

24 December 2021



Grand Union Heights remediation project – resident meeting 15 December 2021

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You can get in touch with us on customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk. All previous communications to Grand Union Heights can be found on our dedicated webpage: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/guhbuildingsafety/>.

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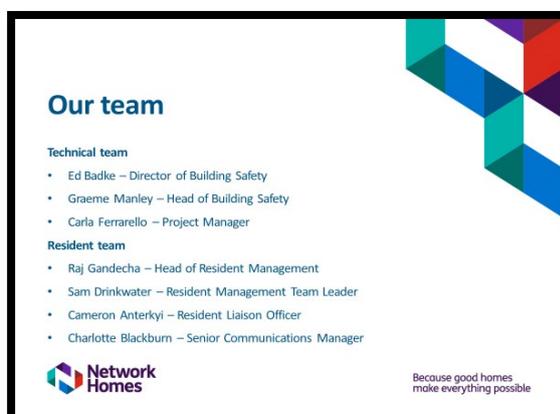
Webinar recording

You can view a recording of the presentation from the webinar at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZ1a8VSJF8c>.

The recording lasts around 34 minutes. The questions that were asked during the meeting have been included at the end of this document.

Presentation slides



We've added a word to the 'What are we aiming for?' slide as in hindsight we want to make it absolutely clear that we are aiming to be compliant with all **applicable** regulations. It will appear without the word applicable in the recording.

Sector timeline and our response

- Grenfell Tower fire – 14th June 2017
- We started investigating ACM cladding – June 2017
- We started investigating other high risk buildings – June 2017 to March 2021
- Government says we must 'investigate above 18m buildings – Dec 2018
- We started analysing above 18m buildings – Jan 2019
- Market for flats above 18m begins to stall – Nov 2019
- We created a building safety taskforce – Nov 2019
- Sector launches EWS1 form – Dec 2019
- We wrote to you with the date for your first investigation – Dec 2019
- Government launches Building Safety Fund for above 18m buildings – March 2020



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Grand Union Heights timeline

- Aug 2019 – we need to investigate your building
- Dec 2019 – initial investigations taking place
- March 2020 – leaseholders/shared owners may have to pay if other avenues are unsuccessful. We added a waking watch warden
- May and June 2020 – we need access to your home to upgrade the fire detection system
- Sept 2020 – we reduced the waking watch
- Oct 2020 – we submitted our building safety fund application
- Jan 2021 – we're working on contractor negotiations and procuring a design team
- March 2021 – further inspections to be carried out by the newly appointed design team
- May 2021 – we emphasised the importance of evacuating when the alarm sounds
- Aug 2021 – more inspections needed by design team
- Oct 2021 – design team visiting to take samples.



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Interim safety measures

- Your fire strategy is **simultaneous evacuation** which means you must evacuate if you hear the fire alarm, even if you think it is a false alarm
- Test is **Wednesdays at 3pm**
- We've upgraded the alarm system
- An Evacuation manager is on-site to aid with evacuation of the building
- Get in touch if you will need to be rescued in the event of an incident.



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Technical makeup of EWS

- High Pressure Laminate Panels (white and red panels)
- Red Cedar (brown wooden panels)
- Timber frame
- BS8414 test.



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Balconies

- Work may be required to balconies
- Not covered by government funding
- Will consult with you if we believe costs need to be recovered through service charge.



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Where we are now?

- We're currently working on:
 - Appointment of specialist design team due to complexity of design
 - Intrusive site investigations
 - Legal discussions with contractor
 - Organising BS8414 fire test.
- There is no easy solution or fast track approach:
 - We must ensure the system works
 - There's no 'off the shelf' solution
 - We have to test our design and ensure it isn't too heavy for the frame.



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What are the anticipated outcomes of the tests?

- **Pass** – hoped for solution where design is approved and start date can be confirmed
- **Fail** – could mean small tweaks to design needed, significant changes or new design required.



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Potential internal work

- While we're carrying out the design process for the external wall system, we're also looking at what may need to be done internally. This may include:
 - Replacing fire doors
 - Installing a sprinkler system.
- Once we know what the way forward is, we will confirm this with you
- We may not be able to secure funding for this work, so will let you know if we expect to recover the costs through the service charge.



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Building Safety Fund

- We're keeping DLUHC informed on all matters and, as a result, expect our claim will be approved
- Government is unable to approve or reject our application until we have informed them of the outcome of the fire test, and we have agreed the final design
- We'll let you know when we get a decision from DLUHC.
- This will cover leaseholder costs of external wall remediation. It will not cover balconies, fire doors or sprinklers.
- We'll consult you on the other costs.



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Other matters

- Communal wide alarm system
- Resident Liaison Officer
- Balconies / Building Insurance
- QR Codes
- Letters
- ASB




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FAQ

- Get in touch with us on **0300 373 3000** or customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk
- Contact your RLO Cameron Anterkyi on **02045 125 791**
- Service charge enquiries to leasehold.services@networkhomes.org.uk
- We'll share a recording of this presentation slides and send round all the questions asked by Christmas.



