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Admiralty Quarter Property

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Dear Sirs

Admiralty Quarter - Car Park (72 spaces) Fire Safety- resident update

Further to our earlier update dated 10 October 2020, the Fire Report was carried out and there were some recommendations which have been followed and a Fire Engineer's report (Façade Review) has also been commissioned. In the meanwhile, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services (HFRS) also carried out their routine fire safety inspection and both the HFRS and Façade Review identified interim and temporary measures that are required before the remedial works to the external walls are carried out.

The main outcome of the Façade Review and HFRS's visit was implementation of 24/7 Waking Watch service in six blocks:

- Admiralty Tower
- Unicorn House
- Mermaid House
- Hamburg House
- Ramillies House
- Centurion House

The role of the Waking Watch is to safeguard the residents by ensuring that routes (hallways and communal landings/staircases) leading to the emergency exits (and the exits themselves) are kept clear at all times and to ensure all internal fire doors remain closed. The evacuation policy in those blocks has now changed from 'stay put' to 'simultaneous evacuation'. We have posted leaflets through the doors and on the notice boards explaining the fire action in more detail. We have also issued a letter to owners and their tenants asking to advise us if you or your tenant is likely to require assistance of the waking watch in emergency. If this is applicable and you have not done this already, please email us the details to info@encoreestates.co.uk and we will pass this information to the waking watch wardens.

The reasoning behind the requirement to implement a waking watch was because of the height of the building exceeds 18m and the means of escape in case of emergency needs to be monitored 24/7 given the results of the external wall Fire Report.

Fire Report:

The investigations undertaken as part of the report found the following types of cladding construction:

- Curtain walling – Solid aluminium cladding panels (Euroclass A2) with phenolic insulation behind (Euroclass C-s2,d0), a non-insulated internal steel frame with a cement particle sheathing board (Euroclass B-s1, d0) and a plasterboard inner lining.

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- Rainscreen cladding – Solid aluminium panels (Euroclass A2) with phenolic insulation behind (Euroclass C-s2, d0), a non-insulated internal steel frame with a cement particle sheathing board (Euroclass B-s1, d0) and a plasterboard inner lining.
- Rendered external wall insulation (EWI) – Acrylic render finish (Euroclass B-s2, d0) on expanded polystyrene insulation (Euroclass E) on a non-insulated steel frame with a cement particle sheathing board (Euroclass B-s1, d0) and a plasterboard lining.
- Masonry walls- External clay bricks (Euroclass A1) with rigid PIR cavity insulation (Euroclass B or less), on a non-insulated internal steel frame with plasterboard inner lining.
- Timber cladding – External timber (Euroclass E if not fire rated) with phenolic insulation behind (Euroclass C-s2, d0) and non-insulated steel frame, brickwork wall or reinforced concrete wall.

Vertical and horizontal fire barriers were found to be either absent or incorrectly fitted within the cavity of the rainscreen cladding, rendered external wall insulation and timber cladding. Horizontal barriers were present within masonry walls but vertical barriers at compartment walls were missing (non-compliant). Cavities around window openings were either closed with plasterboard/cement board (considered compliant) or proprietary PVC cavity closures (likely non-compliant).

The combustible materials used in the external wall systems comply with the Building Regulations at the time of the construction but would not meet current regulations, in particular the external wall insulation on some of the blocks in Cross Street that are over 18m high and the timber cladding.

Private balconies to all the blocks have combustible timber decking (exposed to the underside) with dividing screens clad in timber, and are considered to be a significant risk to fire spread due to the exposed underside of the timber decking and the vertical dividing screen providing an easy path for the fire to spread vertically between balconies.

The external frame to the front elevation of Brunswick House comprises combustible timber plates bolted either side of a steel plate. The timber is a structural component that cannot be removed without affecting the integrity of the frame. The timber frame is considered to be a risk to fire spread across the building surface in both vertical and horizontal directions and between balconies.

