

Policy H9 Ensuring the best use of stock

- A Boroughs should promote efficient use of existing housing stock to reduce the number of vacant and under-occupied dwellings.
- B The Mayor will support boroughs with identified issues of new homes being left empty, sometimes known as 'buy to leave' properties, to put in place mechanisms which seek to ensure new homes are occupied.
- C Boroughs should take account of the impact on housing stock and local housing need when considering applications for a change of use from housing to short stay holiday rental accommodation to be used for more than 90 days a year.
- D Boroughs should take account of the role of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in meeting local and strategic housing needs. Where they are of a reasonable standard they should generally be protected.

- 4.9.1 Given the pressure for housing and competition for land in London for a variety of uses, it is important to ensure that new homes meet an identified need and are not left vacant long-term (over six months). While the number of **long-term vacant properties** in London has decreased significantly, and is now below one per cent of the housing stock,⁶⁴ to make best use of existing stock, where vacant properties are identified, local authorities should investigate why the units are vacant and where possible seek to bring them back into use. Boroughs should levy the council tax empty homes premium to incentivise occupation of vacant properties. Boroughs are encouraged to use all the tools at their disposal such as Empty Dwelling Management Orders to bring long-term vacant stock back into use as affordable housing. Boroughs should also ensure a range of new homes are provided that meet the needs of those who wish to downsize, and that tenants in affordable homes are supported to downsize where they wish to do so.
- 4.9.2 A recent phenomenon in some parts of London has seen a proportion of new homes being purchased by investors who rely solely on capital appreciation for their returns. New homes purchased for this purpose are sometimes known as '**buy to leave**'. Although GLA evidence suggests this practice is not particularly

⁶⁴ Table 615 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

widespread, where it does happen it reduces the amount of new housing stock being occupied by households in need. Where the practice is widespread in a new building it can also negatively affect the provision of services to tenants.

- 4.9.3 It is unlawful for homes in greater London to be used **as short-term holiday rented accommodation** for a cumulative period of more than 90 days a year without seeking planning permission.⁶⁵ The use of dwellings as short-term holiday rentals can have a detrimental impact on neighbours' residential amenity and community cohesion in the wider area where concentrated in a particular location. The use also reduces the supply of homes available for people to live in.
- 4.9.4 **Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)** are an important part of London's housing offer, reducing pressure on other elements of the housing stock. Their quality can, however, give rise to concern. Where they are of a reasonable standard they should generally be protected and the net effects of any loss should be reflected in Annual Monitoring Reports. In considering proposals which might constrain this provision, including Article 4 Directions affecting changes between Use Classes C3 and C4, boroughs should take into account the strategic as well as local importance of HMOs.

Policy H10 Housing size mix

- A Schemes should generally consist of a range of unit sizes. To determine the appropriate mix of unit sizes in relation to the number of bedrooms for a scheme, applicants and decision-makers should have regard to:
- 1) robust local evidence of need where available or, where this is not available, the range of housing need and demand identified by the 2017 London Strategic Housing Market Assessment
 - 2) the requirement to deliver mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods
 - 3) the need to deliver a range of unit types at different price points across London
 - 4) the mix of uses in the scheme
 - 5) the range of tenures in the scheme

⁶⁵ Pursuant to the Deregulation Act 2015 (sections 44 and 45: Short-term use of London accommodation: relaxation of restrictions and power to relax restrictions.): http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/20/pdfs/ukpga_20150020_en.pdf