



## **Alexander House - Frequently Asked Questions**

*January 2020*

### **Questions about the recommended works**

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

No, but Alexander House has an External Wall Insulation (EWI) system, which was retrofitted onto the original construction at the time conversion around the year 2000. The EWI system is wrapped around the whole building and is the light blue coloured material.

#### **2. What type of EWI system does Alexander House have?**

Alexander House has an EWI system and the manufacturer is Relius. The materials used in the construction are as follows:

1. Render top-coat (3mm).
2. Plastic reinforcement mesh.
3. Insulation 110mm EPS (Expanded Polystyrene).
4. Adhesive.
5. Cement sheathing board.

#### **3. Has the EWI system been independently inspected?**

Yes, it has been independently inspected. 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 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. To review the top floor flats to determine the materials used in their construction.
2. To consider the replacement of the EWI system.

## **7. How long will the work to meet the recommendations take to complete?**

There are a number of factors that need to be considered 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. This will ensure 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 that we did immediately. The independent expert reported to us 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 carried out.

However, 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 EWI system installed. This has led to some concerns over the suitability of the EWI system and us now considering its replacement.

## **9. What does this mean for Alexander House customers?**

This now means that 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 that have been made for the EWI system and the four 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. No costs will be passed on to customers.

## **Customer Safety Questions**

### **1. Is Alexander House safe?**

Yes, we believe Alexander 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 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 carries out a weekly inspection of the building and reports any remedial works to be completed.
2. Hampshire Fire Brigade undertake a joint annual inspection of the building. 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 on 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 Alexander House and the EW1?**

Yes. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service are aware and we are working together to make sure customers are 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 and ensure any remediation works 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 best 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 in a format we can send to customers.

#### **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 you think we might not know about, (e.g. Sky installation), please contact us on 0345 678 0555 or e-mail

[Aldershotfiresafety@accentgroup.org](mailto: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 the 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](http://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. However, 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, and we will be in touch with you directly.

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

For the people 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 help 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 email your enquiry into the dedicated email address we have set up, [Aldershotfiresafety@accentgroup.org](mailto:Aldershotfiresafety@accentgroup.org). We will ensure the right member of the project team responds or speaks to you as appropriate, 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 important changes. We are also happy to have face to face conversations and will arrange a customer meeting before the work starts on site.

Because of the current 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, and further investigation works may be required.