

NATIONAL
PLANNING
BAROMETER
2026



NORTH OF ENGLAND INSIGHTS



FROM MANIFESTOS TO BRICKS AND MORTAR:

How do we get more homes built?



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Housing delivery has moved from a long-running policy challenge to one of the defining tests of political credibility. Across national government, city-region leadership and local authorities, the objectives are broadly shared: more homes, more affordable and social rented housing, faster planning decisions and a stronger role for public land and public sector delivery. The harder question is whether that political consensus can be converted into bricks and mortar.

That context has sharpened further under a new Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, whose early agenda has placed council housebuilding, public land and action on rough sleeping at the centre of a wider platform on living standards and “good growth”. His appointment of Angela Rayner as Housing Secretary signals a renewed focus on delivery from the centre of government. Rayner has acknowledged that the pledge to deliver 1.5 million homes over the parliament is a “really difficult stretch target”, but has insisted it remains in place, linking progress to planning reform, investment in capacity, infrastructure alongside housing, affordable housing funding and a stronger role for council house building.

The same pressures are visible on the ground in Greater Manchester. The city-region now has a new mayor, Bev Craig, whose manifesto commitments include 50,000 new council, social and genuinely affordable homes by 2039, with 10,000 delivered, under construction, or in the pipeline by May 2028.

Seen as holding a position of strength among the Greater Manchester boroughs, Manchester City Council’s Housing Strategy targets 36,000 new homes by 2032, including 10,000 affordable homes. Recent delivery has been strong by city standards, with Manchester reporting 4,766 homes completed in 2025/26, including 901 affordable homes, and 13,555 homes delivered during the strategy period to date. But the scale of need means delivery must not only continue, it must accelerate, diversify and become more resilient to the barriers that repeatedly slow schemes down.

This is the context for a Northern focus on SEC Newgate’s latest National Planning Barometer research. The findings explore how Northern councillors view housing need, planning reform and the practical conditions required to turn permissions and policy commitments into completed homes.

They point to a familiar but urgent delivery gap: while the political case for more housing is increasingly clear, councillors continue to identify constraints around viability, infrastructure, local consent, planning resource, affordable housing provision and build-out rates.

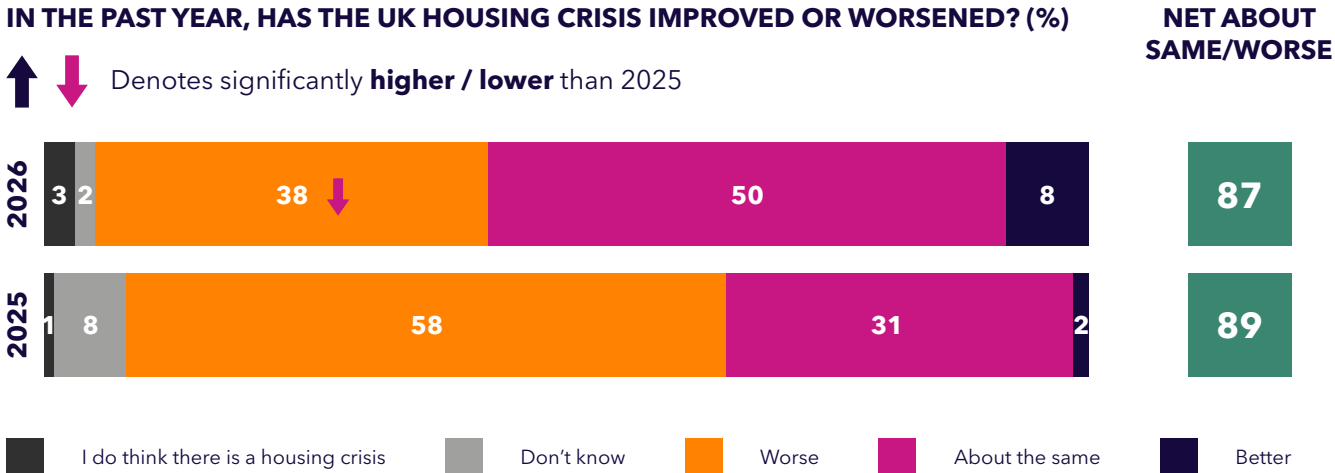
The research therefore asks a practical question at the heart of SEC Newgate’s panel event, **From manifestos to bricks and mortar: how do we get more homes built?**



Whilst planning committee councillors in the North feel the national housing crisis is levelling out, 1 in 3 say it is severe in their local authority area

Compared with 2025, perceptions appear to be stabilising, with more councillors saying conditions have remained the same and fewer reporting deterioration.

