PERIODS & TRENDS

GOVERNMENT POILCY

SELF ORGANISED ACTION

PANIC OF 1873

WALL STREET CRASH

OPEC OIL EMBARGO

ENERGY CRISIS (STAGFLATION

BLACK MONDAY

PANDEMIC RECESSION

WWI
1914-18

1% ..Council housing stock in England..

- Before 1914, housing was left almost entirely to the private market and Victorian laissez-faire principles.
- WWI established the permanent precedent that the central government and local councils were responsible for securing adequate housing and living standards for the population

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

WWII
1939-1945

War damage (500,000-750,000 homes), Lack of modern amenities (500,000 homes lacked an indoor toilet), demographic pressure (birth rate surged after soldiers returned) and 6 years of halted construction, caused the post war housing crisis

GOVERNMENT CONSTRUCTION

Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) They were designed to give private developers, residents, and local councils a single, unified reference point for guiding development, conservation, and regeneration.
Part I: Contained broad, strategic policies similar to old county structure plans. Part II: Contained detailed local land-use, zoning-like guidelines, and site-specific policies similar to district local plans.

2004 | Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)
Act shifted county-level and regional strategic planning into higher-tier frameworks, leaving local authorities to focus their Local Plans on specific site allocations and detailed development management. The LDF process was meant to speed up plan-making, but it did the exact opposite. Years after the Act was passed, only a tiny fraction of local authorities had successfully adopted a complete LDF.

10% ..Council housing stock in England..
31% ..UK population living in Council housing..

6% ..Council housing stock in England..
16% ..UK population living in Council housing..

2012 | National Planning Policy Framework
Became a "Passport" for Speculative, Low-Quality Developments
The framework featured a "tilted balance". This mechanism meant that if a local council could not prove a rolling 5-year supply of deliverable housing land, the national presumption in favour of development automatically took over. Private developers utilized this loophole to bypass democratically agreed-upon local infrastructure plans. This essentially served as an automatic passport to planning permission for high-profit, speculative housing schemes in unsustainable edge-of-settlement or greenfield locations.

CO-OWNERSHIP

Members contributed monthly payments to cover the cooperative's mortgage costs, and when they left, received a premium based on a formula in the lease. Over 40,000 homes were built. However, rising interest rates and property prices reduced affordability

GOVERNMENT BACKED CO-OPERATIVES

Ownership cooperatives, supported by government programs or initiated by grassroots member groups. Some were backed by housing associations focused on affordable housing. Others were self-financed through member contributions and mortgages

CO-INVESTMENT

1969
Short-life arrangements
formal, legal agreements between local government authorities and organised squatting groups. The core terms included
Sweat Equity: Properties were handed over in unliveable conditions. Squatters used their own time, money, and labour to repair roofs, fix plumbing, install electricity, and make the homes habitable.

The Handback Clause: The occupants explicitly agreed that when the council finally secured funding to redevelop the land, the residents would move out voluntarily--typically on a short 1-month notice.
Running Costs: The licensed occupants were responsible for paying utility bills and council taxes, relieving the local authority of financial burdens

GOVERNMENT DISINVESTMENT

MARKETISATION & DEREGULATION

INFRASTRUCTURE PRIVITISATION

300 exist in London

8,000 remain

1915
War Restrictions) Act
Froze residential rents and mortgage rates at their August 1914 levels.

1945-49
156,623 temporary prefabricated homes
Built as a fast stop-gap solution

1945-51
Homes For All
constructing over 1.2 million new homes between 1946 and 1951, with over 85% built as council (social) housing

1974
Housing Act
Registered housing associations--including eligible housing co-operatives--could obtain Housing Association Grants to cover construction or the purchase and rehabilitation of existing housing. The system could cover virtually the whole approved development cost

when co-operatives helped bring unwanted properties back into use, borough councils also played an important role

1925
Renters' Rights Act

1381
The Forcible Entry Act
Prohibited entering lands or tenements with a strong hand or a multitude of people, allowing entry only in a peaceable and easy manner where permitted by law

1632
Adverse possession Act
Also known as "Squatter's rights"
The original time period for an action of ejectment/ adverse possession under the English Statute of Limitations enacted around this era was 20 years

1919
"Home Fit For Heroes"
Addison Act
council housing and homeownership became the dominant housing models

1924 "Rent Caps"
Wheatley Act
fixed, long-term state subsidies over 40 years,. By strictly capping rents to make them affordable for working-class tenants, it resulted in the construction of over 500,000 high-quality council homes

