

Q5. Do you have any other comments on topics not covered by the specific questions above? If so, the CMA requests that respondents structure their responses to separate out their views in relation to each of the Draft Guidance's chapters.

I have now had a chance to talk to a number of agents and we are very concerned about the proposal that agencies should reveal the full contact details of property owners when properties are advertised by them.

If this was to be actioned, it would mean enabling guests to contact owners directly. The majority of owners let their properties through agencies in order to avoid having to communicate directly with guests, preferring to let agents do this.

Some owners require agencies to vet guests to ensure they are suitable before letting them, this avoids problems with group bookings particularly for hen and stag weekends. Giving guests direct access to owners removes this safety feature agencies offer them.

For some owners there are concerns over security if guests can contact them if they are unhappy with their stay, letting a property through an agency means the agency deals with any disputes, as a mediator.

Publishing owner email addresses will increase the risk of spam emails to owners as well as being a risk of scammers impersonating owners to scam guests by offering properties to let fraudulently.

If the address of a property has to be visible on the website, this will inevitably mean anyone can see where a property is and when it is empty by looking at the availability calendar. This significantly increases the risk of break-ins, theft and possible vandalism by competitors and others. Many owners will be unwilling to let properties through agencies where this disclosure is a requirement.

Advertising contact details for property owners means any guests can contact owners directly to arrange stays without using an agency. Agencies invest a significant amount of money in advertising and office systems which would not be repaid if guests approach owners directly.

There is a significant amount of money invested in finding and recruiting new owners, advertising owner contact details will allow new start-up agencies not to mention existing ones to contact owners in an attempt to recruit them.