

## **GRENFELL TOWER**

### **PUBLIC INQUIRY**

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#### **Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry Witness Statement of**

**Jose Anon**

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I, **JOSE ANON**, c/o Kensington Town Hall, Hornton St, Kensington, London W8 7NX, WILL SAY:

1. I make this Witness Statement further to receipt of the Rule 9 letter from the Public Inquiry dated 12 July 2018 and to provide assistance to the Public Inquiry.
2. The matters contained in this statement are either known to me or, are ones which I believe (in which case I have specifically said so) or are derived from records including computer records maintained by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ('the Borough') and to which I have access and with which I am familiar and which I believe to be accurate.
3. I was at Grenfell Tower on the afternoon of the fire and during the following two days. The fire has had quite an effect on me and the images of the burning building remain in my head. Although I carried on with my usual work responsibilities, as I felt we needed to keep the Building Control team running, it has been difficult. I have attended

dangerous structures with fires before, but this was very different. I felt helpless watching multiple small fires still burning in the building during the course of the afternoon and evening and not being able to assist the fire brigade.

### **Background**

4. I have a BA Honours Degree in Modern Iberian and Latin American Regional Studies from UCL and a BSc Honours in Building Control Surveying. I obtained my BSc degree, which took 5 years to complete, from the University of Westminster which I undertook whilst working for RBKC. I am also a member of the Chartered Association of Building Engineers and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.
5. Before joining the Borough, I used to work for my father's privately owned building company, which undertook various building contracts within the borough and around central London. I was a Company Director and Secretary until I joined the Council, when I had to give up my business interests in the Company.
6. I joined the Borough just over in May 1989 as a Surveyor. During my time with the Borough, having started as a Building Control Surveyor, I progressed to Senior Building Control Surveyor and was then promoted again in August 2002 to Principal Building Control Surveyor. I became Deputy Building Control Manager under John Allen in August 2013, which is the role I was in at the time of the fire.

### **Borough Building Control function**

7. Since John Allen left the Borough in February 2018, my job title is now District Surveyor. I am technical lead for the function and jointly run the team with the Head of Service and Business Development. I also report to the Head of Service and Business Development. As technical lead, I tend to be involved in the most complex developments within the borough, but I do not handle the financial/business side. I deal with live cases and go to site day to day.
8. In 1990, there were about 40 surveyors and administrative staff working within Building Control at the Borough. Due to increased competition for work from approved inspectors (private sector building control surveyors), our numbers working in the department dwindled. We have lost a lot of our staff to the private sector and retirement.

9. The Building Control function sits within RBKC's Planning Department. At the time of the fire, John Allen was the departmental manager and I was John Allen's deputy. There were a number of other surveyors who would be responsible for "patches" within the borough, detailed further below. The department also had a specialist fire surveyor, Paul Hanson.
10. Before the fire at Grenfell Tower, the way that work would be allocated is that a surveyor would be allocated a geographic area in the borough, a "patch", and they would generally be responsible for any work that came in within that area. There were certain exceptions to this. Because a lot of the team members have been in the industry for so long, some of us would always do work for "partner" clients, regardless of the patch system. For instance, I deal with a lot of the Corporate Services work such as schools, flats and Council buildings, which are scattered around the borough. I would tend to pick these jobs up when they came up, even if they were not in my assigned patch.
11. Since the fire, the process of work allocation has changed, such that work is allocated dependent on the complexity of the job. As the technical lead, I will usually take on the most complex jobs. Other smaller, simpler jobs will usually be allocated to a more junior surveyor within the team.
12. In terms of team training, if there are changes to the Building Regulations or British Standards, the team receives copies of the necessary material documents. They are also usually available online. We also subscribe to IHS (a provider of digital information on Building Regulations and other technical information, including British Standards) and the trade press, which are resource providers, to assist us with technical issues. We have access to the British Standards and technical documents as they are published. We are informed of any changes and updates to Building Regulations and legislation by Local Authority Building Control ('LABC'). LABC provide advice and education to Local Authorities in England and Wales.
13. We also have in-house training. When we attend seminars or tutorials, for example from LABC, we share the contents of these within the team. As surveyors, we have to be up to date in terms of all legislative developments within building control

### **Building Control process**

14. When a client wishes to build, re-design, extend or refurbish a structure, they submit an application to the council so that a building control surveyor will oversee their project. A surveyor in the team will then firstly be responsible for checking the plans before work starts. The surveyor will then visit and survey the site periodically throughout a project before issuing a completion certificate at the end of the project.
15. In order to help us win work from clients on larger projects, we also offer initial free pre-application advice on the proviso that the Council will be instructed to deal with the project. Under the Charges Regulations, Local Authorities are statutorily bound to provide 1 hour of free advice for projects anyway, but we are agreeable to extend this on big projects in order to win work.
16. Once the application and plans are received, the surveyor will check them and, if necessary, liaise with the architect for supporting documents, such as structural calculations (normally provided by structural engineer as a sub-contractor), fire strategy, details of drainage and services, and any other further documentation/information which is necessary.
17. On major projects, we engage early on in the design process, even during the pre-planning stage sometimes. Changes to the design may be required which will have an impact on the planning aspect of the project and therefore it is beneficial for a customer to finalise the design as soon as possible and be able to close out their planning application as soon as possible. One recent large project I worked on involved a change of use from two hotels to residential flats. We were involved in fortnightly meetings with the design and fire safety teams to ensure the work would be compliant before substantive work began on site.
18. Surveyors are not under a statutory obligation to routinely inspect work at specific stages of the project. These statutory obligations were abolished around 2012. Under the old regime, there used to be what were known as "Statutory Notifications" under the Building Regulations. The person undertaking the work (the owner or contractor) was obliged to notify the local authority building control department at certain prescribed stages of a project, for instance: commencement, excavations for

