

MAYOR OF LONDON

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and
Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Date: 19 SEP 2019

Dear Robert,

Thank you for making time to speak to me and the Commissioner of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) to discuss fire safety in residential buildings, on the same day as the serious fire in Worcester Park.

I know it is a priority for you as Secretary of State to finally get the Government on top of resolving the building fire safety issues the country faces. I welcome the additional funding you have secured from the Treasury and your consultation proposals, which include mandatory sprinkler provision in a greater range of buildings. You have my support in bringing about meaningful reform to make buildings safer and I will be responding to the consultation to offer London's help and experience to make the system fit for purpose.

However, this process will take time and residents seek reassurance about the safety of their homes now. This must be our urgent priority. As we discussed, there are significant concerns about the types of cladding used, the way it has been fitted and failures in compartmentalisation. All serious, ongoing concerns that were brought into sharp focus by the fires at Worcester Park and Barking Riverside. This week the LFB once again bravely responded to two major fires in residential blocks in East London. Thankfully, there have been no injuries reported and I know you will join me in thanking the LFB for their work in tackling the blaze.

The frequency of such major incidents is deeply concerning: we appear to be facing systemic issues in building construction practice. It is critical that the Government show strong leadership and act immediately to reassure residents living in potentially dangerous blocks. This should include new legislation in the forthcoming Queen's Speech, where it is required. I urge you to:

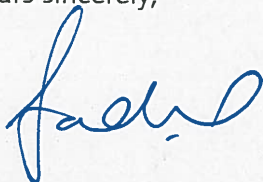
- Give the new Protection Board stronger powers to encourage or, if necessary, compel those with responsibility for buildings to get on with remediation of dangerous cladding or compartmentalisation failures and to identify and support the data collection on priority risk buildings straight away. The Board will need to prioritise, be flexible and have the authority to act where new risks are identified and to share this crucial data to local agencies and decision makers.

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- Ensure the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) leads on a 'heat map' of fire safety risk and undertake further desk research to identify blocks that are similar in design to those that have proved dangerous in previous incidents. Joint work should also be undertaken between the Greater London Authority and MHCLG to ask developers and councils to conduct their own testing in a pro-active way to speed up the fire-risk assessment process.
- Extend the Government's focus to buildings below 18 metres. As the recent fires I have highlighted above show, there are risks in all types of buildings that cannot be ignored.

The tragedy at Grenfell Tower occurred well over two years ago. I remain seriously concerned that the previous pace of Government response, action and understanding has not been sufficient and has risked another such tragedy occurring. My office and the LFB stand ready to help inform and support your urgent response to the issue of building fire safety and we welcome the opportunity to work with you to get this right for the people we serve.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

Cc: Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP, Minister for London
Sir Edward Lister, Chief of Staff, 10 Downing Street