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HOUSING TARGETS THREATENED BY MISSED PLANNING DEADLINE

Government aspirations to build 240,000 homes per year are at risk because over 90 per cent of local authorities are missing the deadline for submitting local plans for housing to central government.

According to the House Builders' Association, a division of the National Federation of Builders, the delay in submitting their 'Local Development Frameworks' (LDFs) will have a knock-on impact on the amount of land that is available for development.

Local Development Frameworks, made up of Core Strategies and other Development Plan Documents, are prepared by local authorities to detail the number of properties they want to see built.

Three hundred and fifty councils throughout the UK were expected to have submitted their LDFs to central government by the end of September 2007 - but according to Communities Minister Iain Wright, only 14 (less than four per cent) have been examined and approved.

Roger Humber, strategic policy adviser at the HBA said: "The disappointingly low number of plans that are coming out of local authorities means that land required to increase the level of house building will not be produced. The new planning system, only introduced in 2004, has predictably collapsed into chaos incredibly quickly."



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Roger also argues that the recently announced restructuring of regional planning responsibilities is likely to exacerbate the problem further.

“These changes,” he says, “expect regional planning responsibilities to be transferred from Regional Assemblies to Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). However this will not happen until 2010 and, meanwhile, the Regional Assemblies, with the sword of Damocles hanging over their heads, are expected to produce the huge increase in housing numbers that the Government demands”.

This will result in massive and damaging conflict between RDAs, the proposed regional planning bodies, and local authorities which will delay plan production and slow down housing output.

“There needs to be a huge catch-up in terms of housing delivery, but the signs do not look encouraging. In the long term, planning for higher housing numbers will be undertaken via Regional Development Agencies rather than Regional Assemblies, but with RDAs not being given full powers until 2010, it’s unclear how plans to increase house building will be produced.

“The whole system has virtually collapsed at a regional and local level. Ministers are in denial about the magnitude of the crisis. The evidence given by Yvette Cooper and her senior advisers to the Commons Select Committee recently confirmed this.

“Their 240,000 annual target will be unachievable unless major changes are made in the forthcoming Planning Bill to deal with the failure of forward planning for housing numbers



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and the delivery of new housing through the local authority development control system which is near to collapse,” added Roger.

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For further information, please contact David Shirt at Citypress on 0161 606 0252 / david.shirt@citypress.co.uk

