

Michael Gove has signalled he will explore “retention” options to preserve Grenfell Tower as a memorial to the [72 people killed](#) in the 2017 fire, a move that has been welcomed by relatives of the dead.

The new housing secretary’s intervention, weeks into his latest post, follows speculation that Grenfell would be demolished because of safety concerns. It is understood his predecessor, Robert Jenrick, had been briefed that the tower posed a risk to the local west [London](#) community with government-appointed structural engineers indicating it should be razed.

The meeting last Wednesday, held in the basement of former garages on the Lancaster West Estate in north Kensington where Grenfell stands, was arranged to discuss its future after a request from Hisam Choucair, who lost six family members in the fire.

Choucair said: “We wanted the minister to visit us here where our catastrophe took place – not in an office – so he could feel our pain.”

The Grenfell Next of Kin group had relatives of 21 victims present and a mandate from 13 others. One survivor, who lost his young son in the fire, said: “It was a refreshing change to have a minister who did listen. It was a really difficult meeting as we went around the room and all the mums and dads and partners of the deceased expressed their pain and sorrow directly. He took time to speak to everyone.”

A group spokesperson said: “Gove is open to listening to all key stakeholders and considering all structural issues before making a decision.”

It is a [far cry from reports](#) that ministers were to announce that Grenfell would be taken down because of structural fears. A structural engineer’s report subsequently said reports of structural weaknesses by the government-appointed experts did not properly consider retention as an option. The latest report is understood to say that the structure is safe up to the tenth floor.

Among options favoured by relatives and survivors are reimagining Grenfell as a living tower, based on the vision of [Italian architect Stefano Boeri](#) who has designed numerous “vertical forests” on buildings across Europe.

In May the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [published a letter](#) revealing it was considering if Grenfell should be taken down, but promising that the “views of the community” would be taken into account.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and [Communities](#) said it was aware of the decision’s importance and sensitivity and that no decision has been taken.

Source: [Michael Gove ‘open’ to keeping Grenfell Tower as a memorial](#)