

Press release regarding the UPRN letter. Embargoed until 9:30am on the 12th January.

Leading residential property bodies have today (12th January 2021) published an open letter to Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and copied to Thalia Baldwin, Director of the Geospatial Commission highlighting the potential benefits from a widely adopted Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) and steps that Government needs to take to make this happen. The signatories of the letter, which includes leading bodies from across the residential property sector, believe that the wide market adoption of the UPRN will deliver substantial benefits to UK society, the residential property sector and to Government.

Andrew Bulmer, CEO of IRPM comments: “The UPRN is like attaching a number plate to a car, instead we attach a unique number (up to 12-digits) to all things related to properties (fittings, fixtures, paperwork, surveys etc), so that each property can be uniquely identified with unparalleled accuracy.

If all the conditions outlined in the letter were to be met, we could proactively work towards the wholesale adoption of the UPRN. Implemented effectively, this could help position the UK as the world’s leading property market”.

Dan Hughes, Founder of Alpha Property Insight and the Real Estate Data Foundation noted that; “The property sector is at the heart of the economy, people’s wellbeing and our impact on the environment. There are huge opportunities for technology to help with improving every aspect of this, but to do so requires the effective use of data. The wide adoption of the UPRN would be a big step towards providing the foundations to enable this.”

Theresa Wallace, Founder of The Lettings Industry Council (TLIC), notes that “widespread adoption of UPRN’s could revolutionise the property market, this is a really exciting initiative which has industry support and we now need the Government to add theirs.”

The letter details the benefits of widespread market adoption of the UPRN to society, the economy and property sector. These include:

- Improved building, consumer and market safety
- More targeted and cost-effective enforcement of legislation
- Increased protection for tenants and a reduction of rogue landlords
- The ability to speed up conveyancing and transparency in home buying and selling
- The opportunity to reduce waste, save time and empower the consumer

However, the letter also calls for steps by Government and for certain conditions to be met to really enable these benefits:

- All public sector data sets relating to properties and buildings should include the UPRN and a clear roadmap is needed to get to this point
- All future Government tenders and policy relating to residential properties and associated data should mandate the use of the UPRN
- There must be clear agreement about the ethical use of data in the housing market
- The UPRN must be in a clear and useable format that allows the UPRN to be widely identified, and freely used and shared

- This must include the tools, the support materials and the explanation needed by the whole sector for adoption, not just the solution providers

Following the profound findings in the RoPA report, that outlines the phenomenal need for compliance within the property agents' sector, Lord Best states that "the UPRN is an excellent concept and could be a game-changer."

The impact of the universal adoption of the UPRN can be immense, The National Trading Standards Estate and Letting Agents Team (NTSELAT) explain that, "the widespread use of a Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) has the potential to deliver many benefits across the residential property market. Importantly, a UPRN can offer tenants a greater level of protection against rogue landlords and help to reduce consumer fraud when buying or renting a home. The NTS Estate and Letting Agency Team supports the work of The Letting Industry Council in driving the adoption of the UPRN across the property sector".