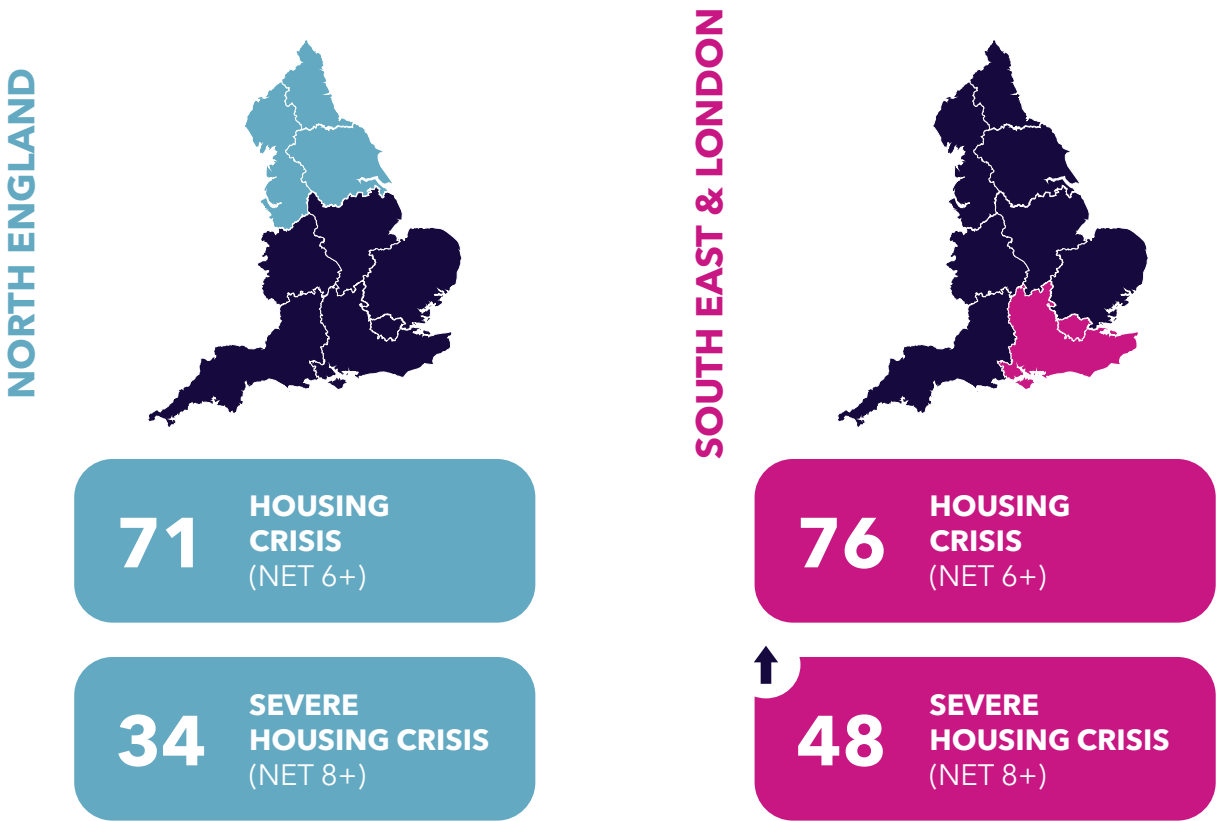
However, housing pressures remain widespread, with 7 in 10 councillors continuing to report a housing crisis in their area. Despite this, perceptions of severity remain lower than in London and the South East, where councillors are more likely to describe housing pressures as severe.



