{insert your name}

{insert your address}

{insert your postcode}

{insert candidate’s name}

{insert candidate’s address}

{insert candidate’s postcode}

{insert date} 2017

**Building a Better Brexit**

**Building.co.uk**

Dear [insert name here]

As you are a candidate to become my constituency MP, I am writing to express my concern that the vital role of the construction sector in a post-Brexit economy is being overlooked during this election campaign. As highlighted by Building magazine, a Brexit deal for the industry should be commensurate with its importance to the country’s economy: construction makes up about 10% of GDP, when product manufacture and services are included.

As the country grapples with the realities of exiting the EU, it is likely that the industry will be even more crucial to the UK’s economic performance – after all, the next government will rely on it to deliver some major projects over the coming years (Hinkley Point C, HS2, Heathrow’s expansion plans and hundreds of thousands of homes, to name just a few). And yet, it seems the needs of the industry under Brexit are at risk of being overlooked.

Some sectors, such as the UK’s aerospace and car industries as well as the agriculture and financial sectors, have received ministerial attention and some reassurance that the Brexit negotiators are alert to their needs. But the particular needs of construction – classified as a “low priority” sector in government circles but bigger than the aerospace and car industries combined – appear to be less widely appreciated.

Construction stands to be significantly affected by the outcome of two of the central battlegrounds in negotiations with the EU: immigration and trade. Although there are few details at this stage, the construction industry is braced for a withdrawal from the single market and an end to the free movement of labour. Around 12% of the UK’s 2.1 million construction workers are from abroad, the majority from the EU. According to the Office for National Statistics, 45% of workers on construction sites in Greater London are foreign workers, 27% coming from the EU.

At a time of unprecedented demand for construction skills, Brexit could cut off our access to one vital source of skilled and semi-skilled workers. In his government-backed review, Mark Farmer predicted a 25% decline in available labour over the next decade, even before factoring in the Brexit effect, simply because of the numbers of older workers retiring. The consequences of not negotiating a special deal for EU construction workers could be increased costs or reduced output.

On top of rising labour costs, the threat of tariffs or barriers on products from the EU could also severely affect construction’s ability to deliver its pipeline of work. Only 20% of construction products in the UK are imports, according to the Construction Products Association, but those that are imported cannot easily be produced in the UK – soft wood timber is one example. Of imported products, 61% are from the EU and tend to be bulky products such as cladding systems, sanitary wear, and M&E systems that would be expensive to import from long distances beyond the EU.

Many in the industry believe two years is not enough time for the UK government and EU to determine everything that needs to be agreed across all the areas of concern including trade agreements. Some have said a five-year transition would be preferable. The consequences of not negotiating favourable trade agreements for construction products could be the same as not getting a deal on labour: either increased costs or reduced output.

In order for construction’s contribution to the country’s economy to be safeguarded in the Brexit negotiations, I ask you as a candidate in this election to seek assurances from your party that it will consider the following calls for action:

**1. Re-classify the construction industry as a “high priority” sector in the Brexit negotiations
2. Ensure tariff-free and barrier-free access for all construction product imports and exports
3. Put in place a clear, robust system for training future UK workers
4. Confirm the rights of skilled construction tradespeople and professionals from the EU who are already legally working in the UK
5. Guarantee freedom of movement for key skilled tradespeople and professional architects and engineers at least for a transitional period, and for any new immigration system to allow as near frictionless movement for these key workers as possible
6. Retain mutual recognition of professional qualifications in the industry with EU countries
7. Commit to greater spending on construction of public projects in housing, infrastructure, schools, hospitals and other public projects to counteract market volatility, giving the sector a clear pipeline of work that will benefit the UK economy
8. Work with private sector clients to establish best procurement practices in order to develop more efficient bidding processes for public sector contracts.**

Yours sincerely,

{insert name}