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Chartered Engineers
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Report 2942

An Bord Pleanála Appeal regarding the attachment of Conditions by Dublin City Council to grant of Fire Safety Certificate for the material alteration of existing office building at Irish Life Centre

Client: An Bord Pleanála,

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Dublin 1

FAO: The Secretary

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BUILDING CONTROL ACT, 1990 – APPEAL

FIRE SAFETY CERTIFICATE APPLICATION FOR THE MATERIAL ALTERATION OF EXISTING OFFICE BLOCKS D, E and F (sub-division of storeys above ground floor into separate tenancies) AT IRISH LIFE CONTRE, LOWER ABBEY STREET, DUBLIN 1

APPEAL AGAINST THE ATTACHMENT OF CONDITIONS NO.s 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 & 15 TO FIRE SAFETY CERTIFICATE (REF. FSC 1181/16) ON 4th FEBRUARY 2016

AN BORD PLEANÁLA APPEAL REFERENCE FS29B.FS.0522

Local Authority: Dublin City Council
Appellant: Irish Life Assurance

c/o Jeremy Gardner & Associates

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this appeal be upheld and the subject 6 no. Conditions (Conditions No.'s 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15) attached to the Fire Safety Certificate granted by Dublin City Council (under Reference FSC 1181/16) should be removed and replaced by the following 5 no. Conditions:-

Condition No. 8

The fifth floor shall be designed so as to ensure that a maximum travel distance of 18 metres is not exceeded. The layout provided with an extended protected lobby and FD30S fire doors as indicated in the applicant's drawing no. 14-24-T-306 Rev. B (dated Jan 2015) is satisfactory.

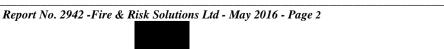
Reason:

To comply with Part B1 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 10

The minimum fire resistance of all existing elements of structure (i.e. structural frames, beams, columns, load bearing walls (internal and external), floor structures and gallery structures) within the building shall be 60 minutes.

Reason:



The floors separating the new tenancies/floors from each other shall be compartment floors. These compartment floors shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes).

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 12

The ground floor entrance lobby/security areas shall be separated from the office areas by compartment walls. These compartment walls shall provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes.

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 13

The wall which separates the lobby area of lift 5 from the offices area of Block F on the ground floor shall be a compartment wall. This wall shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes. The doors to the lift shall be a FD30 fire door.

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The residual 9 no. Conditions (Conditions No.'s 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 14) attached to the granted Fire Safety Certificate are not subject of the subject appeal and shall remain. The granted Fire Safety Certificate should therefore be subject of 14 no. Conditions.

Dr. Raymond J Connolly

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1.0 RELEVANT INFORMATION

- (i) Application for Fire Safety Certificate by Irish Life Assurance to Dublin City Council dated 19th December 2014, including Compliance Report (dated 19th December 2014) and drawings by Jeremy Gardner & Associates.
- (ii) Fire Safety Certificate (FSC 1181/16) granted by Dublin City Council in respect of Application No. FA/14/1522) issued on 4th February 2016.
- (iii) Letter of appeal from Jeremy Gardner & Associates on behalf of Irish Life Assurance to An Bord Pleanála dated 2nd March 2016.
- (iv) Letter sent by Dublin City Council to An Bord Pleanála dated 24th March 2016 outlining observations/comments by Fire Prevention Officer.
- (v) Letter from Jeremy Gardner & Associates to An Bord Pleanála, dated 26th April 2014, responding to submission by Fire Authority.

2. BACKGROUND

Jeremy Gardner & Associates on behalf of Irish Life Assurance made an application to Dublin City Council for a Fire Safety Certificate for the proposed sub-division of existing offices in Blocks D, E and F of the Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1into separate tenancies at each upper floor level under reference FA/14/1522. The Fire Safety Certificate was granted by Dublin City Council (under Reference FSC 1181/16) on 4th February 2016 subject to 15 no. Conditions including *inter-alia*:-

Condition No. 8

The single direction travel distance of 16 metres on the fifth floor is in excess of the maximum permitted distance of 12 metres. The protected lift lobby at this level shall be extended to the service riser denoted as "Electrical Cupboard - 1" and the column on the drawings. FD30S fire doors shall be provided as appropriate to the protected lobby to ensure that the maximum travel distance is not exceeded..

