

Detailed experimental methodology for Public Land for Housing Programme monitoring information

Establishing the site boundary and extracting planning application data

The monitoring information collected aims to ascertain the number of homes forecast, planned, under construction or built on central government land sold for housing. Ordnance Survey (OS), working with GeoPlace, was provided with the following information to help locate sites sold under both programmes:

- PLHP Programme number
- Site Name
- Address
- Site Postcode
- Local Authority
- Sold by (Department)
- Disposal Year (date)
- Forecast Housing Capacity at point of disposal
- Site boundary where provided by department

The planning portals of local authorities were queried to obtain further information about the sites. Where a relevant planning application was found, the former public sector site boundary within the planning documents were interpreted and digitized. From the planning applications, details were then extracted on attributes such as planning permission dates and housing capacity in the planning application. Amendments to full planning applications may not have been captured for every site.

Where government land only makes up part of a larger development, the planning information captured refers to the larger development in the majority of cases. However, only completions captured within the government land extent were captured.

Detailed site information is not provided where ambiguity existed around the exact extent of the public sector site boundary, for example where

- The complex nature of the way sites are parcelled up and sold off means there is potential for listed sites to overlap and be double counted, or

- Identification of all relevant planning application documents, historic mapping, and Land Registry records, for a given site proved difficult.¹

Monitoring progress on homes built

An innovative automated process was developed to monitor the progress of development within each site boundary. This process detects when building on each site began by using changes depicted in Ordnance Survey's Master Map of Great Britain (OS MasterMap Topography Layer). This gives an indication of which sites have started and when.

Work started on site and construction of homes

Using OS MasterMap Topography Layer, the first building created on the site after the planning permission was secured is identified. This could be a garage or commercial building (not necessarily a house) but provides a strong indication of substantial work beginning on the site. If such a building is found, then the start date is set to the date on which the building was added to the map. To monitor housing starts and completions, residential addresses within AddressBase² associated with the new buildings created on the site were counted. Information relating to these addresses were gathered together, including:

- when the address was originally added to AddressBase;
- the date its associated building was created in OS MasterMap Topography Layer;
- the date the address was matched against Royal Mail's Postcode Address File; and
- the date the address was matched against Valuation Office Council Tax records.

The resulting data was then analysed in order to create the dwelling counts for each site. Housing starts were counted when a residential address record is first observed within a site boundary in OS MasterMap Topography Layer. The date the building was added to the map is used as the start date for the home³. Any addresses without a completion date and younger than two years, or a completion date after 31 April 2018, are classed as incomplete and therefore amount to the number of homes started but not completed.

¹ Disposing departments and local authorities have been contacted on a site-by-site basis in instances where uncertainty as to correct site boundary or planning application exists. In many cases, but not all, this has led to a resolution.

² ADDRESSBASE® is the most comprehensive national geospatial address dataset collected by local authorities, compiled and enhanced by GeoPlace and published by Ordnance Survey.

³ Note that Homes England define a start as an excavation for strip or trench foundations or for pad footings; digging out and preparation of ground for raft foundations; vibroflotation, piling, boring for piles or pile driving; or drainage work specific to the scheme.

Given the unavoidable time lag between change in the real world and changes appearing on the map, OS aims to capture all change relating to new residential properties within six months of that change occurring.

Conversion/change of use method

Following the quality assurance process, a number of sites were found to be possible conversions/change of use rather than new built development. Sites that potentially had conversions/change of use development were verified by using the planning application description and then reprocessed for completions. This was done by analysing all residential addresses within the site regardless of the date the building footprint was captured. The date that the first full complete address appears in the AddressBase database, verified with a postal address and/or a VOA reference is taken as the start date on site. However, in some cases the start date and completion date is the same.

Completion of homes

Homes were considered to be complete if the address matched against either Royal Mail or Council Tax records. The earliest match date was used as the completion date for the home. If an address has no Royal Mail or Council Tax match, but both its building and its address were added to OS databases more than two years ago, then it was deemed to be complete and its completion date will be the latest date it was added to either database. In these instances, which apply to approximately 3% of all housing completions, because the address was capable of receiving mail in the opinion of the local authority, it remains sufficiently likely that the home is complete.⁴

A bespoke approach to counting completions is taken in the case of 'residential sales/ built residential development', which involve previously held public sector accommodation being sold off directly as private housing or where new residential development for military personnel is already built. This includes:

- New Service Family Accommodation (SFA), which is new housing built on Ministry of Defence land for service personnel and their families;
- New Single Living Accommodation (SLA), which is new housing built on Ministry of Defence land for single service personnel comprising accommodation with communal living space and shared facilities; and
- A home previously leased to the Ministry of Defence by Anningtons and sold back to the market.

On these sites completions have been counted in line with forecast housing capacity.

⁴ Note that Homes England uses a different methodology when counting completions. They obtain evidence from the local authority or from the relevant partner under the Single Land Programme every quarter.

Where the planned use of the site is identified as student accommodation and only the bedroom number is provided in the planning application, the number of completed bedrooms is captured unless addresses are grouped by unit rather than bedrooms. This figure is then divided by 4 based on 1 unit per 4 bedrooms in line with the technical handbook.

Sites are not included in the count towards completions totals where:

- It appears likely that government land formed only a proportion of a larger development, but the extent of the government land is unknown.⁵
- Complex relationships exist between the original site boundary sold by Government which cannot now be accurately determined and the planning applications that relate to that site. This may come to exist because of amalgamation of sites, phased approaches to development, or a mixture of the two.

Type and tenure of homes built

Each address has a unique identifier called a UPRN (Unique Property Reference Number). This is used as a link to Land Registry data, from which OS was able to find the tenure of the home. In addition, ADDRESSBASE® contains a classification for each address, which usually provides the detailed property type for a given address (e.g. a detached house, terraced house, etc.). The count of homes within each of these different tenures and property types was used to populate as far as possible the relevant attributes in the dataset.

⁵ The approach taken aims to only count homes built on public sector land itself, but it should be noted that public land released may have facilitated a wider development (for example sites released under the Programme may have undergone subsequent masterplan revisions after they were sold. Therefore, public sector land could have been used for a non residential use and new homes developed on adjacent land).