Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

[redacted]
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

[redacted]

Susan Ridge
[redacted]

1 October 2026

Dear Susan,

Thank you for your letter and report dated 7 August 2026 concerning the tragic death of Thomas Andrew James Combeer. I would like to express my condolences to Thomas's family and friends and thank you for drawing these matters to my attention through your report.

Your letter and report were made in accordance with paragraph 7 of Schedule 5 to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and regulation 28 of the Coroner's (Investigations) Regulations 2013. You set out matters of concern and stated that, in your opinion, action should be taken to prevent future deaths.

You noted concerns relating to the safety of multi-storey car parks, the relationship between Approved Document K and relevant British Standards guidance, and the extent to which existing multi-storey car parks reflect current guidance relating to guarding heights and protection from falls.

Consideration of the matters of concern

Officials are working with the Building Safety Regulator to prepare and publish a Call for Evidence on Building Regulations Part K and Approved Document K, which cover protection from falling, collision and impact. The Call for Evidence will seek evidence and views on issues relating to guarding, barriers and protection from falls, including in multi-storey car parks. This follows wider concerns raised in recent years regarding safety in multi-storey car parks.

The matters raised in your report align closely with issues that will be considered through the Call for Evidence. The Department will consider the concerns raised in your report alongside technical evidence and stakeholder views received through that process. This includes consideration of guarding heights, the clarity of existing guidance, the relationship between Approved Document K and relevant British Standards, and evidence regarding the design and effectiveness of guarding in multi-storey car parks. The concerns raised in your report will be considered as this work progresses.

Building Regulations do not apply retrospectively; relevant building work must conform to the regulations in force at the time the work is carried out. Many existing multi-storey car parks were constructed before the current edition of Approved Document K was published. Existing

buildings may, however, become subject to relevant requirements where further building work is carried out. Approved Document K provides statutory guidance on one way of meeting the applicable requirements but does not itself impose legal requirements. Accordingly, revisions to Approved Document K would not, of themselves, require existing buildings to be altered.

Responsibility for the management, maintenance and operation of existing buildings, including multi-storey car parks, rests with building owners and operators. Decisions relating to operational arrangements, surveillance, staffing, physical mitigation measures and site management are matters for owners and operators having regard to their legal responsibilities and the circumstances of individual sites.

The Department is aware of work undertaken by representatives of the parking sector relating to suicide prevention and the management of fall-from-height risks in multi-storey car parks. The Building Safety Regulator has engaged with representatives of the parking sector on matters relating to multi-storey car park safety and is considering risks associated with falls from multi-storey car parks through its wider statutory functions. Relevant evidence and guidance arising from this work, together with evidence received through the forthcoming Call for Evidence, will be considered alongside the matters raised in your report.

Conclusion

Thank you for bringing these matters to my attention. I recognise the seriousness of the concerns set out in your report. The matters you have raised will be considered through the forthcoming Call for Evidence on Part K and Approved Document K, alongside wider evidence relating to guarding, protection from falls and safety in the built environment.

Yours sincerely,

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Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government