



## **Response to DCLG and Mayor of London 'Consultation on upward extensions in London' from the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA)**

**April 2016**

### **Background**

1. National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA) is the UK's leading professional body for estate agency personnel, being part of a group representing more than 16,000 members who practice across all aspects of property services both in the UK and overseas. These include residential and commercial sales and lettings, property management, business transfer, auctioneering and land. The NAEA is a sister organisation to the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA).
2. NAEA is dedicated to the goal of professionalism within all aspects of property, estate agency and land. Its aim is to reassure the general public that by appointing an NAEA member to represent them they will receive in return the highest level of integrity and service for all property matters. Both NAEA and ARLA members are bound by a vigorously enforced Code of Practice and adhere to professional Rules of Conduct. Failure to do so can result in heavy financial penalties and possible expulsion from the Associations.

### **Questions**

#### **Delivering upward extensions**

##### **Q1. Would greater freedom to build upwards on existing premises be a viable option to increase housing supply while protecting London's open spaces? Why do you think so?**

3. Yes. NAEA believes that the best way to increase housing supply is to encourage the building of every type of home. Therefore we think building upwards on existing premises is a viable option to increase housing supply while protecting open spaces, which are at a premium in London.

#### **Options to support upward extensions**

##### **Question 2: Do you agree with the proposal for a London permitted development right with prior approval, allowing the addition of new housing units where the extension is no higher than the height of an adjoining roofline, and no more than two storeys, to support delivery of additional homes in the capital?**



4. Yes, NAEA agrees with the proposal for a London permitted development right with prior approval, allowing the addition of new housing units where the extension is no higher than the height of an adjoining roofline, and no more than two storeys, to support delivery of additional homes in the capital.
5. However, NAEA also wants to see a balance struck between house building and local amenities in order to create communities for people to live in. According to the Office for National Statistics unemployment rates by region (November 2015 to January 2016) showed that London after the North East had the highest unemployment rate in the UK.
6. As a result we think the Government and Mayor of London should consider allowing permitted development rights with prior approval only after premises previously used as offices or shops have been left empty for a certain period of time. Alternatively, the permitted development right with prior approval should also be provided to allow change of use from residential to commercial in order to provide local authorities with the ability to decide upon a good balance of employment opportunities as well as places for people to live within their borough.

**Question 3: Do you agree that the proposed options for neighbour consultation provide adequate opportunity for comment on development proposals for upward extensions?**

7. Yes, NAEA agrees that the proposed options for neighbour consultation provide adequate opportunity for comment on development proposals for upward extensions. We continue to believe that local residents must be informed as early as possible in the planning process. They must be told through street letters and have the opportunity to provide comments to a consultation or attend a public event which outlines the plans.

**Question 4: What other measures could a London permitted development right contain to encourage applications for upward extensions to come forward? For example, would allowing additional physical works to provide for access, or partial or full demolition and re-build up to the height of an adjoining roofline, incentivise building up? If so, would this raise additional considerations which should be taken into account?**

8. The Government and Mayor of London should take into consideration the difficulties which may be faced when local authorities and communities want to keep new upward extensions (or demolishing property and building from the ground) in the style



of existing surroundings. For instance, we know from a town hall roundtable debate which NAEA held in Cambridge that lack of labour and materials, such as using the right type of brick which is popular with buyers and imported from China, costs time and money and is holding up house building in the area.

### **Local development orders for additional storeys in specific areas**

#### **Question 5: Do you agree that local development orders would be an effective means to promote upward extensions and contribute to the delivery of additional homes for London?**

9. Yes. NAEA agrees with the flexibility that a local development order could bring such as being borough-wide or for certain areas, streets or buildings. Where property is empty in a borough, developers could be given discounts on upward extensions when they also redevelop an existing empty property. If the Government's agenda is to get more homeowners, by definition estate agents can facilitate this but they need more stock of all different types of property to do this.

#### **Question 6: What measures should a local development order contain to encourage proposals for upward extensions to come forward?**

10. NAEA thinks that offsite construction of additional storeys where feasible could incentivise and encourage developers as well as communities to come forward and acknowledge applications for upward extensions. This could help mitigate the effects of traffic levels, local roads and businesses would be less affected.

