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## Timber! Wooden skyscraper proposed for central London

Buildings made of wood are lighter, cheaper, and faster to erect, researchers say.

by [Andrii Degeler](#) - Apr 11, 2016 7:55am CDT

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A rendered image of the proposed timber skyscraper in Barbican. But will it have paper-thin walls?

### [University of Cambridge](#)

A 300-metre high wooden skyscraper has been proposed for central London by a team of architecture researchers from the University of Cambridge.

London mayor Boris Johnson is currently considering the project, with architects hoping to erect the 80-storey timber building in the capital's Barbican complex—a residential area built during the 1960s and '70s. The skyscraper would apparently provide more than 1,000 new flats.

“The Barbican was designed in the middle of the last century to bring residential living into the city of London—and it was successful. We’ve put our proposals on the Barbican as a way to imagine what the future of construction



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could look like in the 21st century," Dr Michael Ramage, director of Cambridge's Centre for Natural Material Innovation, told the [Cambridge University News](#).

The researchers—whose project is supported PLP Architecture and Smith and Wallwork—said that, when compared to materials such as steel and concrete, timber is cheaper and lighter. Apparently, it also takes less time to build multi-storey buildings based on a timber structure. Additionally, it's a renewable resource, because the type of wood needed doesn't have to come from troubled rainforests.

Canada alone could produce enough wood of the "crop" type in the next 70 years to house a billion people, the researchers claimed.

Addressing the obvious concern of fire safety, they asserted that the proposed skyscraper "would eventually meet or exceed every existing fire regulation currently in place for steel and concrete buildings."

"If London is going to survive it needs to increasingly densify," Ramage said. "One way is taller buildings. We believe people have a greater affinity for taller buildings in natural materials rather than steel and concrete towers."

The proposed skyscraper—if built—would be the second tallest structure in London after The Shard, and significantly higher than the 14-storey apartment block in Bergen, Norway, which currently holds the world record for the highest wooden house.

"We've designed the architecture and engineering and demonstrated it will stand, but this is at a scale no one has attempted to build before," said Ramage.

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