



2 March 2018

Draft new London Plan

Response to Mayor of London's consultation

Introduction

1. London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) runs the London Fire Brigade (LFB). The 17 members of the Fire Authority are appointed by the Mayor of London. Eight are nominated from the London Assembly, seven are nominated from the London boroughs and two are Mayoral appointees. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 includes legislation to bring fire and rescue services in London under the direct responsibility of the Mayor of London by abolishing LFEPA and creating the London Fire Commissioner as a corporation sole. This change is currently expected to happen in April 2018.
2. LFB is the busiest fire and rescue service in the country and one of the largest firefighting and rescue organisations in the world. We are here to make London a safer city and our vision is to be a world class fire and rescue service for London, Londoners and visitors. We will always respond to fires and other emergencies, but our work has changed over the years with a much stronger emphasis now on fire prevention and community safety.
3. LFEPA is the enforcing authority for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in London. The Order applies to virtually all buildings, places and structures other than individual private dwellings and relates to fire safety in parts of blocks of flats which are used in common by more than one flat. On the abolition of LFEPA, the London Fire Commissioner will become the enforcing authority.

Overview of response to Policy D11 fire safety

4. The Grenfell tragedy has put an unprecedented spotlight on fire safety and it's now vital that Government, local authorities, builders and developers seize this once in a generation opportunity to raise fire safety standards to the highest possible level across all future building developments in the capital, whether they are residential or commercial.
5. Only by making fire safety a priority during every part of a building's life – from the earliest stages of the planning process, throughout its construction, after its completion and through any maintenance and refurbishment work – will we see a significant improvement to safety standards in the capital's buildings that will reassure those who live and work in them that they are as safe as possible.
6. This new policy, D11 fire safety, puts a keen emphasis on fire safety and is welcomed as a step change in what the London Plan has to say on fire safety. It instils a principle of fire safety by design through seeking to ensure that development proposals achieve the highest standards of fire safety
7. There are a number of key areas where we would like the Plan to provide further clarity, covered under the subheadings below.

Access

8. LFEPA would like the Fire Statement to include how the proposed development is expected to comply with the functional requirements within building regulations for access to the site for the purposes of

firefighting (as currently covered in part B5 of the Building Regulations), ensuring that this is considered at the earliest stage of the development. In particular the Fire Statement should consider:

- appropriate access into, and around the site for fire appliances; and
- appropriate access and facilities within the building(s) provided for firefighting

9. We would also expect the Fire Statement to consider water supplies for firefighting, and this will likely require supporting information from the water undertaker such as hydrant locations and projections for water flow and pressure. We would expect this to meet the standards set out in Water UK's national guidance document on the provision of water for firefighting¹, which was produced jointly by the water industry and the fire and rescue services.

