

# The Chartered Institute of Building

submission to the

## Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)

on the consultation on the

## Review of the ban on the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of buildings

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# Review of the ban on the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of buildings

## Introduction

The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) is at the heart of a management career in construction. We are the world's largest and most influential professional body for construction management and leadership. We have a Royal Charter to promote the science and practice of building and construction for the benefit of society, which we have been doing since 1834.

Our members work worldwide in the development, conservation and improvement of the built environment, both in the private and public sectors. We accredit university degrees, educational courses and training. Our professional and vocational qualifications are a mark of the highest levels of competence and professionalism, providing assurance to clients and authorities who procure built assets.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation and are happy to be involved in the debate as it develops.

## Background

The CIOB has welcomed Dame Judith Hackitt's [\*Building a Safer Future: Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety\*](#) and is supportive of the 53 recommendations to establish a new regulatory framework and achieve a culture change to create and maintain safe buildings.

We are pleased the Government confirmed its support and set out a detailed implementation plan, published in December 2018, which sets out the action Government will take to fundamentally reform the building safety system in the future.

The CIOB have been active in driving this reform, participating in the Industry Safety Steering Group (ISSG), the Competency Steering Group (CSG) and the Procurement Advisory Group (PAG).

Separately, the CIOB established a [Construction Quality Commission](#) formed in response to the Independent Inquiry into the Construction of Edinburgh Schools and several other high-profile failures in the industry. Some of the work to-date includes:

- The launch of a course in Construction Quality Management by the CIOB Academy in September 2018.
- The publication of a new Code of Quality Management in July 2019.
- The introduction of a Quality MOOC by the CIOB Academy.
- The pilot of a new Building Safety Certification Scheme, which will be launched in Autumn 2020.

In addition to this work, the CIOB has collaborated with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) to launch the 'Building in Quality' initiative. This is a free-to-download digital tool to improve the quality of outcomes in the construction industry. We have also maintained a shared view on the mandatory installation of sprinklers in all new and converted residential buildings, hotels, hospitals, student accommodation, schools and care home buildings of 11m in height or

above. See: [www.ciob.org/media-centre/news/riba-rics-and-ciob-call-government-revise-sprinkler-requirements](http://www.ciob.org/media-centre/news/riba-rics-and-ciob-call-government-revise-sprinkler-requirements)

Our response to this consultation can be seen below. Given the technical nature of the consultation, we have only responded to those questions that we can provide advice and guidance on. The consultation has been informed by several CIOB members with a background in fire safety, building regulations and quality management. The same group also responded to the Building a Safer Future: Proposals for reform of the building safety regulatory system which can be accessed here: <https://policy.ciob.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CIOB-response-to-the-BSF-Proposals-for-reform-of-the-building-safety-regulator.pdf>

## Full Response

### Question 3.

- a. **Do you agree that hotels, hostels and boarding houses should be included in the definition of relevant buildings in Regulation 7(4)?**
- b. **Should any other building types be included within the scope of the ban?**

Yes, the CIOB is supportive of including in scope, any building where the occupants sleep and are unlikely to be familiar with the building layout and provisions for means of escape. For example, back in November 2019, a serious fire took place at the Cube, a six-storey student accommodation building which housed students at Bolton University. Although the fire only resulted in minor injuries, we advise that there seems very little difference in building types with any sleeping accommodation.

Buildings with unfamiliar layouts require a longer time to evacuate safely in the event of a fire. Therefore, we recommend that all residential buildings due to their associated sleeping risk are included.

### Question 4.

- a. **Do you agree that the height threshold of the ban should be reduced to at least 11m and above?**

Yes, there seems to be consensus between professional body and trade groups that the height threshold of the ban should be reduced to at least 11m. Additionally, these standards should be harmonised and must be consistent with the devolved administrations to avoid complexity and interpretation.

