

Olympic park fire sparks demolition inquiry

The Olympic Delivery Authority is analysing demolition procedures on an area of the Olympic park site that was hit by a fire on Monday, write Eleanor Goodman and Sarah Richardson.

As Building went to press on Wednesday, the ODA said that it expected its investigation to be complete "within days".

Morrison Construction has confirmed that the fire broke out in an area under its control, in an empty warehouse on the western edge of the park.

It is thought a Morrison subcontractor was working on the project.

An ODA spokesperson said it was carrying out a "thorough

investigation" into the incident, which at this stage is thought to be an accident rather than arson.

The spokesperson confirmed that, although it was too early to say whether it would be making any changes to demolition procedures, the investigation was looking at what procedures were followed and the cause

of the fire.

It is also examining contamination issues after it emerged that asbestos was found on the site of the fire.

It is understood that the blaze was fuelled by polystyrene panels, and some site sources have suggested that tyres contributed to the cloud of black smoke that spread out across London (pictured).

The London fire brigade said it would continue to investigate the cause of the fire. A Metropolitan Police spokesperson said officers would only carry out investigations if the cause was found to be suspicious.

■ In last week's issue we incorrectly reported that a guaranteed maximum price contract would be agreed for the Olympic aquatics centre. The ODA would like us to make it clear that it has always sought a target cost contract for the site and that it is not discussing a guaranteed maximum price with Balfour Beatty.



Smoke spreads across London on Monday. Inset: the site on the following day.

Government to reopen academies framework to contractors

The government's framework for building academies is to be rebid next year, it is expected.

Partnerships for Schools (PFS), the body responsible for delivery of the school building programme, intends to put the framework out to tender again when it reaches capacity. It has not yet been decided whether the move will open up the scheme to contractors beyond the six presently on it.

Partnerships for Schools set up the framework last year when the government asked it to incorporate the academies programme in the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative to upgrade schools. The framework contractors include Willmott Dixon and Skanska.

Meanwhile, Ty Goddard, director of the British Council for School Environments, added to the pressure on BSF today at a

schools conference. He said the programme needed greater leadership at ministerial level and argued that the procurement route "complicates simple things".

Tim Byles, chief executive of PFS, said: "We have made improvements to the pre-procurement phase of the process, resulting in a greater focus on educational transformation and reducing timelines for delivery by up to six months."

Land Secs to split into three

Land Securities is to be split into three separately quoted companies after revealing a slump in pre-tax profit.

The company said it plans to demerge property outsourcing business Trillium and divide the remainder of the business into two divisions, focusing on retail property and London real estate.

It said the break-up would increase shareholder value and attract investment from global

property funds, which favour specialist companies.

At the same time the company released its interim results for the six months ended 30 September, which showed a pre-tax profit of £375.2m compared with £1.17bn in 2006.

The adjusted diluted net asset value was up 55p to 2236p, an increase of 2.5%.

The basic net asset value was 2356p, an increase of 52p.

Home Office could introduce anti-terror design reviews

Design reviews such as those carried out by Cabe could be conducted on new buildings to ensure they are able to withstand terrorist attacks.

The move is one of a range of measures on the table after a confidential review of protective security was drawn up by Home Office minister Lord West.

The RIBA has been working with

the government on drawing up the guidance, which will include masterclasses in designing secure buildings. Architects will also attend simulations to examine crowd reactions to terrorist attacks.

Richard Hastilow, chief executive of the RIBA, said design reviews could also be an option if the guidance isn't followed.