Reason:

To comply with Part B1 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 10

The minimum fire resistance of all elements of structure (i.e. structural frames, beams, columns, load bearing walls (internal and external), floor structures and gallery structures) within the building shall be as indicated in Appendix A, Tables A1 and A2. As the top storey of the building is greater than 20 metres above ground or access level, the minimum fire resistance required shall be 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 11

The floors separating the new tenancies/floors from each other shall be compartment floors. These compartment floors shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

Reason:

The ground floor entrance lobby/security areas shall be separated from the office areas by compartment walls. These compartment walls shall provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 13

The wall which separates the lobby area of lift 5 from the offices area of Block F on the ground floor shall be a compartment wall. This wall shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered). The doors to the lift shall be a FD30 fire door.

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 15

As the top storey of the building is greater than 20 metres above ground or access level, fire-fighting shaft(s) shall be provided within the building in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5588-5:2004 (or equivalent standard). Stair 1 shall be upgraded as necessary to become a fire-fighting shaft. The fire-fighting shaft shall be enclosed in fire-resisting construction achieving a minimum of not less than 120 minutes fire resistance. Lift 4 shall be upgraded as necessary to become a fire-fighting lift.

Reason:

To comply with Part B5 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

On 2nd March 2016, Jeremy Gardner & Associates appealed on behalf of Irish Life Assurance against the attachment of these 6 no. Conditions (Conditions No.'s 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15) to the Fire Safety Certificate. The residual 9 no. Conditions (Conditions No.'s 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 14) are not subject of the subject appeal.

3. REPRISE OF APPEAL (AS PRESENTED)

The subject works comprise the material alteration of existing Blocks D, E and F at the Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1 to sub-divide the upper floors (1st floor to 5th floors inclusive) of the building into different tenancies. The existing ground floor is in two separate tenancies and these are proposed to remain unchanged. However, the ground floor is included within the scope of the application. The existing basement floor is to remain unchanged and is not subject of the application nor the associated appeal.

Condition No. 8

The single direction travel distance of 16 metres on the fifth floor is in excess of the maximum permitted distance of 12 metres. The protected lift lobby at this level shall be extended to the service riser denoted as "Electrical Cupboard - 1" and the column on the drawings. FD30S fire doors shall be provided as appropriate to the protected lobby to ensure that the maximum travel distance is not exceeded.

Reason:

To comply with Part B1 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The appellant has submitted further information in the course of the appeal indicating the proposed furniture layout within the 5th Floor Office. Furthermore, the appellant contends that:-

- (i) The building is existing.
- (ii) The extent of the 5th floor office remains unchanged.
- (iii) Occupants will be awake and familiar with their surroundings.
- (iv) The travel distance is within the recommended 18 metres maximum limit.

The Fire Authority confirm that the appeal includes new information regarding the layout of the 5th floor and the movement of the storey exit door in a manner such as to reduce the travel distance.

Condition No. 10

The minimum fire resistance of all elements of structure (i.e. structural frames, beams, columns, load bearing walls (internal and external), floor structures and gallery structures) within the building shall be as indicated in Appendix A, Tables A1 and A2. As the top storey of the building

is greater than 20 metres above ground or access level, the minimum fire resistance required shall be 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The appellant argues that :-

- (i) The building is existing.
- (ii) There is no increase in building height.
- (iii) There is no increase in fire loading and by inference anticipated fire severity within the building.
- (iv) No new or greater contravention with Regulations arises.

The Fire Authority explains that Building Regulations apply to the construction of new buildings and to the extension and material alteration of existing buildings. The application concerns the material alteration of the building and accordingly the Fire Authority consider that the entire building shall comply with the current Building Regulations. This includes provision of adequate fire resistance to the structure of the building, which in this case according to Tables A1 and A2 of Technical Guidance Document B (2006) should comprise not less than 90 minutes fire resistance rating.

