



JOHN EDWARD HOBAN WITNESS STATEMENT 30.11.18

1. I was a senior building control surveyor employed by RBKC from 01.04.1996 to 31.03.2017. During that period my duties included being responsible for projects in the relevant area.
2. As per the Witness Statement Protocol, I confirm that I have provided a statement to the police regarding this matter. Although I have yet to formally sign that statement, I confirm that to the best of my recollection the matters stated within that statement are true and accurate. I consent for that statement to be disclosed to the Public Inquiry.
3. As a result of restructuring, due to austerity measures, the planning department was restructured with substantial cuts to building control. This led to a substantial reduction in the number of employees in building control. Consequently, the remaining employees had their work load increase commensurately.
4. Against this backdrop, in November 2013 my line manager, John Allen, instructed me to take over major projects that he had previously been dealing with. At some point this included the Grenfell Tower refurbishment.
5. I will limit my statement to matters with which I have direct knowledge of. Any sections/points I have not commented on in respect of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry letter (Rule 9 request) of 05.06.18 is because I do not have direct knowledge of these matters.
6. I will use the headings and questions as outlined in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry letter (Rule 9 request) dated 05.06.18.
7. **Modifications to the interior of the building 2012-2016**
8. **What modifications were made to the inside of the building?**

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9. As far as I can recall, the main works carried out comprised of works within the main common lift area, minor alterations to utilities within various flats, refurbishment of the mezzanine floor (including new flats), the walkway and walkway plus one (including the new boxing club, refurbishment of the ground storey (including new community room and playgroup areas for pre school children), basement storey plant, making good of installation of new windows, new services cupboards in the lift lobby area on all storeys, new mains electrical power cables in the main common lift area, mechanical smoke extract ventilation system, automatic fire alarms and escape lighting.

10. **Who made these modifications?**

11. The Council and their project managers. Kensington and Chelsea TMO. And the main contractors were Rydon.

12. **What was the reason for the modifications?**


13. I am not in a position to answer that.

14. **What were the regulations, legislation, British Standards, guidance etc. that applied to the modifications throughout the period from initial design to completion and approval.**

15. The main regulations/legislation, British standards and guidance that I gave advice and observations under were The Building Act 1984, The Building Regulations 2010 (as amended), the Approved Documents in force at the time and the applicable British Standards and Guidance including the Building Control Guidance Notes and other information that I read during the course of the project.

16. **Were the modifications compliant with such regulations, legislation, British Standards (including testing requirements), guidance etc.**

17. From the plans that I saw, and the inspections I and other members of building control carried out, yes. However subsequent to the fire it became apparent that fire stopping / fire breaks was not sufficient.

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18. If so, were any of those inadequate and if so in what respects?
19. See response at paragraph 16.
20. If not, what elements or aspects of the interior of the building at the time of the fire failed to comply with what elements or aspects of what regulations, legislation, British Standards, guidance, industry practice, and in each case to what extent?
21. As far I can tell now, the windows were not fitted in accordance with the Building Regulations. They were not complaint as it appeared the fire barriers were not installed correctly and the fire stopping hadn't been sealed correctly.
22. Why did each such failure occur?
23. This would either be due to the design of the window and/or the manner of installation.
24. Who was responsible for such failures?
25. If the fault is due to the design of the window then the failure would be due to the procurement/use of said windows and whoever made that/those decision(s). I would not know who this person or persons are.
26. If the fault is due to the installation of the windows then the failure would be with the installers and their supervisors.
27. To what extent did the design and construction of the modifications to the interior of the building take account of the design and construction of the modifications to exterior of the building? If it did not, in what respects did it not and why not?
28. I cannot comment on this.

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29. What advice or information was available, and what assessments were made, about the components that comprise the interior of the building, their fire safety, fire-resistance and compliance with safety standards (including information or advice from manufacturers of relevant components)?

30. I provided observations under B2 and B3 of The Building Regulations 2010 as amended in consultation with Paul Hanson where necessary.

31. I would also forward emails to the architect and other parties following consultation with my colleague Paul Hanson.

32. I retained copies of some emails relevant to this issue and I attach them to this statement. Email chain 03.03.15 – 11.03.15 (JEH/1), email chain 02.09.14 – 05.09.14 (JEH/2), email chain 03.03.15 – 11.03.15 (JEH/3) and email chain 03.03.15 – 20.03.15 (JEH/4).

33. Was specific consideration given to the combination of the interior components (e.g. fire-doors, other fire-breaks, ventilation systems, dry or wet risers or the absence of the same, stairways and access) and the fire safety, fire-retardancy and compliance with safety standards of the same

34. Yes it was, I refer you to emails provided exhibited as JEH/1, JEH/2, JEH/3 and JEH/4.

35. What decisions about the interior of the building were made, by whom and when?

36. I made decisions in relation to B2, B3 and B4 and where necessary after consultation with Paul Hanson and John Allen. Paul Hanson made decisions in relation to B1 and B5.