- b. **Is there another lower height threshold that should be considered? Please provide evidence.**

Building Regulations are in place to ensure the safety of those in and around buildings. Therefore, the Government may wish to consider the escape level/ground floor cladding around the means of escape routes to a place of safety, particularly for sleeping accommodation, Public Assembly buildings or those buildings with high occupancy of people with limitations such as intoxication or not being familiar with their surroundings.

Trigger heights should not be the only criteria for making the decision of the height threshold. For example, a cladding fire at the refurbished Shepherd's Bush Underground Station took place in ground floor level cladding that affected the means of the escape via final exit doors

and the route to a place of safety. The investigation revealed a cigarette was placed into the panelised cladding system by a member of the public at ground level. This discarded cigarette subsequently caught the internal insulation alight, whilst it was a small but significant fire, it was difficult to deal with due to the watertight nature of the secure cladding.

Additionally, due consideration should be given to higher risk residential buildings, such as care homes, which may also require lower height thresholds.

**c. Do you agree that an appropriate research project regarding building risk should be carried out to inform further review of the scope of the ban?**

Yes, the CIOB would be fully supportive of greater research into building risk, however, this must not cause delay to the scope of the ban being widened.

**d. Please suggest the type of evidence you consider should be included in further review of the height threshold of the ban.**

- Areas such as the reconciliation of 'fitness of purpose' of modern construction techniques and materials.
- Development of suitable testing regimes relevant to 'as built' applications. For example, for large cladding applications or laminated glass guarding protection to balconies.
- Analysis of evacuation methods and techniques of different types of buildings.
- Studies of human behaviours during evacuation, across different age groups and building types.

**e. Please provide any evidence you believe should be considered in further review of the height threshold of the ban.**

- The fire at the six-storey Samuel Garside House, Barking - June 2019.
- The fire at the twenty-two-storey Markland House, Notting Hill – August 2019.
- The fire at the ten-storey Markham Tower, Norwich – September 2011.
- The fire at the four-storey Worcester Park, south-west London - September 2019.
- The cladding fire at Shepherd's Bush Underground Station – Circa 2010.
- Post Grenfell there seems many international examples in the Middle East, Australasia and Asia, of evidence where building materials and fabric specification are different to those in England.

**Question 9.**

**a. Do you agree that laminated glass in balcony construction should continue to have to achieve A2-s1, d0 classification or A1?**

We believe, in the first instance, that guarding of balconies to ensure the safety of occupants is possible using other design forms using fire safe and secure guarding materials, compliant in regard to Building Regulation 7 of materials being fit for purpose.

Notwithstanding, there are many different combinations or number of glass ply's and interlayers. Furthermore, there are significant differences of glass and interlayer types, panel sizes and thicknesses of laminated glass and performance specifications that can be deployed to provide safety guarding on a balcony.

Some of these specifications can contain limited quantities of interlayer material. 0.76mm up to 1.52mm are more common thickness rather than the 3mm interlayer mentioned in the consultation.

Additionally, there are many ways in which laminated glass can be mounted to continue to provide encapsulation protection provided by the glass, thereby creating conditions similar to those of window glazing and frames.

- b. Please provide evidence to support your answer where possible and discuss specific materials or products.**

UKAS and European accredited test houses have undertaken some sponsored testing of various multiple glass ply and interlayer comprising differing laminated glass performance specifications which are used for both guarding and façade construction.

**Question 12.**

- a. Do you agree with the proposed expansion of classifications required for materials used horizontally to include Class A2fl-s1 and Class A1fl?**

Yes, although in terms of Building Regulation 7: Materials and workmanship, it makes sense to test materials in the orientation like situations of use to determine materials are “fit for purpose” in that application.

**Question 14.**

- b. Are you aware of any particular equalities impacts for these proposals? How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any ways we could better advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not? Please provide evidence to support your response.**

We hold concerns that in all types of buildings where there may be vulnerable people sleeping and different guidance could confuse issues between buildings under/over the 11m threshold.