

Even London influentials fear rise in house prices

Poll shows backing for radical new measures

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NEW evidence of the scale of London's housing crisis emerged today. Prices are now so high that a survey of influential Londoners has found that more than half could not afford to buy their current home if they were looking for a property now.

The findings are in an Evening Standard poll of 790 leading figures in a range of sectors, including business, education, health, politics and media. Asked if they could afford to buy their current home now, 51 per cent said "no" and 44 per cent "yes". Five per cent didn't know. The poll was conducted as the Standard prepared to host a major debate on how to solve the property crisis. It will be held tomorrow at the Royal Society of Arts. Speakers include housing minister Yvette Cooper, the Mayor's policy director



Speaker: housing minister Yvette Cooper will be at tomorrow's Standard debate

for housing Neale Coleman and architect Sir Terry Farrell.

Many of those polled backed Ken Livingstone's plans to ensure half of new homes are "affordable" to people on low incomes. They were neutral about proposals for more residential tower blocks. But there was overwhelming support for Tory plans to exempt first-time buyers from stamp duty — a move Chancellor Alistair Darling failed to adopt in last week's spending review.

At present, buyers pay a levy equal to one per cent of the purchase price up to £50,000, three per cent up to £500,000, and four per cent on higher sums. Only seven per cent of respondents believed the system should remain unchanged. According to Nationwide building society, the average price of a London home is £302,486. First-time buyers pay an average tax bill of £8,000 when they purchase a property. Thirty per cent of respondents to the survey wanted house prices to stabilise at current levels, 29 per cent wanted a less rapid rise — currently around 18 per cent annually — and 23 per cent wanted prices to fall. Other key findings include:

- 61 per cent in favour of councils building new homes themselves rather than relying on housing associations.
- 52 per cent support for building on green belt land in occasional circumstances to help meet demand.
- 58 per cent agreeing public money should be used to help key workers get on the property ladder.

How long have you lived in your current home?
Less than a year 8
Between one and five years 26
Between six and 10 years 22
Between 11 and 20 years 24
Over 20 years 19
Don't know 0

Could you afford to buy it now?

Yes 44
No 51
Don't know 5

In the next year would you like to see house in prices in London...

Continue to rise at present rates 10
Rise less rapidly (about 15 per cent a year) 37
Stabilise at current levels 23
Fall 23
Don't know 1

Do you agree or disagree that the rise of cash-rich foreign property buyers has distorted the London property market?

Agree strongly 35
Agree somewhat 49
Disagree somewhat 9
Disagree strongly 1
Don't know 5

Would you like to see any restrictions on foreign ownership of property?

Yes, I would 25
No, I wouldn't 64
Don't know 10

Thinking about the building of high-rise residential developments, which of the following do you most agree with?

They should not be allowed at all 13
They should be restricted to central areas which already have high rises 37
They should be restricted to the most built-up areas, including town centres in outer boroughs 33
They should not be restricted to particular areas 13
Don't know 4

Stamp duty is levied at one per cent on property up to £250,000, three per cent (£250,000 to £500,000) and four per cent (over £500,000). Which of these statements do you most agree with?

It should be kept as it is 7
It should be changed to make first-time buyers exempt 50
It should be changed from a purchase to a sales tax 15
None of these 25
Don't know 3

Tenants of council or housing association properties have the right to buy their homes, but local authorities face a shortage of social housing. Do you think this right should remain, or should tenants be banned from buying council and housing association homes?

The right to buy should be retained 61
The right to buy should be ended 34
Don't know 5

● 61 per cent support for retaining council tenants' right to buy.

Increasing the supply of affordable homes is one of the Mayor's key pledges. The survey found 45 per cent of respondents backed his policy that half of all developments should be affordable. Nine per cent wanted the propor-



Hard search: more than half of respondents supported the Mayor's policy that at least 50 per cent of new developments should be affordable housing

Do you think tenants living in social housing should be made to leave their home if their income rises above a certain amount?

Yes, they should be made to move out 40
No, they should not 50
Don't know 10

Would you support or oppose more social housing being built by councils rather than through housing associations?

Strongly support 31
Slightly support 30
Slightly oppose 18
Strongly oppose 12
Don't know 9

Ken Livingstone has a policy that 50 per cent of all new developments are allocated as affordable housing. Developers claim this is too high. What proportion do you think developers should be made to allocate as affordable housing?

It should be increased to more than 50 per cent 9
It should be kept at 50 per cent 45
It should be reduced to around 25 per cent 26
It should be relaxed entirely to allow some developments without affordable housing 16
Don't know 3

Would you support or oppose the Government subsidising first-time

sets out plans to deliver 50,000 affordable homes in London in the next three years."

Ms Cooper said: "We badly need more affordable homes. That's why we are investing more than £1 billion a year to back the Mayor's plans. That includes more help for key workers and first-

buyers to allow them to get on to the housing ladder?
Strongly support 20
Slightly support 34
Slightly oppose 22
Strongly oppose 22
Don't know 3

Would you support or oppose the Government subsidising public sector workers to allow them to get on to the housing ladder?

Strongly support 23
Slightly support 35
Slightly oppose 19
Strongly oppose 20
Don't know 3

Given the limitations on space available, do you think housing development in London should concentrate more upon providing large numbers of apartments (one or two bedrooms) or smaller numbers of family homes (three or more bedrooms)?

Large numbers of apartments 44
Smaller numbers of family homes 33
Don't know 23

Thinking about the type of land used for housing development, such as brownfield land (previously used for development, such as derelict industrial land), greenfield land (that has not been built upon previously, such as farmland) and green belt land (undeveloped greenfield land around cities that presently has tight restrictions upon development), which of the following do you MOST agree with?

Housing should be restricted to brownfield sites only 34
Housing should be built on brownfield land as much as possible, but some development of greenfield land is necessary to meet demand 52
There is insufficient brownfield land to meet housing needs and a greater proportion of greenfield land should be used for housing than at present 5
Demand for housing is such that it is necessary to build on both brownfield and greenfield land and we should also consider building on the green belt 7
Don't know 16

THE EVENING STANDARD INFLUENTIALS DEBATE
WHO CAN SOLVE LONDON'S HOUSING CRISIS?
The debate will be tomorrow at the Royal Society of Arts, WC2

time buyers. We also want to work with boroughs so they can promote shared ownership and social homes."

● The poll was conducted in association with the Architecture Foundation and YouGovStone.

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