

FIRE SAFETY IN FLATS REPORT

Report of the Head of Capital Works

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Derby Homes is committed to minimising the risks associated with fire in its properties in line with its duties as a landlord and recognises the fundamental importance of fire safety and the need to operate a clear Fire Safety and Management Policy to ensure the safety and welfare of service users, visitors and staff.
- 1.2 Derby Homes manages over 245 blocks of flats ranging from 1 to 12 storeys in height. The Fire Safety and Management Policy clearly details Derby Homes' approach to managing Fire Safety in Flats through mitigating the risks associated with fire.
- 1.3 This report details our approach to managing Fire Safety in Flats in anticipation of the upcoming Building Safety Bill, which will bring in new regulations in the wake of the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire and subsequent report into systemic failings by Dame Judith Hackitt.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note this update on Derby Homes approach to managing fire safety in flats.

3. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To ensure the Operational Board is informed on the status of Derby Homes' approach to managing fire safety in flats and our response to the changing agenda post Grenfell and prior to the upcoming Building Safety Bill.

4. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Background

Derby Homes are committed to minimising the risks associated with fire in its properties in line with its duties as a landlord and recognises the fundamental importance of fire safety and the need to operate a clear Fire Safety and Management Policy to ensure the safety and welfare of service users, visitors and staff. The Fire Safety and Management Policy sets out Derby Homes approach to mitigating the risks associated with fire, ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation, principally:

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (Fire Safety Order)
- The Housing Act 2004 which introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Regulations 2005.
- Health and Safety at Work act 1974.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Building Regulations 2010 (amendment) Regulations 2015
 - Approved Document B 1
 - Approved Document B 2

Nationally, the Grenfell Tower fire in West London on 14 June 2017 claimed 72 lives. The tragedy exposed serious failings across the whole system of building and managing high-rise homes. Subsequently, the Government asked Dame Judith Hackitt, a former Chair of the UK Health and Safety Executive, to lead a review of building regulations and fire safety which would make recommendations to ensure a robust regulatory regime in the future and make residents feel safe in the buildings they live in.

The review concluded that the whole system needed major reform and that residents' safety needed to be a greater priority through the entire life cycle of a building – from design and construction, through to when people are living in their homes.

The Government accepted the review's recommendations and in the Queen's Speech in December 2019 the Government announced that it intended to introduce a Building Safety Bill that would "Put in place new and enhanced regulatory regimes for building safety and construction products, and ensure residents have a stronger voice in the system."

The draft Building Safety Bill was published for consultation in July 2020 and is written to accompany the existing Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (Fire Safety Order). Although the consultation stage is still open it is evident that requirements on landlords and managing agents will be stronger in terms of fire safety.

4.2 Fire Safety in Flats

Derby Homes manages over 245 blocks of flats ranging from 1 to 12 storeys in height. The Fire Safety and Management Policy clearly details Derby Homes approach to managing Fire Safety in Flats.

Flats - All flats are designed to be fire resisting. A fire in one flat should not spread from one flat to another, so residents do not need to leave their home if there is a fire elsewhere in the block however if in doubt 'get out' applies.

To help ensure the safety of residents and enable a "stay put" policy in the event of fire, Derby Homes has implemented a "sterile area" fire management policy for general use blocks of flats and category 2 sheltered schemes. This requires the communal corridors, landings and stairwells of properties managed by Derby Homes to be designated a "clear zone" or sterile area free of all extraneous items. This aims to limit or remove:

- Sources of ignition and combustion
- Items that may help sustain or spread fire
- Items that may form an obstacle or trip hazard during emergency egress

In addition, We will:

- Test service and maintain fire detection and alarm equipment where provided
- Test service and maintain fire extinguishers and firefighting equipment where provided
- Actively manage and regularly inspect communal areas
- Ensure decorative coatings are specified and maintained to appropriate flame-resistant standards.

Sheltered Accommodation - Kestrel House, Rebecca House and Whitecross House are supported living flats within a complex with corridors and communal facilities. In addition to the arrangements for general use flats Derby Homes provide smoke/heat detection linked to an emergency call system monitored by a 24-hour emergency call centre. This fire detection operates independently to the main building alarm system. The common and communal areas within the complex are covered by a monitored alarm system.

