REGULATORY REFORM (FIRE SAFETY) ORDER 2005 (as amended)
FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT – Summary

1-66 Woodlands Court, Plymouth

Type 1 Fire Risk Assessment

PAS 79-2:2020

Responsible person (e.g. Employer) or person having control of the premises:	Plymouth Community Homes
Block Code:	BK2830A
Address of premises:	1-66 Woodlands Court, Plymouth, PL5 3QT
Person(s) consulted: (If applicable)	No-one consulted during this assessment
Assessor:	Nigel Hill EngTech GIFireE
Report validated by:	A. M. Fox
Date of fire risk assessment:	05/08/2025 **revised 27/011/2025** Paul Bray EngTech. GIFireE. MIFSM.
Date of previous fire risk assessment:	22/07/2024
Suggested date for review:	11/08/2026

This report is intended to assist you in compliance with Article 9 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the “Fire Safety Order”) as amended, which requires that a risk assessment be carried out.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The premises overall Risk Rating

The overall risk rating has been determined considering the life safety occupancy within the premises which – under Part 2 (8) of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

It is considered that the risk to life from fire is TOLERABLE - No major additional controls required. However, there might be a need for improvements that involve minor or limited cost.

INTRODUCTION

This Fire Risk Assessment report addresses the requirement to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments under the requirements of Article 9(1) of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended), hereinafter referred to as the "Fire Safety Order".

Scope of the Risk Assessment

The report represents Plymouth Community Homes' (PCH) understanding for the current building designs and use, the fire strategy and proposed evacuation procedures. It is to provide an assessment of the risk to life from fire and does not address building or property protection or business continuity. The report is not an assurance against risk and is based on the best judgement of the assessor involved. The assessment may rely on information given by others outside of PCH and no liability is accepted for the accuracy of such information.

The Risk Assessment Procedure

This report considers the following aspects of fire safety and also reflects the fire safety standards identified during the assessment in each area of the building being inspected:

- Sources of Ignition / Fuel
- Persons at Risk
- Fire Detection and Warning Systems
- Means of Escape
- Provision of Fire Fighting Equipment
- Emergency Evacuation Plans and Training
- Maintenance and Testing of Fire Safety Equipment
- Signage
- Plant Emergency Procedures
- Building Plans & Fire Provisions

Limitations of the Risk Assessment

This report has been written following a visual non-invasive inspection only, and if any problems, irregularities, or defects are suspected, then they are noted where the assessor judges them to be urgent, significant, or helpful.

The inspections undertaken in order to compile this report do not include any areas which were concealed or closed in behind finished surfaces, such as flooring, walls or ceilings, or which required

the moving of anything which impeded access or limited visibility, such as floor coverings, furniture, appliances, personal property, vehicles, vegetation, debris or soil.

Recommendations

The recommendations made by the assessor are outlined in the Action Plan (attached to the full version of this fire risk assessment). This sets out the measures that are considered necessary to satisfy the requirements of the Fire Safety Order and to protect people from fire. In certain instances, the assessor may have made recommendations for further inspection in the report, however as a general guidance it is recommended that the 'no access' areas are inspected as soon as possible. The assessments, observations and recommendations made are only relevant to the conditions identified at the time of this assessment.

Reviewing the Risk Assessment

The Fire Safety Order requires that this risk assessment be kept under review. A date for routine review is given on the front of this report but should any of the buildings (or their operations) change in any way, there be any reason to suspect it is no longer valid or if a major fire occurs the risk assessments should be updated accordingly.

Following a further Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls (FRAEW) conducted by Bailey Partnership in accordance with PAS 9980, the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) for Woodlands Court has been reviewed. The FRAEW identified elements of combustible material within the external wall system, including external wall insulation (EWI) below 18 m, UPVC cladding strips, and entrance canopy finishes.

A detailed review confirms that the building remains safe for continued occupation. The EWI system below 18 m was previously tested to BS 8414 and assessed against BR 135:2013 Annex A, achieving compliance. Fire breaks and non-combustible render further reduce the risk of external fire spread. Planned works to remove some remaining combustible elements to further reduce risk and improve EWS1 rating.

More details is provided below;

External Wall Construction

External Wall Fire Risk Review – Woodlands Court

Following the recent Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls (FRAEW), report from Bailey Partnership (36419-BPG-XX-XX-RP-B-0001-FRAEW) the Woodlands Court FRA dated 05/08/2025 was reviewed and Woodlands Court has been assessed as safe for continued occupation. (See supporting information below.)

