

Scandalous Labour Lacks Ambition – 3.4 Million Should Be House Building Target

There are currently an estimated 30,597 grey belt sites across England, enough to deliver 3.4 million homes to the market if developed – more than twice the number Labour has promised.

The North-West is home to the largest number of grey belt sites at 5,858, accounting for 19% of the national total and enough to build 720,592 new homes. There is also a high proportion across the South-East (18%), East of England (16%), West Midlands (15%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (15%). This data comes from Searchland, the development site sourcing specialist.

Some people say the grey belt is a phrase coined by the new Labour government, although many property professionals were using it before Kier Starmer and co claimed it. Grey belt is defined as land within the green

belt consisting of previously developed and poorly performing land, which largely focuses on poor quality land, car parks and wastelands, poor quality scrubland, disused petrol stations and any land which does not affect the beauty of the countryside.

Local authorities have been challenged to Get Britain Building homes and to reject planning opposition. This can be more easily accomplished on grey belt land as it is already unsightly and having previously been built on, it is harder to argue there will be local community disruption.

The co-founder of Searchland, Hugh Gibbs, says: “Those campaigning against concreting over the countryside are right to do so but there are swathes of land that



don't look like the beautiful rolling countryside you'd imagine. So, it's great to see that our new Labour government has decided to act with a degree of common sense by bringing in the grey belt classification and identifying the areas of wrongly classified green belt that are ripe for development.

“As our data shows, this could help boost the level of new homes reaching the market by 3.4m properties, which is more than double Labour's ambitious miserly target of 1.5m homes by 2030.” [i](#)

Profile Firm Is A Great Place To Work

Rehau UK has been awarded the Great Place to Work certification, putting it among some of the top employers in the country.

Great Place to Work is a global certification standard that evaluates workplace culture, employee experience and leadership behaviours.

Rehau also secured a participation percentage of over 89% of employees completing a sixty-statement survey. This follows a year where Rehau has invested significantly in its employee experience, including the

enhancements of four key locations. For example, Rehau's factory in Blaenau Ffestiniog, which has won Rehau Group's 'Site of the Year' award for the last two years, underwent a revamp in January to improve its training facilities for an enhanced learning experience.

Martin Hitchin, CEO at Rehau UK, says: “I'm beyond proud that Rehau has been accredited by Great Place to Work as it's testament to the dedication of so many people within the business to improve our workplace for the better.



“However, we must not stand still. We must continue to innovate and improve to maintain our high standards and support our employees' growth as we head into a new year.” [i](#)

Colour Trends – Pebble Cuts A Dash

Timberlook, which produces heritage-style PVC-U windows and doors, has revealed data highlighting the most popular colour choices among UK homeowners over the past year – and pebble grey is high on the list.

The company, which is part of Affordable Window Systems (AWS), conducted a detailed analysis of a year's worth of orders to come up with the results which show that grey remains the dominant choice for exterior finishes, with various grey shades accounting for 47% of all Timberlook orders.

"The data confirms the popularity of grey for windows," says Amelia Gaughan, head of marketing at AWS. "Nearly half of our orders featured a grey shade on the exterior, with Agate

grey leading the pack at approximately 27%.

"Our data shows that homeowners continue to favour neutral tones that complement both traditional and contemporary properties," adds Gaughan.

"The strong performance of our newest shade, Pebble grey, which accounts for 8% of orders, demonstrates that this shade has already established itself as a popular choice."

The data further highlights that white finishes maintain their appeal, with Polar Foiled proving particularly popular at 16% of orders. This reflects the steady demand for finishes for



PVC-U that realistically replicate the tactile qualities of traditional timber. Natural stained wood-effect finishes account for 2.5% of total orders, with Oak being the most popular, closely followed by Rosewood. ;

Gaughan adds: "While colours like Chartwell Green represent a smaller percentage of orders, they play an important role in our range, offering homeowners the opportunity to create striking, individual installations where appropriate." [i](#)

Construction Charity – Lighthouse Family Support

In 2024, the Lighthouse Charity for those in need in construction, was once again setting new records by reaching more people and delivering more support than ever before.

The charity is in the unique position of being able to offer every aspect of emotional, physical and financial wellbeing support. Last year the charity's helpline advisors and caseworkers delivered an amazing £4.98m of charitable support to 5,695 families who reached out for help through the charity's free and confidential helpline and live web chat service.

