



## Environmental Audit Committee

Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP  
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP  
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

*Sent by e-mail only*

29<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Dear Secretaries of State –

### **Sustainability of the built environment**

The response of the previous administration to the Committee's First Report of this Session, *Building to net zero: costing carbon in construction*, was received in late July while the House was adjourned. The Committee considered the response at its meeting on 7th September and agreed to publish it as a special report. The Committee also agreed that I should write to you both with some observations on the response, and that this letter should be published to accompany it.

The Committee is grateful to the Government for the careful consideration given to the report and its conclusions and recommendations, and for the generally constructive approach taken in the response.

Members noted with approval the intention to consult in 2023 on the measurement and reduction of embodied carbon in the built environment. Given the widespread support which the Committee identified across the sector for the use of whole-life carbon assessment to reduce embodied carbon, we imagine that this will be one of the measures on which views will be sought via the consultation and the associated stakeholder feedback. The reductions required can best be achieved through progressively more ambitious carbon targets for the built environment that are consistent with climate commitments and carbon budgets.

We look forward to receiving more details of the consultation in due course, together with a proposed timeline for completion of the consultation and implementation of the outcome, and details of the research and analysis carried out to evaluate the impact of potential interventions.



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The Committee was surprised to learn of the lack of data on the take-up and effect of the permitted development right (PDR) relating to demolition and residential rebuild in place since August 2020, and was concerned to note that the Government had no plans to evaluate the effect of the change in PDR on incentives to retrofit, rather than replace, existing properties. It is encouraging that the review of the National Planning Policy Framework will ensure that this supports climate change mitigation and adaptation measures as fully as possible. The Committee would be grateful for an assurance that the review will consider explicitly the current incentives to retrofit properties, with a view to ensuring that retrofit delivers energy-efficient low-carbon homes.

The Committee remains of the view that the failure to accelerate full introduction of the Future Homes Standard to 2023 represents a missed opportunity. The acceleration of the work on a full technical specification for the Standard is nevertheless welcome. We trust that the Government will act wherever possible to encourage earlier voluntary adoption of the standard by housebuilders, supported by the new specification. Greater energy efficiency in newly-built properties will alleviate cost of living pressures and contribute to achieving the twin policy goals of energy and climate security.

I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee.

Yours sincerely,

**Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP**  
**Chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee**