



NEW
IDEAS
FOR
HOUSING

NLA INSIGHT STUDY



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Foreword.

October 2015

The facts are stark: in 2015 London's population passed its previous peak of 8.6 million people and continues to grow. The population is likely to be around 10 million by 2030, adding nearly 70,000 people and 34,000 jobs every year.

The current net delivery of new build homes in London of all tenures stands at about 20-25,000 homes per year, a number that has not changed significantly in the last 15 years. This figure is made up of new build homes as well as homes created through the conversion of houses to flats. At least 40,000 new homes per year over the next 20 years are needed to house the new population, and a further 9,000 a year are needed to 'catch up' with current latent demand.

So the delivery of new homes has to at least double from its current rate in London. How are we to do that?

The private housing sector is at maximum capacity, there is a shortage of skilled labour, a shortage of some materials, and it is not to housebuilders' benefit to radically shift the imbalance between supply and demand. Smaller housebuilders were decimated in the last recession thus making it more difficult to address the sort of smaller and more difficult sites that abound in the capital.

It is clear that there is no silver bullet that will increase the level of house building and make up for years of under investment. That is why the NLA sought new ideas from architects, contractors, manufacturers, economists and housebuilders. We wanted to look at a multitude of ways that we could implement to chip away at the big numbers that are needed.

We were not disappointed. This study illustrates a wide range of ideas and approaches to the delivery of new homes – some that can be delivered within the current regulatory system, others need a shift in policies in planning and funding. The ideas, in the main, occupy areas of delivery not covered by the major housebuilders and, taken together, can go a long way to making up the shortfall of the current system.

Peter Murray

Chairman, New London Architecture

Housing supply has become the most critical issue facing London. For decades, the number of homes built has simply not kept pace with population growth. In some ways the city has become a victim of its own success and for many Londoners, housing availability is rightly their biggest concern.

At City Hall we are pioneering new ideas such as Housing Zones, which use focused planning and flexible funding to create high quality places, fast track homes and build much-needed infrastructure. The Mayor is on track to deliver a record 100,000 low cost homes for low income Londoners by 2016, with over 94,000 already completed, and we have released 99 per cent of City Hall's land for development, including major regeneration schemes at Greenwich and Barking.

Yet we know that more needs to be done to achieve the level of housing building required – at least 49,000 homes a year, around double the current rate. Such is the scale of the challenge that no single solution can provide this increase and nor can any single organisation deliver this change. The Mayor, London boroughs, government, private and public sector developers, construction companies and architects must work together to find new ways to drive delivery of new homes. More than that – we need creative new solutions that will improve the speed, scale and quality of housing supply.

That's why I have been delighted to join the NLA in our quest to bring fresh thinking to building the homes that Londoners need. We asked for innovative and ambitious ideas, and we were certainly not disappointed. The range and sheer number of well-considered and imaginative entries was truly impressive. Some ideas were eye-catchingly radical – such as a floating neighbourhood transforming sites on the Thames. Others were simple yet brilliant – such as redefining the index of public transport accessibility (PTAL). Without a doubt, the entries showcase some exciting ways to challenge the traditional approach to housebuilding and we look forward to pursuing the ideas set out by winning entries in discussions here at City Hall.

Richard Blakeway
Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property

Multiplying London: Space and Time

Urbem | Elemental | Ratti | Triptyque

To increase the supply of market and affordable housing, we propose a regulatory policy and an urban design blueprint that would (i) intensify the use of developed land, (ii) establish a market incentive system aimed at aligning interests of different stakeholders (landowners, developers, investors, civil society), and (iii) increase funding for social and intermediate housing.

We suggest the adoption of a *city-wide storey(s) addition policy*, aimed at identifying new vertical opportunities – ‘onfill’ as opposed to infill developments. Property owners would enjoy immediate increased value and higher equity position. And the public administration would collect more taxes and be empowered to create a specific fund for new affordable homes and/or to establish a Housing Voucher Programme (HOVOP) that would provide rental assistance and home ownership option to low-income individuals or families.

One idea in three levels of complexity

Level 1 – Simple densification

The first design variant is the large-scale duplication in height of two-storey buildings, and the addition of one floor to three-storey buildings. Through our new regulatory planning model, owners of existing properties will be allowed to sell their corresponding aerial rights to developers.

Revenues generated by the new construction rights would be shared between landowners (and potentially tenants), in order to give them an incentive, as well as to minimise Nimbyism conflicts within the community that can arise during construction and as a result of denser occupation. Council and stamp duty land taxes, capital gains taxes, business rates and Section 106 Community

Infrastructure Levy originated from the new areas would be allocated to the HOVOP, to finance the construction and acquisition of social housing and to fund part of the necessary additional hard and soft infrastructure.

Level 2 – The ambitious next step

Building on Level 1, we also ambitiously suggest: multiply London, not just housing. Take the most desired typology in the world, a lot of it with a small front and a backyard, and multiply it as many times as possible in height. If such a parcel is built several times into the air, then the forces that shape the city will automatically take care of housing, within the suggested policy parameters. A public elevator in front of the lots, maintained by the city (as the streets are), would allow each property to be entered through a front yard. But since the elevator is public, the rooftop is also public property. This would consequently increase the area of London’s public green spaces.

In a typical 0.5 hectare block with 20 lots of 300 sqm each, we pile 14 lots vertically on two parallel blocks’ sides, obtaining 28 new aerial lots that would add to the existing 12 ground lots in the central strip of the block. Thus, a 160 inhab/ha block would turn into a 320 inhab/ha block.

Level 3 – From CO₂ to CO₃ (co-living, co-working, co-making)

With these new structures in place, the urban landscape would be in a much better position to host a functional mix, in space and time. In a denser and hyper-mixed London, distances will be shorter and spaces (including dwellings) more flexible and diverse.



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