

MP LETTER - ACAN PDR Extension RESPONSE - SEND THIS VIA EMAIL

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EMAIL SUBJECT: URGENT - Permitted Development Rights - August 2020

[YOUR ADDRESS IF WRITING TO YOUR MP]

RE: Permitted Development Rights Extension - August 2020

Dear Sir or Madam, [insert name if known]

I [work with / support] Architects Climate Action Network (ACAN), a group of architects and associated professionals working to address the Climate Emergency.

I am writing to you for your assistance in pushing for stopping the new changes to Permitted Development Rights (PDR) from coming into force at the end of August 2020. I, together with the Architects Climate Action Network are seriously concerned about these changes as being detrimental to meeting underlying climate targets and demand the Government to immediately stop the changes from coming into force on 31 August 2020 without enough scrutiny and before amendment of the current Building Regulations and Planning Laws. This is a depressing step backwards rather than the huge leap forwards we need to take in the face of the climate emergency.

Over 65% of UK Councils have declared a Climate Emergency including [name of Council or MP you are writing to if they have declared]. List of declared councils can be found at <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/list-of-councils/>] and some cities are targeting net zero by 2030, 20 years earlier than the government. The incoming PDR legislation is at odds to their declaration and commitment. In particular, focussing on PDR Part 20 Class ZA: 'Demolition of buildings and construction of new dwelling houses in their place', through this automatic demolition of buildings they are adding CO2 emissions due to the demolition of the building and transportation of waste to dump sites, when the building may be suitable for refurbishment.

The construction industry currently is responsible for more than 40% of carbon emissions. The speed and nature with which the industry was constructing under the current Building Regulations prior to COVID-19 would not have allowed adhering to the UK 2050 targets to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero. While the Building Regulations continue to be reviewed, the proposed new laws would take us further from meeting our targets; incentivising unregulated development in the mistaken notion of aiding the economy. It is negligent and short-sighted of this government to take such reckless action that will only serve to expedite catastrophic climate change to the detriment of the citizens of this country and as citizens of the world. The shortsightedness will have much higher costs to society and the economy in the future.

PDR changes that are coming into force have been rightly and extensively critiqued by researchers, organisations and campaigns such as TCPA, LGA, RIBA amongst the many others. Government commissioned research by UCL academics concludes that new housing created through PDR in England since 2013 is more likely to be characterised by worse quality than housing created under the full planning permission process. These well-addressed criticisms mainly challenge the design, democratic and equitability, economic, social and well-being aspects of the PDR and its new proposed changes. ACAN fully acknowledges and supports these

organisations' calls to review and revoke PDR.

The recent research conducted by Royal Town Planning Institute towards a sustainable and inclusive recovery post COVID-19 points out that although there has been a reduction in operational carbon emissions during the COVID-19 lockdown, "energy consumption could quickly rebound to pre-crisis levels as lockdown measures are lifted, while the wider economic impacts could create both challenges and opportunities for the transition to net zero carbon". The report recommended measures to include the deployment of low carbon energy production and storage infrastructure and higher standards for new homes alongside other interventions which will need to be integrated into local and strategic plans, to minimise the costs of decarbonisation. All the reports and research show that there has not been enough scrutiny on the environmental and climate change aspects of the proposed changes to PDR and are further proof that amendment of local and strategic plans should be prioritized before any changes come into force. ACAN are prioritizing their focus on the environmental aspects of the proposed changes and are campaigning against the PDR expansions coming into force before the related Acts, policies and regulations are amended.

The waste related to construction, demolition and excavation accounts for approximately 60% of total UK waste. New laws on demolition and rebuild are not aligned with the Circular Strategy Approach, cited in the 'Design for Circular Economy Primer'. Demolition of structures and buildings that are adaptable, and the knock-on effect from transport and building materials and the associated increase of unregulated energy consumption, will lead to a considerable increase of both embodied and operational carbon emissions and is considered incompatible with the UK's 2050 net zero greenhouse gas emission commitment and the recommended mid-term targets.

Currently there is a 20% VAT applied to most forms of refurbishment and renovation projects while this amount is between 0-5% for the new build projects applied under VAT relief. Financial and economic barriers are one of the common barriers highlighted by many reports on the matter of retrofitting. This approach is against decarbonisation, and adapting the UK's housing stock is critical in meeting emission reduction targets by 2050, due to the high embodied carbon of the new build projects. Changes to PDR with the current VAT relief would only further discourage retrofitting and favour new buildings with higher embodied carbon emissions and production of more waste.

ACAN are calling the government to :

- Immediately stop the extension of PDR in its current form from coming into force 31 August 2020
- Include the proposed changes to PDR into the PftF Public Consultation before they are adopted
- Prioritise amendment of NPPF and Building Regulations to include robust climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies (i.e. Introduction of Embodied Carbon limits into legislation)
- Update the 'Environment Act 1995' to align to achieving net zero carbon by 2050 before the enforcement of any new laws

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- Vastly restrict PDR to only include near zero carbon or better retrofitting projects and to exempt demolition and new build
- To allow for demolition only if enough scrutiny has been conducted that retrofitting is not viable by including a Whole Life Cycle Analysis and incorporating the principles of Circular Economy to: design for adaptability, longevity, disassembly, re-use and recycling
- Remove the VAT relief from new build projects and allow VAT relief only on retrofit projects to create financial incentive and funding streams that support and promote retrofitting and adhere to a circular economy and a sustainable model of growth
- Provide all stakeholders with retrofitting design guidance and toolkits which should be applied for via the Prior Approval Notice process and would adhere to the climate change commitments

I'd like to see these concerns raised urgently by politicians, to prevent the PDR extensions coming into force at the end of August, and so that they are seriously addressed as part of future consultation

ACAN are also preparing a response to the White Paper: Planning for the Future consultation due in October 2020.

Your Support

I hope you agree that the new changes to PDR would be only detrimental to meeting the UK's carbon emission targets and are a huge step backwards. I would appreciate it if you could help to challenge the proposed changes to PDR in their current form.

Could you please write to the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy requesting that they review this decision and to amend the related Acts and regulations so that the UK can meet their carbon emissions targets?

In addition, if you could please use your voice in parliament in debates and parliamentary questions to highlight this issue, it would be much appreciated.

In 2020, ACAN will continue to take action to address the twin crises of climate and ecological breakdown, please do not hesitate to contact ACAN if you wish to support this cause or have any questions.

You can find further information at the links below.

Link to ACAN's Open Letter to Jenrick:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZUoMvgmciPxOp0rFj8bLY3-pfKoPEN5f/view?usp=sharing>

Link to ACAN's full response to PDR changes:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xHa-86hu-yY4Kn0SlzCwAXUvQEnd-Qu2/view?usp=sharing>

Thank you for your time and support.

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Yours, [YOUR NAME]

[Architect (if applicable)]

ACAN contact: mail@architectscan.org

Further Information

Architects Climate Action Network (ACAN) is a group of volunteer architects who understand buildings and are working to address the Climate Emergency.

You can contact ACAN for more information on mail@architectscan.org

Keep up to date with ACAN on twitter at [@ArchitectsCAN](https://twitter.com/ArchitectsCAN)