



Stafford House - Frequently Asked Questions

Questions about the recommended works

1. Does Stafford House have any ACM (aluminium composite material) panels on the building?

No, but it does have an External Rainscreen Cladding system to one elevation, which was retrofitted onto the original construction at the time of conversion around 2007/8. The Rainscreen Cladding System is on the South facing side of the building and is a powder coated metal material that is red in colour.

2. What type of Rainscreen Cladding System does Stafford House have?

The Rainscreen Cladding is formed of 40mm thick steel sheet composite panels with PIR (polyisocyanurate) insulation cores. It is understood the panels were fixed to the original brickwork substrate via a series of galvanised steel cladding rails, thus forming an 80mm cavity between the original brickwork face and the back face of the cladding panels.

3. Has the Rainscreen Cladding System been independently inspected?

Yes, it has and the findings have been reported to us.

4. Has Accent received an independent report?

Yes. We are still reviewing the report and identifying how to apply the recommendations based on the further information we need from Building Control and the independent fire safety expert.

5. How long have you had the report?

We received the finalised report on Tuesday 10 March 2020.

6. What recommendations does the report make?

1. Review the top floor flats to determine the internal fire safety and install additional linked fire detectors and warning sounders.
2. Consider the replacement of the Rainscreen Cladding system.

7. How long will the recommendations take to complete?

There are a number of factors we need to consider before a clear timeline can be agreed. We have set up a dedicated project team to work with our customers and external experts including Rushmoor Council and the independent fire safety experts to make sure we understand the impact and cost of the work that needs to be done.

We will be talking to you as soon as we know more about what work we will need to do and how long it is likely to take.

8. You wrote to us in 2017 advising of an independent report and that the building was safe. What has changed and what is different now?

In 2017, a fire specialist inspected the building and made a number of recommendations. These resulted in remedial work which we did immediately. The independent expert reported that the fire integrity of the building was robust and safe. They also reported that no further action was required over and above the remedial works we had carried out.

Since the Grenfell Fire Tragedy, the Ministry of Housing, Culture and Local Government's (MHCLG's) guidance has changed.

Advice Note 14 was introduced by the Government. It provided a 'decision tree' (a tree like model of decisions and their possible consequences), relating to the suitability of external wall materials of residential buildings over 18 metres (6 storeys) high. We have, therefore, followed the guidance and reviewed and analysed the Rainscreen Cladding System installed. This has led to some concerns over the suitability of the Rainscreen cladding and us now considering its replacement.

9. What does this mean for Stafford House and customers?

This now means, due to current guidance, we will be working with Rushmoor Council and independent fire safety experts, to assess how we can safely and practically progress the recommendations made for the Rainscreen Cladding System and top floor flats.

10. Who is going to pay for any works required?

We are currently reviewing all funding options, including the recent budget pledge by the Government to help landlords pay for external wall material removal.

We can assure you that we will bear the cost of the work required, not pass on any costs to customers.

Customer Safety Questions

1. Is Stafford House safe?

Yes, we believe Stafford House is safe. We would not allow customers to stay in any unsafe home or building.

2. Am I safe in my home?

How safe you are in your own home very much relies on you making sure your home complies with standard fire safety regulations. We would be more than happy to inspect your home and offer fire safety advice.

3. What assurance can you offer me that I am safe?

To be safe in your own home, please check that you have the following:

1. A working smoke/heat detector alarm in your kitchen and hall.
2. A half hour fire door, with strips and seals to the entrance of your home protecting you from a communal fire.
3. Internal walls which provide a minimum 30 minute fire protection between properties.
4. A working communal fire alarm and detection system that is independently checked monthly.

If any of these are not in place, please contact us.

In addition:

1. Our fire safety assessor does a weekly inspection of the building and reports any remedial works that need to be completed.
2. Hampshire Fire Brigade undertake a joint annual inspection of the building, and there are no current concerns.

4. Do I stay put or evacuate if the smoke/heat alarm sounds?

We have taken advice from Hampshire Fire Brigade about what our customers should do in the unlikely event of a fire in the building. Their recommendation is that if the smoke/heat alarm sounds within your flat, you should evacuate. If you hear another alarm from another property, you should stay in your home unless advised by the fire brigade.

5. I am worried about fire safety, do I have to move out?

No. Based on the most recent fire risk assessments, carried out in January 2020, and taking into account the fire prevention measures in place, the risk of a fire in the building is low.

6. Are the fire brigade aware of Stafford House and the Rainscreen Cladding System?

Yes. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service are working with us to make sure customers remain safe.

7. What extra fire safety measures are Accent putting in place until the remediation works are complete?

We have introduced weekly inspections of the building. There is also a dedicated project team, which includes independent fire safety experts, Rushmoor Council and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, which regularly reviews the fire safety risk of the building.

8. Do you undertake Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs)?

Yes, we undertake annual fire risk assessments by internal fire safety assessors. We ensure any remediation works that are raised as part of the FRA process are carried out.

9. Can we see a copy of the FRAs?

Yes, we are looking at how we can share this information with you. Currently, our FRAs are stored in an internal computer system and there isn't a straight-forward way to share the detail with you.

10. How do we report any potential fire risks or concerns we have?

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure we are all safe. If you have any concerns or see people undertaking work that you think we might not be aware of (e.g. Sky installations), please contact us on 0345 678 0555 or e-mail

Aldershotfiresafety@accentgroup.org

Leasehold / Shared Ownership Questions

1. Will this have any impact on the value of my property?

It is difficult to say at this time. Any potential purchasers may not be able to obtain a mortgage, due to mortgage lenders requiring confirmation of a building's safety. A building's safety, for conveyancing purposes, is established through the External Wall System (EWS) process. This has been agreed by RICS and banks and building societies. Until the works are completed, the fire expert completing the EWS will not be in a position to sign off the EWS form. Further details can be found at www.lease-advice.org

2. What happens if I am currently trying to sell my property?

Unfortunately, at the moment, we don't think you will be able to sell your property on the open market.

Once the works are complete, and the buildings are compliant, the EWS form can be signed off, and you should be able to sell your property.

3. Will Accent buy my property?

Unfortunately, no, we cannot buy back your property. However, once the remedial work has been completed, we will be able to advise you on how to sell your property on the open market.

4. I have a private tenant, what will you do to help me and them?

If you sub-let your property, we expect that you have landlord insurance in place that would cover such eventualities. If you live in one of the four top floor flats, we do need to talk to you about what happens next for your tenant. We will be in touch with you directly.

5. Do I have to move out whilst works are done?

For those living in the top floor flats, the works will be quite intrusive. If you want to move out whilst the work is being done, we can assist you with this.

For those living elsewhere in the block, there is no need to move out during the works.

Next Steps / Timeline Questions

1. Who do we speak to, if we have further queries or questions?

If you have any further questions, please e-mail your enquiry to the dedicated email address Aldershotfiresafety@accentgroup.org and we will ensure the right member of the project team responds or speaks to you within one working day.

2. How will you keep us informed?

We will be in touch with you regularly, to keep you informed of progress or major changes. We are also happy to have face to face conversations, and will arrange a customer meeting before the works start on site.

During the present Coronavirus outbreak, we will need to take account of current Government advice about the holding of face to face meetings, but do let us know how you would prefer us to keep you informed.

3. What else do Accent need to do to assess the building?

We are not aware of anything else required to assess the building. However, as Government guidance and best practice is reviewed, we will continue to monitor the fire safety of Alexander House, Further investigation works may be required.