

## Northern cities lead British building boom

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With recent figures indicating that new construction work in Great Britain has trebled in the last twenty years(1), Royal Mail has commissioned a report(2) painting a detailed picture of where and which sectors are building on this boom. According to Royal Mail's 'Not Yet Built' database, Manchester has applied for the most new development plans in the country in the last three years. This is closely followed by other northern towns and cities including Leeds, Wigan and Liverpool, reflecting building confidence in England's 'Northern Powerhouse'.

### By geography

- Tower Hamlets is officially the nation's fastest growing 'housing hotspot', seeing the single largest percentage increase between 2010 and 2017.
- Cornwall's push for affordable housing sees it as the local authority with the largest amount of new homes built in the last five years.

### By industry

- Annual construction output in Great Britain has increased by more than 50% in the last five years, and trebled in the last twenty.
- Demand for new housing is leading this surge, output for which has increased by 99% in the last five years.
- However schools and universities, work spaces and the entertainment sector have also enjoyed a strong increase construction in output during this timeframe.
- Flats now account for nearly a quarter of housing in the UK. Outside of London, many towns on the south coast, including Brighton & Hove and Bournemouth, now see flats make up half of their overall property count.
- Royal Mail's 'Not Yet Built' data shows that both the number of development plans applied for and the number completed in the last year have risen by 10% and 5% respectively, indicating the growing ambitions

of developers in the UK.

Royal Mail has commissioned a new report to paint a detailed picture of where and in which industries modern Britain is building; following recent reports of a £72bn construction boom in the last twenty years.

Manchester is very much at the epicentre of this growth, with 9,127 new development plans applied for in the last three years. This trend is closely followed by other districts in Northern England, including Leeds, Salford, Liverpool and Wigan – reflecting growing confidence in the 'Northern Powerhouse' concept.

The main driving force behind this development surge is new housing. In the last five years, the value of constructed housing has doubled. Tower Hamlets officially records the largest rise in new homes - with a 14% upturn between 2010 and 2017 - followed by Corby (11%)(3).

Flats are the fastest growing type of new housing to be built in recent years and now account for almost a quarter (22%) of British residential properties. Detached houses have also seen growth of four per cent in the last five years.

Across England & Wales, the top fifteen local authorities with the highest share of

properties as flats are all in Greater London. In the City of London, a staggering 98% of residential properties are flats. However, towns and cities on the south coast also feature highly – for example half of properties in Brighton & Hove and Bournemouth are flats.

Many other construction sectors have benefitted from a sizable building boom in the last five years, including office spaces (a 92% increase), schools and universities (35%) and entertainment venues (62%), ranging from theatres to bowling alleys.

Other interesting outtakes from the research include:

- Cornwall's expanding tourist industry makes it the local authority with the largest rise in developments of residential properties in absolute terms, with 17,450 homes built in the last seven years.
- Birmingham, Edinburgh, Tower Hamlets and Wiltshire local authorities have seen a particularly high surge in development plans in the last three years (on average 8,303 new developments per location).

The most common type of new construction work to be built per region in the last five years includes:

**London:** Private commercial (including office spaces, entertainment venues and shops)

**Scotland:** Infrastructure (including water, roads and railways)

**East, West Midlands, North West, North East, Yorkshire & the Humber, East Midlands, South East, South West, Wales:** Housing

- The most common type of housing to be built per area in the last five years is:

**North East, East Midlands, Wales:** Detached houses,  
**London, North West, West Midlands, East, South East, South West, Yorkshire & the Humber:** Flats

Steve Rooney, Head of Address Management Unit at Royal Mail said: "As we deliver to over 30 million addresses across the UK, our 'Not Yet Built' database is notified of any new building developments – either business or residential. I hope we'll be delivering to most – if not all – of these fledgling properties in years to come."

Lord Jim O'Neill, Vice Chair of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, said: "It has been clear for some time that parts of the Northern Powerhouse, in particular the North West, are actually doing far better than people seem to think; even outperforming London in some areas."

"This is welcome news. The unique aspect of the Northern Powerhouse, and why it is so crucial in rebalancing the economy, is that its towns and cities are close enough to create a true single market which can have a significant national impact."

Source: [Royal Mail](#)

