Guidance on the repeal of Sections 20 & 21 of the London Building Acts (Amendment) Act 1939

Sections 20 and 21 of the London Building Acts (Amendment) Act 1939 were repealed on 9 January 2013 and the Council’s approval is no longer required for works previously controlled by these sections of the Act.

Section 20 applied to:

- Buildings more than 30 metres high
- Buildings over 25 metres high, if the area of the building exceeds 930m², or
- Buildings of the warehouse class, or buildings (or parts thereof) used for the purpose of trade or manufacture, with a compartment volume exceeding 7100m³.

Requirements specific to Section 20 buildings may have included automatic sprinkler installations and other fire suppression systems, smoke ventilation to above-ground stories, special fire precautions for car parks and loading bays, special measures for other areas of high fire risk and provision of additional facilities and information for the fire and rescue services.

Section 21 dealt with the uniting of buildings and addressed the special fire risk that this action may pose.

Although a large proportion of the requirements of Section 20 have been incorporated into Part B of the Building Regulations (Fire Safety) or supporting codes and standards, a number of provisions have not and therefore this repeal raised a number of questions for project teams, developers, building owners and facilities managers. This guidance note attempts to address some questions raised as a result of the repeal of Section 20.

We recommend that you contact us with any questions you may have and our team will be happy to discuss the implications of the repeal of this legislation with you.

We can be contacted on:

0207 332 1000 or, district.surveyor@cityoflondon.gov.uk
Please be aware that building height is measured differently under Section 20 rules than as specified in Approved Document B of the Building Regulations.

One of the questions that may be raised by building owners or facilities/estate managers following the repeal of Section 20 is whether existing Section 20 provisions require ongoing maintenance or if they can be removed entirely. The sections below address some potential questions.

**Can I remove or decommission a Section 20 provision?**
These provisions form part of the general fire precautions for the building as defined under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and you will need to review your Fire Risk Assessment to see if it is appropriate to remove/decommission these provisions.

You will need to consult the Fire Authority for their approval and they may wish to review the revised Fire Risk Assessment prior to any work being undertaken.

You may also require Building Regulations permission.

**Can I stop providing regular maintenance of these systems?**
The Fire Authority expect that these systems are being regularly maintained in an operable condition by competent and qualified people unless it has been agreed that these systems can be removed/decommissioned and your Fire Risk Assessment has been revised. Not doing so may result in enforcement action being taken by the London Fire Brigade.

**Who do I need to contact if I want to remove/decommission systems originally provided under Section 20?**
Please contact the local London Fire Brigade Fire Safety Regulation team. You are also advised to contact us so that we can advise you whether works require Building Regulations approval.

**Who can I contact to assist me with reviewing my Fire Risk Assessment?**
We can provide you with a revised Fire Risk Assessment. Please contact us for further details.