foundations, drains, oversite, installation of damp-proof courses and damp-proof membranes and completion.

19. A surveyor would have to check these key stages of the building works, under the Statutory Notifications regime, before that element of works could be finalised and signed off by the surveyor. If a drain was covered up before inspection, a surveyor could serve an opening up notice requiring the contractors to expose it for inspection.
20. However, now clients are not obliged to tell us when they are completing certain elements of works. There is no statutory obligation for them to do so. The only time clients are obliged to notify Building Control is at the start of the works "commencement" and then upon "completion".
21. Because of the changes to the Statutory Notification procedure, there is more onus on surveyors and clients to ensure enough visits are made in order for the surveyor to be able to issue a Completion Certificate at the end of the project. The wording used on the Completion Certificate is that the surveyor must have '*ascertained after taking all reasonable steps, the building work carried out complied with the relevant provisions (of the Building Regulations)*'. Enough inspections must therefore be carried out, but the specific matters requiring inspection are no longer prescribed by law. Clients will often ask us to come in at certain stages to approve the work and surveyors in our team are proactive - we will schedule visits to a site even when not specifically asked by a client.
22. Personally, I still adhere to the statutory inspections as I believe that these are the minimum inspections which should be made. I would say that most reputable builder clients would still ask that the old statutory "inspections" regime is adhered to, for their own and their client's peace of mind. I think most of my colleagues also prefer to follow the old statutory inspection regime. As a team, each surveyor aims to visit each job at least once every 90 days, although visits are of course dictated by the client demand, the type of work being undertaken and the progress of works on the site.
23. In terms of the elements the team look for during a project, it will commonly be things like underpinning, foundations, piling, drainage, damp proofing, new floors and walls,

and ventilation. We will periodically check these types of items. We also look at electrical and mechanical services, including penetrations and how these are fire stopped. We check to ensure that all is built as per the plans and that the work is compliant with the Building Regulations, highlighting to the client any areas of concern or non-compliance. If there are any issues, we will make a repeat visit to ensure the necessary remedial work has taken place.

24. When carrying out inspections, surveyors will be accompanied by various site foremen (for instance a brickwork foreman who will be responsible for the quality of the brickwork), trades sub-contractors and other site personnel with different roles. As such, there are usually a multitude of people looking and inspecting each area of building work, not just us. We are there to provide specialist building control input.
25. I have always thought that a big part of a surveyor's job is risk assessment of the builder. If a surveyor knows the builder in question from previous projects, and knows they tend to carry out work competently, these would be classed as lower risk.
26. On larger projects, we often liaise with appropriate outside authorities such as the fire authority, water utilities (for sewage and sewers) or London Underground. It is not just a matter of setting up periodic meetings, but being receptive to how a project is developing and going when needed by the client, sometimes at short notice.
27. Often a design may require changes which can't be foreseen until contractors set up on site. For example, if it turns out carrying work out required by the design is not practicable for some reason. If this occurs, we work closely with the designers to ensure regulatory and building control compliance in any revised designs.
28. If specialist fire safety knowledge for a site was needed, such as means of escape routes and fire-fighting access, Paul Hanson would deal with this part of the project on a consultancy-type basis, to provide the necessary advice. Paul would not run his own jobs as the rest of the surveyors do in the team, but rather provide advice when needed. Paul would produce a set of comments, which we call "observations", on the works proposals. These would be sent to the client for them to address and factor into their works.

29. All surveyors do also have at least a working knowledge of fire safety requirements. Our clients must demonstrate compliance with the Building Regulations, including B1 to B5 which relate to fire safety, so we all know the key principles.
30. When the work is complete, we go back to site to do a final inspection. By this stage, we would have made enough visits to the site to be familiar with the works and already satisfied ourselves the work is compliant. The final visit is just to ensure everything has been finished properly and to satisfy ourselves the work can be signed off.
31. Once we are satisfied work has been carried out in accordance with the plans, drawings and Building Regulations, a completion certificate is issued. Everything has to be completed to our satisfaction before a certificate is issued. We do have the option of issuing what is known as a "sectional completion certificate". We might issue one of these if we are able to sign off part of the works, for example, where residential works are complete, but the commercial property parts of the building are not yet finished and do not impact on the residential parts of the building.
32. A job can't be signed off until we have receipt of certificates for elements such as electrical, fire alarm, and emergency lighting amongst others. These are specialist elements which we as surveyors can't sign off ourselves. We may do the final inspection and will be satisfied but we do not sign off until all necessary certificates are received, even if there is pressure from the client to do so.
33. Our role on a project tends to end once we have signed a completion certificate. Occasionally, where there are defects identified post-completion, clients may ask us for advice but this would be quite rare.

