



PlanningPortal



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TerraQuest



**Q4 2025:**

A long-awaited return to form

TerraQuest

# The Planning Application Index

What does the latest Planning Portal data  
tell us about the country's housing targets?

# Foreword

## Welcome to the latest Planning Application Index from TerraQuest.

Those who reach the end of this report will find our industry in a curious position. On one hand, we have record levels of housing units applied for this year, exceeding important markers both nationally and regionally. On the other, there are a high number of proposed developments failing to translate into completed housing. Barriers found later in the housebuilding process continue to impede progress for a government set on delivering good homes at scale.

And yet, it's difficult to ignore the industry's ambition once you put those challenges aside.

This report demonstrates that Q4 2025 was the best-performing quarter for housing unit submissions in the past five years. It was also the first time this key metric was tracking at the required rate to deliver the government's homes target, with the latter half of the year building on some of the promising signs

of growth seen throughout our previous two indexes.

In Q1 and Q2, housing unit submissions began to trend upwards, returning to levels last seen in early 2023. And now, with Q3 and Q4 data in support, we can see developer intent has recovered from that two-year slump. Perhaps most promising of all, momentum also appears to be building across all types of housing – including social and affordable homes – as we move into 2026.

Growing confidence at this early stage is critical for several reasons. First, it suggests government reforms have had a positive impact on industry intent. Developers now appear to have confidence in the legislation underpinning their plans, providing sufficient support for both small and large organisations looking to build. Secondly, recent and upcoming changes will make it easier to move applications forward. The government's announcement of a streamlined 'yes' for development near railway

stations, and their introduction of 'grey belt' policy, for example, will unlock sites that would have otherwise stalled in the assessment phase – or not progressed to application at all.<sup>1</sup> This will only increase confidence among developers of all sizes in bringing forward smaller sites.

We cannot overlook the concerning rate of attrition observed at later points of the housebuilding chain. But equally, we cannot discount the volume of activity being recorded at the point of submission – not least because housing supply start figures are now exhibiting signs of recovery.<sup>2</sup> From this vantage point, we appear on the precipice of a housebuilding recovery, providing we can unpick some of the issues that continue to hold us back.

That will require ongoing dialogue and collaboration, supported by relevant, timely data. This is why The Planning Application Index exists.

**Thank you for reading.**



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## How TerraQuest Gets Its Data

As the provider of Planning Portal, TerraQuest processes around 95% of all planning applications submitted to local planning authorities across England. This unique dataset is captured at the point of submission, providing early insights into proposed development trends.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2025/12/17/government-proceed-bng-exemptions-modification>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mhclgmedia.blog.gov.uk/2026/01/15/housing-sec-halls-recovery-green-shoots-in-latest-housing-supply-figures/>

# FAQs

## ? What is The Planning Application Index?

The Planning Application Index is a quarterly report from TerraQuest – the national planning application service operator of Planning Portal. The report focuses specifically on residential units applied for each quarter.

Planning Portal processes around 95% of all planning applications across England, giving us one of the most complete and reliable datasets on planning.

Every quarter, we analyse residential planning application data from the previous three months to show:

- How many homes are being applied for
- Where housing growth is happening
- Key trends shaping new development

**This insight is particularly important as England faces an ongoing housing crisis and the government has committed to significantly increasing housing supply.**

## ? Why is this report unique?

Because TerraQuest, operators of Planning Portal, use a unique, application-focused data standard, we can track information that is often unavailable elsewhere.

For example, we can report on:

- The number of individual new housing units applied for (offering a more complete picture than simply the total number of applications)
- Detailed market-relevant trends (e.g. the rise or fall in a particular housing type, or trends affecting a certain region)
- Early indicators of housing pipeline activity

Our reporting prioritises the tracking of housing unit submission, as we believe this is the greatest measure of intent on housing. This makes The Planning Application Index a valuable source of intelligence for planners, developers, policymakers and the wider built environment sector.

**TerraQuest, operators of Planning Portal, also use this data to provide insight into other major policy areas, such as our recent reporting on biodiversity net gain.**

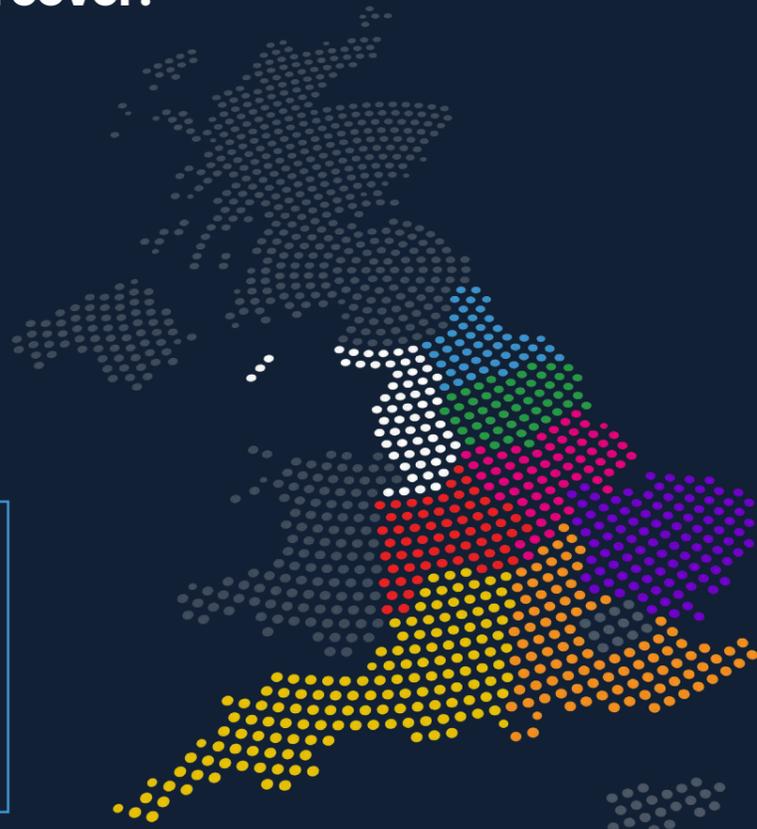
## ? What does the data cover?

All data covered is submitted via the Planning Portal service.

The data in the report covers:

- 📍 England (excluding London)
- 📍 London (separately)

**Please note: in this report all data is either collected via the Greater London Authority question set or the England question set, which excludes the GLA. For the sake of clarity, the two datasets are always presented separately.**



## Glossary

<b>Planning applications</b>	This includes all applications submitted through the Planning Portal application service. This is not limited to residential application types, providing a wider view of the planning sector's performance.
<b>Housing units</b>	The number of new homes or residential units that the applicant is seeking permission to build as part of an application.
<b>Housing unit net gain</b>	The number of proposed dwellings, accounting for any existing dwellings on the land that are to be removed.
<b>Quarter</b>	Calendar year quarters, e.g. Q1 2025 = 01/01/2025 – 31/03/2025.
<b>Social, affordable, intermediate rent</b>	Three rental housing categories grouped together (social rented housing, affordable rented housing, intermediate rented housing).
<b>Affordable housing</b>	Intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined regarding local incomes and local house prices.



# The National Picture (exc. London)

Renewed optimism among developers



Short on time?

## Here are the key findings:

Net gain housing unit submissions – the most important metric for gauging developer intent – reached record levels in 2025, with a strong Q4 contributing to this growing sense of confidence.



**335,387** housing units were gained in applications in 2025, making it the **best-performing year** of the decade so far.



Net gain housing units **exceeded 100,000 in Q4 2025** – the first time this has occurred in a single quarter since the beginning of the decade.



The second half of 2025 outperformed the first by **71,341 units**.



At **61%**, this quarter experienced a marked **year-on-year increase** when compared with the same period in 2024.

**2025 had the highest annual number of market home unit submissions since 2022.**



**TerraQuest recorded the highest number of residential units in applications for affordable homes and affordable rent sector homes**

in a single quarter this decade, building on the record levels first observed in Q3 2025.