TO WHAT DEGREE IS THERE A HOUSING CRISIS IN YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY? (%)

THOSE WHO SELECTED 6-10/10 OR 8-10/10 INDICATING A CRISIS

↑ ↓ Denotes significantly higher / lower than the North of England



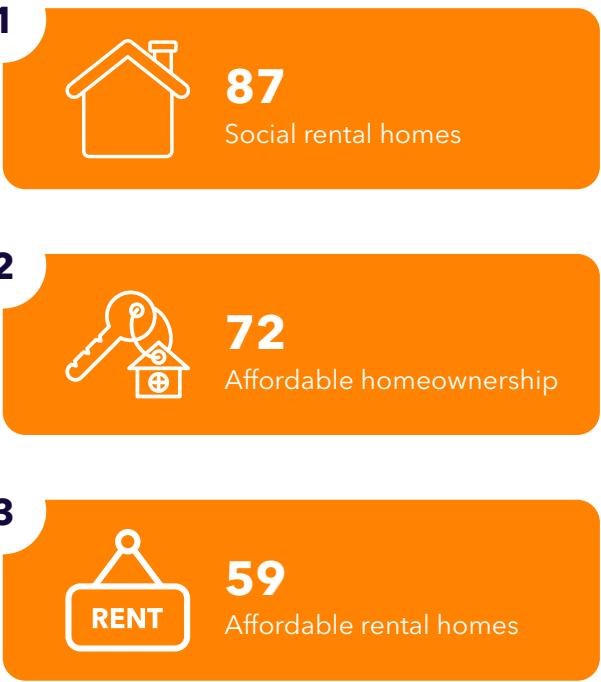
For councillors in the North, the housing crisis is rooted in a shortage of affordable housing and a lack of supply keeping pace with local need

Social rented housing emerges as the clearest priority, but the findings also reveal a stronger emphasis than seen elsewhere in England on affordable homeownership compared to rent. Alongside this, councillors report significantly high levels of unmet need for later-life housing, suggesting growing pressure to provide housing that supports an ageing population.

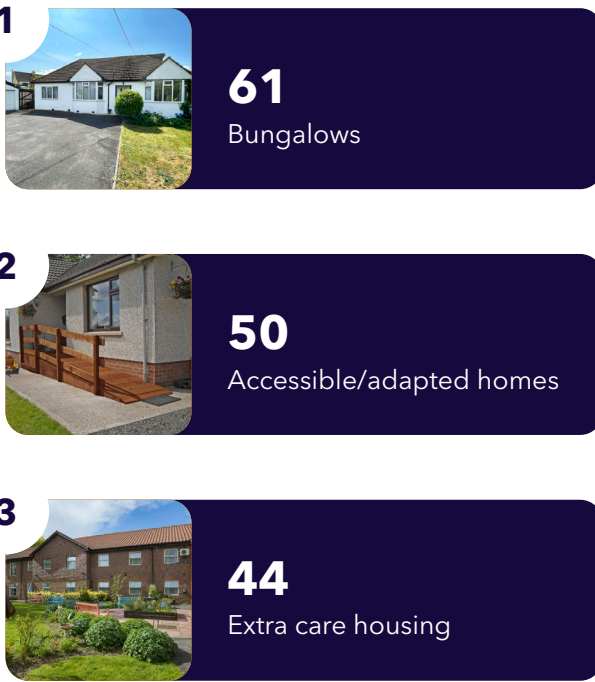
"There isn't enough social and truly affordable planning applications coming through. Developers are using loopholes to gain planning principle to build less than 10 executive houses on 'grey belt' land. Councils' hands are tied by 'housing land supply' small print. **The planning policy and regulations should be social and truly affordable housing first to meet local needs, not those of developers.**" - Planning committee councillor in the North of England

"The population increases every year, and we do not build enough houses to cover the population increase, never mind to help with the backlog of those who need houses." - Planning committee councillor in the North of England

WHICH TYPES OF HOUSING TENURE ARE MOST NEEDED IN YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA? (%) TOP 3 SHOWN



