



# Homes England

Date: 13 September 2023

Our Ref: RFI4423

Tel: 0300 1234 500

Email: [infogov@homesengland.gov.uk](mailto:infogov@homesengland.gov.uk)

[REDACTED]  
By Email Only

Dear [REDACTED]

## **RE: Request for Information – RFI4423**

Thank you for your request for information which was processed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You requested the following information:

**Can you provide the figure for the total amount of grant Homes England has awarded in each of the last financial years since the First Homes policy was introduced?**

**In each of those years, can you provide the total number of homes that figure was expected to deliver, and how many have been started and completed?**

**At the same time, can you provide the comparative figure, in each of those years, for the average grant given for Social Rent, Shared Ownership and First Homes?**

## **Response**

We can confirm that we do hold some of the requested information. We will address each of your questions in turn.

**Can you provide the figure for the total amount of grant Homes England has awarded in each of the last financial years since the First Homes policy was introduced?**

**At the same time, can you provide the comparative figure, in each of those years, for the average grant given for Social Rent, Shared Ownership and First Homes?**





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We can confirm that we hold some of the requested information. First Homes was introduced in the 2021/2022 financial year. We do not hold information on the total grant that was awarded in 2021/2022 because this initial phase did not involve grant funding by Homes England.

We can confirm that we do hold information relating to the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 financial years. We also hold information relating to average grants given for other Home Ownership schemes. However, we rely on section 43(2) of the FOIA to withhold the information from disclosure.

## Section 43 - Commercial interests

Under section 43(2) Homes England is not obliged to disclose information that would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any party.

The information requested relating to grant funding amounts engages section 43(2) of the FOIA as it is commercial in nature and its release would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of Homes England and other interested parties to the information.

Homes England has identified that the information requested, if released, would be likely to prejudice the effective operation of the First Homes Scheme.

Section 43 is a qualified exemption. This means that once we have decided that the exemption is engaged, Homes England must carry out a public interest test to assess whether or not it is in the wider public interest for the information to be disclosed.

## Arguments in favour of disclosure:

- Homes England acknowledges there is a general public interest in promoting accountability, transparency, public understanding and involvement in how Homes England undertakes its work and how it spends public money.

## Arguments in favour of withholding:

- Releasing the information would be likely to negatively impact future funding processes and proposals to our funding schemes as potential partners may be deterred from applying to Homes England for grant funding if they felt information relating to their commercial and ongoing funding commitments would then be released to the public domain. This would be likely to result in a substantial impact on potential financial outcomes and delivery of the First Homes Scheme. Furthermore, this would impact the ability of Government officials to make effective, informed





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decisions regarding allocation of public funds. This would not be in the public interest as public funds could be allocated in a way that would distort regional need for development;

- If information regarding value that has been/will be derived were in the public domain there could be expectations from the public and potential future partners about the value of First Homes Scheme development sites and the value of potential works. This would mean that prices could be inflated and negotiating positions put at risk. This would not be in the public interest as it would be likely to result in poorer value for public money;
- The allocation of grant funding is subject to a robust assessment process that includes a detailed value for money review ensuring that we protect and allocate public funding efficiently and effectively. By disclosing this information would project an inaccurate indication on the cost to build homes. This would not be in the public interest as it would put development at risk, inflate prices and damage Homes England's reputation as a partner. This would negatively affect public money and nullify work already undertaken;
- Those wishing to put forward proposals to our funding schemes will be reluctant to do so at all, or drive reduced competition by bidding for the maximum grant possible. This will result in pressure being placed on the available budget and may result in the target number of homes to be delivered not being met. This would not be in the public interest as this could put potential homes in jeopardy and would undermine Homes England's position and ability to deliver against its objectives and targets in our Strategic Plan; and
- Homes England has been unable to identify a wider public interest in disclosing the information requested.

Having considered the arguments for and against disclosure of the information, we have concluded that at this time, the balance of the public interest favours non-disclosure.

The full text of the legislation can be found on the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/43>

**In each of those years, can you provide the total number of homes that figure was expected to deliver, and how many have been started and completed?**

We can inform you that we do hold some of the information that you have requested. However, we rely on section 21, exemption where information is available to the applicant elsewhere.





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The full text of the legislation can be found on the following link and we have quoted section 21 below for ease.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/21>

## Section 21 - Information accessible to applicant by other means.

(1) Information which is reasonably accessible to the applicant otherwise than under section 1 is exempt information.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)—

(a) information may be reasonably accessible to the applicant even though it is accessible only on payment, and

(b) information is to be taken to be reasonably accessible to the applicant if it is information which the public authority or any other person is obliged by or under any enactment to communicate (otherwise than by making the information available for inspection) to members of the public on request, whether free of charge or on payment.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1), information which is held by a public authority and does not fall within subsection (2)(b) is not to be regarded as reasonably accessible to the applicant merely because the information is available from the public authority itself on request, unless the information is made available in accordance with the authority's publication scheme and any payment required is specified in, or determined in accordance with, the scheme.

## Advice and Assistance

We have a duty to provide advice and assistance in accordance with Section 16 of the FOIA. We are able to advise that we do not hold information on the number of homes that have been 'started', only those that have been completed, at purchaser legal completion. Statistics for the number of homes that have been completed are available via the following link (page 14, 3.11)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1165527/Housing\\_statistics\\_June\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1165527/Housing_statistics_June_2023.pdf)





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## **Right to Appeal**

If you are not happy with the information that has been provided or the way in which your request has been handled, you may request an internal review. You can request an internal review by writing to Homes England via the details below, quoting the reference number at the top of this letter.

Email: [infogov@homesengland.gov.uk](mailto:infogov@homesengland.gov.uk)

Information Governance Team  
Homes England  
Windsor House  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
42-50 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0TL  
United Kingdom

Your request for review must be made in writing, explain why you wish to appeal, and be received within 40 working days of the date of this response. Failure to meet this criteria may lead to your request being refused.

Upon receipt, your request for review will be passed to an independent party not involved in your original request. We aim to issue a response within 20 working days.

You may also complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) however, the Information Commissioner does usually expect the internal review procedure to be exhausted in the first instance.

The Information Commissioner's details can be found via the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/>

Please note that the contents of your request and this response are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Homes England may be required to disclose your request and our response accordingly.

6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Windsor House  
42 - 50 Victoria Street, Westminster  
London, SW1H 0TL

0300 1234 500  
@HomesEngland  
[www.gov.uk/homes-england](http://www.gov.uk/homes-england)





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Yours sincerely,

**The Information Governance Team**  
For Homes England

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Windsor House  
42 - 50 Victoria Street, Westminster  
London, SW1H 0TL

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