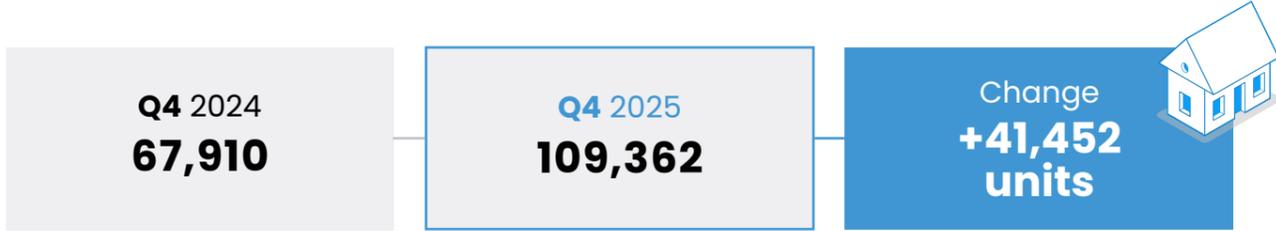


**457,397 planning applications were submitted in 2025 – an increase of 26,658 on 2024.**

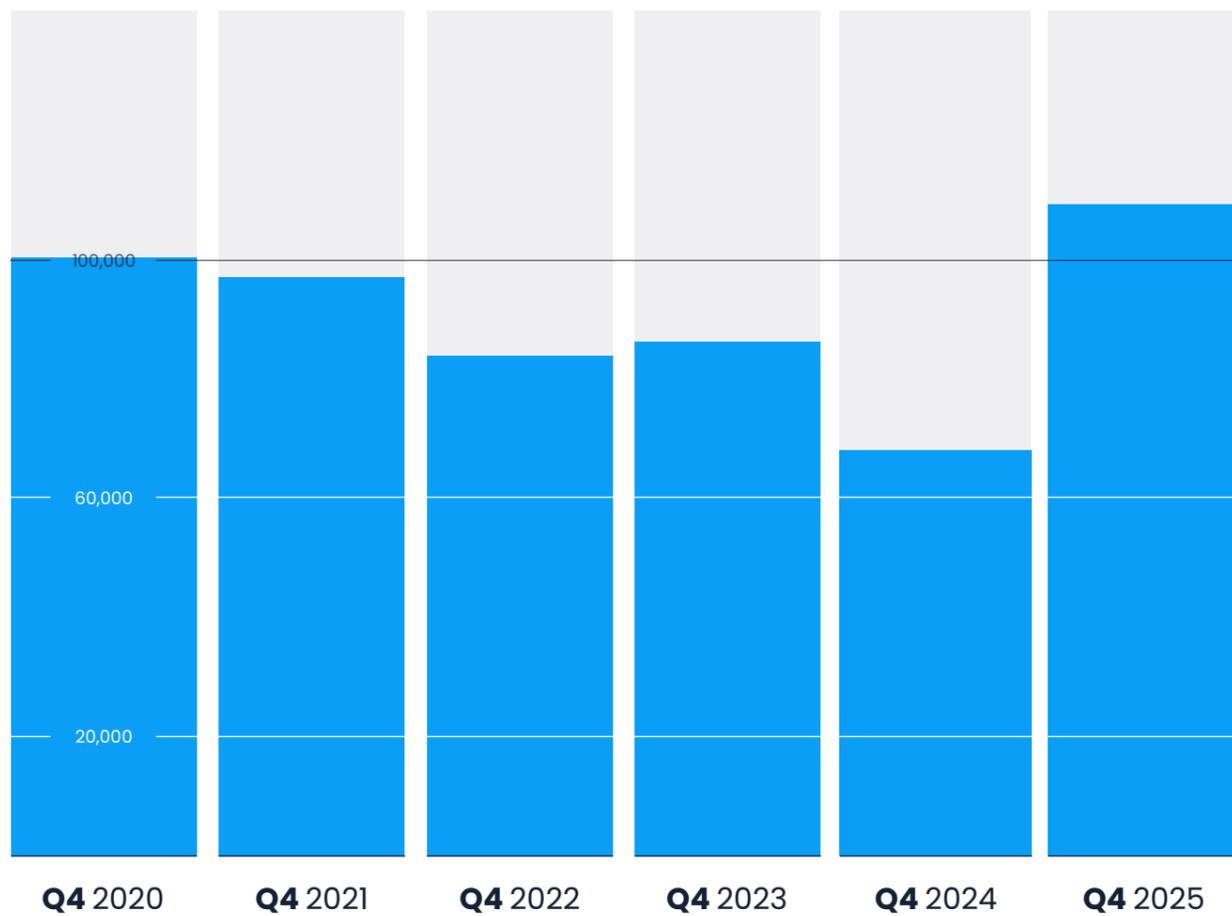
Q4 2025 application numbers fell slightly on Q3 2025, although this was an expected decrease seen year on year.

# 1. Record-level housing submissions in Q4

Our Q3 2025 index showed a noticeable improvement on the same quarter a year previously, with net gain housing unit submissions increasing by approximately 76% year on year. This quarter tells a similarly positive story.



Housing Unit Submissions (Q4 historical)



In Q4 2025, net gain housing units reached 109,362, increasing by 41,452 on Q4 2024. This represents a year-on-year increase of approximately 61%.

Q4 2025 was also the first time net gain housing unit submissions exceeded 100,000 in a single quarter since the end of 2020.

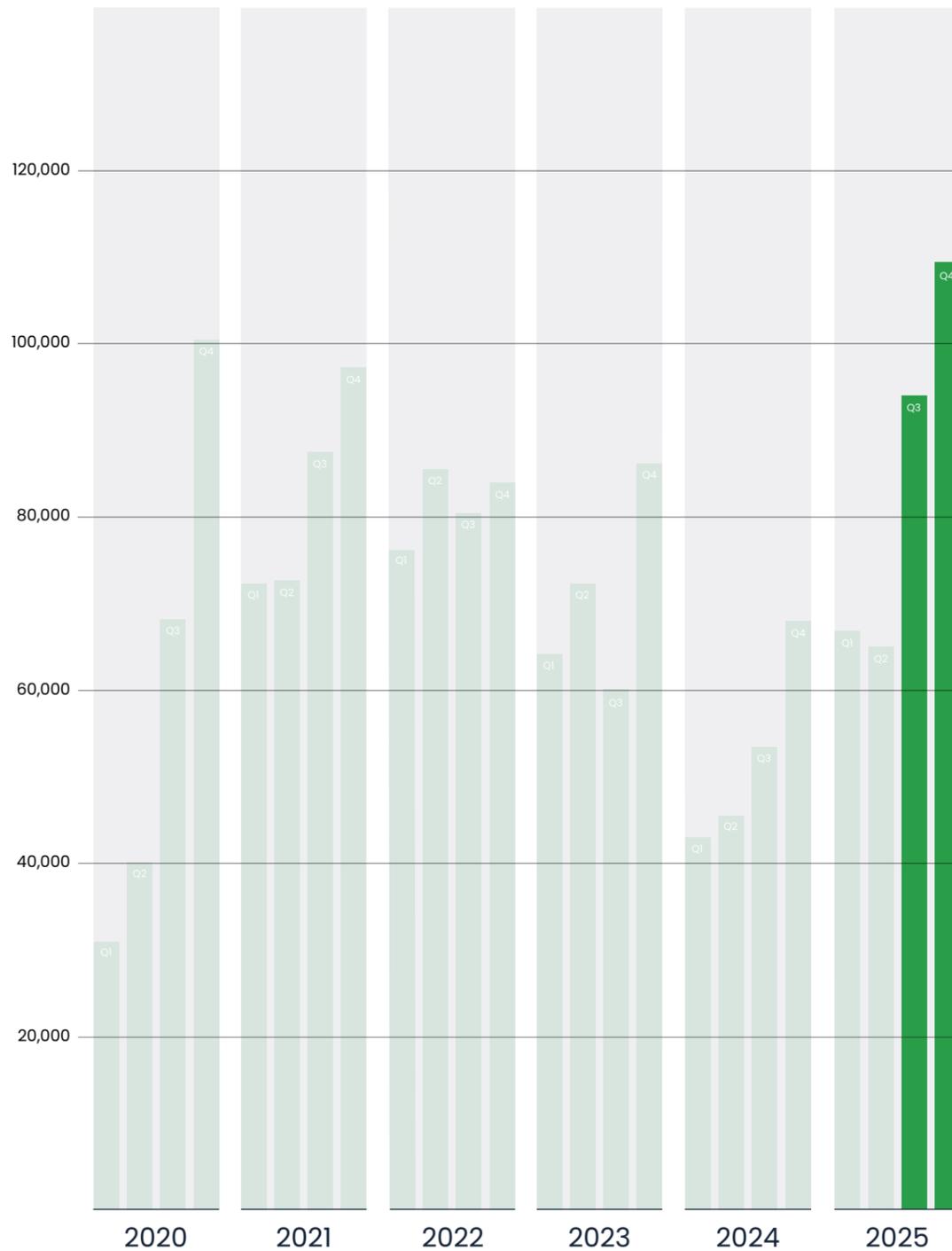
**Overall, Q4 2025 is the best-performing quarter of the decade so far.**



