



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

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Dear Steven,

Thank you for your letter of 10 March to the Prime Minister about environmental requirements for new buildings. Your letter has been passed to my department and I am replying as this matter falls within my ministerial responsibilities.

I am pleased that Burgess Hill Town Council supports the measures this Government has taken to assist the Ukrainian people. I also agree that it is vital we reduce our oil and gas consumption, so we can achieve our target of net zero emissions by 2050 and reduce our dependency on other countries for gas and oil.

The Government recognises the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has to make in meeting these ambitions. By improving energy efficiency and moving to cleaner sources of heat, we can reduce carbon emissions and keep energy costs for consumers down now and in the future. The challenges involved in improving the energy efficiency of our buildings and reducing carbon emissions are substantial. However, new build is an area where we can and must maintain momentum.

In December 2021 we introduced an uplift to Part L (conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations that delivers a meaningful reduction in carbon emissions. Once the uplift comes into force, new homes will be expected to produce around 30% less CO₂ emissions compared to the previous standards. They will have very high fabric standards and where appropriate they are very likely to have solar panels fitted. This uplift will deliver high-quality homes that are in line with our broader housing commitments and encourage homes that are future proofed for the longer-term.

However, we recognise that energy efficiency standards for new homes must be increased even further if we are to meet our net zero goal. From 2025, the Future Homes Standard will ensure that new homes produce at least 75% lower CO₂ emissions compared to those built to current standards. This represents a considerable improvement in the energy efficiency standards for new homes.

Homes built under the Future Homes Standard will be future proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. They will be 'zero carbon ready', which means that in the longer term, no further retrofit work for energy efficiency will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon homes as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

The Building Regulations will continue to set a performance-based standard rather than mandating or banning the use of any technologies. However, to make sure that new homes are zero carbon

ready we plan to set the performance standard of the Future Homes Standard at a level which means that very few new homes will be built with fossil fuel heating.

The future is likely to see a mix of low carbon technologies used for heating and it is unlikely that there will be a one-size-fits all solution, so multiple technologies will play a role. That said, we anticipate that heat pumps will play a very important role in meeting our heating needs under the Future Homes Standard.

You are right to also draw attention to the importance of reducing embodied carbon. This is a challenge across the built environment, not just in buildings, and there is existing work that will reduce our embodied carbon emissions. The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, for example, have set out how large sectors of the economy will decarbonise, and the England Trees Action Plan looks to increase production of timber, which can be used to replace higher carbon materials in construction when safe to do so.

As these policies take effect and industries that supply construction decarbonise, the embodied carbon emissions of buildings will fall in turn. This alone, however, will not be enough. Our choice of materials, and the way we design and construct buildings will also need to consider the impact on embodied carbon.

The Net Zero Strategy sets out Government's ambitions to help the construction sector improve their reporting on embodied carbon in buildings and confirms we are exploring the potential of a maximum embodied carbon level for new buildings in the future. This will help ensure that carbon is properly accounted for, encouraging the industry to use low carbon materials and to produce efficient, low-carbon designs.

I trust this information is helpful and I thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours ever,



EDDIE HUGHES MP