

Sprinklers and other Fire Safety Measures in New High-Rise Blocks of Flats

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and South Essex Homes

Joint Response to Consultation

Chapter 2 – Stronger requirements for multi-occupied high-rise residential buildings

Q1	Do you agree or disagree that the height threshold for sprinkler provision in new blocks of flats should be reduced?
	<i>Yes</i>
Q1b	If you agree that the height threshold should be reduced, what should the new threshold be and what is the evidence for this particular threshold?
	<i>We believe that the threshold should be set at 18 metres to align with the definition of a high rise residential building in the proposed new building safety regime and also with the ban on combustible materials in external walls. This will ensure consistency of definition and approach.</i>
Q2	Do you agree or disagree that these systems should be designed in accordance with the relevant guidance in BS 9251?
	<i>Agree</i>
Q2b	If you disagree, what specifications and performance should be required?
	<i>n/a</i>
Q3	Do you agree or disagree that there should be a transitional period of six months?
	<i>Agree in order to give the industry time to prepare.</i>
Q3b	If you disagree, how long should the transition period be?
	<i>n/a</i>
Q4	Do you agree or disagree that there should be a more consistent approach to wayfinding signage for fire and rescue services in Approved Document B?
	<i>Agree</i>
Q5	Are there any existing standards or guidance which should be introduced to the guidance provided in Approved Document B? Please specify.
	<i>No view</i>
Q5b	Does this guidance need to be supplemented or amended for inclusion in Approved Document B? If yes, please specify how.
	<i>No view</i>

Q6	What views exist on the benefits of each signage option set out above?
	<i>The signage option followed should provide for safe evacuation and the protection of fire fighters. Further research is required to determine best method. Vinyl lettering would not meet the low visibility requirement.</i>
Q6b	What is the preferred option set out above for wayfinding signage? Vinyl lettering, photoluminescent lettering, emergency powered lighting luminaries, other (please specify).
	<i>Our preference would be for the installation of photoluminescent lettering as this would provide a good level of visibility and would be less susceptible to vandalism and/or poor maintenance than, say, emergency powered lighting luminaries. Further research to determine suitability is required.</i>
Q7	Should Approved Document B include a requirement for an emergency evacuation system, which could support fire and rescue services operational response by alerting residents if they need to evacuate? [Yes/No]
	<i>Yes, however the priority is having a suitable framework in which the correct design and construction decisions are made. Emergency evacuation system and alerting residents can then be part of this.</i>
Q7b	For each response, what views exist on the benefits and risks of such an approach?
	<i>A mandatory evacuation alert system, to be controlled by the attending fire service, would enable the fire service to switch from a stay put approach to a phased or all out evacuation based upon their on-scene dynamic risk assessment.</i> <i>Fire service control would also reduce the likelihood of false alarms and/or misuse of the system. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and South Essex Homes will be piloting the installation of such systems in two of their high rise residential blocks in early 2020.</i> <i>However, serious consideration should be given as to whether single staircase evacuation is ever suitable and all high rise residential buildings should be designed with more than one means of escape.</i>
Q8	If this requirement was introduced to Approved Document B, above what height threshold should this system be required?
	<i>We believe that the threshold should be set at 18 metres. An 18m threshold would align with the definition of a high rise residential building in the proposed new building safety regime and also with the ban on combustible materials in external walls. This will ensure consistency of definition and approach.</i>
Q8b	For each response, please provide evidence to support your answer.
	<i>An 18m threshold would align with the definition of a high rise residential building in the proposed new building safety regime and also with the ban on combustible materials in external walls. This will ensure consistency of definition and approach.</i>
Q9	Please provide any additional evidence on costs, risks and benefits which should be considered in an assessment of impacts in the following areas.

	<p>a) Sprinkler provision in new high-rise blocks of flats</p> <p>b) Wayfinding signage for fire and rescue services</p> <p>c) Evacuation alert systems</p>
	<p><i>Each of these investments would individually and collectively improve fire safety within high rise residential buildings. Individual schemes should be assessed based upon their lifetime maintenance costs, risks of vandalism and/or misuse.</i></p>
Q10	<p>Are you aware of any particular equalities impacts for these proposals? How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any ways we could better advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not? Please provide evidence to support your response.</p>
	<p><i>Any evacuation system must be designed to meet the requirements of people with disabilities including hearing and sight impairment.</i></p>