1947
Town and Country Planning Act
Required formal planning permission from local councils for any construction or change in land use. Instead of clear rules on what could be built, it created an unpredictable, case-by-case approval process

The act slowed down post-war housebuilding rates significantly, laying the groundwork for a long-term supply deficit

1977
Order 113 & Order 26
repealed the 1381 Forcible Entry protections. It made it a criminal offense to refuse to leave a property when requested by a "displaced residential occupier" or a protected intending occupier

1980
"Right to Buy"
Housing Act
Allowed eligible council and social housing tenants to purchase their home at a discount off the market value
Led to a massive Reduction in total housing stock: Over 2 million council and social homes in England have been sold since 1980. Council housing stock dropped from roughly 5.1 million to 1.6 million homes, shifting the social housing population from 35% of English households in 1967 down to 17% (and council housing alone down to about 6%)

1985
Local Government Act
London's administration was fractured and handled individually by its 32 separate London boroughs

1988
Housing Act
Deregulated the private rented sector (PRS) in England and Wales to encourage private investment by replacing older lifetime rent-regulated tenancies with market-driven agreements

Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs)

Rent Deregulation
Ended strict government-controlled "fair rents" for new tenancies, allowing market-rate pricing

Scale
required development schemes to combine government grants with private borrowing. This made it much harder for small co-operatives to finance new housing and favoured larger housing associations

Section 13 Rent Increases
Set a formal statutory process for landlords to propose periodic rent increases subject to tenant challenges at a tribunal.

Section 21 'No-Fault' Evictions
Allowed landlords to repossess a property at the end of a fixed term AST on two months' notice without needing to state a reason

1994
Housing Act
social housing and tenant rights (Tenants Right Organisations) organising around such rights as the right to repair, compensation and improvements

Allowing landlords to let properties for a fixed term and reclaim possession easily

2002
Land Registration
Adding a mandatory notification system that allows registered owners to serve a counter-notice to block the claim

2012
End to "Squatters Rights"
Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act
Squatting in residential buildings became a criminal offence in England and Wales under Section 144 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, which took effect on September 1, 2012

TENANT CO-PARTNERSHIPS

Ealing Tenants Ltd built the first cooperative at Brentham Garden Suburb, closely tied to the Garden City movement and the ideas of architect Ebenezer Howard, these housing schemes included other prominent developments like Hampstead Garden Suburb and Letchworth Garden City.
1903
Brentham Garden Suburb
1907
Hampstead Garden Suburb

1930 "Slum Clearances"
Greenwood Act
obliging local councils to clear remaining slum housing, culminating in the clearance of vast inner-city slums and the building of roughly 700,000 new homes.

EXPANSIVE USE OF CPOs

Compulsory Purchase Orders used to acquire swathes of private housing for massive post-war slum clearance, road development schemes, and comprehensive urban redevelopments. Whole streets of perfectly sound Victorian and Edwardian terrace houses were forcibly bought by councils, but Whole streets of perfectly sound Victorian and Edwardian terrace houses were forcibly bought by councils.

1967 National Stock Condition Survey
launch of the first national stock condition survey, major leasehold reform legislation, and a rising social crisis that reshaped government policy

5.1 million ..Council Housing Stock..
29% ..Social Housing's Population..
51% ..Owner occupied..
352,540 Homes Completed..

10-year limitation period required to claim adverse possession over **unregistered land**

1.6 million ..Council Housing Stock..
17% ..Social Housing's Population..
6% ..Council Housing..
58% ..Owner occupied..

2017
English Housing Survey

DOT-COM BUBBLE BURST
GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS
EUROPEAN DEBT CRISIS

106,720 | 140,850 Homes Completed

1086
Doomsday book
Manuscript record of the Great Survey of much of England and parts of Wales historically.

It provided a comprehensive audit of land ownership, wealth, resources, and tax potential across England.

Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW)

The London County Council (LCC) Inner London (formed from parts of Middlesex, Kent, and Surrey)

Greater London Council (GLC) The entire Greater London administrative area, which spanned 33 local government districts

Greater London Authority (GLA)

Rochdale Pioneers
Founded the global cooperative movement. While their ultimate goal was to provide housing, they began by opening a store to supply basic goods to members.

Consisting of 27 men and 1 woman, they came together during the "Hungry Forties"--a period of severe economic depression, low wages, widespread unemployment, and high food prices. Each member saved up £1 (a total starting capital of £24 to £28) to open a small cooperative store at 31 Toad Lane, selling basic provisions like butter, sugar, flour, oatmeal, and candles at fair prices and true weights.

