



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

Apsana Begum MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

**Lord Greenhalgh**

*Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and  
Communities*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local  
Government**

Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 3672

Email: [stephen.greenhalgh@communities.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.greenhalgh@communities.gov.uk)

[www.gov.uk/mhclg](http://www.gov.uk/mhclg)

Our Ref: 11273356

Your ref: AB5144

26 May 2021

Dear Aspana,

Thank you for your letter of 10 May to the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP regarding the recent fire at New Providence Wharf. I am responding as the Building Safety Minister.

Firstly, I want to say that my thoughts are with all those affected by the fire at New Providence Wharf, those who were injured, especially the two residents who were hospitalised, and those who are still not able to return to their homes.

The fire at New Providence Wharf was a powerful reminder of the importance of fire safety in high-rise residential buildings. The London Fire Brigade are now leading an investigation into the fire. This will help us to understand the origin and behaviour of the fire as well as the response and the ability to evacuate safely. Once the conclusions of this investigation are finalised, we will work to ensure that appropriate lessons are learned for the future.

The Secretary of State visited New Providence Wharf on the day of the fire and spoke to Ballymore at the most senior levels on the following day. He made it clear that we expected that residents would be fully supported for as long as is required. He also pressed Ballymore to ensure that leaseholders are protected from any costs of remedying fire safety works not funded by Government.

The Secretary of State also underlined to Ballymore that the full remediation works must begin as planned on 10 May, which I understand has now happened. He expressed deep disappointment at the delays caused thus far by Ballymore, given that the Government has already made £8 million available to them to fund the remediation of unsafe cladding.

I must clarify that works could have started prior to receiving a decision regarding their application for funding. The Government was aware that Ballymore had sufficient resources to start works in advance of receiving funding and has been pushing them to start through months of engagement. Additionally, the Department publicly named Ballymore for missing the start on site deadline and I held two meetings with Ballymore's senior leadership to hold them to account for lack of progress. While the Government has made unprecedented interventions, committing £5 billion to protect leaseholders from remediation costs, it has always been clear that ultimate responsibility for the safety of buildings rests with individual building owners.

The fund's application process has been designed to enable projects to proceed at pace with building owners, freeholders or others responsible for the building urged to progress applications alongside the development of the remediation project. We continue to engage with building

owners, including providing expert consultancy support, to ensure that their buildings are remediated swiftly and safely. We also offer pre-tender support to applicants where funds are a barrier to them assembling a project team and progressing their application at pace.

I would like to assure you that the Government is taking a number of steps to ensure that all remediation works are started and completed as soon as feasibly possible, in addition to committing £5 billion in funding to protect leaseholders and remove cost as a barrier to pace. The Department has engaged expert construction and project management consultants, who are using their industry experience to increase pace of projects significantly. Additionally, the Department has held responsible entities for buildings where slow pace has caused them to miss deadlines to account by publicly naming them. There has also been significant collaborative work with Local Authorities and Fire and Rescue Services to take legal enforcement action on problem buildings where required.

As a result of the Department's work, homes are being made safer – 95% of high rise residential buildings identified at the start of last year with unsafe 'Grenfell-style' ACM cladding have been made safer or have remedial work underway. Despite the backdrop of a global pandemic, 159 buildings started work last year compared to 90 in 2019 – representing more buildings on site with remediation work in 2020 than at any point previously.

You have raised concerns that the Building Safety Fund will not cover the costs of remediating all fire safety defects within buildings. The Government's funding support is focused on cladding on high-rise buildings because longstanding independent safety advice has been clear that unsafe cladding poses the greatest risk to buildings, as it can act as a fuel to a fire. The costs for remediating this are high, and the risks posed by it are also high, with funding removing the biggest obstacle to remediation proceeding.

However, Government funding will also meet the costs of any works which are integral to the safe removal and replacement of an unsafe cladding system. This can include associated costs such as fire cavity barriers where they are integral to the cladding replacement.

You have questioned whether the Government would consider barring planning applications from developers until they have made sufficient progress on fixing fire safety defects on blocks they have already built. While I understand this request, the planning system purposely entitles anyone to apply for permission to develop any plot of land, irrespective of ownership. Unless otherwise specified, planning permission runs with the land and is not awarded to individuals.

Planning permission is needed if work being carried out meets the definition of "development" as set out in section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Generally, the installation of cladding will be development that requires planning permission. However, some categories of work do not amount to development; for example, there may be circumstances where the external appearance of the building is not materially altered where planning permission is not required, depending on the scale of the operation, but this is a matter for each local planning authority to determine in the first instance. If permission is required for recladding we would encourage the authority to work proactively with the applicant to determine any application at the earliest possible opportunity.

I note the points you have raised regarding the experiences of residents affected by the fire. As I have already mentioned, the London Fire Brigade are now leading an investigation into the fire, and we will continue to support them where we can. Once the conclusions of this investigation are finalised, we will work to ensure that appropriate lessons are learned for the future. Under the Fire Safety Order, it is the responsibility of the Responsible Person to ensure the safety of the occupants of a building from fire, and in addition assess the risk and identify suitable mitigating measures where they are needed. The National Fire Chiefs Council published and updated Simultaneous Evacuation guidance to help the Responsible Person adapt their building's fire

strategy once it is established that interim measures are needed. I know the London Fire Brigade were aware of the position at New Providence Wharf. In addition, the National Fire Chiefs Council has led work to ensure that the interim measures and evacuation planning at all buildings with unsafe ACM remain robust pending remediation.

I remain committed to ensuring the permanent safety of tower block residents. Thank you again for your letter, and for the ongoing support you are providing to the residents and leaseholders of New Providence Wharf.

Yours sincerely,

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

**LORD GREENHALGH**