Parkland View assisted living is fully sprinklered throughout therefore any fire should be controlled and possibly extinguished by the operation of the system.

4.3 Fire Risk Assessment

To support the aforementioned approach to fire safety and management, a regime of fire safety risk assessments is carried out. A fire risk assessment is a means of identifying potential fire hazards and rating the likelihood and possible severity of the fire and enables Derby Homes to put adequate controls in place to minimise the risks. It's a legal requirement for all blocks of flats (including houses converted into two or more flats) to have a fire risk assessment of the communal areas only. But this must include the front doors of individual flats

Derby Homes has carried out and documented fire risk assessments for:

- The communal areas of blocks of flats managed by Derby Homes
- Sheltered housing schemes with corridors and communal areas
- Common areas (where applicable) of complex needs accommodation
- Assisted living blocks of flats

Fire risk assessments are reviewed on a risk-based inspection process annually for sheltered housing schemes with corridors and communal areas. Communal areas of blocks of flats are reviewed every three years. The table below summarises the regime of FRAs and their frequencies.

Frequency	Description
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivermead House • Sheltered Housing • Extra care assisted living (Parklands View)
Every 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All complex needs properties
Every 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communal areas of blocks of flats*

They will also be reviewed:

- After any fire related incident at the premises
- After any modifications or alterations or change of use to the building
- Any near misses

Currently, in addition to the regime of FRAs, communal areas of flats have a maintenance inspection bi-annually. These inspections are likely to be expanded as the pending legislation is likely to introduce requirements that all communal fire doors will have to be inspected every three months in high rise buildings and every six months in lower rise blocks. In addition to this individual fire doors that form the entrance to flats will require inspection at six monthly intervals for high rise and 12 months for low rise.

4.4 Fire Risk Assessment – Performance

Compliance with the legal requirement for all blocks of flats to have a valid fire risk assessment of the communal areas only, is reported monthly to Derby Homes SMT monthly as part of a wider Regulatory Compliance Report. Both Operational and Main Board receive compliance reports.

4.5 Fire Protection Surveys

Many of the buildings containing flats have seen alterations to their fabric and layouts during their lifetimes. To complement the regime of Fire Risk Assessment, it is intended to carry out a programme of full invasive, compartmentation survey of the common areas and roof voids to all flat blocks.

The surveys shall provide an assessment of the buildings condition to ensure that penetrations in fire-rated construction are identified and assessed. It shall also establish if any refurbishment or building service updates are required to ensure compartmentation within the common areas and roof voids. The surveys will include the condition of the tenanted doors/frames and letter plates. .

A report and drawings of the building will then be generated which will provide a detailed record of the location and condition of all compartmentations, record any penetrations and recommend any remediation works, for each the common areas and roof void.

At the time of this Report, the first phase of Fire Protection Surveys are being carried out.

4.6 Fire Protection Surveys – Remedial Works

The Fire Protection Surveys will generate significant amounts of additional work, in addition to that generated by the regime of Fire Risk Assessments and the bi-annual maintenance inspections. In commissioning fire protection works, we have previously experienced issues with the quality of workmanship carried out by external contractors. Further post Grenfell, we are also seeing a substantial increase in the costs for this work, demand for work in the area is expected to increase and this will cause further overheating of the market.

In January 2020 the Board agreed that we achieve third party accreditation to enable us to bring the work to fire doors and minor repairs in house. We have successfully completed the first phase of becoming third party accredited via the nationally recognised BMTrada scheme. In order to complete our registration, we need to complete the maintenance and replacement of fire doors in accordance with the accreditation and have this work audited by the registered body and comply. This work is currently in progress and I anticipate completion by 31 March 2021.

In September 2020 the Board agreed that we create a dedicated, accredited in-house team to specialise in this work. This approach will allow control of both quality and cost of the works. The recruitment to this team is underway

5. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None

IMPLICATIONS

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:

Consultation

Financial and Business Plan

Legal and Confidentiality

Council

Personnel

Environmental

Equalities Impact Assessment

Health & Safety

Risk

Policy Review

If Board Members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact:

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Background Information: None

Supporting Information: None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Managing Director	Maria Murphy	11/11/20
Company Solicitor	Taran Lalria	
Head of Service	Ian Yeomans	02/11/20