

The rest of the country

Fire regulations are some of the oldest known building regulations. They used to be issued on a local basis, were applicable to demarcated areas and varied in their content. It was not until the end of the 1700s that building outside of market towns became subject to a common fire regulation, which was then superseded by the Fire Policy Act for the Countryside of 2 March 1861.

This Act contained the only provisions (and few at that) of a technical nature for regulating building work outside of market towns. Moreover, its contents correlated to the type of settlement being experienced by the towns concerned, that is to say, slow and more widely spread than in the market towns.

The contents of the Act were formulated for the sole purpose of preventing fire from breaking out and spreading. Consequently, the Act was concerned only with the spacing of buildings and the flammability of the materials and structures present.

However, these requirements were in line with their counterparts in the Market Town Act and, thus, in the Copenhagen and Frederiksberg acts as well.

The Fire Policy Act did differ from the other acts in that it did not stipulate a requirement for government approval before the commencement of building works. On the other hand, the tradesmen were given responsibility for ensuring that the work was carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Following a revision in 1926, the Fire Policy Act was the only “building act” applicable to building work in the countryside up to 1960.

Regulations/statutes

It seems obvious that towns lacking a municipal charter but of a similar size to, or larger than, market towns would have had a need for building regulations that extended beyond the Fire Policy Act.

With the Act of 19 April 1864, the Ministry of Justice was authorised “when the municipal council concerned petitions for it, to extend, in accordance with the regulations, the provisions in the Building Act for Market Towns in the Kingdom of Denmark of 30 December 1858 to trading centres, ports and unloading berths, with the amendments necessitated by the relevant town’s particular municipal and local conditions, and which have been proposed or endorsed by the municipal council.”

This happened in Løgstør the same year, then in Marstal (1868), followed by Nørre Sundby and Silkeborg (1872) and others later. Such regulations changed again, either in connection with a town’s change of status to market town or pursuant to the Act of 5 December 1894 referred to previously, or possibly later still under the Act of 23 April 1915.

But other urban communities also experienced unforeseen growth and other, completely new, kinds of town came into being. Station towns sprang up where the railway network’s natural expansion did not directly coincide with existing cities. These towns

were also issued with regulations in accordance with the aforementioned acts.

Examples of such station towns include Aulum, Grindsted, Skjern and Viby. (A total of 17 station towns had their own regulations by the start of the 1930s.)

Esbjerg is a unique example of an urban community that experienced enormous growth. The town barely existed at the end of the 1850s but by 1900 had a population of over 13,500.

Furthermore, a number of rural municipalities around Copenhagen experienced population growth comparable to that in the suburbs and Frederiksberg.

Three of them have since been incorporated into Copenhagen, namely Valby and Brønshøj (1901) and Sundbyerne (1902). These three rural communities already had their own set of regulations – the first of which appeared in the 1870s.

Pursuant to the Act of 5 December 1894, these were later amended and finally came under a common regulation in 1930. The incorporated districts were not directly included under the Copenhagen building legislation until 1939. Other towns experienced such population growth that their municipal administration needed to change in size and approach and become more aligned with their counterparts in the market towns. This happened in Gentofte in 1920 and the municipality therefore acquired a supplementary building regulation in the form of a statute.

Some time later, the same thing happened in many of the other surrounding municipalities and they acquired so-called “Gentofte status”.

The number of municipalities coveting their own building regulations grew. Eventually, by 1951, the situation had reached such a stage that “Standard Building Regulations” (Normalbyggningsreglement) were drawn up for the rural municipalities.

In terms of its important provisions relating to building technique, this set of regulations was similar to Copenhagen’s, as they appear in the building statute of 1939.

The Standard Building Regulations were reissued in 1958 with a few changes that were essentially editorial in nature.

The building legislation as described was in its infancy when Southern Jutland became part of Germany in 1866. The developments that took place in Denmark up to the reunification in 1920 were, under the Act of 8 April 1924, extended to apply here. At the same time, they were equalised between the large towns, who designated the market towns as “hamlets”.