

Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee

2 August 2017

Report of the Assistant Director
Planning & Public Protection

Building & Fire Regulations & Risks – Briefing Note**Summary**

1. This briefing paper provides members with an overview of the steps being taken to check the fire risks associated with buildings in York.

Background

2. In light of the recent tragic event at Grenfell Tower in London, at the Committee's previous meeting in June 2017 Member's requested a briefing on the situation with buildings in York and the associated fire risks.

Grenfell Tower

3. The Building

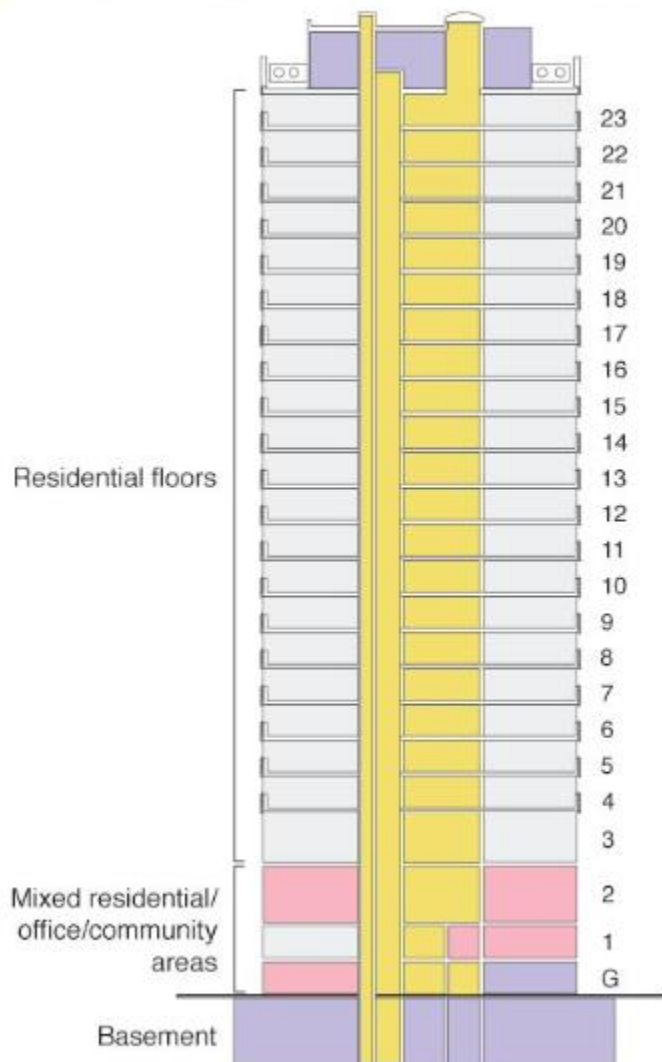
The building was a 1970's built tower block some 24 storeys and 67m high. It was a concrete frame construction, and had a single central core staircase for escape purpose. Over the previous few years it had been refurbished. The full details of this refurbishment are as yet unknown, but part of the refurbishment involved the external fixing of insulated aluminium clad panels. For information; Tall buildings are those with a floor height over 18m – approx six storeys).

4. The Fire

The fire reportedly started on the fourth floor due to a white goods fire, and was apparently extinguished by the fire service. As fire personnel were leaving the building it was noticed that the fire was actually still burning, but now external to the building, and was moving up the building via what is now thought to be the external insulation panels, and the external windows that were open due to a warm night. The fire moved at a considerable rate both up and also around the building, and went beyond the height at which the fire services were able to fight the fire.

Grenfell Tower

■ Stairs and lifts
 ■ Community areas
 ■ Residential
 ■ Other



Source: Studio E Architects

BBC

5. As a consequence of the fire and for reasons as yet unknown, smoke entered the stairwell - this hindered escape from the building. The exact cause of the fire, the deficiencies in the buildings construction and the possible lack of fire detection and prevention are still under investigation.

Issues to Consider for Buildings in York

6. Older Buildings (1960-1984)
 York is fortunate not to have many tall (over 18m – 6 storeys) buildings. Current buildings are being inspected for any potential issues by either North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service, or if they are local authority housing stock, by the Housing department. This does not include

Georgian or Victorian historic buildings that are unlikely to have a construction that may be an issue.

7. Modern Buildings

Again there are few tall buildings. Accommodation at York University has been inspected by the university facilities staff. St John's University have been advised of the government's suggested checking procedure. We are advised that other property owners are in the process of checking their own buildings in line with Government guidance, however most, if not all buildings do not have external metal skinned insulation panels attached to the outer facade, as the thermal requirements of the building are inherent in the main construction.

8. In addition, all modern higher buildings contain:

- Requirements for multiple escape provision, (Fire escapes)
- Fire fighting risers for fire service connection at each floor.
- Fire doors and closers to doors.
- Smoke control and smoke ventilation provisions.
- Enhanced alarm and emergency lighting.
- Compartmentation and fire stopping between units.