## 2. Strong signals in the latter half of 2025

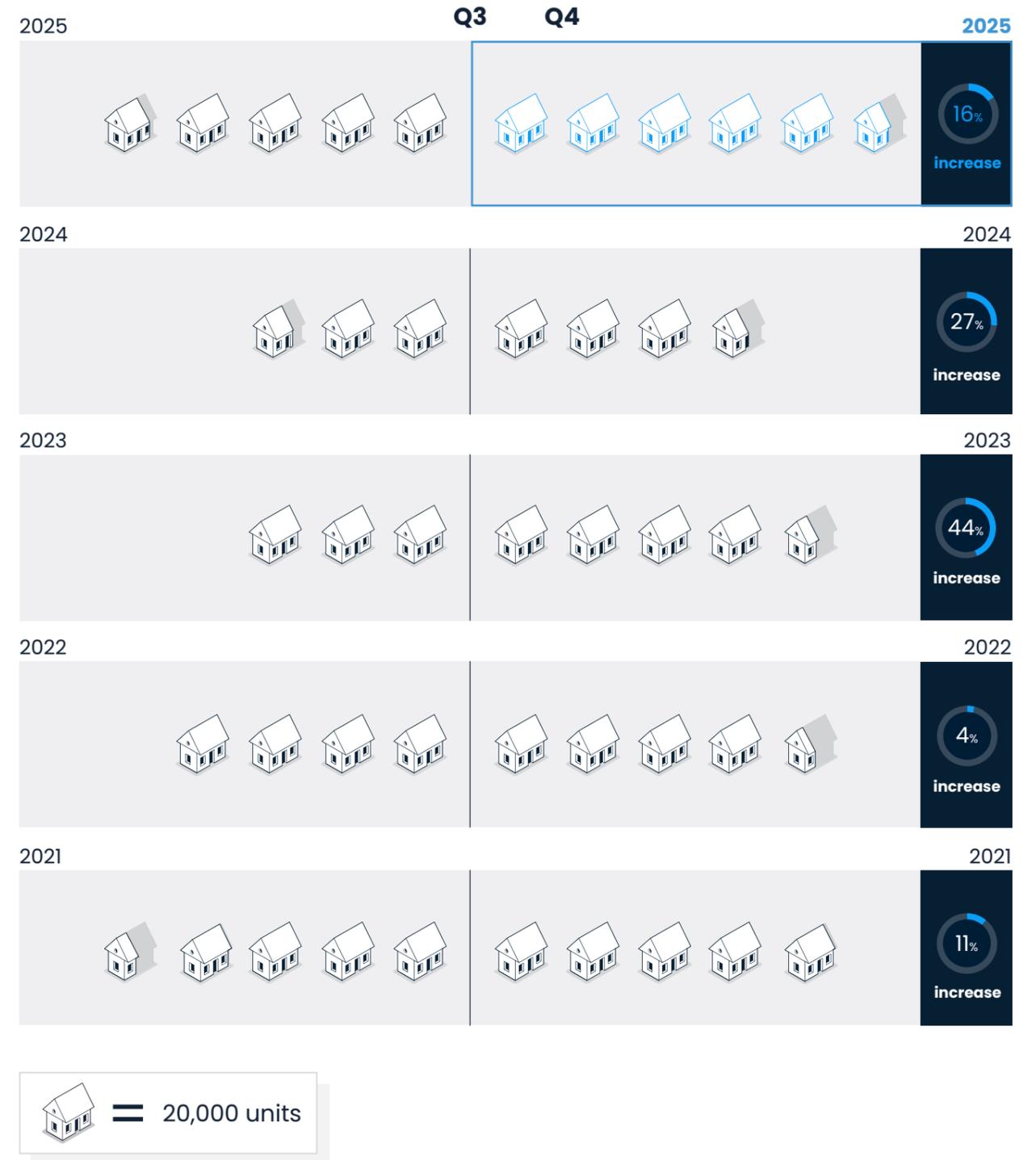
Data can sometimes leave open-ended questions, with a mixture of possible interpretations. For Q4 2025, however, the figures were emphatic, exhibiting a clear intent among developers to initiate the housebuilding process, with all key markers trending in the right direction.

Housing Unit Submissions (historical)



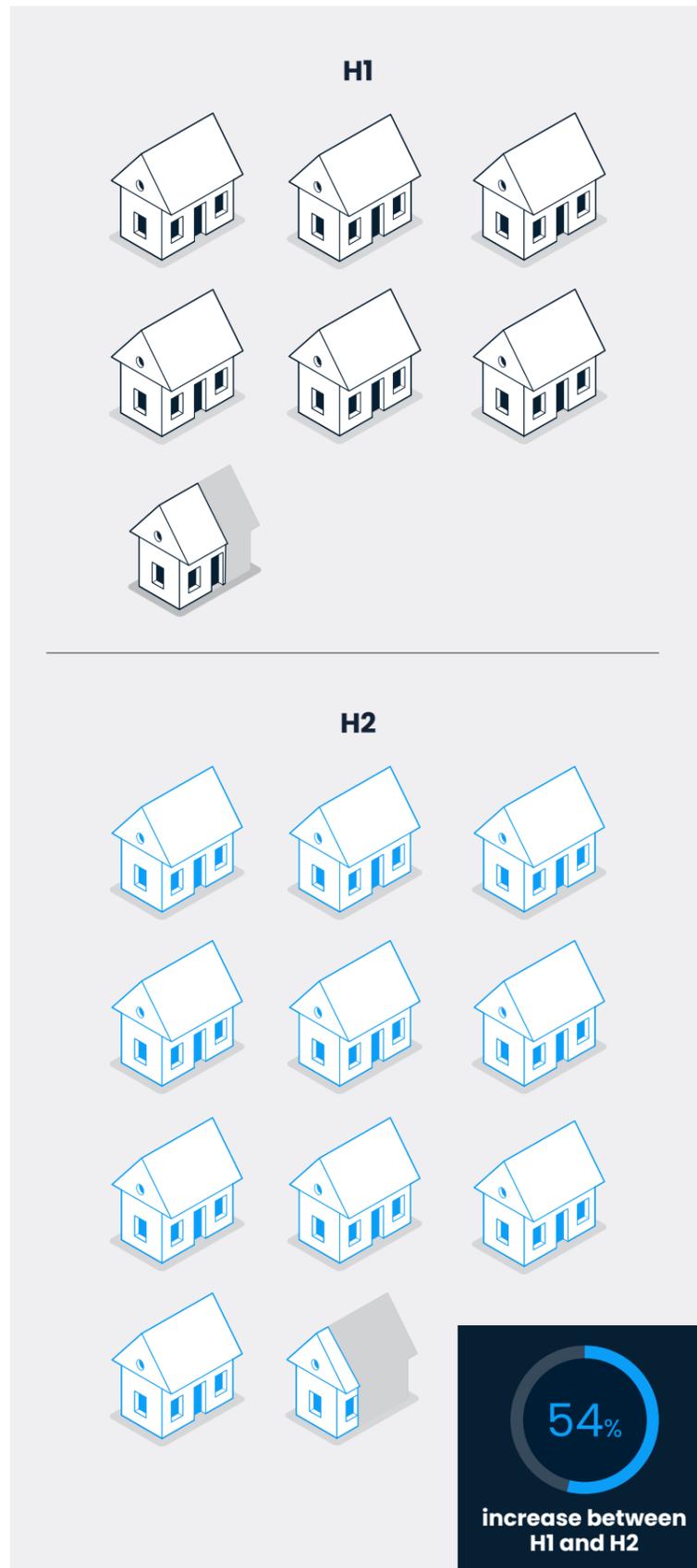
For instance, there was a notable jump in net gain housing unit submissions observed between Q3 and Q4, rising by 15,360 – an increase of approximately 16%. This rate of change is not an outlier when looking at other Q3-Q4 transitions over the past five years, although the total volume of housing unit submissions for 2025 in this period is far greater when compared with the ‘normal’ years of 2021 and 2022.

