

Grenfell Tower fire – implications for the Local Plan

The Council considers that the Grenfell Tower fire doesn't have implications for the soundness of policy LP27 Tall Buildings, or the Local Plan as a whole.

Policy LP27 is based on a robust evidence base which justifies the approach to managing tall buildings in the borough. The policy, first of all, sets out areas in the borough that would be appropriate for the location of tall buildings, and goes onto list a set of criteria which would be applied when assessing applications for tall buildings. It is also in conformity with London Plan policy 7.7.

The policy applies to new developments for tall buildings. It would not apply to retrofit or refurbishment schemes.

Future development

In relation to future development, the Council's Building Control Service/an approved inspector will ensure that new development complies with the requirements of the building regulations, which includes assessing applications against fire safety. Fire safety is beyond the remit of planning policy, but is well catered for within the building regulations.

The Council will await the findings of the inquiry into Grenfell Tower. Early speculation indicates a review of the building regulations, and amendments to the regulations will be taken into account as a result.

Action we have taken

After the incident, the Council immediately reviewed the fire safety arrangements for all of our 18 tall blocks of accommodation and established that none have the same cladding which was used on the Grenfell Tower. Six of our tall blocks on the Orchard Estate have a partial cladding system which was installed in the 1990s. Tests and surveys were carried out on this cladding and it does not contain Aluminium Composite Material (ACM). As ACM is the material the Government require testing on, we are not required to have any further testing carried out on this material.

Whilst the cladding met the safety standards when installed, it would not meet the standard for a new build now and for safety reasons we have taken the decision to remove these panels and replace the insulation material inside with more fire resistant material.

We have met with the London Fire Brigade (LFB) to discuss these plans and they are satisfied that this is the best course of action for resident safety. The Redbridge LFB Borough Commander has notified the local fire stations of our intentions.

All of our blocks have current Fire Risk Assessments in place and as such the advice is that there is no need for residents to leave as there is no immediate danger– they will be able to stay in their homes while the panelling is removed and replaced.

We are currently investigating options and ability to install a sprinkler system and smoke alarms in communal areas across all blocks above five storeys high. We will also be following any additional safety guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the LFB. Our Housing department will continue to work closely with the LFB to ensure the safety of our residents, which is as always our highest priority.

Tall blocks of housing not owned by the Council

We have been in contact with registered housing providers in Redbridge to ensure that assessments are being carried out on their tall blocks with cladding as a matter of urgency. We have asked them keep their residents updated on this process, so that they can be reassured on fire safety in their home.

One private housing block in Redbridge was identified as possibly having cladding work carried out by the same firm who provided the cladding at Grenfell Tower. To ensure that the occupants of this property were fully protected, we wrote to the freeholders and all leaseholders of the property to alert them to this and to advise them on how to reduce the Fire risk to themselves, their tenants and their property by reviewing their Fire Risk assessment.

Within 24 hours the managing agents of the block were able to confirm that the cladding used on City Gates house is not made of Aluminium Composite Material.

We are encouraging the owners of all tall housing blocks, which are buildings above five storeys high, to carry out assessments on buildings which have cladding installed.