

Appendix A

Ledbury Estate Fire Safety Compartmentation Issues

In response to the issues raised by the tragic Grenfell Tower Fire, the council and the LFB jointly held a residents' meeting to listen to and respond to concerns about fire safety at the Old Kent Road Fire Station on Monday 26 June 2017.

At that meeting, a resident reported large cracks in her flat in one of the four Ledbury Towers on the Ledbury estate. She expressed concern that these cracks breached the compartmentation of her flat and therefore compromised fire safety.

The Ledbury Estate is situated at the top of Commercial Way and comprises low rise blocks and four tower blocks. The tower blocks, Bromyard, Peterchurch, Skenfrith and Sarnsfield are 14 storeys high, and each block consists of 56 two bedroom flats comprising 224 properties in total.

The blocks are concrete frame construction, built by Taylor Woodrow between 1969 and 1970 and are former GLC properties which transferred to Southwark Council in 1982.

Following that meeting, the Strategic Director Housing and Modernisation, Gerri Scott, contacted the resident by email to arrange a visit by the Fire Safety team to inspect the cracks. In a series of emails between the SDHM and the resident, photographs of the cracks were provided, along with specific advice that the resident had personally sought from the LFB which suggested that there was a breach of fire safety compartmentation.

The Fire Safety team carried out an inspection of the resident's flat on 29 June 2017 when it became clear that the gaps were significant. This raised concerns about the structural integrity of the block, and the other three tower blocks as well as the fire safety of the residents.

A new fire risk assessment was carried out on 30 June 2017 and the LFB were informed. The LFB carried out their own assessment of the tower blocks on the same day which required the council to put in place a number of remedial measures, all of which were designed to ensure that residents could remain in their homes during the investigative surveys and the temporary repairs to seal the breaches in compartmentation. These included:

- Walking Wardens (one per two floors) hired from a private company to walk the floors during twelve hour shifts (two shifts per day). This is co-ordinated from Tenants and Resident Hall (Control Centre) by Southwark Council staff to ensure that the brief is complied with in full.
- Each block has one person designated to call 999 to inform the Control Centre of any potential issues. This person has overall control of the wardens in the block. The instruction to the Wardens is that in the event of a fire anywhere in the block they are to alert the residents and assist them to leave the block. There is no longer a 'stay put' strategy applied to the estate we are now working to a simultaneous evacuation strategy. In an emergency, priority will be given to those on the floor of a fire and initially those on the floors above the fire.
- Communication between all Wardens via radios and between the Control Centre and the Head Warden and between Head Wardens for each block.
- The maximum distance from a front entry door to the staircase is @six metres and there are four flats per floor.
- Ongoing work to seal any gaps between flats.

- Inspections to all fire doors to ensure they are thirty minutes fire resistant and have appropriate self closing devices. If there is any doubt regarding the validity of a 'notional' door it will be replaced.
- A 'zero tolerance' approach to all items in the common areas to include doormats and pot plants.
- All flats have an enhanced LD2 part 6 fire alarm system meaning we have coverage to all rooms in the flats except the bathrooms. All flats are being checked to ensure their fire alarm is in full working order.
- Initial inspections undertaken by a Senior Building Surveyor and our Senior Fire Surveyor indicate there are no potential breaches between the dwellings and the escape routes and that the escape routes are fully protected.
- This building has no cladded materials.
- An interim fire alarm system covering the common areas at every landing.

All of these measures were fully complied with and as long as they remain pending a permanent solution to the compartmentation issues, residents will not need to leave their homes.

A team of technical staff started to assess all of the flats within the four tower blocks from Thursday 29 June. Contractors were appointed to carry out remedial works and continued to do so over the weekend and into the following week.

Arup, the leading civil engineering firm, were commissioned on Friday 30 June and started work on Monday 3 July. They carried out internal investigations to 4 flats, three occupied and one empty, and also erected a tower scaffold to the exterior of the building to inspect the structure externally.

Arup wrote to Dave Markham, Director of Asset Management, on 5 July 2017 to advise that, *'Arup engineers have found no structural safety issues but are continuing to investigate and will make recommendations for remediation work if required'*.

The LFB Borough Commander wrote to residents of the four tower blocks on 5 July 2017 to advise them of the ongoing dialogue between the council and the LFB and the appropriateness of the council's measures in view of the compartmentation measures as below:

'Southwark Council then took the precaution of placing fire wardens on each floor of each of the blocks and briefed them to evacuate the entire block should a fire occur. Needless to say this is contrary to the LFB policy of 'stay put' but entirely appropriate if there are doubts regarding the compartmentation of a building.

In addition to the implementation of briefed fire wardens a range of other measures have been actioned that add to your safety in regard to early detection of fire, keeping means of escape clear and protected and evacuation protocols. Arrangements are being made to secure long term solutions and rest assured that the enhanced measures currently in place on the Ledbury Estate, will not be lifted until these solutions are satisfactorily actioned'.

Communications to residents have been ongoing. A control centre has been set up in the Ledbury estate TRA Hall. This hall has been constantly staffed by council staff since Friday 30 June. It also provides rest centre facilities for the fire marshals and contractors who have been working on site.

The SDHM has sent letters all residents of the four tower blocks on Friday 30 June, Saturday 1 July, Monday 3 July and Wednesday 5 July. These have been hand delivered to residents, together with the letter from the LFB and update from Arup.

A dedicated website www.southwark.gov.uk/ledburytowers has been set up where all information has been posted. Copies of FRAs are available on this website, although these are live documents because of the current compartmentation issues and are being constantly updated.

Ward councillors and the Chair of Ledbury TRA have received regular updates.

Arup engineers will be providing an overview presentation about the structural issues and answer residents' questions at the Ledbury Estate TRA AGM on Tuesday 11th July 2017, and the venue has been shifted to Camelot School to provide sufficient capacity for attendees.

The long-term solution for the tower blocks is to address the compartmentation issues.

The current remedial works being carried out are temporary measures to provide compartmentalisation.

Arup's report will provide conclusions on the nature of the structural movement and its extent and any remedial works. At the time of writing we have not yet received this. However we anticipate that from this information we will work with independent specialist consultants to develop a system to seal the cracking ensuring that it is flexible enough to maintain compartmentalisation to meet the necessary tolerances which we see with this type of construction.

Once a design solution is agreed these works will be commissioned and started immediately.