

[INSERT YOUR ADDRESS IF SENDING A LETTER TO YOUR MP]

Dear [insert name of your MP eg. Mr Keir Starmer]

RE: Government's proposed ban restricts our ability to tackle the Climate Emergency

I [work with / support] Architects Climate Action Network (ACAN)¹, a group of architects and associated professionals working to address the Climate Emergency.

The UK Government is currently running a public consultation on 'the ban on the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of buildings.'² The proposals would affect every new residential building in the country with a floor level above 11m (approximately 4 storeys).

The Issue

I am strongly in favour of a ban on combustible cladding materials including those that contributed to the shocking scale of the Grenfell tragedy. Combustible cladding systems that greatly increase the risk of fire spreading across a building's exterior are quite rightly being banned as a response.

However, whilst I welcome new measures to increase the safety of new buildings, the nature of the proposed ban is unnecessarily prohibiting the use of safe structural timber. I am writing to you for your assistance in ensuring that low carbon timber construction is not caught up in an otherwise justified ban on unsafe combustible cladding materials.

Safe Structural Timber & The Climate Emergency

The use of timber construction has undergone a renaissance in recent years as innovations led by UK designers have greatly increased its safety and speed of construction. In the form of Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) it is a fast construction method that can help urgently address the housing crisis. In addition, it is now widely recognised that timber construction has a vital role to play in the UK's response to the Climate Emergency.

Existing buildings and new construction accounts for nearly 40% of our national carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Addressing this, a report launched in November 2019 by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Timber Industries (APPG)³, highlights the key role timber industries can play in helping the Government meet its targets for house building whilst working to achieve the legally binding commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Without using safe structural timber we cannot meet these targets and we will fail to address the construction industry's contribution to climate change.

Whilst other countries are passing legislation to promote the use of timber in construction, in the UK we now face a ban on its use in residential buildings over 3 storeys.

Your Support

ACAN has been working closely with the Timber Trade Federation⁴ in developing a robust technical response to this consultation, building on evidence which includes reports from the Government's own Committee on Climate Change⁵. ACAN are asking for the following concerns to be addressed;

1. **Focus the ban on combustible cladding** as distinct from external walls. This will help provide the clarity needed for designers and specifiers to build better and safer.
2. **Take a science-based approach.** Use BS8414 as the base for fire safety compliance, which was found to still be fit for purpose in the Hackitt Review.
3. **Align legislation with the Scottish approach.** This will encourage a common regulatory approach throughout the UK improving clarity and safety.
4. **Efforts in decarbonising the construction industry should not be impeded unnecessarily.** The ban hampers innovative progress by UK designers in meeting the targets set out by the Committee on Climate Change.
5. **The government should recognise the significant contribution made by UK designers in fire-safe timber architecture,** and new regulations should support developing these further.

As my MP, I ask for your support in the following ways

- To write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy requesting that they review the technical consultation paper with due consideration to the UK's climate commitments.
- Due to the current exceptional circumstances linked to Covid-19, there is concern that many potential stakeholders in this consultation would not have been able to give the due attention that this consultation deserves. I ask that you call on the government to delay this exercise by at least three months.
- To use your voice to raise parliamentary questions to highlight this issue, it could have a great impact to the furthering of this debate.

Please do not hesitate to contact ACAN if you wish to support this cause or have any further questions. You can find further information using the links included below.

Thank you for your time and support.

Yours,

[YOUR NAME]

[Architect (if applicable)]

ACAN contact: mail@architectscan.org

Footnotes

1: The Architects Climate Action Network response to the consultation:

<https://www.architectscan.org/safe-timber>

2: The Government Consultation on the Combustibles Ban:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/859300/Combustible_Ban_ConDoc.pdf

3: The All Party Parliamentary Group for the Timber Industries Report:

<https://ttf.co.uk/how-the-timber-industries-can-help-solve-the-housing-crisis/>

4: The CCC Report 'Wood in Construction in the UK'

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/wood-in-construction-in-the-uk-an-analysis-of-carbon-abatement-potential-biocomposites-centre/>

The Timber Trade Federation's Response to the Consultation:

<https://ttf.co.uk/combustibles-legislation/>