WHAT SPECIALIST AND LIFE-STAGE HOUSING DOES YOUR AUTHORITY NEED MORE OF? (%) TOP 3 SHOWN



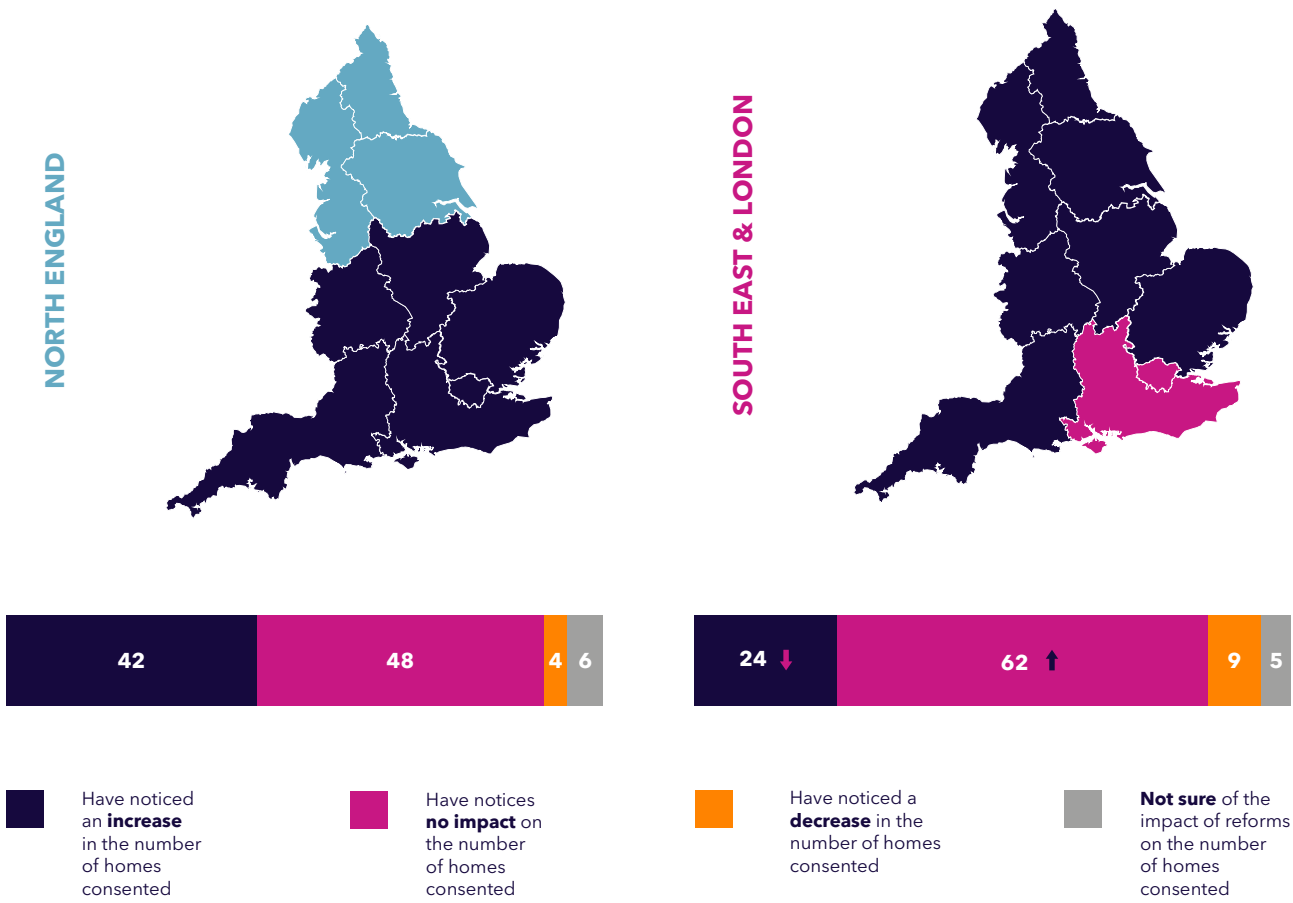
A clear North-South divide emerges in perceptions of planning reform, with Northern councillors more likely to report increases in housing consents

Councillors in the North are more likely than those in London and the South East to report that Labour’s planning reforms are increasing housing consents, pointing to a more positive perception of the reforms’ early impact.

