

22 July 2008

Councillor G C Murphy  
Town Hall  
Bridge Street  
PETERBOROUGH  
PE1 1HG

Dear Councillor Murphy

#### FIRE SAFETY AND SANDWICH PANELS

LABC is the representative body for building control professionals working in local authorities, and we have members in some 370 authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We are keen to ensure that the Building Regulations encompass the country's needs, and that local authority building control delivers a high quality professional service to the community in the face of competition from the private sector.

I have seen a copy of a letter you wrote on this subject on 6 June, which I understand was sent to Chief Executives in a large number of local authorities. As you say in your letter, there is clear Government advice for planning not to stray into areas properly covered through other legislation such as Building Regulations, and LABC strongly supports that view. To do otherwise means that regulatory systems overlap and are in conflict, with resultant confusion and additional costs for the construction industry.

We understand your concerns about the safety of buildings constructed using sandwich panels, although as yet I have not seen any evidence that they were a major factor in the death of 4 firefighters in the tragic Warwickshire fire to which you refer. We believe that you are right to press the CLG to consider improvements to the Building Regulations if the safety case suggests this is desirable. We were however very concerned to note that you have introduced in Peterborough new planning obligations presumably seeking to restrict the use of sandwich panels, and that you are encouraging other local authorities to do the same.

Could you therefore please let me have a copy of your new planning policy on this issue, and also let me know what reaction you have received from other local authorities.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

**Paul F Everall CBE**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**