

Appendix 1 – Fire safety and the Council’s response to the Grenfell Tower Tragedy

A. Introduction

1. This appendix sets out the fire safety arrangements that are already in place in Barnet and the additional steps that the Council is taking in response to the tragic events at Grenfell Tower earlier this month.

B. Barnet Council Housing Stock

2. The Council is responsible for approximately 15,000 homes in the borough, which are managed by an Arm’s Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Barnet Homes.
3. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) order 2005 (RRFSO) Barnet Homes is the responsible person is required to undertake fire risk assessments of public areas. These assessments determine the risk of fire occurring (e.g. due to materials used/stored within these areas and the probability of ignition), the ease of evacuation and provision for fire fighting.
4. Barnet Homes carry out fire risk assessments (FRAs) on a regular basis, the frequency of which is determined by the level of risk associated with the building type. The following cycle of assessment has been discussed with and agreed with the London Fire Brigade and is in line with good practice:

Risk Level	No. of Blocks	Inspection Frequency	Type of property included BH to populate
High	122	12 months	Generally, these include all residential blocks 6 storeys and over, Sheltered Housing Units and other locations such as hostels
Medium	637	36 months	Residential blocks under 6 storeys, street properties i.e. maisonettes or houses divided into two dwellings will be assessed either every three or five years dependent upon block risk and/or whether they fall under the parameters of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
Low	318	60 months	

5. It should be noted that if following a risk assessment the risk dictates a more regular inspection then the frequency of inspection will be increased accordingly for that location.

6. FRAs are carried out by a specialist consultant and cover the communal areas and also extend into riser cupboards, electrical intake cupboards, bin storage areas and the like. The FRA considers matters such as;
 - Fire separation between the communal areas and dwellings
 - Fire compartmentalisation between areas within the communal areas as required
 - The ease of evacuation in event of a fire (presence of emergency lighting, way marking etc.) and/or the presence of obstacles that could present residents safe egress or fight-fighters safe access to a building in event of a fire.
 - Presence of materials that could cause and/or contribute to the spread of a fire
 - Fire safety maintenance records available for the premises
 - If the premises are generally well managed and maintained
7. Actions arising from inspections are given a priority rating. This is based upon the risk posed by the matter and also gives some consideration to the practicalities of remedying the matter. The table at appendix A provides an overview of the priority ratings and how these are dealt with:
8. In additions to FRAs, there are a range of other activities that Barnet Homes undertake as part of managing fire safety of the Council's Housing Stock as follows:

Testing of equipment – regular inspections and testing fire safety equipment is undertaken, including communal fire alarm systems, fire detection systems, dry risers, fire extinguishers, electrical smoke vents and emergency lighting systems.

Capital Investment- Since 2012, nearly £6m has been invested in fire safety works arising from FRAs, including replacement doors, fire separation between communal areas and dwellings, installation of signage and/or way marking, emergency lighting and fire detection systems. When practical Barnet Homes have incorporated further fire safety measures in other planned works meaning the true sum of fire safety works significantly exceeds this sum.

Installation of premises information boxes - Premises information boxes are used to hold data which may be of assistance to the LFB in responding to emergency situations within a block. Boxes are generally used at locations which may be more complex or pose additional risks. Examples include blocks which may have multiple doors serving one dwelling, unusual floor layouts, high rise blocks and sheltered housing blocks. The boxes are secured by means of a Gerda lock with keys being held by Barnet Homes and the LFB.

Working with the London Fire Brigade (LFB) - In 2015 The Barnet Group signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the LFB to ensure greater working between the organisations and includes arrangements for;

- The LFB to share data on incidents attended to and false alarms

- The LFB providing assistance with resolving matters of hording, arson, training and estate based events. This can be through joint visits and sharing of relevant information.
- Provision of advice around developments in technology (e.g. sprinkler systems)