The FRAEW identified concerns regarding external wall insulation, UPVC cladding strips, the entrance canopy, and vehicle proximity.

These have been reviewed in detail, and the following conclusions apply:

External Wall Insulation (EWI):

The external wall system design, as installed below 18m, was subject to a full-scale fire test by Warrington Fire in 2022.

The tested configuration was assessed against the parameters set out in Annex A of BR 135:2013 and achieved certification confirming compliance with those criteria for external wall systems.

The test result resulted in the conclusion of by PCH competent advisers that the risk of external fire spread is low due to fire breaks and non-combustible render.

However, to provide further assurance, PCH are in the process of investigating a plan to have the EWI below 18m removed and replaced. This takes time, all residents will be consulted as plans develop.

UPVC Cladding Strips:

The UPVC cladding is located under the windows in the communal corridor on each habitable floor.

The two narrow strips of UPVC cladding present minimal risk of ignition. They are limited in extent and location, with non-combustible mineral wool insulation behind, preventing fire penetration into the escape route.

Removal will take place as part of planned works.

Entrance Canopy and Vehicle Proximity:

The entrance canopy has a small amount of EWI on the outer elevation of the canopy and there is varnished wooden cladding on the ceiling outside the entrance doors.

Although there is a very slight risk of this being ignited, PCH are planning on having this removed.

A further precaution is to install barriers to prevent vehicles from parking close to the entrance.

This will be subject to consultation with the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, to ensure the access to the perimeter of the premises for firefighting is not affected.

Both issues are assessed as low risk. Interim measures and future upgrades will address these concerns.

Supporting information for maintaining fire risk assessment outcome as tolerable and keeping fire evacuation strategy as 'stay put'.

Robust fire safety measures

The building benefits from robust fire safety measures, including:

A BS 9251 Category 4 fire sprinkler system, installed to cover all areas of the Woodlands Court.

The fire sprinkler system has been installed in each flat and in the communal areas, it is designed to contain a fire to prevent fire from spreading from the room or compartment (flat) of origin.

In most cases it extinguishes a fire. It is therefore very unlikely for a fire to breakout of flat.

This therefore significantly reduces the likelihood of a fire originating within a flat breaking out and spreading externally up the external façade of the building.

The sprinkler system is monitored and any activation of a sprinkler head immediately alerts an Alarm Receiving Centre, (ARC) which notifies Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, ensuring prompt attention by firefighters to ensure the fire is does not spread and assistance can be provided to those that need it.

Automatic Opening Vents (AOVs)

Automatic Opening Vents (AOVs) are installed in the communal corridors of the habitable floors on one elevation.

This ensures any smoke from a fire in a flat entering the lobbies protecting the single staircase will be vented outside and promote safe escape to the staircase. It has been confirmed that the cause and effect of the AOV's is such that operation of a smoke detector opens the AOV on that floor and an interlock locks out all other floors.

Openable windows on corridors can be opened by the attending fire and rescue service to ventilate the remaining areas of corridors should the need arise.

The single staircase has a permanently open vent at high level to provide makeup air for the corridor AOV's.

Well maintained fire doors

All the communal fire doors were replaced in 2022 and are subject to quarterly checks to ensure they are in good condition and will operate as required in the event of fire, preventing fire and smoke from entering the escape routes.

All flat entrance doors, including leasehold doors were intrusively inspected in 2021 to ensure the fire stopping between the door frame and the walls wall met the required standard.

The flat entrance doors are subject to annual safety checks to ensure they are in good condition and will operate as required in the event of fire, preventing fire and smoke from entering the escape routes.

Fire compartmentation

As part of the sprinkler and fire door installation works in 2022, the fire compartmentation was inspected and any breaches found were fire stopped by competent fire stopping contractors.

The Fire Risk Assessment

The fire risk assessment (FRA) for Woodlands Court is reviewed annually, or whenever there is a need to complete a review.

As a result of the recent FRAEW and EWS1 report the FRA has been reviewed.

The current Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) rates the building as **tolerable risk**, with no requirement for urgent measures, though there might be a need for improvements.

The outcome of tolerable is based on the risk matrix used by the professional fire risk assessors when assessing risk and likelihood. This ensures consistency but also allows for professional judgement.

