

# New Civil Engineer

## Barking flats fire highlights gap in building regulations

11 June, 2019 By [Rob Horgan](#)



London mayor Sadiq Khan has criticised the “woefully slow response” to the Grenfell Tower disaster after a fire ripped through a new block of flats in Barking, East London.

An investigation has been launched to determine the cause of the Barking fire as well as the materials used and whether they contributed to the fire’s spread.

The blaze on Sunday afternoon destroyed 20 flats, with 10 other homes damaged by heat and smoke. Two people were treated for smoke inhalation, but no other injuries were reported.

Images of the blaze show the timber-clad balconies alight. Residents have said that they had previously raised concerns to the local council and the building management company about the materials used on the outside of the building.

The Barking Riverside flats were built in 2012 by Bellway Homes, which sold the freehold of the property to Adriatic Land 4, which is part of the £1.6bn Long Harbour Ground Rent Fund.

“Two years on, residents in blocks of flats are still living in fear that their buildings are unsafe,” said Khan.

“Despite not having any responsibility or powers over this property, my City Hall team had been in contact with Adriatic Land and their agents Homeground urging them as the owner of the building to resolve issues previously raised by residents.

“We will be making further contact with [Bellway Homes] about fire safety at all Barking Riverside buildings, pushing for vital changes to be made and the safety of residents ensured.”

Last week, the government announced that it was planning to launch a [new building regulator “with teeth”](#) to assess the safety of new and old buildings.

It came in response to [Dame Hackitt’s review](#) of building safety standards which was commissioned following the Grenfell Tower disaster.

Many [expert witnesses](#) who have testified during the Grenfell Tower Inquiry have concluded that combustible cladding on the outside of the building was to blame for the fire spreading up the building.

Mosen managing director Fathi Tarada told *New Civil Engineer* that the Barking fire raises questions about how balconies are categorised within current building regulations.

“It seems to me that the balcony has been constructed of steel but clad in timber,” Tarada said. “What this suggests to me is that it may have fallen somewhere between two regulations.”

“If the balconies had been deemed as circulation spaces then they would have been subject to higher regulations in terms of fire restrictions. However, it would appear that the balconies have been treated as external walls and therefore have slipped somewhere between two regulations.”

He added: “In my opinion, tightening up the wording in the building regulations would eliminate this grey area from the start.”

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