Response to Grenfell Tower Fire

9. Although the cause of the fire and its spread at Grenfell Tower has yet to be established, Barnet Homes is undertaking an urgent review of all 28 council housing blocks of 6 or more stories, and those of 5 or more stories that have cladding. 10 of these blocks have external cladding and have now been inspected; inspection of the remainder is in hand and will be completed by 30th June.
10. Following this inspection, it has been established that the cladding system used in three blocks at Granville Road (Granville Point, Harpenmead Point and Templemead point) is different to that which media reports suggest was used at Grenfell Tower. While it contains similar rain screen panels to those reportedly used at Grenfell Tower, crucially it uses different insulation materials, which are made from a non-combustible mineral fibre material. In addition, fire stops have been installed at each floor level and around each window. The fire stops are also made of a non-combustible material.
11. In line with the Government's advice to councils, samples from the panels at Granville Road have been submitted to Department for Communities and Local Government who have confirmed that they are similar to those used at Grenfell Tower.
12. Despite the differences between the cladding system used at Granville Road and Grenfell Tower, the Council is not prepared to take any chances with the safety of residents and have agreed with Barnet Homes to remove the cladding at Granville Road as soon as possible, and Barnet Homes have instructed their contractors to proceed with this as a matter of urgency.
13. Following the decision to evacuate several tower blocks in Camden, Barnet Homes have carried out further inspections of the blocks at Granville Road with the London Fire Brigade. No additional fire safety concerns have been identified as a result of these checks, and it is not necessary to evacuate these homes.
14. To provide additional reassurance to residents at Granville Road, Barnet Homes are carrying out round the clock fire safety patrols on the estate to reassure residents and carry out enhanced fire safety checks. This will include a sweep of corridors to make sure they are clear of obstructions and anything that is potentially flammable.
15. Barnet Homes will also be working with residents to test white goods, assessing fire doors in properties and providing fire safety advice.

16. An information point at Granville Road has also been set up, which will be staffed by housing teams who will be on hand to advise residents.
17. The remaining seven cladded blocks have different cladding systems to the type used at Grenfell Tower. Updated Fire Risk Assessments of these blocks have been completed and no issues identified. In addition, Barnet Homes have commissioned a specialised fire safety consultant to carry out a review of the cladding systems used to provide additional reassurance.
18. Barnet Homes have written a letter of reassurance to all residents in these blocks and will keep them updated on specific actions taken, once the results of the inspections have been fed back.
19. As well as the 10 cladded blocks, there are 18 high rise blocks managed by Barnet Homes. It is proposed that Barnet Homes are instructed to carry out a fire safety review of all of 28 blocks with the London Fire Brigade and in consultation with residents to identify a programme of works required to ensure best practice in relation to fire safety, including consideration of sprinkler systems, improved fire and smoke alarm systems and other measures. This programme will be reported back to the Housing Committee in October 2017, but in the meantime it is recommended that authority is delegated to the Chairman of the Housing Committee and Deputy Chief executive to approve a programme of up to £10 million.

C. Registered Providers

20. There are approximately 7,000 homes managed by RPs in the borough and these are regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).
21. Registered Providers (RPs) or Housing Associations are required to carry out fire risk assessments and operate in a similar way to Barnet Homes in managing fire safety in relation to the housing it manages.
22. The Council has written to all housing associations operating within Barnet asking them to confirm their fire risk assessments are up to date for their properties and to identify any high rise blocks that they are responsible for management within the borough.
23. The Department for Communities and Local Government and HCA are also working with RPs to identify high rise blocks with cladding and the Council has asked that this information is shared with the authority when it is available.
24. At the date of drafting this report, the Council is aware that there are approximately 7 RPs with blocks of flats which are above 6 stories. An oral progress update will be provided to the Housing Committee on 26 June 2017.

D. Regeneration Schemes

25. The Council is checking with partners for all of its regeneration schemes to confirm whether there are any concerns with the use of cladding in new homes being provided. An oral update on this will be provided to the Housing Committee on 26 June 2017.

E. Private Sector buildings (residential and commercial)

26. In the case of privately owned high rise blocks, the Councils' power to act is limited. However, in order to raise the issue of the serious risks involved Barnet's Building Control service are issuing a briefing note to owners and managing agents to advise on the information we have so far and the checks landlords can make to establish the risk level in their buildings. This is attached at **annex A**.

27. The way building control legislation works is a two stage process. The first involves scrutiny of the detailed drawings before construction starts and the second phase is to carry out inspections at key points in the construction or refurbishment of the building. Once the building is signed off as complete, the work and influence of Building Control is over.