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FAQs

Developer

Please confirm who were the builders/developers of Grand Union Heights?

The original contractor was United Living South (formerly United House Group).

Balconies

What are Network Homes' intentions in regard to the costing of the balconies? Will the expense fall only on leaseholders that own balconies? Can I clarify that leaseholders that do not have balconies will not need to contribute to the costs of balcony decking?

Any charges for work to the balconies/terraces that are required as part of building safety work would be charged based on what it states in the tenancy/lease. We have spoken to our colleagues in the leasehold team who have advised that work for repairs to balconies would be divided by all residents, regardless of the size of balconies or whether residents have one or not, as these are considered to be part of the structure of the building.

If the cost is above £250 per person, this would be classed as 'major works' and would be billed separately to the communal service charge. This would only be payable by leaseholders and shared owners while Network Homes would pay for the tenanted share of the costs. Until we have received the results of the fire test and know that our approach is acceptable, we will not have any confirmed costs. Once we know what the approach will definitely be and any associated costs, we will share them with you.

Are there any flats without balconies?

Most flats at Grand Union Heights have access to a balcony or terrace for their own use.

What items can/can't we have on our balconies?

No barbeques, patio heaters, gas/fuel, plastic toys or anything that could cause a spark or flame to catch the external wall system or balcony. You should also look at the materials used in items you do have on the balcony – could it add a lot of fuel to an already burning fire, e.g. don't store a lot of items or cardboard boxes on your balcony. Large wooden structures such as sheds should also not be on balconies.

I want to be clear that it is the responsibility of everyone who lives in Grand Union Heights, their family and friends, guests and everyone at Network Homes to ensure we do everything we can to minimise the risk of a fire. If you see something that you think might be a fire risk, please get in touch with us. We'll then be able to look into it as soon as possible.

Can I smoke on my balcony?

We strongly advise you to smoke away from balconies and the external wall system, so as to minimise the risk of a cigarette causing a fire.

Project timeline

Why has it taken so long, and we haven't even got started yet?

As we've said in our presentation, the external wall system at Grand Union Heights is very complex and it might even be a unique design in London. Although it is frustrating that it is taking so long, we must ensure that the solution we come up with is acceptable from a fire risk perspective and a structural perspective.

You may also be aware that this is an issue which is much wider than just Network Homes or even other housing associations. This is an issue which we are seeing across the private and public sector, as well as places such as schools, hospitals and hotels. We have a lot of competition when we are trying to hire specialists, book investigations and schedule fire tests. There are a lot of people out there doing the same sort of building safety remediation projects as us, and not enough experts to advise them all. This is why it is taking so much time. Added to that, a lot of construction projects paused over the various lockdowns and so there is a backlog of those projects who are also competing for the same experts, same staff and same materials.

We are working as fast as we can, but we also are going to ensure that the end solution for the building is the right one.

How much longer do we have to wait?

We're not able to get a slot for the fire test until next year as they are in incredibly high demand. Once we have the results of the test, we will know if we're able to get on with the current design and will communicate a start date with you. If not, we will write with further information on the next steps.

Costs

How much is the likely total charge for this project? We were told originally it was £10.5m.

The £10.5m is an older figure we used when we submitted our initial application to the government's Building Safety Fund. That figure no longer reflects our current plans for the design and remediation

of Grand Union Heights. Until we have got the results of the fire test and know for sure what our approach will be, we won't have a final project cost.

Will Network Homes start the remediation before any shared owner/leaseholder payments are made?

We won't start on-site until the conversations around who will have to pay for the work have been resolved. If it is necessary for leaseholders/shared owners to contribute, this would not delay the work. Network Homes would pay initially and then recover the costs through the service charge.

How will Network Homes deal with the likely situation shared owners/leaseholders will refuse or be financially unable to pay for remediation costs?

We are doing absolutely everything we can to try and avoid having to recover costs from leaseholders/shared owners through the service charge. However, if we do have to recover costs, Network Homes has authorisation from the Financial Conduct Authority to offer interest free credit to those residents who are affected by building safety service charges and this is something you may be eligible for¹.

Will I have to pay for anything? How much will it cost?

We are doing everything we can to try and make sure that leaseholders and shared owners will not have to contribute to costs through the service charge. However, we're unable to make that guarantee at the moment, and we don't want to give you false hope that you may never have to contribute to these works.

The government is still looking at its offering to residents of buildings in need of remediation and it is likely they will make further announcements in the new year. We also are still in conversation with the original contactor, and the government over its Building Safety Fund so those are still avenues where we may get support.

If it does get to the stage where we have to recover costs through the service charge, we have authorisation from the Financial Conduct Authority to offer interest free credit for those affected by building safety service charges and you may be eligible for support through this scheme.

As soon as anything is confirmed, we will work with our leasehold colleagues to inform you and consult with you if necessary.

¹ FCA consumer credit arrangements are regulated by the FCA and any complaints arising from these arrangements by the Financial Ombudsman Service; Network Homes Limited, reference number FRN 919890, is authorised to provide Limited Permission lending and debt counselling on a not for profit basis. Details of our FCA permissions can be found on the [Financial Services Register](#).