To arrive at tolerable, the risk assessor has considered the likelihood of fire is 'medium'.

This means there are 'normal fire hazards (e.g. potential ignition sources) for Woodlands Court, with fire hazards generally subject to appropriate controls (other than minor shortcomings).

The risk assessor also considers the consequence of a fire.

For Woodlands Court, this is deemed as 'slight'.

This means that an 'outbreak of fire is unlikely to result in serious injury or death of any occupant outside the flat of origin.'

Considering all of the information provided, the fire risk assessor is of the opinion a fire will not spread beyond the compartment of origin and therefore is confident that the outcome of a 'tolerable' risk level for Woodlands Court is the correct.

The fire evacuation strategy

The fire evacuation strategy for Woodlands Court remains **"Stay Put"** and is not changed to simultaneous evacuation because:

- The building benefits from comprehensive fire containment measures, including sprinklers, compartmentation, and fire doors, which are designed to prevent fire spread beyond the flat of origin.
- The FRA concludes that the consequence of a fire is "slight," meaning an outbreak is unlikely to result in serious injury or death outside the compartment of origin.

- A simultaneous evacuation strategy would introduce unnecessary risk and complexity, given the building's design and the effectiveness of existing measures.
- The current strategy aligns with national guidance for purpose-built blocks of flats and remains the safest and most proportionate approach.

However, to give assurance additional Interim measures are being recommended, including perimeter checks and vehicle exclusion near the entrance canopy.

As already stated, investigations and planned works will address removing some of the combustible materials to achieve a lower EWS1 rating.

Urgent Actions:
No immediate measures such as waking watch or communal evacuation alarms are required.
Planned works will ensure full compliance with current regulations.

Management Approach:
PCH continues to manage fire safety risks in a proportionate and compliant manner, prioritising resident safety and regulatory adherence.

Conclusion

PCH is managing fire safety risks at Woodlands Court in a proportionate and compliant manner. No urgent actions such as waking watch or communal evacuation alarms are required.

Planned remediation works and interim measures will further enhance safety, ensuring continued compliance with fire safety regulations.

Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 implemented the majority of the recommendations made by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry in its Phase 1 report which required a change in the law.

The regulations seek to improve the fire safety of blocks of flats in ways which are practical, cost effective for individual leaseholders and proportionate to the risk of fire.

The regulations came into force on 23 January 2023 following publication of guidance which was published on 6 December 2022.

For high-rise residential buildings (a multi-occupied residential building at least 18 metres in height or 7 or more storeys), responsible persons must:

- Share electronically with their local fire and rescue service (FRS) information about the building's external wall system and provide the FRS with electronic copies of floor plans and building plans for the building
- Keep hard copies of the building's floor plans, in addition to a single page orientation plan of the building, and the name and UK contact details of the responsible person in a secure information box which is accessible by firefighters
- Install wayfinding signage in all high-rise buildings which is visible in low light conditions
- Establish a minimum of monthly checks on lifts which are for the use of firefighters in high-rise residential buildings and on essential pieces of firefighting equipment
- Inform the FRS if a lift used by firefighters or one of the pieces of firefighting equipment is out of order for longer than 24 hours

For multi-occupied residential buildings over 11 metres in height, responsible persons must:

- Undertake quarterly checks on all communal fire doors and annual checks on flat entrance doors

In all multi-occupied residential buildings, responsible persons must:

- Provide residents with relevant fire safety instructions and information about the importance of fire doors

The Fire Safety Act (FSA) clarified the scope of the Fire Safety Order to make clear it applies to the structure, external walls (including cladding and balconies) and individual flat entrance doors between domestic premises and the common parts.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. THE PREMISES

1.1	Number of floors at ground level and above:	12
	Number of floors entirely below ground level:	0
	Floors on which car parking is provided:	0
1.2	Number of flats:	66 flats in total, with 6 flats per floor which are a combination of 1 & 2 bed flats

1.3 Brief details of construction and approximate age of building:

- Circa 1960
- The building appears to be of traditional masonry construction, brick/block external walls with an external EWI system fitted in 2015 and described in section 5 (of the full version of this fire risk assessment).
- Internal walls are of brick/block/solid construction
- Level concrete floors and stairs
- There is a flat roof structure on this building

