

BUILDING SAFETY AT ADA LEWIS HOUSE, DALMENY AVENUE

We are writing to all residents at Dalmeny Avenue to explain the position regarding our building safety programme and how we are proposing to provide relevant compliance assurances to lenders where residents are looking to move or remortgage their homes.

Full details of our building safety programme are [here on our website](#).

What is the building safety programme?

We've developed our building safety programme to make sure our buildings comply with the evolving government guidance on building safety and that the materials used in and the construction of our buildings are safe.

We have fire risk assessments in place for all our buildings and we have been systematically rolling out more intensive building safety inspections to all our blocks.

The outcomes from this programme are either an EWS1 form for buildings over 18m which is a form used to demonstrate that a building complies with government guidelines **or** for buildings under 18m, an expert report which lenders can rely on to demonstrate compliance with the government's guidance.

Current government guidance remains that an EWS1 form is not required for buildings under 18m.

Ada Lewis House falls into this category.

What happens in the building safety programme?

We have a systematic approach:

1. We identify which buildings to prioritise using a risk based analysis.
2. We commission specialist architects and engineers to come to each building in order of priority and carry out an initial inspection.
3. Following the inspection, the experts produce an initial report for us which details the materials and the construction of the building and also makes any recommendations for further detailed inspections if it looks likely that remedial work will be needed and/or any changes to the fire safety precautions in place.
4. If remedial work is recommended what happens then?
 - Usually we have to carry out further detailed investigations
 - We communicate the nature of the remedial work with residents to let everyone know what the plan is and what to expect.
5. If remedial work is required we must also consider how the work is funded. Safety comes first so, as a matter of principle, we never let questions of funding prevent us from getting on with work that needs to be done.

Find out more [here on our website](#).

Buildings under 18m – providing compliance assurance

We have heard that some lenders are insisting on EWS1 forms for Ada Lewis House. The prime minister has explicitly called on banks to stop asking for EWS1 surveys where these are not appropriate.

Whilst an EWS1 form is not designed for buildings under 18m, we recognise that some form of written compliance assurance is needed. Once Ada Lewis House has been through our building safety programme will provide a verifiable report from a qualified fire engineer. This defines the materials used within the building and indicates if the building is confirmed as having a low combustibility risk. This report can be given to lenders.

We would hope that sensible lenders will accept this independent expert report as sufficient assurance that our buildings comply with government guidelines. We have found that this approach has enabled some lenders to progress transactions on other affected schemes.

If anyone is in difficulties with mortgage brokers insisting on inappropriate EWS1 forms we are happy to speak with them on this subject and explain the position. We are finding that not all lenders are taking the same stance so it may be that another lender will take a different approach given that we are not saying we won't supply compliance assurance but just that the EWS1 form is not the appropriate way to provide that assurance given the height of the building.

Note for leaseholders looking to move or remortgage

In some of our buildings currently going through the building safety programme, the initial survey identifies that there is a need for more intrusive investigations into the walls of the property and potentially, for remedial work. When this happens and remedial work is required, as a rule, leaseholders should factor in that that this will delay any sale, staircasing, or mortgage change further.

A national issue

We share the frustration of our residents, especially those who have been forced to put their lives on hold. We are doing all that we can to progress our building safety programme at pace and we are committed to working with individual residents who are particularly severely affected. Although it is only government which can bring about the national level of support and policy change that are needed to avert this emerging crisis affecting so many, we recognise how stressful this situation is for our residents.

Southern Housing Group is taking part in the government consultation process which is aiming to bring much needed clarity to the UK mortgage market and ensure that all residents of all tenures and properties can move forward with their individual next steps.

Your safety is our first concern, so if you are at all worried about anything in connection with the programme of work or building safety, please get in contact – we are here to support you.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Horsley | Director of Building Safety