Fire Statements and information to be provided to LFEPA

10. LFEPA welcomes the introduction of Fire Statements for all major development proposals. LFEPA has in the past voiced concerns that the current process for planning and building control consultations can lead to the fire and rescue service being consulted very late in the day, in some cases after the building has been completed and occupied. This can lead to inappropriate fire safety solutions in place which may remain in a building for its entire lifetime. These issues could often have been resolved very easily earlier in the process. The introduction of Fire Statements in London should go some way to rectifying this issue and making sure that fire safety of any new development is considered at an early stage.
11. LFEPA would like to see more specific information included in the draft London Plan on where sprinklers should be fitted in the capital. Specifically, LFEPA would like to see stipulation that:
- All new residential developments over 18m in height to be fitted with sprinklers.
 - Existing residential blocks over 18m in height should be retrofitted with sprinklers.
 - Sprinklers to be mandatory in all new school builds and major refurbishments.
 - All other residential properties including hotels, hostels and student accommodation, over 18m in height to be fitted with sprinklers.
 - All new residential care homes and sheltered accommodation to be fitted with sprinklers.
 - Existing residential care homes and sheltered accommodation to be retrofitted with sprinklers.
 - All homes occupied by the most vulnerable² in our communities to be fitted with sprinklers.
12. The categories of information to be included in Fire Statements, as described in Policy D11 Fire Safety, B 1-4, are supported by LFEPA as the appropriate ones to be covered in order to help ensure that the fire safety of these new developments is of a good standard. These are given in broad categories however, LFEPA would like to see them specifically include the following:
- Information about access for firefighting and emergency vehicles in accordance with building regulations (currently part B5) .
 - Information about water supplies for firefighting in accordance with Water UK's national guidance document (see paragraph 9).
 - A statement on how the proposed development would meet the expectations within the LFB position statement on AFSS. The current version of which is provided in appendix A of this submission.
 - A demonstration on how they are going to meet the functional requirements of the building regulations (either using prescriptive guidance such as Approved Document B or BS9999/BS9991 or a fire engineered solution).
13. Policy D11 Fire Safety states that "*Planning departments should work with and be assisted by suitably qualified and experienced officers within borough building control departments and/or the London Fire Brigade, in the evaluation of these statements*". This opportunity for consultation with the LFB is welcomed by LFEPA. However, it must be noted that LFB has limited resources, especially of the specialist kind required for this work, and so would not be able to consider all of the 1000³+ fire statements it would be expected to be made in London in a year. LFEPA supports the policy that "*suitably qualified and experienced officers within borough building control departments*" would be appropriate for the

¹ <https://www.water.org.uk/publications/water-industry-guidance/national-guidance-document-provision-water-fire-fighting-3rd>

² A person who is at a higher than average risk from fire due to their: propensity to contribute to the starting of or development of a fire and/or capacity to respond appropriately to signs of a fire or other cues and/or ability to escape

³ Number of major development proposals by financial year in London: 2012, 834; 2013, 1241; 2014, 1420; 2015, 1180; 2016, 1287.

evaluation of the majority of Fire Statements but would like to have the opportunity to provide a specific guidance note for London on when LFB officers should also be consulted. LFEPA would also look to take forward targeted communications work for this group on the introduction of Fire Statements to help support their smooth introduction which we see would have a very positive impact on the future built environment in London. The nature and the number of the of the fire statements that the LFB would be able to consider, is dependent on the resources available. The guidance note and the communications work would help ensure specialist officers are focused on those developments where there is the strongest risk-based case for them to do so.

14. LFB currently provide guidance notes on many different issues for the public and other interested bodies. They cover a wide range of fire safety topics. LFB would provide similar guidance on Fire Statements.. This guidance would specify the circumstances when consultation with the LFB is necessary as well as what the process would be. LFEPA would like to see a reference to LFB guidance in the London Plan.

Information to be provided to the public and public bodies

15. LFEPA would like to see an expectation on those undertaking major developments to demonstrate that building regulations are being met at different stages in construction, particularly in cases where, once construction is complete, only very expensive invasive testing can show what is in place. Examples of this would be cavity barriers and other forms of passive fire protection.
16. An online system where evidence is provided and stored at different stages of construction, similar to how planning documents are provided to the public, might be one solution. A similar approach is already used by some developers particularly in the commercial sector, for large shopping malls. Southwark Council already requires this information when signing off fire stopping works. LFEPA would suggest that planning departments and building control bodies should only sign off Fire Statements which include this commitment as evidence that the development would achieve the highest standards of fire safety.

Competency

17. LFEPA would advocate wider use of competent and third party accredited fire safety professionals to assure the competency of construction work being carried out. Examples would be UK Engineering Council registration for the fire engineers designing a scheme or a third party accredited contractor undertaking fire stopping works or fire risk assessment. LFEPA welcome the reference to competence within the London Plan but would suggest that building control bodies should be encouraged only to sign off schemes where everyone has demonstrated competence and accreditation (where available). This could be specified as an undertaking from the developer included in the Fire Statement.

On other areas

Inclusive design

18. Under D3, inclusive design (p106) while LFEPA recognises and welcomes the inclusion of this section on inclusive design, the London Plan could be further strengthened by setting out the importance of ensuring that inclusive design is dealt with in parallel with the evacuation strategy, which is an intrinsic part of inclusive design in itself.