In respect of the recommendation, based on the findings of this report it is apparent that there are non-compliance issues with each of the external wall systems. The fire classification of the materials, the absence of fire barriers around windows and the potential for incorrectly fitted fire barriers, as found in some locations, compromises the 'functional fire safety requirement' for the buildings to adequately resist the spread of fire, irrespective of heights, and for this reason and for the guidance provided by the MHCLG the existing external wall systems (except for the curtain walling to the Type 'A' and 'B' blocks) are deemed to be non-compliant and in need of remediation to ensure the system adequately performs in the event of a fire.

A full copy of the Fire Report and the Façade Reviews was sent to the MHCLG which is the government body dealing with the funding. Should you wish to obtain copies of these, please send your request to info@encoreestates.co.uk and we will provide the reports to you.

Next steps:

Stage One:

Installation of temporary fire alarms in blocks which currently have waking watch service in place.

The waking watch service is expensive and will need to remain in place until the recladding materials are replaced. The only viable alternative solution to minimise these ongoing costs, which would allow us to stand down this service, is the installation of temporary wireless fire alarms throughout. In the next few days, the leaseholders will receive a Notice of Intention letter describing the works proposed and inviting the leaseholders to provide their observations. Once the tenders are obtained for this proposed work, we will undertake a cost benefit study to determine the timing of the installation.

Stage Two:

Appointment of Lead Consultant

An independent Lead Consultant will be appointed whose role will be to prepare an action plan, strategy and oversee all remedial recladding works. This includes design, specification, scope of works, preliminaries and compliance documentation. They will also analyse final tenders ensuring all quotes represent best value for money. Ultimately, they will place the contract and oversee the works until the completion. The Lead Consultant will also be asked to attend residents' meetings to explain progress. We have commissioned a pre-tendering exercise to establish costs.

As you will be aware Admiralty Quarter is registered with the Government's funding programme, and whilst the application could result in funding of any works, should that not be the case, any remedial works would still need to progress and we will set out that programme to you in due course.

Zero Valuations

Whilst your safety is paramount, the Government Guidance and recommendations have had an impact on the sales and remortgages of properties where some were receiving a zero valuations from lenders. This has made it difficult to sell or remortgage. Whilst the aim of the remedial works is to make the buildings safe for residents, once the works are completed an EWS1 form will be received which the lenders may use ending the zero valuations.

Developer communication

Copies of the reports have also been sent to the Developer of Admiralty Quarter and we highlighted the issues that were identified and the remedial action needed. We have yet to receive a full reply, but are in open conversation with them and we will continue to press the urgency and importance of this matter and to establish their own financial contribution towards any work.

Portsmouth MP communications

We have raised this issue with the MP for Portsmouth, Stephen Morgan, to explain the situation and seek his support in progressing matters, particularly on funding. We have also raised the concern that leaseholders are potentially going to pay for the remedial works which seems unfair. We will update you on the progress, however please also consider contacting Mr Morgan individually to stress the impact and importance of this to you personally.

Leaseholder communication

We would like to update residents regularly going forward and we would like to ask you to consider signing up to email correspondence and MyPropertyOnline as these are the most sufficient methods of communication. In order to register please follow the guidance set out below.

By registering you will ensure that you do not miss any important information but when you login you will be able to see updates on the virtual noticeboard, view your account balance, see copies of your invoices, and make secure payments.

It's also good for the environment. As an online system, in order to use MyPropertyOnline, you will need to 'go paperless' and receive future correspondence by email.

How to Register

Signing up is easy.

- Go to: <https://portal.encoreestates.co.uk/Registration.aspx>
- Fill in your details (see below)
- You will receive an email with your registration and password details

The details you enter will need to match **exactly** the information we hold for you, which is shown below:

Customer Reference: **1013/570**
Name: **Southern Housing Group.**
Email: **Finance.Purqueries@shgroup.org.uk**

Please note the following:

- If you own more than one property, you will need a separate login for each property
- There can only be one registration per property, not a separate login for each co-owner
- Access to this web domain may be restricted from certain countries for security reasons
- All future correspondence will be sent by email (except for certain documents that need to be sent by post for legal reasons). If you wish to receive your correspondence by post in future, you will no longer be able to access MyPropertyOnline.

After you have registered, we will send you a confirmation letter by post for security reasons.

Yours faithfully

Magdalena Amoura AIRPM
Regional and Client Manager - Sandhurst
On behalf of the Managing Agent, Admiralty Quarter