Condition No. 11

The floors separating the new tenancies/floors from each other shall be compartment floors. These compartment floors shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The appellant argues that :-

- (i) The floors are existing but will be upgraded as required.
- (ii) There is no increase in building height beyond its existing 20.5 metres, which is only 0.5 metres above the threshold requiring a change from 60 to 90 minutes fire rating.
- (iii) No new or greater contravention with Regulations arises.

The Fire Authority explains that Building Regulations apply to the construction of new buildings and to the extension and material alteration of existing buildings. The application concerns the material alteration of the building and accordingly the Fire Authority consider that the entire building shall comply with the current Building Regulations. This includes provision of adequate fire resistance to the structure of the building, which in this case according to Tables A1 and A2 of Technical Guidance Document B (2006) should comprise not less than 90 minutes fire resistance rating.

Condition No. 12

The ground floor entrance lobby/security areas shall be separated from the office areas by compartment walls. These compartment walls shall provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The appellant argues that :-

- (i) The ground floor entrance lobby/security area is to be reconfigured and will include upgrading of the walls separating same from the office to 60 minutes compartment wall standard.
- (ii) There is no increase in building height beyond its existing 20.5 metres, which is only 0.5 metres above the threshold requiring a change from 60 to 90 minutes fire rating.
- (iii) No new or greater contravention with Regulations arises.

The Fire Authority explains that Building Regulations apply to the construction of new buildings and to the extension and material alteration of existing buildings. The application concerns the material alteration of the building and accordingly the Fire Authority consider that the entire building shall comply with the current Building Regulations. This includes provision of adequate fire resistance to the structure of the building, which in this case according to Tables A1 and A2 of Technical Guidance Document B (2006) should comprise not less than 90 minutes fire resistance rating.

Condition No. 13

The wall which separates the lobby area of lift 5 from the offices area of Block F on the ground floor shall be a compartment wall. This wall shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the

minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is

sprinklered). The doors to the lift shall be a FD30 fire door.

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The appellant argues that :-

(i) The ground floor wall separating the lift no. 5 lobby from the office (Block F) is existing

but will be upgraded to a 60 minutes compartment wall standard, including fire stopping

of all penetrations and openings.

(ii) There is no increase in building height beyond its existing 20.5 metres, which is only 0.5

metres above the threshold requiring a change from 60 to 90 minutes fire rating.

(iii) No new or greater contravention with Regulations arises.

The Fire Authority explains that Building Regulations apply to the construction of new buildings

and to the extension and material alteration of existing buildings. The application concerns the

material alteration of the building and accordingly the Fire Authority consider that the entire

building shall comply with the current Building Regulations. This includes provision of adequate

fire resistance to the structure of the building, which in this case according to Tables A1 and A2

of Technical Guidance Document B (2006) should comprise not less than 90 minutes fire

resistance rating.

Condition No. 15

As the top storey of the building is greater than 20 metres above ground or access level, fire-

fighting shaft(s) shall be provided within the building in accordance with the recommendations of

BS 5588-5:2004 (or equivalent standard). Stair 1 shall be upgraded as necessary to become a

fire-fighting shaft. The fire-fighting shaft shall be enclosed in fire-resisting construction

achieving a minimum of not less than 120 minutes fire resistance. Lift 4 shall be upgraded as

necessary to become a fire-fighting lift.

Reason:

To comply with Part B5 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The appellant argues that :-

(i) The existing standard of access and facilities is not being reduced.

- (ii) There is no increase in floor area.
- (iii) No part of the building is subject to a material change of use.
- (iv) No new or greater contravention with Regulations arises.

The Fire Authority explains that Building Regulations apply to the construction of new buildings and to the extension and material alteration of existing buildings. The application concerns the material alteration of the building and accordingly the Fire Authority consider that the entire building shall comply with the current Building Regulations. This includes provision of adequate fire resistance to the structure of the building, which in this case according to Tables A1 and A2 of Technical Guidance Document B (2006) should comprise not less than 90 minutes fire resistance rating.

4. CONSIDERATION

The appeal may be considered as presented and no new issues arise as would demand a *de novo* consideration.

Condition No. 8

The single direction travel distance of 16 metres on the fifth floor is in excess of the maximum permitted distance of 12 metres. The protected lift lobby at this level shall be extended to the service riser denoted as "Electrical Cupboard - 1" and the column on the drawings. FD30S fire doors shall be provided as appropriate to the protected lobby to ensure that the maximum travel distance is not exceeded.

Reason:

To comply with Part B1 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The appellant has submitted further information in the course of the appeal indicating the proposed furniture layout within the 5th Floor Office. The Fire Authority confirms that the appeal includes new information regarding the layout of the 5th floor and the movement of the storey exit door in a manner such as to reduce the travel distance. The Fire Authority offers no statement regarding their view as to the compliance of the revised design, but the inference could be drawn that they are not objecting.

It is confirmed that the actual travel distance now arising on the 5th floor is within those limits recommended in Table 1.2 of Technical Guidance Document B, so the issue of a non-compliance does not arise. It is noted that direct distances are only to be used as a design reference in instances where the internal arrangement of walls and fixed furniture is not known. It is therefore necessary to make it clear that the approval is related to the information contained in the drawing submitted as part of the appeal and not the original application drawing. A revised Condition to such effect is proposed as follows:-

New Condition

The fifth floor shall be designed so as to ensure that a maximum travel distance of 18 metres is not exceeded. The layout provided with an extended protected lobby and FD30S fire doors as indicated in the applicant's drawing no. 14-24-T-306 Rev. B (dated Jan 2015) is satisfactory.

Reason:

The minimum fire resistance of all elements of structure (i.e. structural frames, beams, columns, load bearing walls (internal and external), floor structures and gallery structures) within the building shall be as indicated in Appendix A, Tables A1 and A2. As the top storey of the building is greater than 20 metres above ground or access level, the minimum fire resistance required shall be 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The key issue here is that the building is existing. It is not proposed to be increased in size or height nor is the usage category changing as would give rise to an increased design fire severity. The Fire Authority is correct in their assertion that the proposed material alteration of the building does attract a *de facto* need for compliance with Part B3 to the Building Regulations. In such a context enhancement of the existing fire resistance rating of the structure should be viewed similarly as the need to upgrade the floors to compartment floors, i.e. following as a direct consequence of the increased obligations imposed under Clause 3.2.4.1(b) of Technical Guidance Document B to the Building Regulations to protect tenancies from a fire in a neighbouring tenancy.

However, Technical Guidance Document B also allows for flexibility in the fire safety design of existing buildings. Clause 0.1.5 outlines that where particular design provisions cannot be practicably achieved account may be taken of compensating measures. The appellant does not identify what compensating measures are proposed in this case other than the provision of disabled refuges. It is unclear what standard would describe the existing fire detection and alarm system and whether the proposed Type L2/L3 system represents an enhancement and potential compensatory measure. The proposed inclusion of protected lobbies remains as heretofore and the general upgrading proposed (including upgrading the fire rating of individual floors and walls) reflects a base level requirement, as opposed to any enhanced or compensatory measure.

However, there is a need for a flexible approach to retrospective inclusion of fire safety measures into existing buildings. The essential point made by the appellant in terms of no increase in floor area, no increase in height and no increase in fire load/design fire severity remain valid. The increased level of sub-division of the building and enhanced compartmentation will materially improve the existing level of fire safety, albeit incoming tenants may not enjoy the same level of

provision as they would in a new building. The existing building is only marginally in excess of the recommended 20 metre threshold which would demand an enhancement from 60 to 90 minutes fire rating. The building is stated to be of robust concrete minimum 60 minutes fire-resisting construction and same is likely to be a conservative measure of fire performance.

It is considered that the finer points of the guidance in Technical Guidance Document B should not become an obstacle to the genuine enhancement of fire safety within older existing buildings simply because a changed commercial tenancy arrangement is proposed. Notwithstanding the guidance contained in Clause 3.2.4.1(b) of Technical Guidance Document B, there remains many instances where sub-tenanted areas within a single building can routinely arise without the provision of full fire compartmentation. The special attention given to tenancies in Clause 3.2.4.1(b) follows from property protection (as opposed to life safety) concerns and whilst same do apply to both new and altered multi-tenancy office buildings, there is a case for increased flexibility on the grounds of practicability and proportionality in the existing case. It is highlighted that the appellant is not seeking to have the relevant Conditions struck out but rather modified to a more practicable outcome.