The Pioneers developed a revolutionary set of operating rules which became the global foundation for the modern cooperative movement:
Open and voluntary membership
Democratic control
Dividend on surplus
Cash-only trading (avoiding debt)
Selling pure, unadulterated goods
Promotion of education and mutual aid

1946
New Towns Act
Passed to combat inner-city overcrowding by establishing planned new towns including Stevenage, Harlow, and Cwmbran.

Middlesex Housing Association (MHA)
HOUNSLOW
West London activism and the Freeman Syndicate, helped form the Middlesex Housing Association (MHA) in 1969. The Freeman Syndicate members originally came together in the 1940s through the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and local folk clubs. Partnering initially with Hounslow Council, MHA took over empty properties and used volunteer labour to renovate them.

1966
BBC play Cathy Come Home
fundamentally transformed British television by proving that a single piece of fiction could shift national policy, ignite massive public debate, and launch a major social movement

LONDON & THE MIDLANDS

The First Women's Refuge
HOUNSLOW
The first UK women's refuge was founded in Chiswick. Run as a collective, it provided a safe communal space for women and children escaping domestic violence, transforming what was previously treated as a hidden "private" family matter into a public political one.

Caledonian Road & Islington Women's Houses activists
ISLINGTON
Feminist and socialist activists occupied a row of vacant council-owned houses that were boarded up and left vacant for long periods. They became informal women's centres with community hubs putting a sign outside offering free pregnancy testing, housing advice, and space to organize. Residents challenged unlawful evictions in court using self-represented "McKenzie Friend" strategies, and helped local women and families stuck on long council waiting lists. They coordinated communal childcare, playgroups, and food co-ops, and connected with nearby radical hubs such as the Squatters Advisory Service and Housmans Bookshop

The London Squatters Campaign
The London Squatters Campaign (LSC), originally launched its direct-action campaign in the East London borough of Redbridge to house homeless families. This forced Redbridge Council to sign a formal agreement licensing empty properties on a short-life basis to homeless families
REDBRIDGE
LEWISHAM
helped form The Lewisham Family Squatting Association. It became the very first group to secure an official, legal agreement with a local council to license empty properties for homeless families. Within months, they were managing over 80 council-owned properties.

1966
Shelter
LONDON
Established in response to a severe UK housing crisis and slums, that campaigns to end the housing emergency and provides advice, support, and legal services to people struggling with bad housing or homelessness
London (Notting Hill), Birmingham, Liverpool, and Glasgow

CAMDEN
Following the pressure campaigns modeled after the LSC, Camden Council adopted a system of licensed squatting in unused council properties. Famous mass squats and housing struggles also took place here, such as the famous occupations around Tolmers Square.

LAMBETH
by instituting a system of licensed short-life squatting. This laid the groundwork for massive, decades-long squatted communities and housing cooperatives across Brixton and Stockwell (such as Bonnington Square and Villa Road)

The Hackney Women's Squatting Community
HACKNEY
The movement began as a direct response to a lack of affordable housing, the absence of state-backed support or refuges for women, and the marginalization of lesbians within both the broader Women's Liberation Movement and the Gay Liberation Front.
They began squatting whole blocks of empty, council-owned houses in areas around Hackney. In the absence of institutional support, the squats functioned as vital grassroots spaces for sharing resources, organizing childcare, running health and pregnancy initiatives, and building social networks.

Solon Housing Co-operative
BETHNAL GREEN
started as a secondary housing co-operative and technical/development agency to support, fund, and set up primary resident housing co-operatives and community housing groups.
It was formed to give tenant groups, squatters, and local housing campaigns professional backing, architectural guidance, and administrative help to run their own mutual housing rather than relying on unaccountable private developers or rigid municipal bureaucracies

The Crossroads Women's Centre Squat
CAMDEN
The space in Euston was originally squatted by a radical bookshop and passed to the Wages for Housework Campaign, becoming London's oldest surviving women's centre

Operating in a diverse inner-city neighbourhood alongside many homeless Bangladeshi families who were also squatting, the centre it became a vital multicultural organizing hub. It housed intersectional feminist groups including Black Women for Wages for Housework, the English Collective of Prostitutes, and Wages Due Lesbians. The collective regularly organized direct action, such as occupying council buildings, to expose institutional racism in housing allocation and ensure local mothers secured safe, permanent council accommodation

The Brixton Squatted Communities
BRIXTON
Started primarily in response to a failed local redevelopment initiative known as the Brixton Plan, widespread housing blight, rising homelessness, and mass Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) that left council-owned properties empty and decaying for years

The 121 centre
Originally squatted prominent Black feminist and housing activists to fight post-war housing shortages, racism, and illegal evictions, laying the groundwork for community-led property occupation in Brixton

Served as one of Britain's longest-running and most influential squatted autonomous social centers until its eviction in 1999
It housed Brixton Squatters' Aid, an essential organization that offered advice, legal support, and practical resources to people squatting housing across South London. From 1981 onward, the anarchist collective turned the four-storey building into a base for major social movements--including the 1984–85 miners' strike support, the Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax, anti-fascist mobilization, and campaigns against the Criminal Justice Act.