### **Product safety**

34. As surveyors, we make the assumption that products used on a project (and factored into the design) have already been tested to the necessary regulations and standards. We cannot be expected to ascertain how safe a product is during a site visit. There are a range of accrediting bodies which ensure products meet with the relevant regulations and British and BS-EN Standards. The main bodies are the British Board Agreement (BBA) and the Building Research Establishment (BRE). There are also companies who

test products to ensure they meet the requirements of the British Standards such as Exova, Certifire and TRADA.

35. I do check to ensure there is a compliance stamp on certain products and I have had instances where a non-certified product is used at a site. If this is the case, I advise the client or sub-contractor they need to use an accredited product. The kinds of stamps I will be looking for are things like a "CE" marking. Furthermore, even if the product has the correct certification marking, I may see it is being used or installed incorrectly. I would again in such instance have to advise that the product could not be used in that way. This is part of our job: to ensure compliance.
36. We do not work with testing or certifying companies. We look at certification to ensure compliance with minimum standards. We do not challenge the product's certification itself as we do not have the technical expertise to do so. We and our clients are reliant on the manufacturers and organisation conducting the testing to provide the required proof of the product's suitability.

#### Grenfell Tower

37. I was aware of the Grenfell Tower refurbishment project when the job came into our department. I was initially asked to undertake the surveying work on the project and the associated work at the Leisure Centre and Academy. However, at the time I was dealing with a number of large housing and refurbishment projects across the borough, as well as large projects at Harrods and the Science museum. I did not think I had the capacity to take on this additional workload and advised my supervisor, John Allen, accordingly.
38. One of the other reasons I didn't take the job on was because I had friends who lived in the tower and I felt I needed to keep a professional "distance". Fortunately, all my friends managed to escape from the tower on the night of the fire.
39. I was aware the work was allocated to John Hoban, another surveyor in the team, but it wasn't a job I followed particularly closely and I did not know of any details relating to the Grenfell Tower refurbishment works.

40. I did make one visit to Grenfell Tower on 17 April 2015. I attach at Exhibit JA1, the short site note I entered in my calendar on my Blackberry. The first part of the note relates to the client contact at the tower and the site address. I then added the following contemporaneous note: "Metal deck in place, A393 Mesh going in and ok, min cover 25 mm to mesh. Overlaps ok." This represents the work I inspected, which was the metal decking/shutter together with the reinforcement, reinforcement laps and the depth of concrete below the reinforcement, which was to form a new floor slab.
41. This was the only element of the work I was asked to inspect throughout the course of the building works. I do not recall what floor the work was carried out on. I remember I went up the access scaffolding on the external side of building. On a project of this size, the works would have also been checked by the contractor's site agent, site engineer, the consulting engineer, the clerk of works and possibly the project manager.
42. The work I inspected was "repetitive", which meant John Hoban or possibly John Allen, or even another colleague in John Hoban's absence, would have checked the work too as part of their ongoing inspection of the works.
43. I would have gone to Grenfell Tower to cover for John Hoban who must have been away from work but the client wanted this element of the works to be checked. John Hoban would have dealt with this if he was available. It is quite common for us to cover an inspection for a colleague where a customer requests an inspection and the allocated surveyor is not available.
44. In respect of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation ('the TMO'), I have had a number of applications for works in RBKC owned buildings which are managed on RBKC's behalf by the TMO, but the applications come through the contractor, not the TMO directly.

### **Day of the fire**

45. On the morning of the fire, I got a call at 6:30am from a work colleague who asked if I was in attendance at the fire and I said I wasn't. He told me to switch on the television so I could see what was going on. I switched on the TV and I could not believe what

was happening. Straight away I called my friends I referred to earlier who were residents of Grenfell Tower.

46. I was there at the site of the Grenfell Tower fire from 4pm until about 10:30pm that evening. During the course of my attendance on site I attended a number of Bronze meetings with LFB, Metropolitan Police and other organisations to discuss the ongoing situation with the structural condition of the building, fire-fighting and search and rescue for survivors/victims. Concerns were raised by LFB regarding the structural stability of the building and the danger posed to LFB's presence inside the building. I worked with the LFB and engineers from Arup Associates to ascertain whether or not the building still remained in a stable condition to permit search and rescue, and fire-fighting to continue. I felt so helpless whilst the fire was burning and not knowing how long it would be before the gas supply to the building could be isolated to prevent fires re-igniting.

#### **Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

I am willing for my statement to the Public Inquiry to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and for it to be published on the Inquiry's web site.

Full name: JOSE ANON

Position or office held: DISTRICT SURVEYOR

Signed:



Date: 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018

**GRENFELL TOWER**

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**Exhibit JA1**

**to**

**Witness Statement of**

**Jose Anon**

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Exhibit JA1 Site note of 17.4.2015 (provided to the Inquiry via Egress on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018) -  
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