Construction skills

19. 4.1.4 sets out how the Mayor's London Housing Strategy will deliver the step change in housing supply required, including through "*tackling the construction skills gap and modernising construction methods*". LFEPA would like to see schemes with this aim to include a focus on skills specifically related to fire safety – including the importance of passive fire protection measures such as cavity barriers and the installation/maintenance of AFSS or smoke ventilation systems.

Car parking

20. Section 6A.10 of the current London Plan contains the exception that "*provision for parking at Ambulance, Fire and policing facilities will be assessed on their own merits*". This provision has helped LFEPA ensure that the operational needs of the service have been met in previous developments – for instance, some specialist officers travel to incidents in cars and need to have them parked close to fire brigade properties where they are stationed. There are also incidences where operational staff need to be able to transport bespoke equipment with them to be ready for operational incidents or in order to take part in training, which can require access to cars. Owing to the 24 hour nature of fire service provision, staff also need to travel to and from fire service facilities during times when public transport is not available or not frequent. LFEPA would like to see this exception included in the New London Plan to continue to provide this

flexibility on this issue. This is especially important within the context of the New London Plan setting out that car-free development should be the starting point for all development.

Supporting London's culture and creative industries

21. Under Policy HC5 Supporting London's culture and creative industries, the draft London Plan encourage the temporary use of vacant buildings and sites for cultural and creative activities. This is something LFEPAs support and is currently seeing the benefits of at The Workshop, at the 8 Albert Embankment site in Lambeth. The pop up museum there has seen circa 20,000 visitors in 2017 alone, all of whom have had the opportunity to explore the history of the fire brigade in London, learn about fire safety and improve their own safety in the home. A permanent museum is planned for the site within the lifetime of the London Plan. As well as being a cultural offering this would also support the aspirations set out in D10 and D11 of the London Plan through public education programmes contributing towards maintaining a safe and secure environment in London, including delivering fire safety information.

Appendix 1

Automatic Fire Suppression Systems (AFSS): Refreshed position statement

London Fire Brigade (LFB) believes that Automatic Fire Suppression Systems (AFSS) play a significant role, as part of an appropriate package of fire safety measures, in reducing the impact of fire on people, property and the environment. They also assist firefighters in carrying out search and rescue operations by limiting fire development, which significantly reduces the risks to firefighters.

There is clear evidence that AFSS (also referred to as Automatic Water Fire Suppression Systems - AWFSS), such as sprinklers and watermist systems are effective in the rapid suppression of fires. We therefore recommend AFSS in the following building types to protect those living in, working in and visiting London:

Residential premises

While current Building Regulations recognise that all new residential buildings in excess of 30m height should be provided with AFSS, LFB are of the opinion that this should be extended to existing buildings and that the appropriate height is 18m in both cases. We therefore recommend AFSS in:

- All new residential developments over 18m in height.
- Existing residential blocks over 18m in height (retrofitting), subject to a risk based approach that should include consideration of the vulnerability of the residents.

Schools

Building Bulletin 100 (BB100): *Design for fire safety in schools*, published in 2007, introduced the 'expectation' that all new schools would have AFSS installed. We recommend that:

- AFSS is mandatory in all new school builds and as part of major refurbishments.

Care homes and sheltered (specialised) accommodation

We recommend the inclusion of AFSS in:

- All new residential care homes and sheltered (specialised) accommodation.
- Existing residential care homes and sheltered (specialised) accommodation (retrofitting), subject to a risk based approach that should include consideration of the vulnerability of the residents.

Other priorities

We also strongly advocate the use of AFSS in the following premises:

- All homes occupied by the most vulnerable in our communities.
- All other residential properties which include hotels, hostels and student accommodation, over 18m in height.
- All new London Fire Brigade buildings.

Other premises

We will also continue to promote the installation of AFSS within the following types of properties throughout London:

- Heritage buildings.
- Complex and deep sub surface structures such as basements.
- Large warehouses.

Additional information supporting this statement is available on the London Fire Brigade website:

<http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/sprinklers.asp>