



## Safety in your building

30 May 2023

Cumnor House, Helmi House, Lidcote House,  
Stockwell,  
SW9

The Hive  
22 Wembley Park Boulevard  
Wembley  
HA9 0HP

[www.networkhomes.org.uk](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk)

customerservice@  
networkhomes.org.uk  
0300 373 3000

Dear residents,

### Project update – new draft completion date expected to be December 2023

We are writing to provide an update on the remediation project being undertaken to your building. To get to the point, the new completion date for the project is December 2023. We have explained in depth below why this is the case and I'd like to apologise for the additional disruption you will face while we remediate the issues found in your building.

### Progress in the last few months

We recognise that there has been limited progress over the last few months. The reason for this delay is because after scaffolding erection and removal of the cladding panels, we discovered further issues that were not fully known beforehand. We've explained some of this in our previous updates.

Therefore, in the last few months we have been working with the contractor and the professional team to agree the appropriate solution on each issue. This has meant obtaining advice from architects, fire engineers, façade engineers, structural engineers, product manufacturers and building control.

Below is a summary of the issues encountered:

- **Aluminium cladding subframe:** The cladding panels are attached to this. We had questions about the re-use of the existing subframe. Higgins will now be replacing the subframe.
- **Sheathing board:** Repairs were required to other parts of external wall such as sheathing boards. This has been agreed with Higgins.
- **Brickwork cavity barriers and cavity closures:** these have undergone further assessment from our fire engineers with some relatively minor changes to the original remediation scope.
- **Inset balcony soffits:** Helmi House and Cumnor House have inset balconies on the south elevation facing Denchworth House. These have an aluminium cladding soffit and behind this is combustible insulation which will be replaced. We are still working on an alternative design for ventilation extraction in this area which currently terminates into this concealed soffit. Additional works will be required to install fire stopping in these areas.
- **Brick work piers:** The brick piers to the East and West elevations require additional wind post supports to be fitted. A remediation approach has been agreed with Higgins and the structural engineer to install additional brickwork supports to these areas.
- **Roof capping:** The wooden boarding below roof capping has deteriorated from water ingress. This will be replaced with a non-combustible boarding.

### A summary of this letter

Due to a number of issues discovered during the remediation project, Higgins has advised us that the new draft completion date is December 2023. This could even extend further into 2024. We will keep you informed on our progress.

We'll be starting internal communal areas surveys to make sure firestopping is adequate in these areas.

After fire door investigations, we've found some issues with installation and some with maintenance. We should be able to repair them, so won't need new doors. We'll be meeting with Higgins to work out their liability for the installation issues. We'll then send out any necessary section 20 notices for any costs which may need to be recovered through the service charge.

We've included some mental health support info for those of you who may be affected and need support.

### 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.

- **Breather membrane:** We have agreed for a breather membrane to be installed as part of the aluminium cladding system. This is not a defect but an upgrade to offer an additional barrier to prevent moisture ingress into the building.
- **Balcony possessions:** We have found alternative storage facilities on the estate for resident possessions on balconies. We would appreciate residents to assist us by keeping balconies clear.

### Revised completion date

The project was initially due to complete May 2023. We have asked Higgins for a revised programme which they have submitted to us in draft. The revised programme suggests the project can complete by December 2023. There are still a number of variables that could affect the programme so it is possible the works could extend into 2024. We will keep you updated about this.

### What is happening now and what will you see the next few months?

Higgins are working on removing the cladding subframe and completing any work needed to the sheathing boards. They will then start to fit new mineral wool insulation, fire barriers and cladding panels. This work will be done starting at the top of the building and working down.

### Internal compartmentation survey

We are going to do a compartmentation survey of the common areas of each block in the coming weeks to check the building's internal fire compartmentation. If the survey reveals any deficiencies, we will take the same approach as on other matters and ask Higgins to put this right.

### Fire doors update

We also wanted to provide an update on the fire door investigations that took place a few months ago. The investigations have been able to determine the different fire doors that we have installed at Helmi, Cumnor and Lidcote House. We found a mixture of issues, some of which relate to the original installation and others which are more repairs and maintenance activity.

The types of issue found are:

- **Installation behind frame:** We found they were not installed correctly to the wall, which is an installation defect.
- **Gaps around door to the floor or to the frame:** We found gaps exceeding tolerances around most fire doors. This tends to happen with doors as they age and is a maintenance issue.
- **Worn parts such as intumescent smoke seals, hinges:** This tends to happen with doors as they age and is a maintenance issue.
- **Certification labels:** some fire doors had visible certification labels which identify the fire door while others did not. We have however identified a pattern and applied this to come to the conclusion that the fire door we have installed at the buildings are:
  - **Communal doors FD30s:** doors manufactured by Premdor
  - **Communal doors FD60s:** doors manufactured by ZMR trading as Millenium Doors
  - **Dwelling doors FD30s:** doors manufactured by Vicaima.

The fire door contractor we engaged with to carry out inspections – Ventro Group – has said it is possible to repair and upgrade the fire doors to achieve a notional/nominal standard. This is where a fire door undergoes significant repair/upgrade to accepted repair techniques. The fire door cannot be re-certified but is judged to be adequate and will perform as a fire door should.

We have issued the reports to Higgins to understand their views of their perceived liability. This is particularly relevant regarding the installation issues discovered behind the frame. We will wait on Higgins' comments on their liability position based on our findings and we will consider further how

best to procure the work. Any liability admitted by Higgins will only cover part of the cost of the required works, as a large part of the work is considered maintenance activity.

We will be considering how best to procure the work so it can be completed satisfactorily in a way that we can demonstrate value for money as the cost of the required work could be significant. We will also need to comply with leaseholder Section 20 requirements for the work considered maintenance. We expect this process will take some time to complete and will advise about progress in our next update letter to residents.

### **More info about why delays can happen**

You may have some questions about why these sorts of delays/issues are happening so we have included some information below which will hopefully help you understand:

- **Why don't you build contingencies into projects?**

We do build some contingencies into projects to account for smaller things like bad weather, lots of operatives on holiday at busy times, delivery delays, local authority permissions, parking etc. However, sometimes things happen which we could not have seen coming or the likelihood was so small that we didn't think it would happen. This is the case with many of the things listed above.

- **Why weren't they spotted during investigations?**

The way we plan our remediation programme is to look at the investigations we've done on a small area of the building and then scale it up for the rest of the building. Sometimes, we find things in other areas of the building that we did not find in the area we investigated.

- **Is the end date you've given us just a guess. Will it definitely change?**

The programme of your building's remediation is put together by detailing how long every task *should* take, and then adding small contingencies along the way. There can be many things which affect the finish date. With the information we have now, Higgins' draft programme says the completion date is December 2023. However, as we've discovered a lot of additional work, this could happen again and change the end date. We'll keep you informed along the way.

We hope this update is useful. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all residents for working with the team by allowing access to your homes and balconies so that the works could progress. We apologise for the unforeseen delays that have occurred and would like to reassure residents that the team will be working hard to bring the external wall remediation project to a successful conclusion in the coming months.

### **Further support**

The resident led End Our Cladding Scandal campaign group has advised housing associations to share mental health support information with affected residents. We know this update will be disappointing and may cause some of you additional stress. Please do check out their resources if you feel it may be helpful: <https://endourcladdingscandal.org/get-support/mental-health-support/>.

Check our website's dedicated page for your building's previous updates: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/robsart1buildingsafety/>. If you have any questions, you can also get in touch with us on [customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk](mailto:customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk).

Kind regards

Raj Gandecha  
Head of Resident Management (Building Safety)