

Overview and Executive Summary

The Audit Commission's website homepage announces:

“The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.”

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Pages/default.aspx>

... while its Housing section's homepage states:

“We help local authorities, arm's length management organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations to improve their services through our audit, inspection and research functions. We work with the Tenant Services Authority to help improve the performance of all these housing providers”

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing/pages/default.aspx>

What follows in an independent audit of the Audit Commission's review of the Housing Market Renewal programme. This finds:

- **a catalogue of statements unsupported by evidence.**
- **a heavy reliance on 'evidences' in graphic form but with the underlying data withheld, thereby preventing checking, further working or comparison with other data.**
- **statements based on a highly selective use of evidence when the bulk of contextual and other evidences point in the opposite direction.**
- **contradictory evidences and statements which attract no investigation or explanation.**
- **the expression of prejudicial political sentiments supporting the very programme which is ostensibly being subjected to 'independent' review.**
- **an unambiguous political thrust which demonstrates that a key purpose of the document is to bid for the replacement of curtailed HMR funding with other public subsidy streams, relying on the argument that the prematurely-axed HMRs' legacy needs to be secured – even though the report spectacularly fails to demonstrate with any clarity that the HMR has any positive legacy to leave.**
- **an anonymous authorship which, given the evident policy and political bias in the Report, leaves the reader wondering whether the contributor(s) might be seeking to disguise a history of allegiance to HMR.**

What follows is a 'line by line' audit of the Audit Commission's own work.

The Critique opens up an alternative narrative to what was happening in 'collapsed housing markets' in the two decades of the 1990s and 2000s. I suspect this will have a much closer 'fit' to the views and experiences of pathfinder residents over those two decades than do the simplistic, one-dimensional analyses and prescriptions which have flowed from the HMRs cheerleaders and beneficiaries over the last 12 years, and which remain unchanged despite the seismic shifts that have occurred in inner city housing markets over the same period.