



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth
Minister for Faith

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 3672

E-Mail: lord.bourne@communities.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/mhclg

To all Members of the House of Lords

11 April 2018

Dear Colleague,

Consultation on proposed changes to existing guidance on assessments in lieu of a fire test (desktop studies)

In response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government asked Dame Judith Hackitt to undertake an Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety with a particular focus on high-rise residential buildings. Ahead of the review's findings which will be published in May, Dame Judith published the Interim Report in December along with early recommendations to the industry and Government.

One of the recommendations of Dame Judith Hackitt's Interim Report was that:

"The government should significantly restrict the use of desktop studies to approve changes to cladding and other systems to ensure that they are only used where appropriate and with sufficient, relevant test evidence. Those undertaking desktop studies must be able to demonstrate suitable competence. The industry should ensure that their use of desktop studies is responsible and in line with this aim."

The principle of carrying out assessments in lieu of a fire test – 'desktop studies' by another name – is a long-established part of the system for classifying the fire performance of construction products and systems.

Following the interim report by Dame Judith Hackitt, the Secretary of State committed that the Government will revise the approved documents on fire safety and commission work to produce a new British standard on when and how such assessments can be used. Government is also going further by asking whether 'desktop studies' should be used at all.

That is why today the Government has launched the consultation 'Amendments to statutory guidance on assessments in lieu of test in Approved Document B (Fire Safety)'. The consultation is seeking views on the Government's proposed changes to the existing guidance on assessments in lieu of test (also known as 'desktop studies') in line with the interim recommendations of Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. The consultation will be open until 25 May.

The consultation paper is also seeking views on whether the Government should go further and prohibit the use of assessments either for all fire test classifications or specifically for

those relating to the BS 8414 full scale cladding test.

Assessments in lieu of test / Desktop Studies

Dame Judith Hackitt's Interim Report has indicated concerns with the current approach to the use of assessments in lieu of tests for cladding systems. Some assessments of cladding systems have been criticised for their lack of supporting test data. An assessment in lieu of test should be an extrapolation or interpolation of relevant, existing test data, not an estimate.

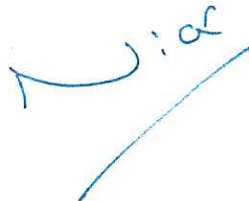
This current guidance on assessments is reflected in the approved document in Paragraph 1b of Appendix A. Our consultation paper sets out proposed amendments to that guidance to ensure that assessments are carried out correctly in line with Dame Judith's recommendations.

Questions have also been raised in Dame Judith's report about the competence of some of the assessment authors. The Government proposals also include amendments to the approved documents which will restrict the type of organisation that can produce assessments in lieu of fire tests.

I recognise that this is an issue that many Honourable Members and Noble Lords have taken an active interest in, and I would encourage you to engage in this process. The consultation document is available on Gov.uk here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/approved-document-b-fire-safety-amendments-to-statutory-guidance-on-assessments-in-lieu-of-tests>

A copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of the House.



LORD BOURNE OF ABERYSTWYTH