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Investment in Green Housing

Climate change is the biggest challenge facing us all. I continue to support efforts to decarbonise energy intensive industries, including the construction industry, to ensure that new homes planned across the country are fit for purpose and integrate the highest possible levels of emissions reduction.

The Architects' Climate Action Network's (ACAN) 'The Carbon Footprint of Construction' report, highlights that embodied carbon emissions account for up to 75% of a building's total emissions over its lifespan. While there is a standard assessment methodology for embodied carbon, concerns have been raised that there is no regulation in this area, and no requirement within existing Building Regulations or within the National Planning Policy Framework for emissions to be measured, reported, or reduced.

Recognising embodied carbon can help to identify elements which are carbon-intensive and promote alternative options which reduce the amount of CO2 released.

I know there are many architecture practices that already use assessment methods to analyse the impact of their designs, such as 'FCBS Carbon', which can be used to estimate and reduce the whole-life carbon emissions of a proposal. The Royal Institute of British Architects' 2030 Climate Challenge is also urging its Chartered Practices to voluntarily reduce operational emissions and embodied carbon, with a challenge of achieving a 40% reduction in embodied carbon as soon as possible.

Nevertheless, I recognise calls for the Government to do more in this area and to set targets for limits on embodied carbon emissions. Indeed, the Government's own Climate Change Committee has called for immediate action to improve focus on reducing the whole-life carbon impact of new homes, including embodied carbon.

The Government's policy on new builds is outlined in the development of the Future Homes Standard (FHS). The Housing Minister said that the absence of a widely agreed standardised method for certifying the embodied carbon of building products meant it was not included in the FHS consultation. I share the frustration and concerns raised by ACAN and others at this decision. Current proposals to ensure carbon neutrality in new build homes through the FHS do not go far enough.

I hope Ministers respond to ACAN's report and set out proposals to work with the construction sector to reduce embodied carbon emissions to help meet the net zero target.

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