

Safety in your building

3 November 2022

Grand Union Heights,
Northwick Road,
Alperton,
HA0

Dear residents,

Fire tests passed, preparing for on-site project start

Following the Grenfell tragedy, we investigated our high-rise buildings as directed by government guidance and found issues within the external wall of your building that need to be remediated. We needed to come up with a plan to remediate the issues. You'll remember we said that the construction of Grand Union Heights was unique in London. We had to carry out a fire test of our proposed solution with the unique wall construction so we could evidence that it would work. I'm extremely pleased to be able to share this news with you – the **proposed external wall system has passed both fire tests.**

The fire tests – what happened?

We held two fire tests as we had two types of outer materials in the external wall system, and we needed to test both. You can see in the image below that there's some wood-effect cladding. The first test was to determine how the replacement of this would perform in a fire situation: **the wood-effect cladding passed.**

The second fire test was to test the replacement of the red and white cladding panels seen on the remainder of the building in the image below. The red panels and white panels are made of the same materials, but due to the colour, the red panels release more heat during a fire. Therefore, we tested the red panels rather than the white: **the red panel passed the fire test.** This means the white panel will also be acceptable to use in the remediation project.



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A summary of this letter

The materials we propose to use on the external wall remediation have passed their BS8414 tests.

This means we are now able to plan for the remediation to begin by hiring operatives, ordering materials, etc.

The first fire test was for the wood effect cladding. The second test was for the red cladding panels (also the same as the white panels).

Both tests see if the fire is adequately contained from spreading across the external wall during the 30-minute test time. Temperature sensors are placed across the wall to also determine the spread during the incident.

We expect we won't start on-site until early next year, maybe not until Spring 2023.

Once we have finalised the project dates, we'll provide you with a 'lender letter' which may allow shared owners and leaseholders to sell, remortgage or staircase, and we'll organise a webinar.

A reminder

Your building's 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.

Good homes make everything possible

What test was carried out and why?

The test was a BS8414-2:2020 test (British standards) which determines the 'fire performance characteristics of non-loadbearing external cladding systems'.

A fire test sees a mock-up of the entire external wall being built in a laboratory, with the exact materials we plan to use on the project used. A fire is then set in a scenario that is supposed to reflect what would happen if there was a fire in an individual flat and it broke through the window, exposing the external wall to fire. The external wall is supposed to give enough fire resistance for 30 minutes, in order to give the fire brigade time to arrive and start to put the fire out. The aim is for the fire to spread across the wall as little as possible in the 30 minutes. Both tests lasted the full 30 minutes and all the temperature readings across the wall were at an acceptable level to pass the test.

This means we now know that the proposed solution will offer adequate protection in the event of a fire and will give enough time for the fire brigade to attend.

What happens next?

Now that we know that our external wall solution gives adequate protection, we can work with our design team to make the preparations for the project to begin on-site. This includes:

- Finalising the construction drawings
- Getting planning approval for the work from the council
- Submitting and agreeing the proposed remediation solution with Building Control
- Finalising tender with the contractor, including preparing the site logistics and programme
- Confirming the funding position with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) so that we can receive money from the Building Safety Fund
- Confirm the remaining funding position so we can share the details with you before the project starts.

Following our application to Brent Council, they may get in touch with you to ask for your comments on our planning application. They may also decide that consultation is not required if the application is seen to be a like for like replacement. If you do receive any planning notices from the council, please do have a read through of what they send you and offer up any comments you have.

When will the remediation of the external wall begin?

At the moment we're not able to give an exact date. Once we've made progress on the above, we'll be able to share a clearer timeline, as we of course need to see how long it will take to deliver materials to site etc. Our current expectation is that work will not begin until the new year – at least until Spring 2023. We'll continue to keep you updated as we move through project planning and will organise a resident webinar close to the start on-site date to answer all your questions.

Lender letters and EWS1 forms

There are some of you who will be waiting for an EWS1 form (external wall system). This is required by lenders in order to offer a mortgage on your property and allow you to sell, staircase or remortgage. While we will still not be able to provide an EWS1 form until the end of the project date (TBC), we are able to provide you with something else which may mean you can move forward in your sales process.

Some high street lenders have agreed to lend on a property without an EWS1 form, if they receive a 'lender letter'. This is a letter from us which outlines the work required to a project, the funding arrangements and the start/finish dates. We're not yet able to provide this lender letter to you as we don't have the start/finish dates confirmed. As soon as we're able to confirm the dates, we will share this lender letter with you and you may be able to progress with a lender at that time, instead of waiting until the end of the project. You can read more and see which lenders have signed up here: <https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/policy-and-guidance/guidance/joint-statement-cladding>.

Further support

You can view our previous letters here: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/guhbuildingsafety/> and if you have any questions, get in touch with us on customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk.

Kind regards

Raj Gandecha

Head of Resident Management (Building Safety)