



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dec Sir Andrew'.

Housebuilding is a central aim of this Government and a central concern for the public. It is therefore essential that the public and Parliament are given an accurate assessment of how Ministers are faring on this crucial measure.

The Government have the widely publicised target to build a million homes by the end of the Parliament. This is a flagship objective for the whole of Government, and for the Department of Communities and Local Government in particular.

The following are examples of this target:

- The Queen's Speech 2016 where Her Majesty said: "My Government will support aspiration and promote home ownership through its commitment to build a million new homes"¹
- The former Prime Minister, David Cameron told the House of Commons on 10 February 2016 that the Government had "a target to build a million homes during this Parliament"²
- The present Housing Minister Gavin Barwell MP was asked in the House of Commons on 18 July 2016 "Are the Government still committed to building a million homes in this Parliament?" he replied "The simple answer... is yes"³

You will note that each of these commitments is clear that the Government is committed to build a million homes.

However, in a report published today, the National Audit Office, commenting on "The Department [of Communities and Local Government]'s objective of delivering a million new homes by 2020" said: "The Department measures new homes as net additions: this is not solely newly-built homes, but also includes converted properties."⁴

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/queens-speech-2016>

² <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm160210/debtext/160210-0001.htm#160210109000129>

³ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2016-07-18/debates/16071818000015/SocialHousing>

⁴ <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Housing-in-England-overview.pdf>, p. 8.

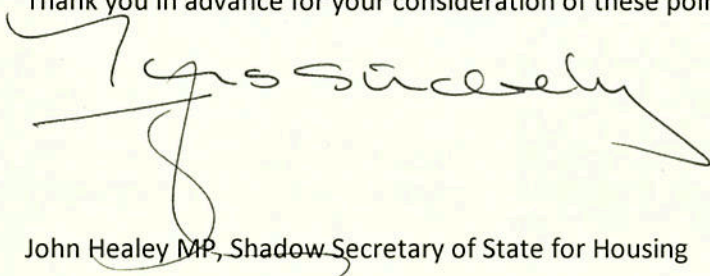
The NAO are clear in their assessment, which is also mine, that the 'net additions' measure of housing supply which is the Government's favoured measure for their million homes target, includes not only 'newly-built' homes, but also the additional category of homes 'converted', for example from offices to flats. This latter category is not properly described as new housebuilding.

It is nevertheless this 'net additions' statistic including conversions that the Government is using as a measure of their publicly-stated target to build a million homes. This seems to me illegitimate and a clear, repeated and deliberate misuse of statistics designed to mislead the public and Parliament.

Therefore I would seek your adjudication on this issues:

- is the Government entitled to use the 'net additions' measure of housing supply to support contentions about the number of homes it is 'building', and to measure its progress against such a target?
- would you agree that either (a) the Government's target is for housebuilding, in which case it should stop using the 'net additions' measure or (b) the Government's target is for housebuilding and conversions, in which case it should stop claiming that their target is a housebuilding target?

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these points. I look forward to your reply.



John Healey MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Housing

