



c/o

UK Green Building Council
The Building Centre
26 Store Street
London WC1E 7BT
Telephone: +44 (0) 207 580 0623
Email: Secretariat@ukgbc.org

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

23rd January 2012

Dear Secretary of State

We understand that you are considering dropping the requirement for schools to be built or refurbished using the 'BREEAM' standard for environmental performance. This is deeply concerning, with implications not just for the quality of the nation's schools, but for the productivity of the construction and property sector more widely.

The most recent estimate is that there is a 0.7% uplift in capital costs for a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating, yet that could yield a potential 25% saving in operational energy costs alone. Quite simply, a school designed with BREEAM is much more likely to be a better quality building not just in terms of its efficient use of resources, but also its daylighting, building management systems, incorporation of biodiversity and access to public transport. All have a very real value, financial and otherwise, to pupils and staff.

The James' Review of Educational Capital questions what it perceives as the prescriptive nature of BREEAM and recommends reducing bureaucracy around assessments. Clearly, there are improvements that could be made, but we must not throw the baby out with the bathwater. The assessment methodology is constantly being updated and BRE Global (the operators of BREEAM) have worked with other departments on ensuring a flexible system that is fit for purpose. We see no reason why this path could not be taken with DfE.

BREEAM is well understood and widely recognised by the construction industry. Removing it would introduce enormous complexity for non-expert construction clients, arguably increasing bureaucracy and thereby causing delay in the design process and driving up costs. Reneging on the commitment would also send a terrible message to UK industry which frequently builds to BREEAM Excellent standards in commercial developments so they can be occupied by a public sector anchor-tenant. Lastly, this risks damaging the success and development of BREEAM itself, which is a UK success story, not just in terms of the use of the tool abroad, but in UK companies exporting knowledge and skills.

BIS has only recently published its Low Carbon Construction Action Plan, emphasising the importance of Government leadership and public procurement in meeting both environmental and economic goals. Furthermore, scrapping the commitment to BREEAM in DfE or any other department seriously undermines the 'Greening Government' commitments on procurement, set out in February last year.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you and your officials.

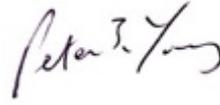
CAMPAIGN FOR A SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Company registered in England and Wales No. 1029239 and a registered Charity No. 1135153

Yours sincerely



Paul King
CEO, UK Green Building Council



Peter Young
Chairman, Aldersgate Group

Cc.

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Rt Hon Chris Huhne MP
Rt Hon Francis Maude MP
Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP
Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP
Rt Hon Vince Cable MP
Mark Prisk MP
Andrew Stunell MP