

Report on	Consultation on Proposed Amendments to Building Regulations
Date of Meeting	8 th September 2020
Reporting Officer	William Wilkinson

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To advise Members on the Consultation forwarded by the Department of Finance, inviting a response on the proposed amendments to the Building Regulations
2.0	Background
2.1	Building Regulations apply to most building works and are principally in place to ensure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of people in and around buildings, and the conservation of fuel and power.
2.2	Following the Grenfell fire, discussions have been ongoing regarding compliance with the Building Regulation requirements for external walls on buildings to adequately resist the spread of fire.
2.3	The objective of the amendment to the Regulations as proposed is to provide certainty about materials to be used in external wall systems of certain buildings (Relevant Buildings).
2.4	In addition, there are proposals to update the Building Regulations in relation to the ingress of Radon into dwellings. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive colourless and odourless gas which is formed by the radioactive decay of the small amounts of uranium and radium which occur naturally in the rocks and soils. The gas can move through cracks and fissures in the sub soil and eventually to the atmosphere. Most radon disperses into the air outside, but some passes from the ground and collects in spaces under or within buildings. For residents of dwellings, exposure to high levels of radon for long periods, this increases the risk of developing lung cancer.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The consultation is intended to seek the views of the Council on proposed amendments to the Building Regulations, to address the issues of combustibility of materials on the external walls of relevant buildings, which are mainly of a residential nature. Primarily, the proposed amendment is to ban the use of combustible materials on the external walls of buildings in question.

3.2	Buildings with a floor 18m high above ground level which contain a dwelling, contain an institution or contain a room for residential purposes will be applicable to with regards to the ban of combustible materials on external walls.
3.3	This means that flats, student accommodation, care homes, sheltered housing, hospitals and dormitories in boarding schools, all with a floor over 18m above ground level will be covered by the ban.
3.4	The ban will also be applicable to newly erected buildings or when there is a material change of use, alteration or extensions to an existing building.
3.5	Building Regulations have been in place for a number of years to prevent the ingress of radon into dwellings where required. The inclusion of radon protective measures can be included relatively easily and cost effectively within new dwellings, extensions or alterations to existing dwellings and to buildings converted to dwellings through a material change of use. The areas on radon maps where radon-protective measures are necessary are known as “radon-affected areas”.
3.6	The consultation proposes an amendment to Part C (site preparation and resistance to contaminants and moisture) which amends the definition of “radon affected area” and refers to the most up-to date maps for identifying “radon affected areas”.
3.7	Additional information is now proposed within Part C – Regulation 26(2) detailing measures to be taken to prevent or limit the ingress of radon from the ground into any dwelling situated in a radon affected area.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: Within current resources
	Human: Within current resources
	Risk Management: Within current Resources
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/a
	Rural Needs Implications: N/a
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that Members consider and agree the content of the attached draft consultation response to the proposed amendments of the Building Regulations.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Consultation document on “The Building (Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020
6.2	Appendix 2 – Proposed Mid Ulster District Council response to Department of Finance Consultation on proposed Amendments to the Building Regulations