

Mark Griffin MSP
Scottish Parliament
(via email)

6 March 2025

Dear Mr Griffin,

Thank you for your letter regarding the claim made by the Minister for Public Finance on 12 November 2024 that “164,000 homes across Scotland have planning permission but are not yet built”.

As noted in your letter, the supporting data was subsequently published in response to your Parliamentary Questions¹, but this should not be used as a standard approach for releasing data. According to the principles of intelligent transparency², data should be available publicly at the same time that officials make statements based on it, with an explanation of context, sources, and limitations. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has raised this issue with the Scottish Government’s Chief Statistician, who has explained that he is currently raising the profile of intelligent transparency beyond the statistics profession within Scottish Government to ensure that these principles are embedded across Government. The OSR will be working closely with the Chief Statistician to support him in these efforts.

The data for this claim are based on Housing Land Audits data which is sourced from local authorities. We agree that the quality of this data remains unclear based on the limited information included in the response to your Parliamentary Question. Future uses of this claim should clearly indicate that this is a high-level estimate.

We understand that there is a long-term plan to improve the data and statistics on housing in Scotland. The OSR will continue to engage with the Scottish Government as this development work progresses, to ensure that the standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics are adhered to.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Robert Chote
Chair

¹ [Questions asked by Mark Griffin MSP, The Scottish Parliament website](#)

² [Regulatory guidance on intelligent transparency, Office for Statistics Regulation](#)