28. The options for direct action on existing buildings are limited as, whilst Barnet Council is the planning authority for most new building works, our building control service competes with the private sector for the building compliance work. Additionally building control services operate strictly within the building regulations and cannot withhold approval on materials that have been tested as suitable, they can only advise.

29. Owners are required to carry out fire risk assessments and spot checks are carried out by the London Fire Brigade. However, these are restricted checking that fire doors, risers, and alarms are fully functional within the fabric of the building and therefore would not pick up faults in cladding systems or fire compartmentation outside the main structure.

30. As stated from the limited powers the Council has, we will strengthen our position on material selection and installation during the building control process however the following additional powers could be sought from the Government:

- The authority to carry out random checks on existing buildings with enforcement powers.
- A regular 5 or 10 year building fabric inspection and certification process that picks up on wear and tear issues and forces their correction.

31. For tall office buildings, there are strict fire safety standards overseen by the Health and Safety Executive, including the provision of fire fighting equipment on site,

signage and evacuation procedures. Along with the fact that they are only occupied during the daytime, this means that they present a much lower risk than residential buildings.

- 32. The Council has identified a number of privately owned buildings with cladding from its planning and building control records, and has issued an advice note to the owners and managers of these buildings. This is attached at **annex A**.
- 33. The Government have also issued advice to owners of private residential accommodation and offered assistance with the testing of cladding. This is being disseminated via representative bodies for the private residential sector.
- 34. The Construction Industry Council has also issued instructions to approved building control inspectors to check their records for buildings with cladding; this will ensure that buildings not inspected by local authority building control teams are identified.

F. Private Sector Landlords (Residential)

- 35. The Council recognises the positive contribution made to local housing by private landlords and works with them to make sure their properties are adequate, safe and meet legal requirements.
- 36. To help do this, the Council manages two licensing schemes for private landlords. A Mandatory Licensing Scheme for houses in multiple occupations (HMOs) and an Additional Licensing Scheme which incorporates a wider pool of qualifying properties (e.g. bedsits, hostels, shared houses and flats).
- 37. Landlords of properties covered by the scheme have a duty to apply for a license for their properties. Following receipt of an application and fee the Council inspect and where appropriate issue a license with specific management and improvement conditions. This includes works to improve means of escape in case of fire and other fire precaution measures where necessary.
- 38. Inspections are made to ensure compliance with license conditions, and where the relevant standards are not met the appropriate enforcement action taken.
- 39. Where landlords fail to licence or manage their premises the appropriate enforcement action is taken.
- 40. The Council also deals reactively with any complaints regarding privately rented accommodation. On inspection an assessment is made under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This is a risk assessment system that focuses on identifying and tackling the hazards that are most likely to be present in housing

to make homes healthier and safer to live in. There are 29 hazards including excess cold, fire safety and falls.

41. If the assessment finds there is a serious hazard then there is what is known as a Category 1 hazard and the local authority must take enforcement action. The enforcement action taken will be considered in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy and will range from a Hazard Awareness Notice to an Emergency Prohibition Order. Failure to comply with a statutory notice could lead to a fine of up to £5,000 and/or the council carrying out work in default or prosecution.
42. The Council through Re also works closely with the London Fire and Emergency Authority (LFEPA). A consultation is undertaken prior to any formal enforcement action being taken in relation to Fire Safety. The Council has a joint protocol with the LFEPA detailing the Council's responsibilities and those of the LFEPA. Where there is an overlap a decision is made about who the most appropriate enforcing authority is.

G. Non-residential Council Property

41. The Council is responsible for a range of non-residential property, including offices and commercial units, and has arrangements in place for ensuring that these are safe, including carrying out regular fire risk assessments.
42. In light of the Grenfell Tower fire, a key concern is to ensure that Barnet House, an 11 storey office block in Whetstone occupied by council services complies with fire safety requirements. Barnet House has been over-clad but the cladding system used is different to that used on Grenfell Tower. In order to fully understand the products used in the cladding system, intrusive sampling and testing will take place as soon as possible. This will inform what future action should be taken.
43. In the mean-time, a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) was carried out in March 2017 and at that time no issues that present an unacceptable risk to fire safety were identified. An action plan is now being developed and implemented to deal not only with the cladding but also the lower priority FRA recommendations that were identified, including improved signage and training of additional fire wardens.
44. The new eight storey office block currently under construction in Colindale is not a clad structure and also complies fully with fire safety requirements and building regulations. A comprehensive fire evacuation strategy will be developed and implemented by the facilities management team, prior to occupation in Autumn 2018. A number of measures have been included within the design, in order to safeguard the building against fire, including:
 - A pressurised deliberately oversized fire stair and lift core to ensure smoke is kept out of fire escape routes.