Actions

9. City of York Council (CYC) Building Control is in communication with North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service (NYFRS) and are providing them with information relating to the construction of buildings (as requested in their action plan).
10. The NYFRS is currently inspecting and fire auditing buildings of six storeys and above, followed by four storey and above buildings. Their action plan is indicated below. The timescale is as soon as possible.
11. Action 1:
- The priority is to establish the number and location of high rise buildings within the county, high rise for the purpose of this exercise is defined as 6 storeys and/or equates to 18m or higher. This is building on the work already completed and needs to identify all of the items on the attached example. It would also be useful to know if it is local authority owned or private. If the building falls into the high rise category as described above and has cladding, then the responsible person should arrange for it to be tested, if this test

returns as positive then we will be notified and a joint inspection will be held, ideally within 48 hrs.

12. Action 2:

- The next priority is to identify any premises of 4 storeys or more and to record the same information as the attached example. We are aware that this will encompass a large number of premises so the focus should be on any with cladding, any with a stay put policy and the social housing premises.
- When talking to the Responsible Persons (RP) the advice should be for them to review their risk assessment and take notice of any cladding on their buildings and how this may affect the fire spread or the evacuation. Should we inspect any premises we need to re-iterate that we are not experts in cladding and that it is the RP's responsibility to get this checked. We will focus on the general fire precautions and give guidance and advice to ensure that they are adequate for the building.

13. Action 3:

- Information may need to be updated or created for any properties that pose a risk which are identified when gathering this information. Operational crews need to ensure that tactical plans include information about stay put policies and how the building could be fully evacuated if necessary. There should be detailed information on any fixed installations such as dry risers and how crews need to use them.
- It is expected that operational crews and TFS staff will all assist with this work, therefore TFS staff are putting together a presentation and will work with ops crews to ensure that they are clear about what they need to be looking for when auditing flats. A list of frequently asked questions is being compiled for the public and can be used by staff to answer any queries.
- The NYFRS website is also being reviewed to ensure that it has the latest updates regarding high rise flats and cladding of buildings.
- Three engagement events are being planned by TFS staff at Harrogate, Scarborough and York throughout July. Anyone with concerns regarding high or medium rise buildings or premises with cladding can attend to find out more information.
- TFS staff are also working to cleanse the data kept on purpose built flats of 4 floors or more however until this is completed a spread sheet will be kept here NYFRS High Medium Rise Risk Flats

information from now please can all amendments be made to this list.

- An Incident log has been created to deal with everything relating to this issue.
 - Communication has been made with all the Hospital Trusts that have premises in North Yorkshire to explain that the email sent at the weekend indicating that FRSs would audit all their inpatient buildings has now been amended and that we will only focus on specific buildings that have cladding. In these cases we will undertake a joint inspection and offer guidance regarding the general fire precautions.
 - This work is to take priority and weekly updates sent to senior management.
14. The number of six storey and over residential buildings in York is 6, all of these premises have been or are booked in for a Fire Safety audit under the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO), buildings that have been audited produced no issues relating to cladding. Housing services have checked CYC housing stock, a letter has been sent to tenants and information has been placed on the CYC web site. I am advised, that to date, none of the housing stock have been found to have any issues.
15. Information has been sent to property owners/landlords on potential fire issues regarding buildings (primarily relating to insulated panels) and how to have them tested if there are grounds for concern.
16. The CYC Health & Safety team are currently liaising with the Regional (Yorkshire) Fire Safety Advisors Group, on how and what may be necessary to identify, and address, deficient Local Authority buildings across the county.

Points to Consider

17. The Building Regulations themselves may be amended after the enquiry into the fire, however what appears to have happened, is that the existing guidance has not been followed correctly regarding alterations to Grenfell Tower, that, in conjunction with multiple other factors, created a situation that resulted in the disaster.
18. CYC Building Control supervises approximately 60% of the construction projects within the CYC area, the remaining 40% are supervised by private companies known as Approved Inspectors. CYC is not required

to have any details of the work supervised by the private sector, so the status and levels of compliance of 40% of the work in York is unknown. It is our understanding that the private sector will be undertaking their own investigative measures.

19. Building Control does not have any continuing legislative powers beyond two years of construction. The Chief Fire Officer has powers under the RRO to visit buildings to which the order has effect and request any remedial measure that they deem appropriate.
20. Attached at Annex A is a copy of a Fire Safety Update previously circulated to Members on 30 June 2017 by the Head of CYC Building Services, that highlighted the action being taken relating to CYC properties.

Briefing Note Provided By:

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Briefing Paper Approved ☒ **Date** 19 July 2017

Specialist Implications Officer(s) N/A

Wards Affected: All ☒

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes:

Annex A: Fire Safety Update dated 30 June 2017

Abbreviations:

CYC – City of York Council
NYFRS – North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
RP – Responsible Person
RRO – Regulatory Reform Order
TFS – Technical Fire Staff