

### **Statement of John Allen**

1. I believe it would be helpful if I explain some of the background to my appointment as the Building Control Manager of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC).
2. I joined RBKC in 1996 as the Assistant District Surveyor and all of the surveyors that I am going to refer to in this statement were already employed in the department when I joined.
3. Prior to my appointment as the building control manager in September 2013 I was a special projects manager from 2009 and held around 7 or 8 projects which had either been delegated to me or self-selected by me with the agreement of my manager John Jackson.
4. For example I was dealing with a three phase project with a ten year plan which was initially known as 375 Kensington High Street. It was a mix of residential and commercial with six 10 storey blocks and a car park below. I believe that John Jackson asked me to take on this project which was the biggest single project I have ever dealt with, with the expectation that I would simply get on with it but if I needed advice or assistance I could ask.
5. Shortly after my appointment as Building Control Manager, Graham Stallwood, successor of John Jackson, told me to transfer all my projects to the team. Although it is correct to say that Graham Stallwood succeeded John Jackson as my manager. He did not take John Jackson's role. John Jackson was made redundant and Graham Stallwood was given responsibility for Building Control in his role as Head of Development Management
6. At the time of my promotion the phase known as 375 Kensington High Street was almost complete and I had just started the next phase 213 Warwick Road which again involved a number of residential 10 storey towers. I handed this project over to Parvinder Virdee who was the Senior Building Control Surveyor and also responsible

for dangerous structures along with a project for the huge extension of the Victoria and Albert Museum known as the Exhibition Road Building.

7. I had to distribute my other outstanding special projects to the other surveyors and I gave John Hoban, a Senior Building Control Surveyor, the Kensington Academy and Leisure Centre which later also involved Grenfell Tower.
8. Jose Anon was the Principle Building Control Surveyor who I gave a new development called Wornington Green plus the Science Museum, all projects for Cadogan Estates, plus all of Harrods projects and projects for RBKC.
9. I gave Amir Fardouee, the Senior Building Control Surveyor, also with a dangerous structures responsibility, a new school called Marlborough Primary School.
10. I had a handover with each surveyor explaining the nature of the projects and the relationships with the people involved. As a further matter of background I believe that there had been high level meetings between the Executive Director of Planning and Conservation (later Planning and Borough Development) and other directors to try and ensure that internal RBKC projects went to RBKC Building Control. I was not a party to those meetings.
11. However we were competing with the private market in building control and to try and ensure that RBKC internal projects selected our building control department I would meet once a month with the corporate property team to talk about jobs past present and future.
12. I am not certain how the Grenfell Tower project initially came to the Building Control Department but I believe John Jackson asked me to contact Terry Ashton from Exova Warrington. John Jackson knew him and he said he needed advice about a smoke control system.
13. In the private marketplace businesses have contractual relationship with private building control who usually provided a document setting out the "service" they

would provide. On occasion we also did this although we did not have the same contractual relationship as we were a public building control authority. I am not aware of any service type plan incorporating the Grenfell Tower project.

14. See our full plans application procedure flow chart exhibit (JA/1 ). In recent years with “design and build”, project information often arrived in stages throughout the build. Statutory time limits regarding approval or conditional approval or rejection were not usually adhered to in practice. In theory if no decision was made the application would be “deemed” approved but in reality no applicant ever took this point.
15. As a Surveyor the typical process of checking a Building Regulation application would be to sort out the drawings you need to look at, look at each drawing, make a list as you go along, thinking through the building regulations and then usually write a letter suggesting amendments with a commentary which includes reference to the building regulations. For example, one might tell the applicant that they have not provided structural calculations.
16. Typically as the manager I would meet the area surveyor’s monthly, check through their monthly job sheets and in particular what was actually still current (live) to confirm that their workload was manageable. I would always ask if the surveyor needed any help or assistance but I had great confidence in the team as I had been out with them all and whilst they all had different approaches to the work and relationships, I found them all to be good and competent. There was a period between 2013 and 2016 when files started to be scanned once the project was completed. There was an expectation that paper files would be weeded and information kept in chronological order and on a treasury tag. When a project finished in order for the final certificate to be produced the fees would have to be paid and the archive tab “operated”. Paper files were placed in a drawer and later collected by a scanning company for external scanning. Scanning at the point of receipt of applications was brought in around 2017.