#### **Question 7: We would welcome the views of London boroughs on whether they consider they would introduce local development orders for upward extensions, and what might encourage them to do so?**

11. It is not applicable for NAEA to answer this question.

#### **Question 8: Do you agree that proposals for a new London Plan policy supporting upward extensions would provide certainty and incentivise the development of additional housing in appropriate locations?**

12. Yes we agree that proposals for a new London Plan policy supporting upward extensions would provide certainty and incentivise the development of additional housing in appropriate locations.
13. Furthermore we know from the Housing 2025 Report that in London in 2013/14 four out of every five new homes had either one or two bedrooms, which reflect the



specific demographic profile of the capital and the unique demand pressures that exist. Therefore upward extensions on existing properties would fit this profile and provide the type of homes that people need and want to buy in London.

**Question 9: What are your preferred option/s to support upward extensions to increase housing supply in London?**

14. The NAEA are not experts on planning, but London Development Orders seem to offer the greatest amount of flexibility to local authorities to fit upward extensions around their local characteristics and safeguard their unique needs. We do, however, believe that in London transport improvement and housing should be closely integrated to help regenerate boroughs.

**Question 10: Do you agree that premises in residential, office, retail and other high street uses would be suitable for upward extension to provide additional homes? Why do you think so?**

15. Yes. However, the NAEA believes that any proposals for upward extensions must take into account the fact that brownfield land for housing must work alongside the consideration of these sites being used for employment opportunities, particularly in areas of high unemployment.

**Question 11: Do you agree with the locations that should be excluded from a permitted development right listed in paragraph 3.3 above, and are there other areas where proposed upward extensions would be best managed through a planning application? Why do you think so?**

16. Yes we agree with the locations that should be excluded from a permitted development right as listed in paragraph 3.3 of the consultation document.

**Question 12: Do you agree with our proposed approach to protect conservation areas and protected views?**

17. Yes, we agree with the proposed approach to protect conservation areas and protected views. NAEA believes it's imperative that any new upward extensions enhance the structure of buildings and add value rather than diminish the saleability of existing property.



**Question 13: Do you agree with our proposals that the property being extended upwards should share a wall with a higher property, or form part of a continuous terrace of premises being extended that shares a wall with a higher property? Why do you think so?**

18. Yes we agree with the proposals that the property being extended upwards should share a wall with a higher property, or form part of a continuous terrace of premises being extended that shares a wall with a higher property.
19. These proposals seem sensible and below a height threshold to gain public acceptance. However, we do think that a key challenge for the Government and Mayor of London is to convince communities that tall buildings are an inevitable part of London's future. This is because, as reported in our March/April 2016 edition of Property Professional magazine to members, London's traditionally low-rise skyline is undergoing a transformation and being replaced with luxury skyscrapers. This includes around 263 tall buildings of more than 20 storeys that are proposed, approved or under construction in Greater London.

**Question 14: Do you agree that for a permitted development right or London Plan policy a limit of two additional storeys is appropriate to manage the impact of upward development in any area?**

20. Yes, because it is also important for existing residents that roof-top gardens, views or access including safety access are taken into consideration during the design of these new units. However, we were alarmed to read in the report 'Building better places' from February 2016 by the House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment that within London only around 20% of major planning applications underwent a design review.

**Question 15: Do you agree that a prior approval should consider the method and hours of construction?**

21. Yes, NAEA agrees that a prior approval should consider the method and hours of construction.

**Question 16: Have you any views on the likely costs and benefits of these proposals to deliver additional homes in the capital?**

22. We do not have any views on the likely costs of these proposals to deliver additional homes in the capital. However, we think that an added benefit could include the requirement for all new upward extensions rooftops to be partially covered in either



plants or solar panels. NAEA also thinks that the use of underground spacing for such things as parking should be taken into consideration when demolishing existing property and rebuilding upwards.

**Question 17: Have you any views on the implications of the approaches to housing supply outlined above for people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010? What evidence do you have on this matter?**

23. According to the Housing 2025 Report, in England the number of over-65s is projected to increase by 20-25% in all regions by mid-2022, compared to general population growth of just 7.2% overall. Therefore this shifting demographic profile means that elderly people living in London may not purchase an upward extension property if they need assistance getting to different floors.

**Question 18: Are there any other points that you wish to make in response to this consultation, including other key components we have not considered that would be beneficial in taking the proposals forward, or any examples of upward extensions providing additional housing?**

24. The NAEA acknowledges the commitment made by the Government and Mayor of London to deliver more homes and make best use of existing buildings. However, we would like to see further regeneration of empty properties to increase housing stock throughout the capital. We know that there are 200,000 long-term empty homes in England and 20,795 in London. Some of these could be developed under these proposals, but otherwise they should not be left to remain empty.