-building-is-the-solution-to-rising-house-prices)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/property/buying-selling/move-germany-if-cant-buy-house-grand-designs-kevin-mccloud/), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/grand-designs-kevin-mccloud-germany-home-ownership-b1151046.html), [[4]](https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/news/kevin-mccloud-claims-self-building-is-the-solution-to-rising-house-prices)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/life-style/kevin-mccloud-grand-designs-house-buy-property-b2826700.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.the-independent.com/life-style/kevin-mccloud-grand-designs-house-buy-property-b2826700.html), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/grand-designs-kevin-mccloud-says-uk-property-market-broken-and-dysfunctional-b1151412.html)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.the-independent.com/life-style/kevin-mccloud-grand-designs-house-buy-property-b2826700.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/property/buying-selling/move-germany-if-cant-buy-house-grand-designs-kevin-mccloud/> - In April 2024, Kevin McCloud, presenter of 'Grand Designs', advised first-time buyers struggling to enter the UK housing market to consider relocating to Germany. He highlighted Germany's robust housing market and culture of valuing building skills, contrasting it with the UK's challenges in homeownership. McCloud noted that in Germany, building is considered a highly respected profession, with builders and carpenters undergoing extensive apprenticeships, whereas in the UK, the profession lacks formal qualifications, leading to a less resilient housing market. He suggested that adopting a similar approach could benefit the UK housing sector.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/grand-designs-kevin-mccloud-germany-home-ownership-b1151046.html> - In April 2024, Kevin McCloud, presenter of 'Grand Designs', suggested that first-time buyers struggling to enter the UK housing market should consider moving to Germany. He praised Germany's strong building culture and state funding models, which have contributed to a more resilient housing market. McCloud contrasted this with the UK's challenges, noting that in Germany, building is considered a highly respected profession, with builders and carpenters undergoing extensive apprenticeships, whereas in the UK, the profession lacks formal qualifications, leading to a less robust housing market.
4. <https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/news/kevin-mccloud-claims-self-building-is-the-solution-to-rising-house-prices> - In April 2024, Kevin McCloud, presenter of 'Grand Designs', criticized the UK's housing market, attributing rising house prices to major builders prioritizing profit over growth. He advocated for a shift towards self-building, citing its popularity in countries like Austria and Germany, where a significant percentage of new houses are self-built. McCloud emphasized the need for the Right to Build legislation to be enforced, allowing individuals to build their own homes and potentially reducing housing costs. He highlighted that in Germany, about half of new houses are self-built, compared to only about 8% in the UK.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/grand-designs-kevin-mccloud-says-uk-property-market-broken-and-dysfunctional-b1151412.html> - In April 2024, Kevin McCloud, presenter of 'Grand Designs', criticized the UK's property market, describing it as 'broken and dysfunctional'. He argued that the market is monopolized by a few large housebuilders focused on maximizing profits, leading to a lack of competition, stifled innovation, and increased market sensitivity to downturns. McCloud suggested that the UK is falling behind other European countries, such as Germany and Sweden, in housing development and called for measures to break the monopoly held by a few companies over the market.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-housing-market-slows-buyers-retreat-uncertainty-swirls-rics-survey-shows-2025-09-10/> - In September 2025, a survey by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) revealed that the UK housing market experienced its sharpest decline in house prices since January 2024. The house price balance fell to -19, indicating a broader drop in prices due to weakening buyer demand amid economic uncertainty, high inflation, and unclear interest rate paths. New buyer enquiries and agreed sales both declined, reflecting waning market confidence. The economy's lackluster performance, with July inflation at 3.8%, has dampened sentiment, leading to a slowdown in the housing market.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/78c6c36f-d477-4f01-a943-34e66bd8fe4d> - In February 2025, UK house prices exceeded expectations, growing by 0.4% from January and reaching an average of £270,493, a 3.9% annual increase. This surge was partly due to buyers accelerating purchases ahead of stamp duty changes coming in April, which would increase the tax burden on properties over £300,000 for first-time buyers. Real wages rose at the fastest pace since 2021, supporting housing demand despite fluctuating mortgage rates and affordability challenges. The Bank of England's interest rate cuts and higher economic resilience contributed to the market's strength.