Housing Units Change Q3 vs Q4 (historical)



There was also strong quarter-on-quarter growth in 2025, with only a small drop in units recorded between Q1 and Q2. This fall can largely be attributed to the end of the financial year and a desire for businesses to submit before the changeover.

The second half of 2025 far outperformed the first, with H2 units up 71,432 on the H1 total – an increase of approximately 54%.



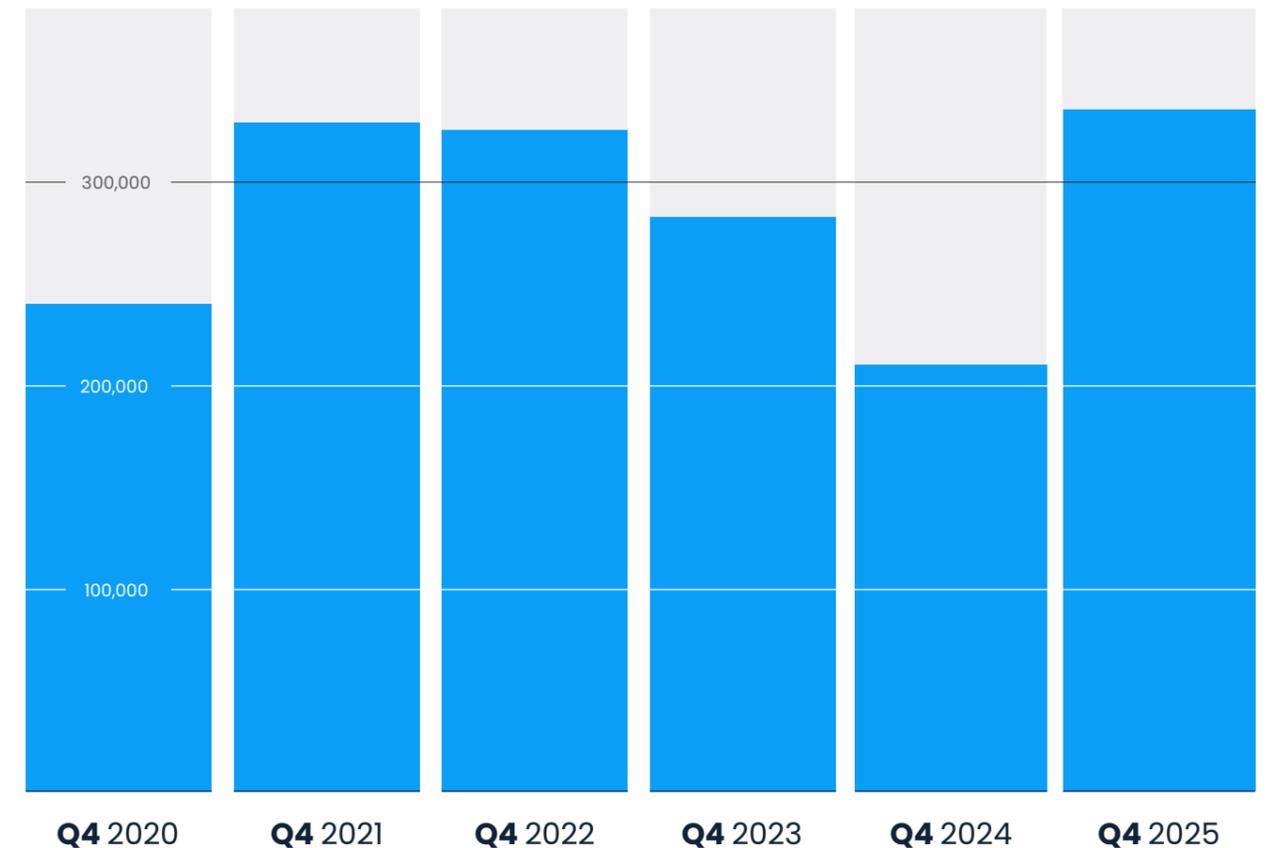
= 20,000 units

On this basis, it's not unreasonable to suggest the industry's response to government reforms has been largely positive. And this growing sense of confidence will be an important sentiment to track across 2026, not least because annual unit numbers now sit firmly

above 300,000 for the first time since the government took office. This is the minimum needed to deliver the 1.5 million homes target, although the realistic number is likely much higher given attrition rates encountered later during the housebuilding process.



Housing Unit Submissions (yearly total)



Notwithstanding that challenge, 2025 was a very strong year overall, finishing with net gain housing units up 125,511 on 2024's total. This reverses a long-running slump in developer intent observed since 2023.

Most important of all, 2025 was the best-performing year of the decade so far.

