

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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The Rt Hon Esther McVey MP
Minister of State for Housing
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
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9 September 2019

Dear Esther,

Combustible materials on existing residential and other high-risk buildings

Many congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister of State for Housing. The Committee is very grateful to your predecessor for his regular correspondence and appearances before us and we look forward to building a similarly productive relationship with you over the coming months.

As you will be aware, this Committee has undertaken a substantial amount of work scrutinising the Government's proposals to reform the building regulations and remediate buildings with dangerous cladding. It is an issue we have returned to frequently over the last two years and we published our most recent report in July, when we criticised the Government for the slow pace of change since the Grenfell Tower fire. We look forward to receiving the Government's response to our report.

Our view has long been that the Government's combustible cladding ban should have applied not only to new high-rise buildings, but also to existing buildings over 18 metres, as well as those currently under construction. As I have said on several occasions, it cannot be right that materials deemed too dangerous for new buildings should continue to be permitted for existing residences and other high-risk buildings.

In this context, during your predecessor's appearance before the Committee on 22 July, my colleagues and I raised concerns around potentially dangerous materials remaining on such buildings. The Minister agreed to provide a list of those products that would not be allowed on new buildings but that the Government is content to see remain on existing buildings.

However, following the evidence session, the then-Housing Minister wrote to the Committee to explain that it would not be possible to provide a definitive list, instead referencing a list of materials which have successfully passed the BR135 / BS8414 fire safety tests.

The Committee is disappointed that the Ministry has been unable to provide the information we have requested. We believe that transparency is important and residents have a right to know if their buildings incorporate materials that the Government deems to be too dangerous for new developments. I would be grateful if your officials could reconsider our request for this information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts', written in a cursive style.

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee