

10 September 2024

1-19 10 Maitland Road,
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Dear residents,

External wall remediation project – what steps do we need to take?

We last wrote to you to let you know that your building requires some remediation to its external wall system. Given that the remediation is a complex process, we wanted to take you through each step that we need to achieve before we can start work on-site and beyond. This is so we can help to set your expectations about how quickly we can get started with making the repairs on-site. Realistically, **we don't expect to be on-site with the remediation until 2025.**

You may have read the news regarding external wall remediation – sometimes referred to as the cladding crisis or the building safety crisis. One of the overarching themes of these articles is about the time it takes to complete the work. We wanted to share this information with you to help you understand what needs to happen and why things may seem like they aren't making fast progress. You can read a useful, albeit lengthy, report of the situation, written by the resident-led End Our Cladding Scandal campaign group here: www.britsafe.org/safety-management/2024/the-building-safety-crisis-still-no-end-in-sight.

Stages of an external wall remediation project

Below we have broken a project down into the typical steps we need to take, why we need to take them and the challenges we can face in doing so. We can sometimes be working on several steps at the same time. This may seem like a lot of information to share with you, however we think this will help you to understand your project more and may mean you spend less of your time having to ask us questions. We appreciate this may be too much information for some people, but please consider that others who live in your building may appreciate receiving more information than you.

We've carried out the following:

1. Identify building as requiring investigation.

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the government has instructed building owners to investigate their buildings to determine that they have been constructed to the appropriate standard. We also check that the materials used are up to the most recent post-Grenfell government standards and they have been fitted properly. Your building is in our second priority group; we investigate based on risk and use the government's risk prioritisation tool to help categorise our buildings.

2. Carry out an external wall investigation to PAS9980 standard.

This investigation at your building has taken place and was conducted by a qualified fire engineer. In the UK, there is incredibly high demand for fire engineers as there are thousands of buildings which require their services. We have worked hard to agree several fire engineering firms to be appointed to carry out work for us – however, they also are carrying out work for other organisations, so we have to book a slot with them sometimes months in advance.

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A summary of this letter

We're still working on getting everything in place so that we can start work on site – **remediation work will not begin until next year.**

For this project at Romford Road, we're currently working on:

- Establishing the scope of the required work
- Designing the solution to fix the issues found
- Appointing a contractor to carry out the work
- Determining funding sources and checking any relevant warranty/insurance policies.

A reminder

Your building's fire strategy is **stay put**, so you should stay in your home unless you are directly affected by smoke, heat or fire, or are told to evacuate by the fire brigade. There is no communal alarm in the building.

3. Issue investigation report determining if there are issues.

Our fire engineer issued their report to us, which outlined the defects present within the external wall system that we must fix for the building to remain compliant.

4. Implement any required interim safety measures.

Your building does not require any interim safety measures. At other buildings these have included things like an evacuation manager, a change in fire evacuation strategy, or the installation of an interlinked fire alarm system.

We're currently working on the below for your project:

5. Determine funding sources/relevant warranty/insurance policies.

Passing costs onto residents is always a last resort. We therefore must do all we can to pursue any insurance policy or warranty the building has, or previous contractor to determine if costs can be covered. Your building is not currently eligible for any government schemes. Funding conversations can take many months and can be very challenging to reach an agreement.

6. Establish the scope of the required works.

This is an important step where we confirm what needs to be fixed to be in-line with government regulations. In addition to this, we also speak to our insurer to determine if there are any measures we need to take to satisfy their requirements. If required, we also send out any relevant Section 20 notices to leaseholders.

7. Design the solution to fix the issues found.

We need to agree which materials and construction methods we will use to fix the problems we have found at your building. Sometimes, if we think the issues in the external wall system are particularly complex, we may appoint a design team of various professional organisations to come together to design the best solution for your building. We do not think that is necessary for your building.

8. Appoint contractor to carry out the work.

This can be one of the most challenging aspects of a project. If there are issues with how the building has been constructed, for example improperly fitted fire barriers, it is usually in everyone's best interest for the original contractor to return to fix the work. We want the contractor to return at their own cost – this means that discussions can take months as projects tend to be expensive. These discussions can stall progress in the rest of the project while we try to reach an agreement. In some cases, the original contractor no longer exists and so we can ask previously approved contractors on our building safety framework to bid for the work.

We'll do these actions in the future:

9. Agree start and finish dates for the work.

Once we have a contractor on board and funding agreed, we can get the logistics for the project in place and agree the program length, and the start and finish dates.

10. Lender letter issued.

Only once we have funding and start/finish dates agreed, can we issue a 'lender letter'. This outlines the work required, who will pay, and how long work will take. The letter may allow a lender to offer a mortgage on a property affected by building safety issues before remediation work is completed.

11. Hold a resident webinar to answer any questions.

We always hold a webinar a week or two before work starts on-site to explain the logistics, how long work will take and give you the opportunity to ask our team any questions. We invite the contractor to speak as well. We hold the webinars in the evening and send out a recording of the presentation, plus a write-up of all the questions asked within two weeks following the webinar.

12. Start remediation work.

We've got the start date, we've held the webinar, and now we're finally on-site starting to fix things. As we've explained above it will have taken us many months to get to this position, so it is always an exciting time as there's lots going on on-site.

13. Remediation work taking place.

We'll send out regular progress updates to let you know how things are going. As these projects are complicated, sometimes we encounter challenges which will delay the finish date. We'll always update you if this happens. You'll have a designated resident liaison officer who you can ask questions if you have them – you'll probably get to know them as you'll see them on-site.

14. Remediation work complete.

An important moment as it means that all issues have been fixed and hopefully you will now have peace of mind that your home is low risk and meets the latest government standards.

15. Interim safety measures stopped.

If we've had to put in interim measures such as an evacuation manager or temporary fire alarm, this will be stopped once work is complete.

16. EWS1 form issued – risk rating of building confirmed as low.

Our fire engineer will issue an EWS1 form which certifies the building as a low fire risk – EWS stands for external wall system. Your building will be given a passing grade once work is finished, this can be either an A1, A2 or B1 rating. Once you have the form, this will also mean a lender will offer a mortgage on your property. EWS1 forms are supposed to only be for buildings over 18 metres. Your building is below this threshold, however we have seen many instances where lenders request this form for smaller buildings and so we still issue them for buildings of a lower height.

I hope you have now got more of an understanding of the steps required to get this work completed at your building. It is sadly not just a case of turning up with a work crew and getting started within a few weeks. We must ensure we have all the correct documentation and do things properly to put ourselves in the best position to get government funding and ensure work is done to the best quality possible. We expect to write to you with an update every three months and will let you know how we are making progress towards the above steps.

Further support

- We understand building safety works can be frustrating and take time to resolve, however we ask that you still treat our staff with respect as they are trying to get the issues at your building fixed. You can read more about how we want to respect each other in our service charter: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/your-home/service-charter/>
- Check our document library for your building's letters and documents – it takes a little while to load: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/romfordbuildingsafety/>
- Get in touch with us on customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk if you have any questions.

Kind regards

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