However, significant barriers remain throughout the planning process. Community opposition emerges as one of the leading barriers to housing consent in the North, while challenges around developer viability and slow build-out continue to dominate pressures on housing delivery. While there are signs of optimism, considerable obstacles remain before planning permissions are translated into completed homes.

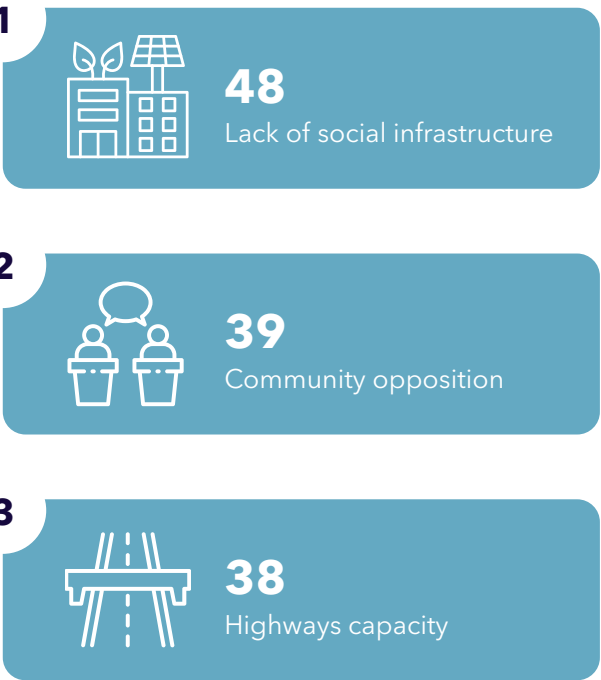
WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE PLANNING REFORMS ON HOUSING CONSENT? (%)

↑ ↓ Denotes significantly higher / lower than the North of England



Source: National Planning Barometer 2026. Q10. To deliver on its commitment to build 1.5 million homes in this parliament, the government announced a series of planning reforms, including the reintroduction of housing targets and a national scheme of delegation. In your view, what has been the impact of these reforms since they were announced, if any? Base: (Excludes Prefer not to say): North England n=120, South East & London n=176

TOP 3 BARRIERS TO HOUSING CONSENT IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND (%)



TOP 3 BARRIERS TO HOUSING DELIVERY IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND (%)



Source: National Planning Barometer 2026. Q14. In your experience, what are the main reasons that applications for new homes are not consented in your local authority area? Q15. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges to housing delivery (i.e. post consent) in your local authority area? Base: (Excludes Prefer not to say): North England n=120

BEST PLACES TO WORK 2023/2024/2025/2026  THE SUNDAY TIMES	GLOBAL AGENCY OF THE YEAR PROVOKE MEDIA GLOBAL SABRE AWARDS 2023 & 2025	CONSULTANCY CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR PRCA PUBLIC AFFAIRS AWARDS 2026	CONSULTANCY OF THE YEAR EDIE NET-ZERO AWARDS 2026 SHORTLISTED
BEST ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN PUBLIC SECTOR PURPOSE AWARDS 2026 SHORTLISTED	PR AGENCY OF THE YEAR HEADLINEMONEY AWARDS 2026 SHORTLISTED	BEST PRO-ACTIVE LOBBYING CAMPAIGN ON AN ISSUE OR CAUSE INCOMMS' CORPORATE AFFAIRS AWARDS 2026 SHORTLISTED	RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE YEAR EDIE NET-ZERO AWARDS 2025 SHORTLISTED
BEST CAMPAIGN REAL ESTATE & CONSTRUCTION PROVOKE SABRE EMEA AWARDS 2024 SHORTLISTED	PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONSULTANCY OF THE YEAR PROVOKE MEDIA EMEA AWARDS 2024	COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY OF THE YEAR EDIE NET-ZERO AWARDS 2023	PLANNING CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR PRCA PUBLIC AFFAIRS AWARDS 2020

Contact us

If you have any questions about
The National Planning Barometer 2026
or how it might impact your business,
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