1.4 Occupancy:

Residential-Purpose-built, 12 storey block of flats

2. THE OCCUPANTS

2.1	Approximate maximum number of employees at any one time:	There is one permanent Ranger based at this block
2.2	Approximate maximum number of residents and visitors at any one time:	66 x 1 & 2 bed flats - assumed maximum occupancy of 286 residents

3. OCCUPANTS ESPECIALLY AT RISK FROM FIRE

3.1	Sleeping occupants:	286 occupants of residential flats.
3.2	Occupants in remote areas and lone workers:	Occasional Rangers or contractors possibly working in remote areas
3.3	Others:	Occasional contractors

4. FIRE LOSS EXPERIENCE

There was no evidence of previous fires in the communal parts and fire statistics (which report fire brigade incidents since 2011) report 1 fire related incident at the property since the last FRA in 2024.

Amendment 05/09/25. A small fire occurred in the bin chute room at Woodland Court on 29/08/25 at approx. 01.40 hrs. Smoke ingress into the bin chute was limited thanks to the fusible-link shutter installed at the chute's base, where refuse enters the hopper. This shutter activated during the incident, effectively preventing further smoke from entering the chute and lobbies. It is however reported that a small amount of smoke managed to permeate from the bin chute room into the stairwell. Initial Investigations appear to point to small cable hole penetrations drilled by broadband installers that weren't filled on completion of the works. All visible penetrations have now been filled and DSFRS are taking no further action.

FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

The following simple risk level estimator is based on a commonly used risk level estimator:

Potential consequences of fire → Likelihood of fire ↓	Slight harm	Moderate harm	Extreme harm
Low	Trivial risk	Tolerable risk	Moderate risk
Medium	Tolerable risk	Moderate risk	Substantial risk
High	Moderate risk	Substantial risk	Intolerable risk

Taking into account the fire prevention measures observed at the time of this risk assessment, it is considered that the hazard from fire (likelihood of fire) at these premises is:

Low ☐ **Medium** ☑ **High** ☐

In this context, a definition of the above terms is as follows:

Low:	Unusually low likelihood of fire as a result of negligible potential sources of ignition.
Medium:	Normal fire hazards (e.g. potential ignition sources) for this type of occupancy, with fire hazards generally subject to appropriate controls (other than minor shortcomings).
High:	Lack of adequate controls applied to one or more significant fire hazards, such as to result in significant increase in likelihood of fire.

Taking into account the nature of the premises and the occupants, as well as the fire protection and procedural arrangements observed at the time of this fire risk assessment, it is considered that the consequences for life safety in the event of fire would be:

Slight harm ☑ **Moderate harm** ☐ **Extreme harm** ☐

In this context, a definition of the above terms is as follows:

Slight harm:	Outbreak of fire unlikely to result in serious injury or death of any occupant outside the flat of origin.
Moderate harm:	Outbreak of fire could foreseeably result in injury (including serious injury) of one or more occupants but is unlikely to result in multiple fatalities.
Extreme harm:	Significant potential for serious injury or death of one or more occupants.

Accordingly, it is considered that the risk to life from fire at these premises is:

Trivial ☐ **Tolerable** ☑ **Moderate** ☐ **Substantial** ☐ **Intolerable** ☐

Comments:

None

A suitable risk-based control plan should involve effort and urgency that are proportional to risk. The following risk-based control plan is based on one advocated for general health and safety risks:

Risk level	Action and timescale
Trivial	No action is required, and no detailed records need be kept.
Tolerable	No major additional controls required. However, there might be a need for improvements that involve minor or limited cost.
Moderate	It is essential that efforts are made to reduce the risk. Risk reduction measures should be implemented within a defined time period. Where moderate risk is associated with consequences that constitute extreme harm, further assessment might be required to establish more precisely the likelihood of harm as a basis for determining the priority for improved control measures.
Substantial	Considerable resources might have to be allocated to reduce the risk. If the building is unoccupied, it should not be occupied until the risk has been reduced. If the building is occupied, urgent action should be taken.
Intolerable	Building (or relevant area) should not be occupied until the risk is reduced.

Note that, although the purpose of this section is to place the fire risk in context, the above approach to risk assessment is subjective and for guidance only. All hazards and deficiencies identified in this report should be addressed by implementing all recommendations contained in the following action plan. The fire risk assessment should be repeated regularly.