



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on July 24, 2026

Britain's New PM Inherits Housing Crisis His Own Party Helped Create

Andy Burnham is Britain's third prime minister in less than two years. He has inherited a housing crisis so severe that his own advisors warn of [projections](#) showing homelessness rising 25 percent by 2030, involving more than 230,000 people. In his first major policy speech as a leadership candidate, Burnham described a country "stuck in a housing trap" since the 1980s.

His proposed [solution](#) is the largest building program "since the post-war period," using vacant public land and reallocating £39 billion (about \$52 billion) for affordable housing. But at what rate is demand for housing growing, and what is driving it?



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Net Migration the Underlying Cause

These questions make a politician of Burnham's progressive background uncomfortable. Net migration to the United Kingdom has exploded in recent years, despite previous administration pledges to reduce it. Historian Rafe Heydel-Mankoo [notes](#), "Britain has received more immigrants in the last 20 years than in the previous 2,000 years combined."

Every 100,000 additional migrants requires [approximately](#) 40,000 to 50,000 additional housing units — units that do not yet exist in a country already running a crippling housing deficit.

Burnham has [acknowledged](#) that net migration "needs to fall further" and that his constituents are concerned about immigration. However, the structural connection between immigration levels and housing unaffordability is rarely stated with the directness the numbers demand.

Simple Economics

Club of Rome member Donella Meadows, lead author of *The Limits to Growth*, [stated](#) in her paper *Immigration Policy That's Practical As Well As Noble*: "The earth is finite. Every nation is finite, even ours. No nation, however well meaning, can end poverty by scooping up and caring for all the poor. Welcoming all comers is self-destructive." She concluded that any sustainable policy requires bringing "net immigration to zero" in the long run — not out of hostility, but out of an honest accounting of limits.

Meadows was not a conservative, but her conclusion acknowledged simple arithmetic: A finite stock of housing, healthcare, school places, and public green space cannot absorb unlimited additional demand. Rationing ensues and always falls hardest on those at the bottom of the economic ladder, including the existing working class and the most recently arrived migrants.



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Multiple Factors

The economic interests that benefit from high immigration — landlords collecting inflated rents, employers suppressing wages, developers profiting from scarcity — are not the ones who bear its costs.

Burnham deserves credit for naming the housing crisis more directly than did his predecessor. But his country's projected crisis will not improve if the demand side of the housing equation is treated as politically off-limits. Managing symptoms will not treat the source of the problem.

Britain's housing crisis has multiple causes — 30 years of [right-to-buy selling](#) off council stock, planning restrictions, and population growth driven significantly by migration at historically unprecedented levels. If Burnham addresses only some of those problems while ignoring the others, he will defer the issue just as his predecessors have — at enormous cost to the people already waiting.

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