

**Philip Glanville**  
**Mayor of Hackney**  
London Borough of Hackney  
Hackney Town Hall  
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Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing  
and Communities  
2 Marsham Street  
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Dear Mr Gove,

### **Consultation on new fire safety measures**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation on sprinklers in care homes, removal of national classes, and staircases in residential buildings. We have responded in detail to the formal consultation, but I also wanted to provide a wider overview of our response.

In Hackney, we've led by example in responding to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower. We've invested in fire safety in our own buildings without passing on the cost to individual flat owners, worked with other building owners in the borough to address fire safety issues, and made the case for changes in national legislation to drive up safety standards.

When it comes to investing in the safety of our own stock we have done this with minimal Government funding and our work to hold private developers to account has also been effectively unfunded. We have made the choice to do this work, but it comes against a backdrop of stretched Council resources.



However, we broadly support your proposed measures, which can provide real benefits in helping ensure the safety of residents in care homes and new taller buildings.

While requirements around second staircases are long overdue, however, we would strongly encourage you to go further than your proposal and follow the recommendation from the National Fire Chiefs Council that all buildings above 18m, rather than 30m, should incorporate a second staircase. This should apply to all new residential buildings which are at an early stage of design and have not yet secured planning approval.

We would also like to flag that, regardless of the outcome of this consultation, new homes being built today and in the future will benefit from a whole raft of recent safety requirements.

In an urban borough like Hackney, which is expected to see major high-density development in the years ahead, higher standards would give more residents the reassurance of an alternative evacuation route and better access for emergency services in the event of a fire.

Finally, while we support all efforts to improve fire safety standards, it is also imperative that this does not come at the expense of addressing the critical housing crisis in Hackney, across London and nationwide. Hackney is at the forefront of delivering new homes, prioritising genuinely affordable social housing for those that need it most.

However, as with all developers, we are also seeing first hand the impact of the rapid increase in construction costs. Alongside much-welcomed but costly requirements around sustainability and fire safety, this is having a clear impact on the viability of new development, and subsequently on the pace and scale of new housing delivery - especially new homes for social rent.

While fire safety is rightly a priority, I urge you to ensure this does not come at the detriment of tackling the acute housing shortage by providing the necessary funding and support for genuinely affordable new homes that the sector and the country desperately needs.

On funding, I noticed that yesterday's budget did hint at possible changes around housing finance and the relationship to the PWLB; but would urge a more holistic look at the interaction between regulation, social rents, borrowing capacity and our ability as Councils to respond to the housing crisis and deliver the higher standard of maintenance we all want to see, alongside our fire safety, retrofit and new development ambitions.

As a Council we would be interested to discuss these challenges with you, your ministers or officials.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip Glanville". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'P' and 'G'.

**Philip Glanville**  
Mayor of Hackney