

## Final Text for communication with NHBC Builders

### The use of combustible materials within the external wall construction of buildings over 18m in height

#### Background

We are aware that some builders are specifying combustible components within the external wall construction of buildings with a floor level 18m or more above ground level.

The external envelope of a building should not provide a medium for fire spread if it is likely to be a risk to health or safety.

This note outlines the applicable Building Regulations and NHBC Standards and aims to help builders provide us with appropriate evidence of compliance for both building control and Buildmark warranty purposes.

#### What do the Building Regulations require?

Paragraphs 12.5 – 12.9 of Approved Document B - Volume 2 deal with external wall construction. In particular:

- Paragraph 12.5 says that external walls should either meet the guidance given in paragraphs 12.6 to 12.9 or meet the performance criteria in BR135 for cladding systems using full scale test data from BS 8414-1:2002 or BS 8414-2:2005.
- Paragraph 12.7 (dealing specifically with the use of insulation materials/products) says that in a building with a floor level 18m or more above ground level any insulation product, filler material (not including gaskets, sealants and similar) etc. used in the external wall construction should be of limited combustibility. However this restriction does not apply to masonry cavity wall construction which complies with Diagram 34 in Section 9 of the Approved Document.

#### What do the NHBC Standards require?

NHBC Standards require compliance with Building Regulations and also that materials provide satisfactory performance.

In addition, paragraph D8 (c) of Chapter 6.9 'Curtain walling and cladding' of the NHBC Standards advises that reference should be made to BR135.

#### Demonstrating compliance

An acceptable method of demonstrating compliance is by providing evidence in accordance with BCA Guidance Note 18 - Use of Combustible Cladding Materials on Residential Buildings (copy attached). This provides guidance on three possible methods of demonstrating compliance: Option 1 - the use of materials of limited combustibility, Option 2 - following BR135 and Option 3 - submission of a desktop study.



Another acceptable method of demonstrating compliance, as recognised by Approved Document B - Volume 2, fire safety engineering can provide an alternative approach to fire safety and the Approved Document refers to British Standard BS 7974, Fire safety engineering in buildings and supporting published documents (PDs) as providing a framework and guidance on the design and assessment of fire safety measures in buildings.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss this matter further please contact me.