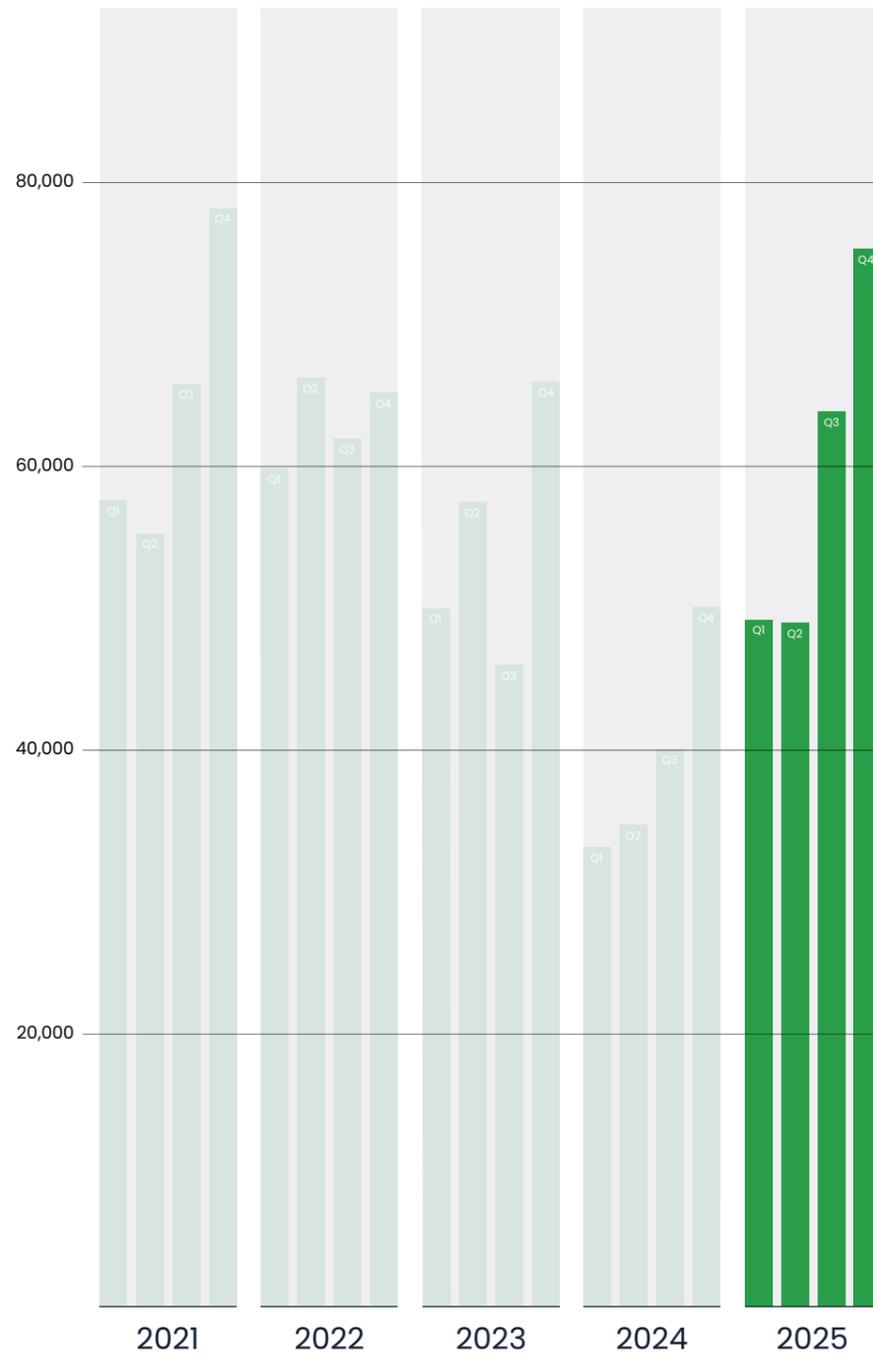
### 3. Sustained progress for both affordable and market housing

Market housing has continued to build on the progress recorded in our last index.

At the end of Q3, market home unit submissions totalled 63,871, having risen significantly from Q2. In Q4 2025 that number rose to 75,336, representing an increase of approximately 18%.

At 237,380, 2025 also had the highest annual number of market home unit submissions since 2022.

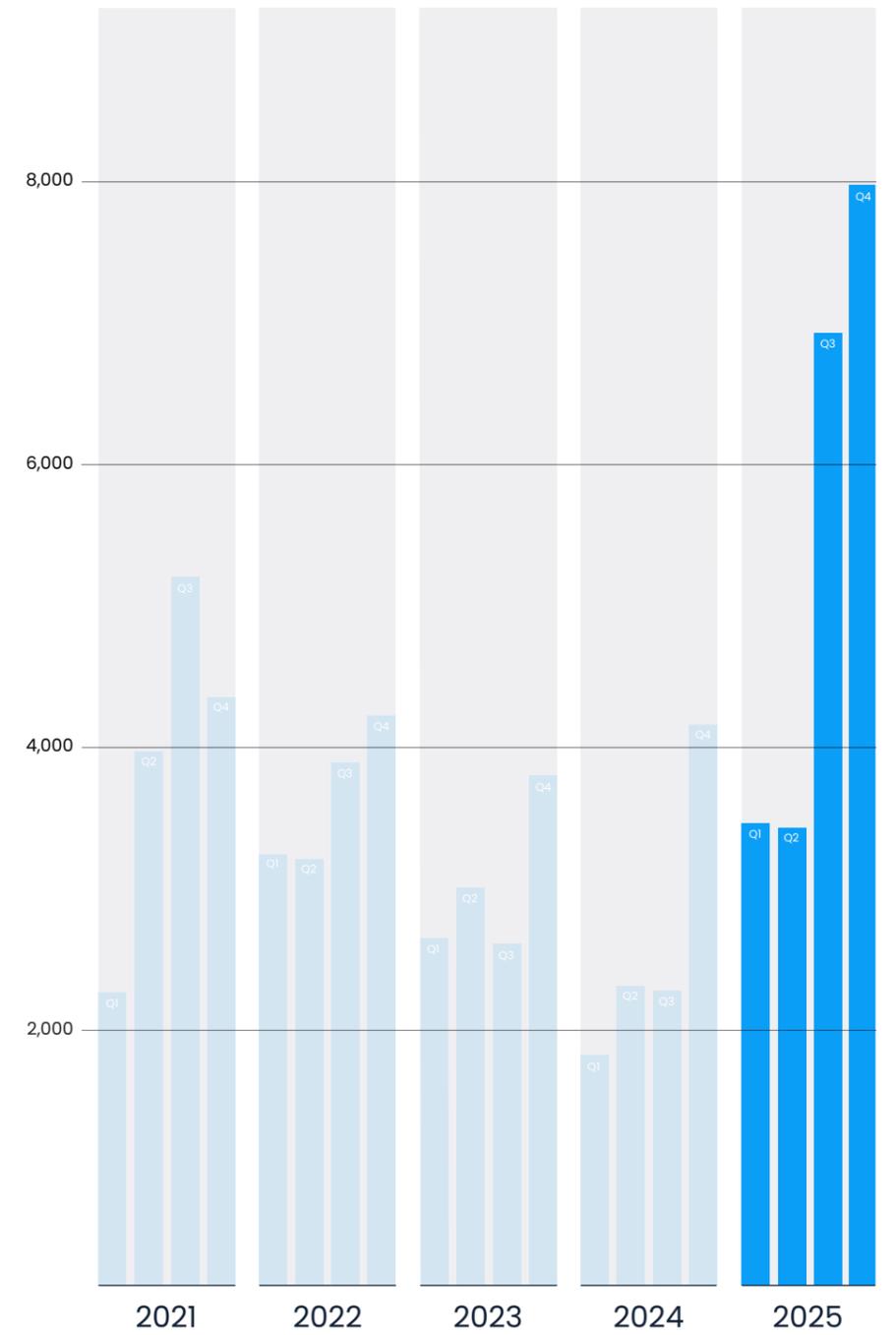
Market Housing submissions (historical)



Progress was also seen in the affordable homes and affordable rent categories, building on the successes seen in Q3.

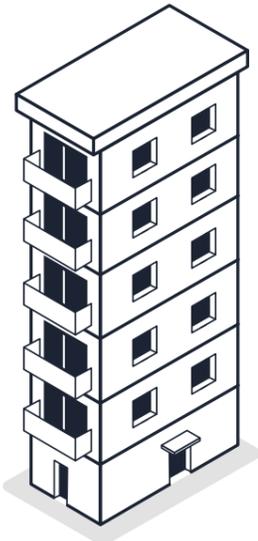


Affordable Home Applications (historical)

