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Dear Richard,

Accelerating the assessment and remediation of buildings

We are writing to you collectively to express our shared concerns in relation to building safety guidance and the lack of progress in determining a clear and proportionate approach to remediation.

Without greater support from Government to achieve discernible progress in this area, our separate proposals, our existing commitments, and the multitude of remediation programmes risk taking much longer than necessary and disrupting the lives of leaseholders for longer. This would be unfair for residents and directly counter the commitments that we have all made, along with Government, to address building safety issues as swiftly as possible.

Collectively we agree that leaseholders should not bear the costs of building safety remediation and that those involved in the design, development and construction of buildings should all play a part, along with the manufacturers and providers of products and materials which have created many of these issues and successive governments which oversaw the regulatory failure.

Whilst the detail of who should pay and how much are undoubtedly important and dominate headlines they cannot be fully resolved until the standard, which will determine the cost and number of buildings in scope, is clear. We remain some way away from establishing or defining what represents a proportionate approach to building safety.

Two months on from the Secretary of State's announcement to 'restore common sense to the assessment of building safety', PAS9980 principles have not yet been adopted by surveyors and mortgage lenders meaning that building owners and leaseholders are still reliant on EWS1 forms as the primary means of ascribing a building safety status. We now understand that the EWS1 assessment will likely supersede the 'common sense' approach put forward through the BSI's PAS9980. Our members share the Levelling Up Select Committee's concerns that the result of this dual assessment criteria to be more confusion and delay for leaseholders and others involved.

Even with new legislation and additional commitments from UK home builders and product manufacturers, without embedding a more proportionate approach and aligning it with the mortgageability and insurability of buildings, it is possible that after even more time and considerable expenditure from all parties, including Government, we will see little practical benefit for leaseholders.

We share the frustrations of ministers that other actors in the market have not yet adopted new guidance following the withdrawal of the Department's Consolidated Advice Note (CAN). Although well-intentioned, the CAN created well-documented logjams in the housing market. This situation demonstrates the importance of ensuring that Government guidance and advice on this matter is clear and proportionate. Failures can have long-term consequences for homeowners and the market.

Establishing a sensible approach to building safety assessments is vital if we are to work our way through these problems and make all buildings safe for residents and leaseholders. Even working together, we cannot make this happen without the intervention and leadership of Government. All parties to this letter reiterate our desire to work at pace with Government and other actors to turn positive intentions into practical action for leaseholders. As ever, we remain committed to working through these challenges and would be happy to make colleagues with technical expertise available to discuss these issue with real-life examples at your convenience. This would most sensibly also include social landlords and RICS.

Best wishes.

Stewart Baseley, Home Builders Federation

Ian Fletcher, British Property Federation

Stephen Teagle, The Housing Forum



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