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Thank you for your letter of 31 May in response to mine. In your letter you offered a meeting and briefing on the issue of sprinklers, however, I can assure you that my department has all the information it needs on this subject and is well aware of the views of the Chief Fire Officers Association as well as those of the house building industry.

Any new regulation on housing needs to be balanced and proportionate. Unrestricted increases in the regulatory costs will result in fewer new homes, making home ownership less accessible especially for first-time buyers, and potentially pushing up rents in the private rented sector.

The real issue here is Government Regulatory policy which is designed to ensure that we only impose requirements on industry when there is clear evidence that it is cost effective and justified, and then only where non-regulatory options have been exhausted. I believe that a responsible Government should always take this kind of objective and dispassionate approach when considering issues of this kind. Whether the Welsh Assembly Government takes this approach or not is a matter for them.

RT HON ERIC PICKLES MP