37. Examples of decisions I made include where the fire stopping should be, linings and structure within the building, internal fire spread (structure), internal fire spread for the new works (including fire time for the building and compartmentation).

38. I also made decisions about items such as ventilation, sound proofing between the flats, drainage, moisture penetration into the building, sanitary accommodation, drainage, heat producing appliances, protection and stairs, conservation of fuel and power, access to and use of the buildings, electrical installations.

39. I do not currently have access to my diaries and handwritten site notes to enable me to answer when such decisions were made.

40. **What was the chain of decision-making, communication and responsibility about those matters?**

41. I made decisions in relation to B2, B3 and B5 of the Building Regulations 2010 as amended. Paul Hanson made decisions in relation to B 1 and B5.

42. In relation to decisions I made, some were made without reference to Paul Hanson and/or John Allen and others were made following discussions with them. Communication would be both by face to face discussion and email.

43. **What factors or motives influenced the decisions about the interior of the building?**

44. As far as I know, the prevailing regulations and legislation.

45. **What if any assessments were carried out to balance such factors or motives with the safety of the residents?**

46. Not applicable given my answer at paragraph 43.

47. **If such assessments were carried out, who carried them out, when and what did they conclude?**

48. I cannot comment on this given my previous answers.

49. **Modifications to the exterior of the building 2012-2016 (including cladding and insulation)**

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50. What was the purpose of the cladding/insulation to the exterior of the building?

51. I do not have an answer for that.

52. What was its design, manufacture, composition and method of fixing to the building?

53. The initial design was aluminium faced insulated panels, ceramic coated insulated glass panels, fixed and pivot hung double glazed units, zinc panel cladding (residential), aluminium rain screen cladding to walkway plus one, walkway and mezzanine. See original drawing 1279 SEA (05) 101 00 Proposed North Elevation Rev01 (my exhibit JEH/5, Inquiry URN RBK00002592)

54. To what extent did the design and construction of the modifications to the exterior of the building take account of the design and construction of the interior of the building? If it did not, in what respects did it not and why not?

55. I cannot comment on this.

56. Was the exterior of the building (including the cladding, insulation, fixings and windows) compliant with relevant building regulations, fire regulations, other legislation, British Standards (including testing requirements), guidance and industry practice?

57. Based on the information I had at the time it was my understanding that it was compliant. However, the cladding has now been shown not to be compliant as a result of the cladding that was specified would be used was not in fact used.

58. To the extent that it was compliant with such regulations, legislation, British Standards, guidance etc. were any of those inadequate and if so in what respects, so far as relevant to the nature and immediate causes of the fire and its spread?

59. The cladding system was not compliant.

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60. If not compliant in any respect, what elements or aspects of the exterior of the building at the time of the fire failed to comply with what elements or aspects of what regulations, legislation, British Standards, guidance, industry practice, and in each case to what extent?

61. The cladding installed did not follow the guidance in section 12 of Approved Document B. For example, it was not class O material and there is a question mark about whether the insulation material was constructed of materials of limited combustibility.

62. Who was responsible for such failures?

63. The person/persons who chose to change the specification without notifying building control using materials that did not comply with the prescribed standards, the person/persons not fixing the fire breaks/cavity barriers correctly, the person/persons supervising their work, the person/persons who set out the standard for fire testing, the person/persons who set out the standards in the Building Regulations, the person/persons who repealed certain regulations/standards that may have prevented the fire from spreading so quickly.

64. What advice or information was available, and what assessments were made, about the components that comprised the exterior of the building, their fire safety, fire-resistance and compliance with safety standards (including information or advice from manufacturers of relevant components)?

65. I was provided with initial drawings and details and discussed the works with the architect and his specialist consultant dealing with fire matters. I also had a brief discussion with the engineer from the contractors installing the cladding system to the exterior of the building at the commencement of the works to the exterior.

66. During that discussion I recall that I was advised by the engineer that tests had been carried out to the metal framework supporting the cladding. I also recall that I was advised that the system had been fitted to many buildings throughout England and Wales to buildings of a similar height and construction.

67. I also looked up information on the insulation. The cladding panels themselves, as far as I can recall, did not have any markings on them to indicate what standard they complied to. I was also advised at the initial meeting on site by the specialist consultant that the cladding would comply with the standards set out in Approved Document B.

68. Was specific consideration given to the combination of the exterior components (e.g. cladding, insulation, windows, and methods of fixing) and the fire safety, fire-retardancy and compliance with safety standards of the same?

69. It was my understanding that the components used would be in compliance with the standards set out in Approved document B.

70. Specific decisions about the cladding, insulation, windows and method of fixing would be made by the designer and the person/persons providing them with technical advice.

71. What decisions about the exterior of the building (i.e. cladding, insulation, fixings and windows) were made, by whom and when?

72. In terms of my role, Paul Hanson and myself provided advice on such matters as outlined in my emails JEH/1, JEH/2, JEH/3 and JEH/4.

