DCSF consulted on the draft of Building Bulletin 100 *Designing and managing against the risk of fire in schools* between August and November 2005.

BB100 is quoted in Building Regulations, Approved Document B on Fire as the normal means of compliance for school buildings with Building Regulation requirements on Design for Fire Safety. It is therefore an important part of the approval process carried out by Building Control Bodies.

There were 64 responses to the public consultation from a wide range of stakeholders.

The majority of respondents felt that life safety issues would have been better addressed if Approved Document “B” (AD B) of the Building Regulations remained as the primary source of guidance. Another frequently made comment was that the draft BB100 was too difficult to follow, due to its poor structuring, and that in its current format it was unsuitable as a design document.

The final version of BB100 therefore incorporates more information from AD B to provide a comprehensive document for designers. However the risk based approach to design remains. We have also restructured BB100 to make it more accessible to designers and easier to use as a compliance document.

The issue of fitting sprinklers in new or refurbished schools was foremost in many respondents’ concerns. Many felt that sprinklers should be compulsory. In March 2007, DCSF announced the new policy on sprinklers in schools. The provision of sprinklers will be based on a risk assessment and this will result in the provision of sprinkler systems in all but a few low risk schools.

At the same time, DCSF published a risk analysis tool and a cost benefit analysis tool to be used to determine whether a school should be fitted with a sprinkler system and a report on the costs of sprinkler systems in schools.

The new policy on sprinklers reflects the many consultation responses which argued for more widespread use of sprinkler systems in new schools. Note that the consultation exercise took place in October ~ November 2005, before the DCSF announced its policy (March 2007).

The inclusion of provisions aimed at property protection were generally welcomed, although a number of respondents highlighted the need for these extra requirements to be distinguished from those concerned with life safety. This is because the life safety requirements (compliance with the Building Regulations) are legally binding, whereas property protection is not. The final BB100 achieves this by colour coding the property protection recommendations so that they can be clearly distinguished fron the life safety requirements.

A number of questions (eg, the use of robust materials) were uncontroversial, with almost all respondents in favour.

Since the public consultation the Department for Communities and Local Government has published a revised Approved Document Part B that came into effect in April 2007. This has been the main reason for the delay in publishing the final version of BB100.