

BUILDING CONTROL GUIDANCE NOTE: 2023-02**DATE: 10/03/2023****SUBJECT: TGD 2 II – Open Plan Flats**

It is now common practice for flats to be designed without protected entrance halls. This gives rise to inner room situations where the only escape is through the living/kitchen area. Such situations should be designed in full compliance with BS9991-2015. The general recommendations are summarised below:

- 1) The flat is provided with Automatic Water Fire Suppression System in accordance with BS 9251:2014.
- 2) The flat is provided with a Grade D LD1 Fire alarm and detection system. An additional smoke detector is to be provided in the living part of the open plan section if this can be remote enough the cooking appliances to limit false alarms.
- 3) The size of the open plan flat should not exceed 16 m × 12 m.
- 4) Open-plan flats should be situated on a single level only, not suitable for flats with mezzanines.
- 5) The ceilings within the open plan flat should have a minimum height of 2.25 m.
- 6) The kitchen should be enclosed in open-plan flats having an area exceeding 8 m × 4 m. Cooking appliances in open-plan flats having an area smaller than 8 m × 4 m should not be adjacent to the entrance of the flat.

NOTE 1 An open-plan flat design is not compatible with small, single staircase buildings reliant upon internal protected entrance halls for lobby protection to the staircase enclosure.

NOTE 2 BS9991 is in the process of being updated and this guidance will change in line with that amendment.

Open plan flats should not be used for sheltered or extra care housing.

Points of note:

- 1) Questions have been raised what constitutes 'not adjacent to the entrance of the flat'. BC have commissioned a report by the BRE to assist in determining this distance. The report was based on a rapid growing chip pan fire and uses an irradiance tenability threshold of 2.5kw m⁻² and anticipated psychological impact. Following the reports outcome the directorate has concluded a figure of 1.8m.

- 2) The 2007 version of BS 9991 allowed for an open plan flat with an unenclosed kitchen to be 10m x 8m. This caused some confusion amongst developers as we were now questioning a layout which had been approved on previous schemes. Any proposals for open plan flats with an unenclosed kitchen greater than 8m x 4m, should be subject to a Fire engineering assessment specific to that development.
- 3) Flats which are designed as part of an over 55s development, or retirement flats, will contain a greater number of elderly persons and constitute a 'significant difference' to the parameters in the NHBC study and will require a fire engineered assessment if these are designed as open plan flats.