- A complete sprinkler system
- A phased evacuation plan to ensure the most efficient evacuation of occupants, mitigating chance of congestion in escape routes
- The provision of an evacuation and firefighting lift
- A comprehensive L2 fire alarm system
- Compartmentalisation of floors, to prevent fire moving between floors, and above minimum fire ratings for those compartments

45. The council also owns many commercial units across the Borough, a number of which are located beneath residential units and these are mainly occupied by third party tenants. Whilst responsibility of these properties may have been transferred to the third parties the Council has taken a proactive approach and has undertaken Fire Risk Assessments for all such units.

46. These assessments have recently been completed and occupiers will now be informed by letter of any remedial actions, and timings for undertaking these actions to ensure compliance. Where recommendations are the responsibility of the tenants, following this communication, the tenants will be provided with support and advice as necessary. Where works are outside the terms of any lease or it would be more prudent for it to be managed by the council, they will be completed as part of the council's planned maintenance programme for 2017.

Annex A – Advice note to owners of private sector buildings

**Development & Regulatory Services
Building Control, Barnet House, 1255 High Road,
London, N20 0EJ**

Contact: Paul Stephens
Tel: 020 8359 4500
Email: Building.control@barnet.gov.uk
Date: 25/06/2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

THE BUILDING ACT 1984, THE BUILDING REGULATIONS 2010

LOCATION:

PROPOSAL:

In response to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, the London Borough of Barnet has identified from Planning and Building Control records that building works have been undertaken to your property that may have involved the installation of external cladding/insulation systems.

The following advice to Local Authorities and Social Landlords has been provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), we consider that it is prudent to convey similar advice to private sector landlords.

There has been much public concern and comment about potential flaws in the cladding that was on Grenfell Tower. While the exact reasons for the speed of the spread of fire have yet to be determined, the Department for Communities and Local Government have concluded that there are additional tests that can be undertaken with regard to the cladding to identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment are a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM).

More details on how to identify this cladding are in the attached technical note.

It is important to stress that ACM cladding is not of itself dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used.

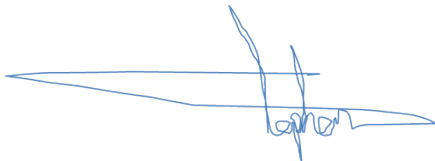
We would urge you to arrange to undertake a survey of your property to identify that cladding on any of your buildings is made of ACM, and arrange for a sample is tested.

I should point out that assessments carried out to comply with the Fire Safety Order are unlikely to have considered the building's cladding. The Local Government Association's Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats remains the most comprehensive guidance on ensuring fire safety in these types of buildings and may be obtained free of charge from:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/fire-safety-purpose-built-04b.pdf>

If you would like to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact your local Building Control Department.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Stephens', with a horizontal line drawn through the middle of the signature.

Paul Stephens
BSc Hons MBA MRICS MCABE
London Borough of Barnet Building Control Manager

Technical Note

(as provided by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG))

Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) is a type of flat panel that consists of two thin aluminium sheets bonded to a non-aluminium core, typically between 3 and 7mm thick. The panels can have a painted or metallic finish (eg copper or zinc effects). It can be differentiated from solid aluminium sheet by looking at a cut edge whereby the lamination is visible. It may be necessary to cut a hole in a panel if a cut edge is not readily accessible.

