

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Rt Hon Robert Jenrick**

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities  
and Local Government  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

**Date:** 05 DEC 2019

*Dear Robert,*

## **Response to the consultation on sprinklers and other fire safety measures in new high-rise blocks of flats**

I welcome the Government's intention to amend the Building Regulations to increase the provision of sprinklers in new residential developments. The proposals are a positive first step but should go further.

The Grenfell Tower fire was a tragedy for the country that will never be forgotten. The Government must do everything possible to ensure it does not happen again. Ensuring that homes are built to the highest safety standards is a key step towards much-needed national reforms.

In London, I have taken important steps to require the highest standards of fire safety in new homes delivered across the city and be at the forefront of best practice when delivering new homes on GLA-owned land:

- For the first time, my draft London Plan includes a specific policy that requires all development proposals to achieve the highest standards of fire safety, including through the use of automatic fire suppression systems (AFSS) such as sprinklers;
- For GLA-owned land, I have recently instated fire safety requirements for new schemes coming forward. As such, future residential development agreements on GLA land must provide AFSS, include water supplies for firefighting and promote the registration of white good products. I have gone further than the Government by restricting the use of combustible materials in the external walls of all residential developments regardless of height.

Turning to the consultation, I have long supported the London Fire Brigade's (LFB) campaign to increase the use of sprinklers. Put simply, sprinklers have an excellent track record of saving lives, protecting residents, reducing property damage, controlling the spread of fire and giving firefighters extra time to facilitate evacuation. Evidence shows that AFSS are an effective additional layer of safety to a building.

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As you will be aware, Scotland and Wales have recently introduced new legislation to require sprinklers in all new residential buildings. In addition, recent fires in low- and mid-rise blocks have demonstrated that a rapid external spread of fire can be extremely dangerous for buildings of any height. Just last month, the student accommodation in Bolton that caught fire was just under 18 metres. It is understood that the high pressure laminate cladding systems may have contributed to the rapid spread of the fire through the building. It is the LFB's view that if these buildings included sprinklers, this may have helped to control the internal spread of fire.

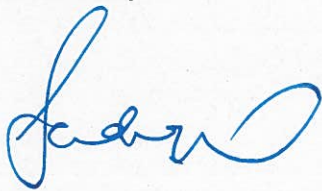
Given all the above, AFSS, such as sprinklers, should be mandatory in all new purpose-built blocks of flats. This should also include non-standard residential buildings, such as hotels and student accommodation. AFSS should be mandatory in all new buildings used for care homes, where building users may be less able to evacuate quickly, and in schools.

Retrofitting of sprinklers, whilst not always possible, may be an important step towards making existing buildings safe and must be considered in a holistic manner within a comprehensive understanding of the building. I support the national Labour Party's proposal for a new Decent Homes Standard, which would include the retrofitting of sprinklers to existing blocks. I call again on your Government to fund the retrofitting of sprinklers or other suitable fire suppression systems as part of a risk-based approach.

Finally, I am supportive of the other fire safety measures set out in this consultation. Wayfinding signage is a positive and relatively low-cost solution to a known issue and should be made mandatory in all buildings. I support Sir Martin Moore-Bick's recommendation in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase 1 report for the installation of evacuation alert systems in high-rise buildings. In doing so, it will be important to bear in mind that emergency evacuation alert systems are a new development, with standards and scope yet to be published, and which could place a significant training requirement on Fire and Rescue Services to manage potential operational risks in their use. These factors should be considered as this technology is taken forward.

I request that you also carefully consider LFB's detailed submission to this consultation. I am pleased with the direction of travel on this important issue, but I urge you to take bold steps to widen the scope of your proposals. Sprinklers should be required in all new purpose-built blocks of flats and all homes where vulnerable people live. You must ensure this does not become a missed opportunity to increase fire safety standards and give people confidence in the safety of new buildings.

Yours sincerely,



**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London