The #MakeltVisible tour team continued to reach some of our industry's most vulnerable workers, sharing the message of support with frontline trades. Last year the charity's team visited 572 sites and started conversations with over 28,000 site workers.

This initiative introduced 88 workers expressing suicidal thoughts to the #MakeltVisible team. But through starting a conversation, those suicides have been prevented.

Reflecting on a year of positive impact, Sarah Bolton, CEO of the Lighthouse Charity said: "This support was delivered against



another challenging year with the construction sector being one of the worst hit for company insolvencies. This, alongside continued increases in the cost of materials and the cost of living, has added pressure on our construction community. The important thing is that people know about us and are reaching out for help. Whether it's supporting someone through illness or injury, making sure there's a meal on the table for the family or simply offering an ear, the message is 'if you're struggling, help is here.' [i](#)

Lamentable Labour Is Losing On Pledges



In the Labour government's first six months, the number of new homes built fell by 10% when compared to the same period in the previous year. Just 107,000 new homes were recorded since last July's election.

The data was taken from the registration of energy performance certificates (EPCs) and are for England only. They are a key indicator of new housing. Those figures have been checked by BBC Verify.

David Hannah, the group chairman of Cornerstone Tax told *The Installer*: "Despite Labour's ambitious pledge of 1.5 million new homes by the next election, it will be difficult to

achieve, with the government's finalised targets requiring councils to deliver 370,000 homes annually.

"Significant growth in new housing is not expected until 2026-27, once planning reforms take effect. However, those policy changes alone may not be enough. Further financial interventions will likely be needed to boost development, particularly in the social and private rental sectors."

The government has pledged to overhaul the planning system, reinstate mandatory housing targets and invest £5 billion in housing this year, including an additional £500 million for the Affordable Homes Programme.

Hannah adds: "The decision from the government to lower stamp duty bands shows a concerning deficit of joined-up thinking. Does this Chancellor and Prime Minister not understand that if they want 1.5m new homes, they cannot drive landlords out of the market, incur additional charges for first-time buyers and freeze up working capital for developers – which can only be available if these homes are selling. I expect stamp duty receipts to fall significantly, potentially plunging the British property market into a desperate situation." [i](#)

Conversions Need Therapy Says Market Barometer

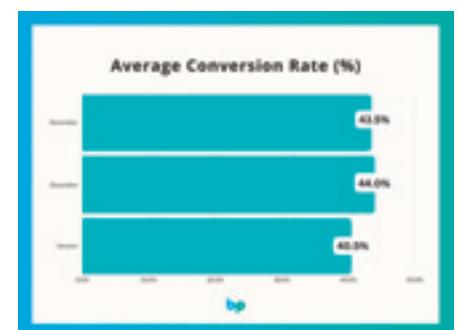
The Business Pilot Barometer for November to January looks at the key trends defining window and door sales.

Neil Cooper-Smith, a senior analyst at the company says: "January's figures reflect a market slowly regaining momentum after the December slowdown, though broader economic pressures continue to shape the outlook for installers. Positive indicators such as increased leads and sales suggest a strong start to 2025, yet rising labour costs could impact future performance.

"Leads saw a strong comeback, jumping from 57.4 in December to 124 in January – a 116% increase. This surge not only reflects renewed market

activity post-Christmas, it also surpasses the 99 recorded in November, which coincides with expectations of early-year market activity, possibly influenced by renewed consumer confidence and predictions of a property market rebound.

"Sales reflected lead growth, climbing from 29 in December to 48.7 in January. However, while activity levels are picking up, there are signs that homeowners may still be cautious. Conversion rates dipped from 44% in December to 40.5%, suggesting that while more consumers are making inquiries, fewer are ready to commit – sales to lead rates need massaging. Good marketing and management will be key."



Inflationary pressures remain a concern, however there are hopes the Bank of England will cut rates multiple times. Lower borrowing costs could stimulate more home improvement investments, particularly in high-value renovations. Cooper-Smith says: "As always, efficiency and visibility will be key. By leveraging tools such as Business Pilot to manage resources and streamline operations, installation firms can reduce their reliance on labour, maintain profitability and capitalise on opportunities in a shifting market." [i](#)