# Labour aims to accelerate new towns construction before next election amid community concerns



Steve Reed, the newly appointed housing secretary, has expressed frustration at the sluggish progress in housebuilding and pledged that construction will commence on three new towns before the next general election. These towns have been identified at Tempsford in Bedfordshire, Crews Hill near north London, and South Bank in Leeds. Reed, addressing the Labour conference, criticised the previous Conservative government for blocking housing development for 14 years, stating they “crushed the dreams of families” seeking affordable homes.

Reed’s announcement forms part of a broader government initiative aimed at building at least 12 new towns across England, each with the capacity to deliver a minimum of 10,000 homes. The overarching plan aims to contribute significantly to Labour’s promise of constructing 1.5 million new homes over the current parliamentary term. These new settlements are designed to be more than just housing projects; they are intended as fully integrated communities with essential infrastructure including public transport, schools, and affordable housing to support sustainable growth. The government’s ambition reflects a renewed drive to address the longstanding housing crisis by not only increasing the quantity of homes but also ensuring quality of life through comprehensive urban planning.

However, not all responses have been positive. Residents of Tempsford, one of the proposed new town sites, have voiced concerns about the lack of communication from government officials regarding the scale and impact of the development. The local parish council chairman described a "void of information," leading to unease among the community. Such concerns highlight the challenges governments face in balancing rapid development with transparent engagement and community consent, especially in rural or semi-rural areas unaccustomed to large-scale urban expansion.

Reed also paid tribute to his predecessor, Angela Rayner, calling her a “true working-class hero” for her efforts on workers’ rights, council funding, and housebuilding, despite her resignation amid controversy over underpaid stamp duty tax. Reed’s remarks drew a standing ovation, projecting a sense of continuity and commitment within the Labour Party’s housing agenda.

Despite the ambitious plans, scepticism remains. Opposition figures like James Cleverly, the shadow housing secretary, dismissed the new town proposals as lacking credibility, suggesting they are empty promises unlikely to be realised. Reed acknowledged in media interviews that the pace of housebuilding has not met expectations, attributing delays mainly to the backlog of planning permissions left by the previous government. He emphasised his administration’s intent to reform planning rules to accelerate construction and prevent future bottlenecks—a critical factor in delivering on the housing targets.

These pledges must also be understood within the context of wider political dynamics. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer is positioned to lead the party into the next general election with housing policy being a focal point of their platform, though internal party pressures and calls for renewed authenticity have also emerged from influential voices within affiliated unions.

Additionally, urban planning experts and business groups have stressed the importance of locating at least one new town within Greater London, taking advantage of the capital's existing public transport infrastructure to better meet the city’s acute housing needs. This suggestion dovetails with Labour’s strategy to tackle housing shortages by developing thoughtfully planned new settlements reflecting local contexts.

Overall, while Labour’s commitment to starting construction on new towns is a significant development in UK housing policy, these plans will need to come with effective communication strategies, community consultation, and streamlined planning reforms. The success of these initiatives will be judged not just on the number of homes built but on the quality of communities created and the extent to which they address both current housing shortages and long-term social and economic needs.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly7kn4z399o)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly7kn4z399o), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-plans-for-next-generation-of-new-towns), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/angela-rayner-keir-starmer-prime-minister-government-british-b1210834.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-28/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/angela-rayner-keir-starmer-prime-minister-government-british-b1210834.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election)
* Paragraph 7 – [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/angela-rayner-keir-starmer-prime-minister-government-british-b1210834.html), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2kxv1xw84no)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-28/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town), [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-plans-for-next-generation-of-new-towns), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2kxv1xw84no)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/sep/28/housing-secretary-vows-building-will-start-on-three-new-towns-before-next-election> - Steve Reed, the new housing secretary, has pledged to commence construction on three new towns—Tempsford in Bedfordshire, Crews Hill near north London, and South Bank in Leeds—before the next election. He criticised the Conservatives for hindering housing development over the past 14 years, stating they 'crushed the dreams of families' seeking affordable homes. Reed emphasised the government's commitment to building not just homes, but entire communities, and honoured his predecessor, Angela Rayner, as a 'true working-class hero' for her contributions to workers' rights and housing.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cly7kn4z399o> - Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook has announced that work on several new towns will begin before the next general election, following the submission of over 100 proposals across England. The initiative aims to build towns with at least 10,000 homes each, contributing to Labour's target of 1.5 million new homes over five years. Each new town will include essential infrastructure such as public transport, schools, and affordable housing.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-09-28/government-criticised-for-leaving-villagers-in-dark-over-potential-new-town> - Residents of Tempsford, Bedfordshire, have expressed concerns over the government's plans to build a new town in their area. The parish council chairman criticised the lack of communication from authorities, stating that residents have received no information about the scale or impact of the proposed development. This follows Housing Secretary Steve Reed's pledge to start construction on three new towns, including Tempsford, before the next election.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-plans-for-next-generation-of-new-towns> - The UK government has unveiled plans for the next generation of new towns, aiming to build over 100 new settlements across England. Each new town will have the potential to deliver at least 10,000 homes, contributing to the government's target of 1.5 million new homes over five years. The initiative includes essential infrastructure such as public transport, schools, and affordable housing, with a focus on creating beautiful, well-designed communities.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/angela-rayner-keir-starmer-prime-minister-government-british-b1210834.html> - Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and Deputy Leader Angela Rayner have announced plans to begin construction on new towns before the next election. Over 100 potential locations have been suggested for new towns in England, each with the potential for 10,000 or more homes, contributing to the 1.5 million homes the government has pledged to build. The initiative aims to address the housing crisis and stimulate economic growth.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2kxv1xw84no> - BusinessLDN has called for the construction of at least one new town within the Greater London boundary to meet the city's significant housing needs. The report suggests that factors such as existing public transport infrastructure make London a suitable location for a new town. This aligns with Labour's strategy to tackle the housing crisis by building a new generation of new towns, with locations to be announced in 2025.