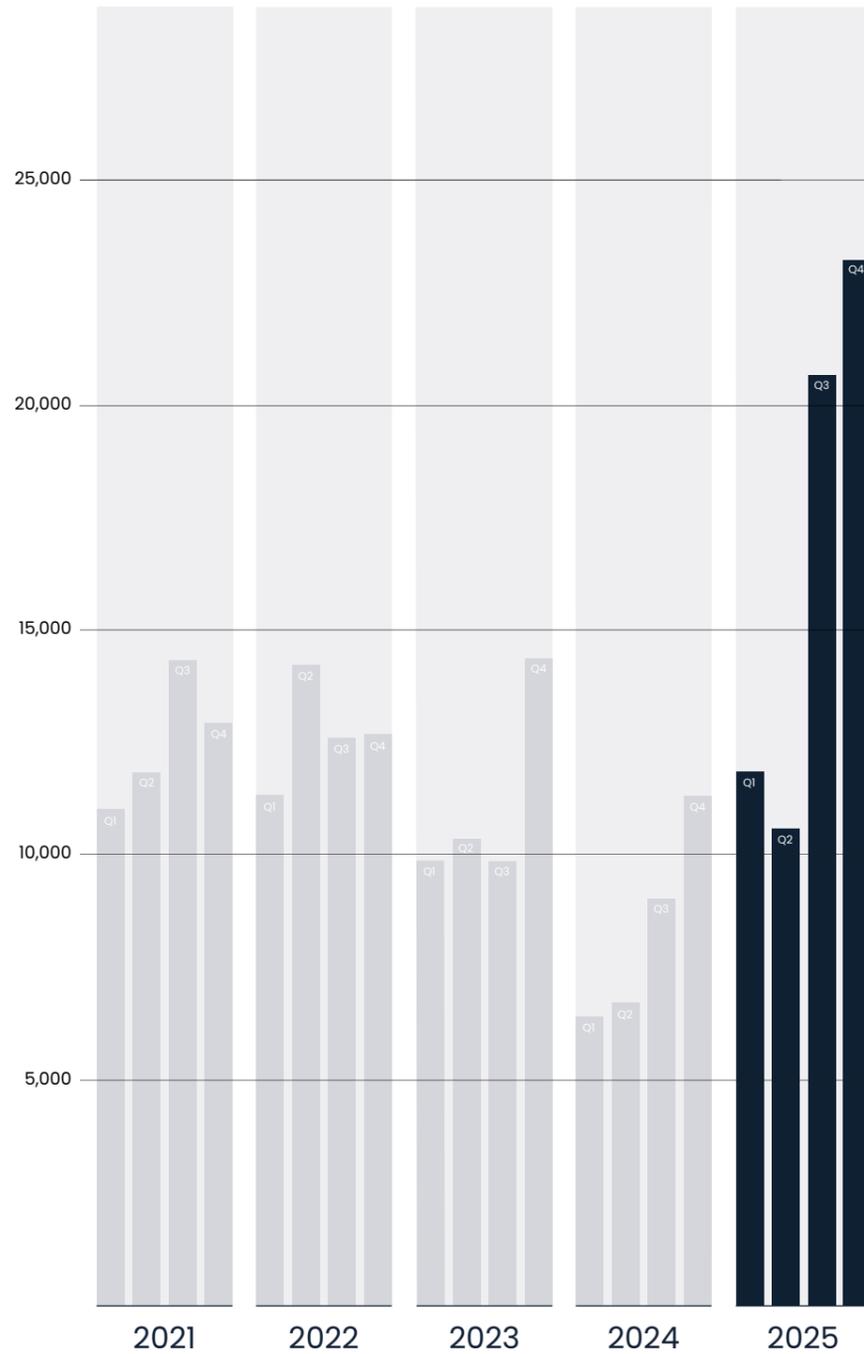


Unit submissions for both these types of housing reached their highest level in a single quarter since our records began.

They also recorded their highest ever annual totals.



Affordable Rent Applications (historical)



### Total No. Planning Applications

457,397 applications were submitted in 2025 – an increase of 26,658 on 2024.

110,365 applications were submitted in Q4 2025, falling by 3,705 compared with Q3 2025.

This drop was expected when looking at the performance of Q3-Q4 application data over the past five years.

However, the extent of the drop between these two quarters continues to decrease year on year.

Q4 2025 applications were up on the same quarter in 2023 and 2024, approaching levels last seen in 2022.





# The Regional Picture

## A uniformly positive response

This section focuses on historical comparisons of Q4 in each region over the past three years. Working this way allows us to analyse the data on a like-for-like basis, accounting for the expected changes in activity that are usually observed at different points in the year.

It also allows us to more easily highlight the standout regions – i.e. those that have performed above or below expectations.

### Short on time? Here are the key findings:

Please note: this section discusses all regions outside of London.

**All regions of England were trending upwards in Q4 2025,**

suggesting a positive response to government planning reforms across the country.

**Q4 2025 outperformed Q4 2024 in all regions,**

with the North East recording a triple-digit percentage increase.

**Q4 2025 outperformed Q4 2022 in all regions.**

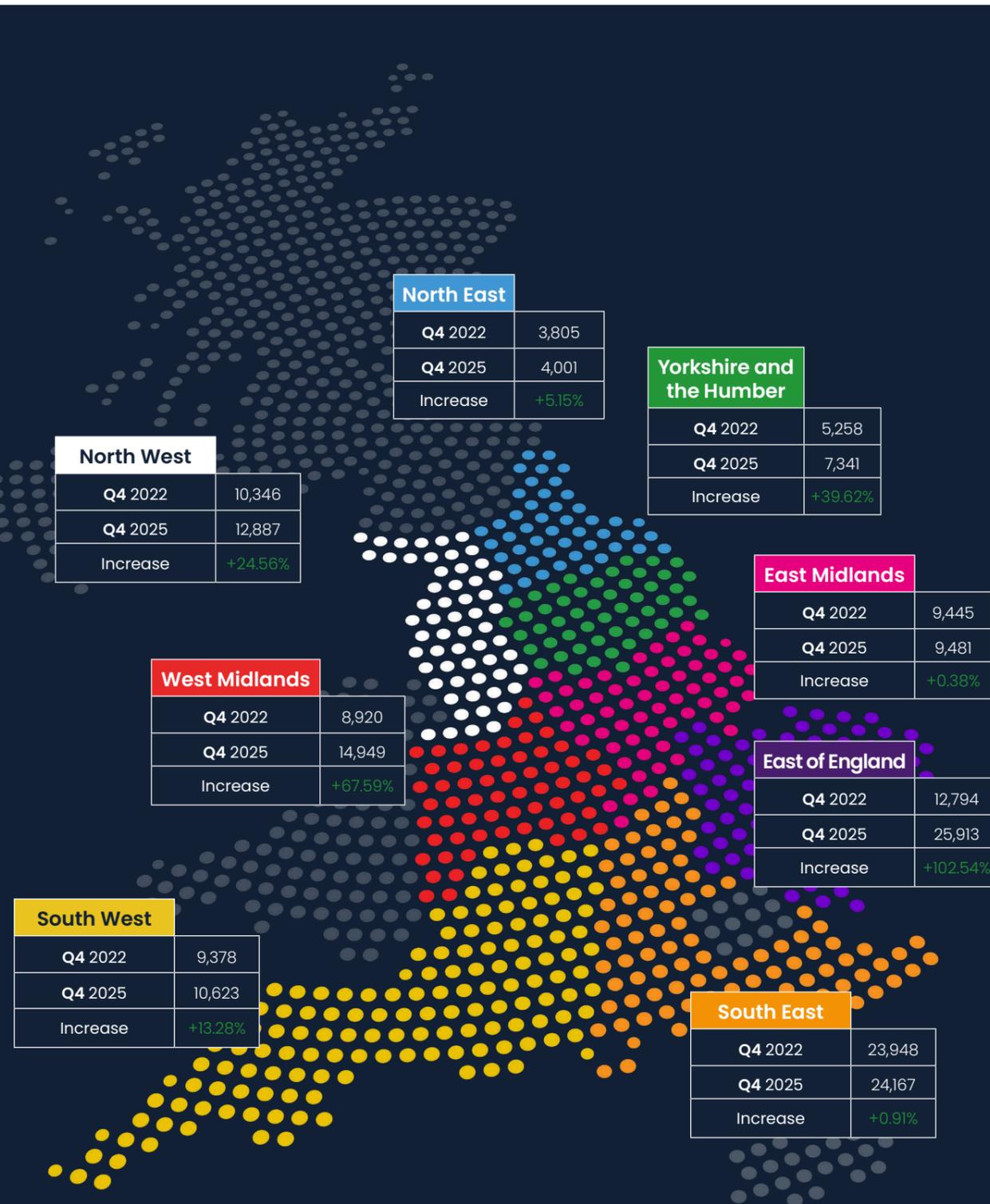
**Q4 2025 outperformed Q4 2023 in all regions**

besides Yorkshire and the Humber, where there was a small decrease.