73. What was the chain of decision-making, communication and responsibility about the cladding, insulation, windows and fixings?

74. Decisions were made by other parties in respect of the cladding, insulation, windows and fixings.

75. What factors or motives influenced the decisions about the exterior of the building?

76. I cannot comment on this.

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77. What if any assessments were carried out to balance such factors or motives with the safety of the residents?

78. Not applicable in light of my response at paragraph 75.

79. If such assessments were carried out, who carried them out, when and what did they conclude?

80. Not applicable in light of my response at paragraph 75.

81. Inspections

82. What fire and other relevant inspections (including building control inspections) were carried out:

83. During the recent renovations; and

84. Inspections were carried out by myself, Paul Hanson, John Allen, Parvinder Virdee. Also, in August / September 2015, I was absent following an operation and I was informed by the project manager that one of my colleagues visited the site in my absence.

85. Between the completion of the recent renovations and the fire?

86. I did not carry out any inspections post renovation completion and pre me leaving the Council.

87. What were the relevant conclusions/reports from those inspections and by whom were they carried out?

88. If I had any concerns after an inspection I would raise these with the site manager and the clerk of works. I would record such concerns in my handheld notebooks which I left in the Council upon my departure. I do not currently have access to these.

89. It was policy that following a site visit, notes are uploaded on to Acolaid. Currently, I do not have access to the information and records requested.

90. Towards the end of the project I prepared a report that was limited to outstanding work and John Allen prepared a similar report.

91. Pursuant to what criteria were such inspections carried out, how frequently and by what personnel?

92. My inspections were to examine the structural works and progress of the works as the proceeded. As far as I can recall I generally visited once a month. There were times when I was unable to do so, such as following an operation and being given an additional area to deal with, but I would need access to the relevant records to comment further.

93. Were the inspections compliant with all relevant standards?

94. We are awaiting disclosure of documents from the RBKC prior to answering this (in particular access to my site notes, typed and hand written, access to my Outlook calendar notes relating to individual appointments / site visits to Grenfell Tower).

95. Were the fire and other safety inspections system (including any criteria applied) reasonably fit for purpose?

96. I cannot comment on this.

97. Who carried out the inspections, how were they trained and were they competent to do so?

98. The persons referred to in paragraph 83 were the persons who carried such inspections.

99. I can only comment on my on training. I am an Associate member of the Chartered Association of Building Engineers. I have an ordinary and higher certificate in building studies. When I first jointed the Greater London Council in April 1979 I was on a training programme for about 9 months where I attended training seminars covering regulations two to three times a week, I had interview boards and a mentor. When I joined RBKC we had seminars and I would attend training courses, I have requested my training records from RBKC. At the time of the Grenfell refurbishment I had approx. 35 years experience and had previously overseen high rise projects under the London Building Act and constructional byelaws inforce at the time. I was competent to do the role I was instructed to do.

100. What was the system for implementing conclusions/recommendations following such inspections?

101. Following such inspections, if my conclusions/recommendation were of a minor nature and I was confident that the builders would deal with the matters I raised my concerns would simply be noted in my notebook and recorded on Acolaid accordingly.

102. If my concerns were serious, in addition to the above, I would return to check that my recommendations had been implemented. If they had not then I would escalate it to my line manager and take according action which could include serving formal notice to correct the works.

103. Was that system operated properly or at all?

104. Yes.

105. What form did the full plans application take?

106. They arrived on my desk in paper form but I am unable to say if they came into the office in paper form or were printed off for me by someone in office admin.

107. Was it revised and amended?

108. Revised and amended proposals were submitted in connection with the full plans application during the duration of the project.

109. Was it in electronic, hard copy or both?

110. The amendments / details came in electronic, disc and paper form.

111. How did Building Control ensure relevant personnel were satisfied that they had agreed the final design which was subsequently built?

112. Through reviewing data, details, drawings and other information, witnessing tests, having discussions.

113. How were the full plans application documents, (including any amendments) stored?

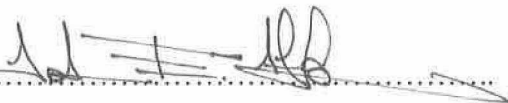
114. The full plans application documents given to me when the application was received by RBKC building control would remain in the working file whilst the file was active. The working file would be kept in the filing cabinets containing the papers files for the active jobs. These cabinets were adjacent to the designated work area for the building control surveyors.

115. Once the job was complete the file would have been weeded out, as per the building control management policy for archiving files. As part of this process some of the

material from the full plans application is likely to have been removed from the file. The removed material would have been disposed of confidentially in the designated waste disposal for confidential material within the planning department work space. The remaining material would remain in the file which would have been placed in the completed jobs cabinet to be collected by Admin who would then arrange for it to be scanned on to the archiving system, known to myself as The Archive Records.

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

I confirm the contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Signed.....

Dated...30th November,
2018.