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UNITED KINGDOM

1 May 2026

Project/File: URS Building - University of Reading

University of Reading

Claire Biggs

Estates, University of Reading, Building 50, Shinfield Road, Reading, RG6 6DQ

Dear Claire Biggs,

Reference: Timber Screens - Fire Safety Engineering

We are writing to provide formally documented clarification regarding Stantec's role and scope of services on the above-referenced project, specifically concerning our methodology for establishing fire safety criteria and our professional assessment regarding the existing timber frames within the protected stair enclosures.

It is important to establish that the role of the fire engineer is to provide the performance specifications for the building. We outline the required safety criteria and performance metrics that the building elements must achieve. However, we do not provide the specific product selections or architectural detailing required to meet those criteria.

This approach has been thoroughly detailed and recorded in the project's Fire Strategy Report. To ensure the highest standard of safety and compliance, this report has undergone and passed Stantec's rigorous 3-step internal quality assurance process. Furthermore, the Fire Strategy Report has been reviewed and officially approved by Building Control (Hayley McCarthy), in conjunction with formal Fire Service consultation.

This comprehensive approval process stands as a clear statement of confidence in the applicability, robustness, and compliance of the fire strategy for this building.

Regarding the existing timber frames located within the protected stair enclosures, we do not comment on the applicability of products, as previously explained. However, we understand that the glazing manufacturer has confirmed the current frames fall outside their extended field of application, which typically necessitates performance testing to demonstrate compliance.

As such, testing the in-situ frames may be seen as an appropriate means to demonstrate compliance, however, Stantec strongly advises against destructive testing of the existing timber frames.

Our rationale is based on the fact that such an approach lacks both practical scalability and representative accuracy for the following technical reasons:

- **Inherent Material Variability:** Aged wood presents significant inconsistencies. Factors such as fluctuating moisture content, varying degrees of historical damage, and natural warping over time mean the material is not uniform.

Reference: Fire Safety Engineering

- **Inability to Extrapolate Data:** Because of this extreme variability, we believe that the results from a single destructive test cannot be reliably extrapolated to represent the performance of the remaining frames across the building.
- **Counterproductive to Conservation:** To achieve a statistically acceptable level of certainty through destructive testing, it is likely that most (if not all) of the frames would need to be subjected to testing. This would inherently destroy the very historic fabric we are attempting to conserve.

Consequently, destructive testing is neither a viable nor an appropriate pathway to establishing compliance for these specific architectural elements.

Best regards,

Stantec UK Limited

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