## Standout Q4 2025 regions vs. Q4 2022

Q4 2025 outperformed Q4 2022 in all regions, with the **East of England** making considerable gains on the same period three years earlier.

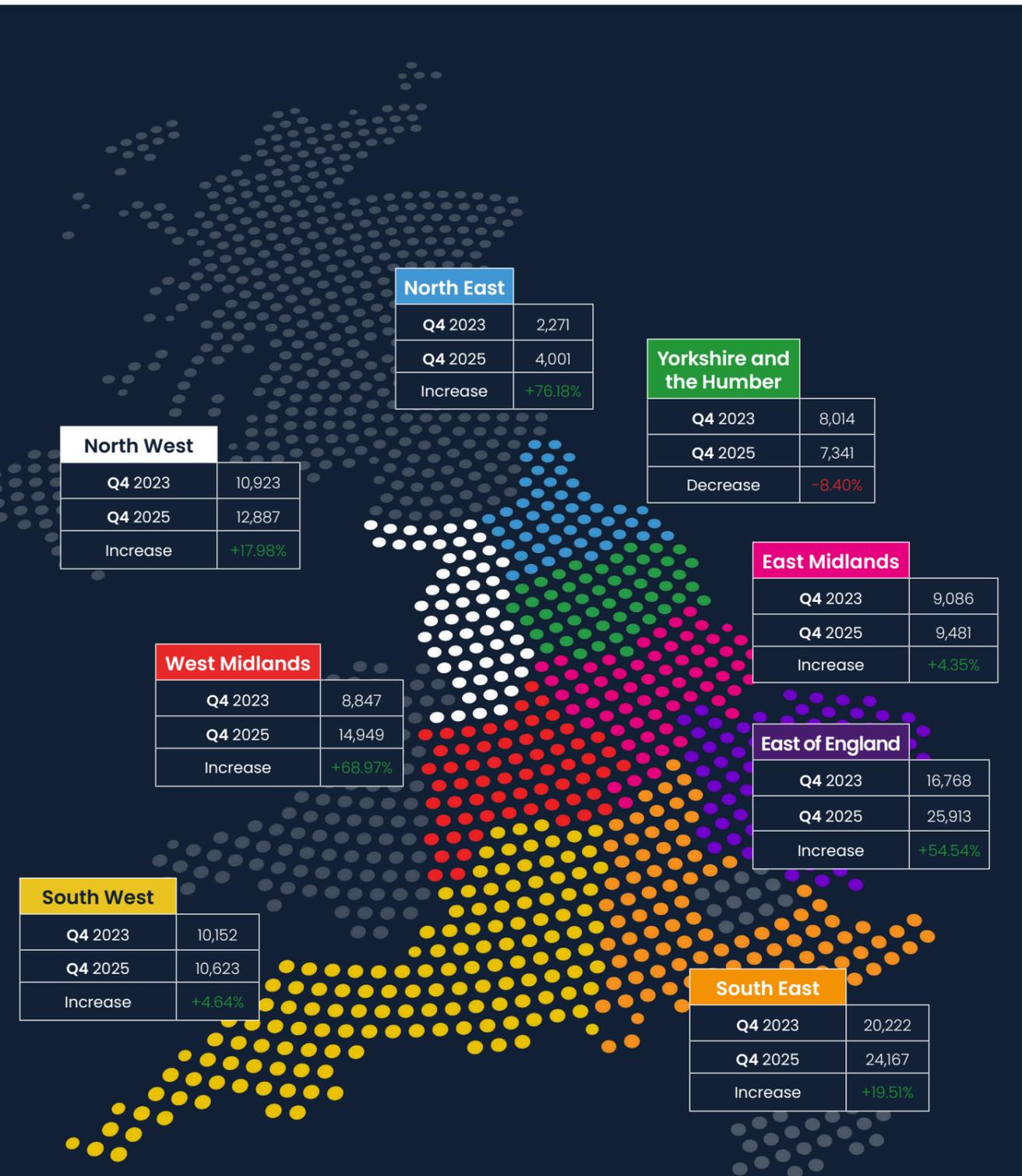
Quarterly Net Gain Housing Units



## Standout Q4 2025 regions vs. Q4 2023

Q4 2025 outperformed Q4 2023 in all regions besides **Yorkshire and Humber**. In 2025, the **North East** and **West Midlands** posted particularly strong numbers when compared with 2023.

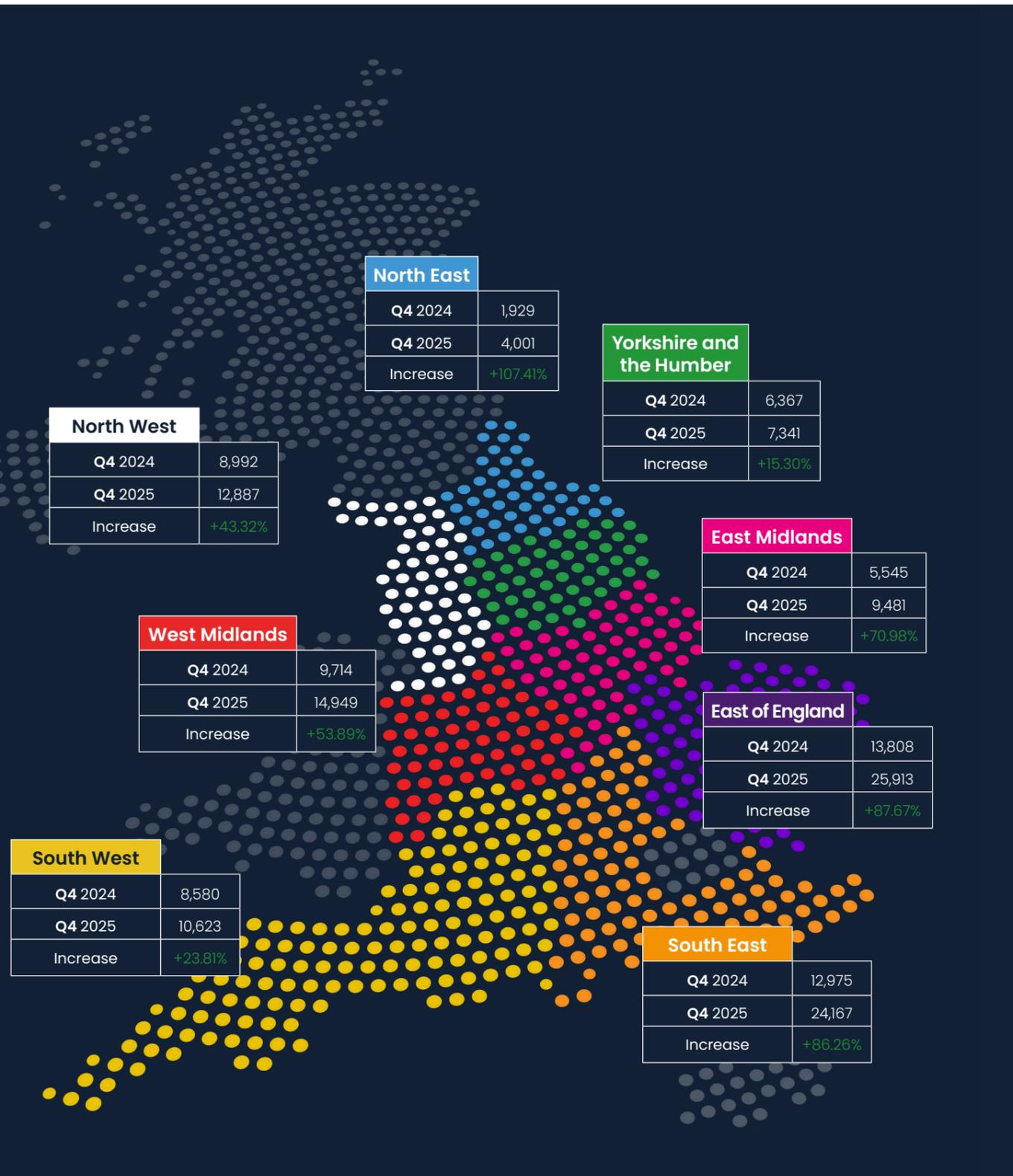
Quarterly Net Gain Housing Units



## Standout Q4 2025 regions vs. Q4 2024

Q4 2025 outperformed Q4 2024 in all regions. Activity in the **North East** was particularly strong this quarter, which recorded a triple-digit percentage increase on the same period a year earlier.

