

# Prof. Susan Bright Closing Remarks to the Event *Leaseholders and Refurbishment - Overcoming the Legal, Practical and Policy challenges*

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Organised by Oxford University Faculty of Law and Future Climate

Venue: Church House Westminster, Deans Yard, Westminster, London, SW1P  
9am-1pm Friday 30th June 2017

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Fitting energy improvements - like double glazing, insulation or solar panels - in blocks of flats or houses converted into flats can be difficult but is necessary if the UK is to meet its carbon reduction and fuel poverty targets. In 2014, homes accounted for 27% of all the energy we use in the UK and 21% of greenhouse gas emissions. More than 1 in 5 homes are flats, and flats are an increasingly common form of housing but flats are much less likely than single family houses to be refurbished with some energy improvement measures.

The focus today has been on social housing but we are conscious of the fact that the problem is, perhaps, even more complex with trying to address problems in the private sector. We have raised the issue of who should be paying in the context of mixed tenure social housing where refurbishment brings about regeneration benefits beyond the private owner and carbon savings. Similar important – yet largely unrecognized – issues arise in the context of the private sector. In the private sector the incentives to upgrade are poor – the freeholder, unlike the social housing provider, usually has no concern to address fuel poverty of those living in the flats or to improve their comfort; the individual flat owners generally have no power to make changes to the shared parts of the building such as the roof, or installing wall insulation. We also have a model of ownership in which individual rights are emphasized at the price of recognizing the interdependency within blocks of flats and responsibilities to others.

We believe that much more research is needed into these issues. There needs to be mapping of blocks of flats that can tell us about who owns and manages the blocks (are they independent freeholders, leaseholder owned or managed, self-managed or professionally managed); what are the energy performance characteristics of these blocks and the opportunities for upgrades? And so on.

We also think that there is a need for legal change. Our draft Bill is a start. We have developed other more radical ideas but hope that our bill would be a relatively non-controversial first step. We also think that there needs to be much greater understanding of the complexities of building management when developing new policies.

We are hoping that we might be able to build on our work to date in order to develop a broader conversation. We would like to thank all of those who have spoken today – we have no budget for this and so they have given their time freely. We are very grateful. We must also acknowledge the Higher Education Innovation Funding Knowledge Exchange Fellowship and the Law Faculty Research Support Fund that have enabled us to hire this venue, and enable David to work with me over the last 6 months.

Thank you very much for your support that it is indicated by your attendance today.