1961
Land Compensation Act
compensation aimed to reflect open market value under a "no scheme world" principle, though critics and small business owners frequently argued that payouts failed to cover the true loss of community, local trade, or business goodwill.

Notting Hill Housing Co-operative
KENSINGTON
Started local residents to combat severe slum conditions, overcrowding, illegal evictions, and the exploitation of low-income tenants in West London. The trust was created to raise public funds, buy and renovate dilapidated buildings, and offer clean, affordable, fair-rent housing to people who had nowhere else to turn

Brixton Housing Co-operative
Local council housing stock that had fallen into disrepair

1977
Housing (Homeless Persons) Act
placed the first statutory duty on local authorities to help people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

1965
Rent Act
Slum land operators charged exorbitant rents for substandard, overcrowded, and unsanitary housing in Notting Hill, Paddington, and North Kensington. The public outcry over the abuses directly contributed to the passage of the act

St Agnes Place squat
LAMBETH
A self-organized community that completely rebuilt and maintained the derelict buildings. Comprised two rows of 22 Victorian terraced houses. At its peak, the community sheltered thousands of residents, artists, musicians, anti-capitalists, environmentalists, travelers, and around 100 Rastafarians

West Eleven Housing Co-operative
KENSINGTON
Founded to combat the severe physical deterioration of the 19th Century housing stock, it was created from a similar impulse to the Notting Hill Housing Trust (formed in the 1960s in response to Rachmanism) to provide quality, low-cost homes. It aimed to give residents a genuine sense of community and direct democratic control over their own living spaces and property management.

London Fields Housing Co-operative
HACKNEY
a group of like-minded individuals in the London Borough of Hackney formed an informal mutual aid and support network to secure housing
The co-op amended its housing policy to prioritize single women, which later led to recommendation by the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1984 to split into separate women-only/lesbian and mixed management groups.

Middlesex Housing Co-operative
Registered housing associations--including eligible housing co-operatives--could obtain Housing Association Grants to cover construction or the purchase and rehabilitation of existing housing. The system could cover virtually the whole approved development cost

First CLT in UK Stonesfield
Formed in response to rapidly rising land values, escalating house prices, and the risk of local people being priced out of their village. Their aims were to provide truly affordable housing so local people including those born or working in the village could afford to stay

Walterton & Elgin Community Homes (WECH)

2016 Doomsday Book
London Land Commission launched the initial public land map (often called a "Domesday Book" of public brownfield sites) to identify surplus land owned by public bodies, government departments, Transport for London (TfL), the NHS, and the Mayor of London
Updated on a quarterly basis

2019 Public Land Map

2000s
Community Land Trusts (CLTs)
Community land trusts arrived in London in mid 2000s. They are non-profit, community-based organization that owns and manages land in trust for the long-term benefit of a local area

2007 London Community Land Trust | 2016 St Clements | 2023 Citizens House

The Rural Urban Synthesis Society (RUSS)

Mutual Home Ownership Societies | 2020 Guaggy MHOS

5,000 - 7,000

TENANT MANAGEMENT CO-OPERATIVES
The 1964 Right to Manage legislation gave tenants statutory rights to take control of their housing management. Today, there are 230 tenant management cooperatives in the UK, managing about 87,000 homes--most owned by local authorities, with around 20 managed on behalf of housing associations.

NEW MODELS & LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

2001
PROPERTY GUARDIANSHIPS
The concept originated in the Netherlands during the 1980s and 1990s as a strategy known as antikraak (anti-squatting)

1,000

Grand Union Housing Co-operative
BETHNAL GREEN
The Triangle Squatters were a group of young people, musicians, artists, and students who occupied empty Victorian terrace houses in Bethnal Green. After eviction notices for a scrapped motorway scheme. They later bought 63 properties under freehold

The trust merged with the Genesis Housing Association to become Notting Hill Genesis

COUNCIL HOUSING & OWNERSHIP
Although postwar legislation gave co-partnership societies access to the same government support as council housing, most local authorities chose to build their own housing instead