



## Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

**Baroness Swinburne**

*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

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Our reference: MC2024/04852

Fiona Howie  
Chief Executive, Town and Country Planning  
Association

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25 March 2024

Dear Ms Howie,

Thank you for your email of 21 February to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP regarding planning and energy efficiency standards. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I appreciate you taking the time to write to me on this matter on behalf of the many organisations you represent. I understand that you were concerned by the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) published on 13 December, particularly surrounding local authority standards for energy efficiency measures. I hope the following information will clarify the Government's position on this matter.

I want to clarify that local plan-makers retain the ability to set energy efficiency standards at the local level that go further than the Building Regulations. The Planning and Energy Act 2008 permits plan-makers to do this, provided they do so in a manner that is consistent with national policy. This ability is not revoked by the new WMS.

However, the WMS does set out that, if local plan-makers wish to set standards that go further than the Building Regulations, this must be done in a way that is coherent and easily understandable for housebuilders. Hence, it states that any additional requirement must be expressed as percentage uplift of a dwelling's Target Emissions Rate. The Target Emissions Rate is a recognised metric which has been used to demonstrate compliance with Part L (conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations for several years.

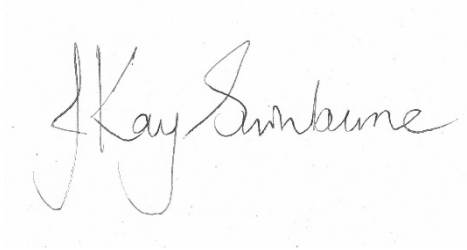
Discrepancy in energy efficiency standards across the country can make it challenging for volume housebuilders to maintain cost-effective development and supply chains, as they are forced to adapt design in different areas. The WMS therefore also sets out that development must remain viable – that is, local standards should not prevent housing development from coming forward and therefore reduce housing supply. It is important to strike a balance between making progress on improving the efficiency and performance of homes whilst still ensuring that housing is built in sufficient numbers to support those who wish to own or rent their own home.

The upcoming Future Homes Standard will deliver the new homes needed for a net zero future. From 2025, homes built to the Future Homes Standard will be future-proofed with low-carbon heating and very high fabric standards. They will be 'zero-carbon ready', meaning that no further work will be needed for them to become zero-carbon in use as the electricity grid is decarbonised.

We are currently consulting on changes to Part 6, Part L and Part F (ventilation) of the Building

Regulations for dwellings and non-domestic buildings and seeking evidence on previous changes to Part O (overheating). We would value your response prior to the consultations closure on 27 March: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-homes-and-buildings-standards-2023-consultation>.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kay Swinburne', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

**BARONESS SWINBURNE**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State