On buildings with a floor over 18m above ground level, where ACM panels are identified, it is necessary to establish whether the panels are of a type that complies with the Building Regulations guidance i.e. the core material should be a material of limited combustibility or Class A22

If you have any queries, please contact

housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Annex B - Barnet Council Fire Safety Action Plan – 26 June 2017

Action	Status	Notes
Council Housing Stock		
Urgent refresh of fire risk assessments for all residential tower blocks	Complete	No issues identified
Identify high rise blocks with cladding	Complete	10 blocks identified 3 (at Granville Road) with potentially similar cladding material to Grenfell Tower.
Notify fire service of blocks with similar cladding	Complete	Borough Commander contacted, joint visit to be arranged
Check cladding on blocks at Granville road and provide samples to Government for testing	Complete	Government tests have confirmed that the panels are similar to those used at Grenfell Tower. (However, the cladding system is different with non-combustible material used for insulation.)
Removal of Cladding at Granville Point, Harpenmead Point and Templemead Point	On going	Barnet Homes have instructed their contractors to remove cladding
Engage specialist contractor to assess the safety of cladding systems on all 10 high rise blocks managed by Barnet Homes	On going	Contractor engaged. Report on Granville Road Towers expected by 28 June 2017. Timescale for other 7 tower blocks with cladding to be confirmed.
Letters to residents living in all 28 tower blocks with information about the safety of their homes.	Complete	Letters delivered to Granville Road Residents 21 June 2017 and to remaining blocks on 23 June 2017.
Attend meeting with Granville Road Residents association	On going	Scheduled for 29 June 2017
Implementation of fire safety patrols at Granville Road	On going	Wardens to be on site around the clock from 22 June 2017
Offer White goods appliance testing to all residents of the towers	On going	To be in place from 28 June 2017
Seek approval from Housing Committee to develop programme of works to enhance fire safety compliance to deliver best practice in fire safety including the consideration of sprinkler systems, improved fire and smoke alarm systems and other measures.	On going	Approval to be sought on 26 June 2017
Completion of DCLG checklist for blocks that have similar cladding panels to Grenfell Tower	Complete	Checklist completed for Granville Point, Harpenmead Point and Templemead Point
Registered Providers (RPs)		
Contact RPs for confirmation that their Fire Risk Assessments are up to date and to identify any high rise blocks they managed within the borough	On going	Information requested 19 June – follow up where not received 26 June
Work with Government and RPs to ensure actions to address any fire safety concerns are addressed.	On going	Government have requested information on high rise properties managed by RPs and facility for testing cladding. Council has requested that this information is shared with them.

Action	Status	Notes
Private Sector Residential and Non residential		
Identify private dwellings in the borough potentially at risk	Complete	List compiled using planning and building control records
Issue briefing note for owners and managing agents of private sector buildings	Complete	Advice note produced and sent to owners 26 June 2017
Publicise letter from Government for private sector owners offering assistance with cladding	On going	Place link on Council web site Include reference in briefing note
Council non- residential		
Barnet House -complete actions from fire risk assessment	On going	All actions will be completed by July 2017
Colindale – new council headquarters – fires safety strategy	Complete	Strategy in place
Actions from fire risk assessments for commercial units beneath residential	On going	All actions will be completed during 2017

Annex C - Priority Ratings for issues identified during fire risk assessments

Priority	Description	Timescale
P0	When an unacceptable risk to fire safety is present.	Works completed within 10 days
P1	These items are regarded as important but a lead-time to organise is recognised to be necessary. Note - Low number of action items per block typically carried out by the responsive repairs team	Works completed within 6 months
P1+	These items are regarded as important but a lead in time to organise is recognised to be necessary, Note – Higher than normal of number of actions per block which cannot be managed by the Repairs team and are more aligned to planned works delivery	Works completed within 1 year
P2	Where an immediate risk to fire safety is not present but improvements/actions are necessary to maintain the essential systems and standards.	To be placed onto a planned improvement programme within 3 months of being identified, and works completed Within 2 years
P3	Where an immediate risk to fire safety is not present but improvements/actions are necessary to maintain the essential systems and standards. Works to be considered in future improvements or placed onto a future works programme/rolling maintenance programmes	To be placed onto a Planned Improvement programme within 3 months of being identified, and works completed within 5 years
P4	Relates to continuing managerial responsibility or recognised best practice guidance	Management/procedural, and not essential but give consideration for inclusion within future refurbishment programme to block/location
Any significant finding that requires more immediate attention will be allocated P0 or P1 for the attention of either the Housing team or Responsive Repairs team. Any matter not dealt with by these teams will be brought to the attention of a member of the Risk and Compliance team.		