17. This next part of my statement will deal with the questions raised by the Inquiry letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

18. Question 1.

I have no knowledge of these matters.

19. Question 2.

I do not recall any applications or modifications.

20. Question 3.

The RBKC hold details of applications made to which the Building Regulations 2010 applied. The reason for any modification is not a matter for Building Control. I made a site visit on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016 in the absence of Mr Jon Hoban and I refer to exhibit (JA/2 ) a letter to Claire Williams setting out the records of the site notes in relation to Grenfell Tower under its application number FP/14/03/563. The site notes were stored on the Acolaid database. The role of Building Control is usefully set out in a Code of Conduct for approved inspectors, exhibit (JA/3 ), and that it is for the owner/occupier of the property ultimately to be responsible for complying with both Planning Laws and Building Regulations. The role of the Building Control Body is to check Building Regulations, and as far as can reasonably be determined, being complied with and that wording is echoed in the Completion Certificate that building work complies with relevant provisions “as far as could be ascertained after taking all reasonable steps”. I had some very limited involvement in a pre-application enquiry concerning the smoke control system and I know that subsequently John Hoban consulted Paul Hanson for his expert advice in relation to that matter.

21. Question 4.

I was not consulted about the cladding and know nothing of its specification. The comment that I make concerning cladding is on my own inspection on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016 as recorded in my notes.

22. Question 5.

At the time of the fire Building Control had no ongoing involvement in Grenfell Tower.

23. Question 6 – Inspections.

I refer again to the exhibit (JA/2 ) the site notes of inspections. Part D of this question refers to “relevant standards”. There is no relevant standard relating to inspections, the frequency and objective of inspections would normally be agreed by the Area Surveyor and the parties involved in a development through the course of the build. If the Area Surveyor had any issues upon which he needed advice he could speak to me. I am not aware of any issues arising in the matter of Grenfell Tower.

24. Question 7 – Governance/Management, Question 8 – Communication with residence, Question 9 –Fire Advice to Residence 2012-14<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Do not relate to Building Control.

25. I have been asked in addition to comment on some questions raised in a letter from the Inquiry dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 regarding the Full Plans Application process.

26. I refer to the flow chart exhibit (JA/1 ). Following receipt and date stamp the application would have been sent to me to check the fees were correct and then returned to the admin team.

27. At this point I do not know what information was submitted with the application but normally whatever was submitted would have been placed in a paper file and handed to the surveyor, John Hoban.

28. I do not believe the application form was amended in terms of the description of the project.

29. Further information regarding different aspects of the project are submitted to Building Control as the building work progresses. There is no final agreed design before the work started and I refer to the limited role of building control that I have explained above which is reflected in the Completion Certificate.

30. In Question 4 the word “subsequently” is used as if there were a complete initial design which is then built. This is a misconception. The “design” of the building takes place through the course of the project.

31. To enable a Completion Certificate to be issued the file location details on the internal computer system called Acolaid had to be changed to “archive”. The issue of the Completion Certificate did not involve me. The Surveyor, John Hoban, would have initiated the process with the Administration Team and the Certificate bears an electronic version of my signature. There was no “system” for checking files had been archived or for checking their content. These administrative practices were the same throughout my employment in the Building Control Department except for one short period when surveyors had to bring files to their manager to ensure they had been weeded, in order to activate the Archive tab in Acolaid. At the time this was to prevent the build-up of large numbers of bulky files on shelving. This frustrated surveyors and the ability to archive was transferred back to surveyors. Post Completion Certificate the paper file should have been placed in a drawer and later collected by an external scanning company.

32. On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017 I searched for both an electronic or paper file as I wanted to find floor plans for the fire brigade. I refer to my email dated 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017 to Mr Jago Williams, exhibit (JA/4 ) confirming that I was unable to retrieve a file.

I believe the content of this statement is true.

I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and published on the Inquiry’s website.

Signed:



Dated:

25<sup>th</sup> November 2018