### Quarterly Net Gain Housing Units



## What do these results show?

**Q4 2025 performed well against relatively stronger years recorded earlier in the decade**, such as 2021, when year-end net gain housing units last approached 330,000. It's also important to note the rebounding regions. The South West and North East both saw a year-on-year decrease in Q3 2025 but have since recovered in the final three months of the year, with the latter recording the greatest increase of any region.

In other words, the intent to build presented throughout these latest figures is not explained by an outsized level of activity in historically popular areas; rather, what we're seeing is a uniformly positive response to planning reforms across the country.





# London

## Mixed fortunes in the capital

Given London's importance and unique planning landscape, this region is presented and analysed separately from the rest of the country.

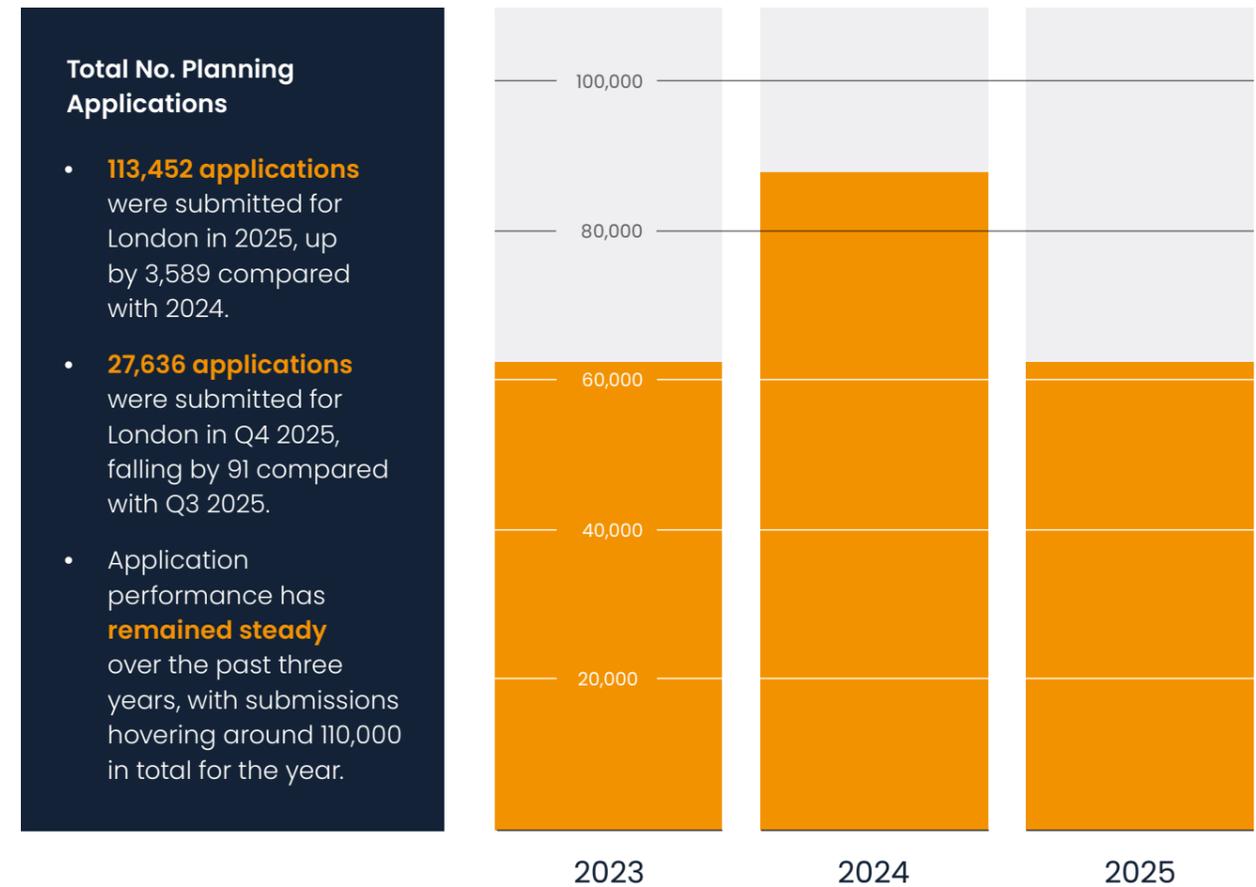
The latest planning data for London paints a slightly different picture when compared with the rest of the country. Annual net gain housing unit submissions were down 25,708 on 2024's year-end total – a decrease of approximately 31%.

There are, however, some caveats to this performance. London's 2025 activity tracks closely with levels last seen in 2023, suggesting 2024 was an outlier year for the region. Internal data also shows London was subject

to a very large application in 2024, accounting for a significant portion of that year's total housing units (and therefore a significant portion of the difference year on year). As such, it would only take a similarly large application to move the dial in a more positive direction.

Moreover, London's H2 was noticeably stronger than its H1 (30,508 and 26,327 respectively), suggesting a growing sense of confidence among developers in the capital.

London Housing Unit Submissions (historical)



**Total No. Planning Applications**

- **113,452 applications** were submitted for London in 2025, up by 3,589 compared with 2024.
- **27,636 applications** were submitted for London in Q4 2025, falling by 91 compared with Q3 2025.
- Application performance has **remained steady** over the past three years, with submissions hovering around 110,000 in total for the year.

Please note: in this report all data is either Greater London Authority or England excluding GLA. For the sake of clarity, the two datasets are always presented separately.

# Analysis

## More great than good needed in 2026

In our previous report, the suggestion was momentum would continue to build on the progress seen in Q2 and Q3. Without question, that has come to pass, though it also raises further questions for the industry.

It's undeniable that Q4 delivered an impressive level of planning activity, with all the key metrics pointing in the right direction. Yet, overall, 2025's year-end totals do not make it a huge outlier when looking at the rest of the decade so far. Modest increases in the early part of the year may also skew the importance of the surge seen in recent months, making firm judgements difficult without more data in support.

Is this more of a 'return to normal' – discounting the slump over 2023 and 2024? Or is it, in fact, the beginnings of a sustained increase to housing unit submissions, bringing levels closer to what is required to meet target when factoring in the country's high attrition rates? The answer lies in the first months of 2026, making our next index particularly important as the industry sets out on a critical year.

It would be an error to overlook the progress made in a relatively short period, however further action from government may be necessary if we continue to see starts and completions plateau just as submissions hit new heights.

The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 goes some way to addressing our most persistent challenges – such as the coordination between land assembly and infrastructure delivery – but success will ultimately rely on early identification of suitable sites and a rigorous, transparent assessment of their viability. That, as we have heard at industry conferences, is the most pressing issue for both industry and government to address.

Viability aside, it's important to recognise the volume of applications now flooding into local planning departments. We've seen housing minister Matthew Pennycook's prediction of a "sharp uptick" in planning activity come good.<sup>3</sup> If this continues – and it's fair to expect so given the quarterly changes discussed in this report – will local teams be prepared to take on more? Time will tell.

***“Is this more of a ‘return to normal’ – discounting the slump over 2023 and 2024? Or is it, in fact, the beginnings of a sustained increase to housing unit submissions, bringing levels closer to what is required to meet target when factoring in the country’s high attrition rates?”***

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1923183/pennycook-expects-sharp-uptick-planning-application-numbers-later-year>



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