

Miss Deane

To those with an interest

KNOWSLEY HEIGHTS, KNOWSLEY. EXTERNAL FIRE ON APRIL THE 5TH 1991

1. I circulated to some of you the report in the Liverpool Echo of April the 5th about this fire.
2. The news from MTF and the consultant architect this morning is that the fire is being treated by Knowsley as "insignificant".
3. The block performed well, the fire doors were unvandalised and in place (which is unusual for Merseyside) the block was evacuated easily, only three people were slightly affected by smoke, and all tenants returned willingly to their flats by 8.00am the same morning.
4. The fire brigade are reported to be pleased with the performance of the block. It did not have vertical fire stopping which is in line with BRE recent advice in cases where all materials used in the over cladding and insulation are non combustible.
5. The fire brigade is reported as supporting the absence of vertical cavity barriers in that, had these been present, the fire might have spread horizontally round the block, or the gases caused by combustion might have leap-frogged the barriers in any case.
6. It appears that the fire was started by a large pile of rubbish, including settees, timber and polystyrene which had been allowed to accumulate in the re-entrant corner to the block.
7. This pile was apparently wilfully ignited.
8. As far as implications for future projects of this type are concerned, the Fire Research Station will be involved in the investigation of this fire.
9. The consultant architect, the cladding manufacturers, and other members of the consortium will also be looking in detail at both the design and performance of the system.
10. Apparently the London borough of Lambeth, where a similar but considerably different project is now in progress are content to proceed.
11. This project, Rundell Tower, is different in design, and has no cladding on its ground and first floors.
12. The particular situation which occurred at Knowsley Heights, could not therefore be reproduced at Rundell.
13. This fire reinforces the connection between inflammable refuse and fire which we know to be a major danger on council estates. It may be that we will need to find ways of educating both councils and residents in the nature of these risks particularly where older flammable foam furniture is involved.