The need for a 90 minutes fire rating in buildings taller than 20 metres reflects the increased consequences of their collapse. In the current case, the consequences of the building collapse remain unchanged as a result of the changed commercial arrangement. The likelihood of such a collapse taking place is materially reduced by the proposed increased level of sub-division of the building by fire-resisting construction. In such circumstances it is not concluded that a new or greater contravention with Part B of the Building Regulations will arise. It is considered that the stability of the commercially altered but physically unchanged building will be maintained for a reasonable period.

It is recommended that Condition No. 10 be replaced by an alternative Condition as follows:-.

New Condition

The minimum fire resistance of all existing elements of structure (i.e. structural frames, beams, columns, load bearing walls (internal and external), floor structures and gallery structures) within the building shall be 60 minutes.

Reason:

The floors separating the new tenancies/floors from each other shall be compartment floors. These compartment floors shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

For the reasons outlined above, it is recommended that Condition No. 11 be modified as follows:-

New Condition

The floors separating the new tenancies/floors from each other shall be compartment floors. These compartment floors shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes).

Reason:

The ground floor entrance lobby/security areas shall be separated from the office areas by compartment walls. These compartment walls shall provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered).

For the reasons outlined above, it is recommended that Condition No. 12 be modified as follows:-

New Condition

The ground floor entrance lobby/security areas shall be separated from the office areas by compartment walls. These compartment walls shall provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes.

Reason:

The wall which separates the lobby area of lift 5 from the offices area of Block F on the ground floor shall be a compartment wall. This wall shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 90 minutes (or 60 minutes if the building is sprinklered). The doors to the lift shall be a FD30 fire door.

For the reasons outlined above, it is recommended that Condition No. 13 be modified as follows:-

New Condition

The wall which separates the lobby area of lift 5 from the offices area of Block F on the ground floor shall be a compartment wall. This wall shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes. The doors to the lift shall be a FD30 fire door.

Reason:

As the top storey of the building is greater than 20 metres above ground or access level, fire-fighting shaft(s) shall be provided within the building in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5588-5:2004 (or equivalent standard). Stair 1 shall be upgraded as necessary to become a fire-fighting shaft. The fire-fighting shaft shall be enclosed in fire-resisting construction achieving a minimum of not less than 120 minutes fire resistance. Lift 4 shall be upgraded as necessary to become a fire-fighting lift.

For the reasons outlined above, it is recommended that Condition No. 15 shall be removed.

5. CONCLUSION

It is recommended that this appeal be upheld and the subject 6 no. Conditions (Conditions No.'s 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15) attached to the Fire Safety Certificate granted by Dublin City Council (under Reference FSC 1181/16) should be removed and replaced by the following 5 no. Conditions:-

Condition No. 8

The fifth floor shall be designed so as to ensure that a maximum travel distance of 18 metres is not exceeded. The layout provided with an extended protected lobby and FD30S fire doors as indicated in the applicant's drawing no. 14-24-T-306 Rev. B (dated Jan 2015) is satisfactory.

Reason:

To comply with Part B1 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 10

The minimum fire resistance of all existing elements of structure (i.e. structural frames, beams, columns, load bearing walls (internal and external), floor structures and gallery structures) within the building shall be 60 minutes.

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 11

The floors separating the new tenancies/floors from each other shall be compartment floors. These compartment floors shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes).

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

Condition No. 12

The ground floor entrance lobby/security areas shall be separated from the office areas by compartment walls. These compartment walls shall provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes.

Reason:

The wall which separates the lobby area of lift 5 from the offices area of Block F on the ground floor shall be a compartment wall. This wall shall be upgraded as necessary to provide the minimum required fire resistance of not less than 60 minutes. The doors to the lift shall be a

FD30 fire door.

Reason:

To comply with Part B3 of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2014.

The residual 9 no. Conditions (Conditions No.'s 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 14) attached to the granted Fire Safety Certificate are not subject of the subject appeal and shall remain. The granted Fire Safety Certificate should therefore be subject of 14 no. Conditions.

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