

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS: ALL</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Chalcots Estate Permanent Cladding Solution Update (SC/2017/56)	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Leader of the Council	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Cabinet	<b>DATE</b> 6 December 2017
<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b>  This report sets out the Council's progress on the removal and replacement of the external cladding facade at the five Chalcots Estate blocks in Swiss Cottage. This report in particular outlines the recommended process for seeking planning approval for the permanent cladding façade replacement. This update is being brought at this stage prior to the final decision in January. The report sets out the below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background to the Council's work including an update on progress to date including removal of the current system and interim measures;</li> <li>• Information on the proposed permanent cladding façade replacement options including the outcome of resident engagement; and</li> <li>• An outline of the process for seeking planning approval.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b> No documents were used in the preparation of this report which are required to be listed.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Jenny Rowlands, Executive Director Supporting Communities</p>	
<b>WHAT DECISIONS ARE BEING ASKED FOR?</b> To note progress in the development of the options for replacement cladding.	

Signed:



Jenny Rowlands

Date: 28 November 2017

## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY?**

- 1.1 Following the Grenfell fire in June 2017, a programme of national testing by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Building Research Establishment (BRE) of various cladding systems has highlighted the significant risks of ACM cladding when used on the façade of high-rise residential buildings. Camden took the decision to remove the cladding following the first BRE test result in June 2017. The purpose of this report is to update on progress of the cladding removal at the Chalcots blocks as well as the process for seeking planning permission for the permanent replacement cladding. The report provides some initial background on Chalcots works, outlining the Chalcots cladding programme and its ongoing impacts, and setting out Camden's proposed approach for a simultaneous planning application.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 As outlined in the Fire Safety Cabinet Report in July 2017, after the Grenfell fire on 14 June, the Council immediately took steps to assure itself and reassure residents of the safety of its buildings. Following information provided by the DCLG, the Council sent sample cladding from the Chalcots Estate to the BRE, responsible for the national testing programme, on 21 June. Camden immediately publicised the results of the test and indicated that based upon the outcome of the Government testing it would seek to remove the cladding as quickly as possible.
- 2.2 Subsequently four of the five blocks were evacuated after investigations by the London Fire Brigade (LFB), and Enforcement Notices were issued on the 12 July. A schedule of works was provided by the LFB to Camden that required to be completed in order for residents to return to their homes. Camden worked in conjunction with the LFB who checked the works and advised in July 2017 that it was safe for residents to return. Independent Building Control officers authorised the sign off of the work on a floor-by-floor basis and residents were able to return to their homes by 24<sup>th</sup> July. Confirmation of completion of the work required by the Enforcement Notices was formally received by the LFB on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017.
- 2.3 Further mitigations were required prior to the cladding removal to ensure resident safety. Fire Wardens were posted on each floor of the blocks while the remedial works were being completed and in the evacuated blocks this has been reduced to a roaming patrol with one warden based on 2-3 floors 24/7 while the cladding is still in place. The Council has also been carrying out additional works to improve resident safety in the blocks. This includes fitting new front entrance doors for all flats with 60 minute fire protection, additional smoke alarms and heat detectors, as well as fire and personal appliance testing (PAT) for white goods and other items in all households.

## **3. CLADDING WORKS**

### **Cladding Removal**

- 3.1 Camden has committed to removing the cladding system (which includes both the ACM tile and the rockwool insulation) from all five blocks as quickly as possible. Works to secure the structure of the blocks started in September. This included strengthening of the podiums in the underground car parks to ensure the weight of the construction vehicles can be supported.
- 3.2 Rather than using scaffolding across the buildings which the LFB indicated may pose an additional fire risk, rising platforms (called 'mast climbers') have been constructed to remove the cladding panels, with limited scaffolding required around the base of each block. Due to the nature of construction at the base of Taplow it has taken longer to secure the necessary equipment prior to cladding removal. The cladding system removal was therefore delayed at the Taplow block and started in November. The site

will also be closed for Christmas holidays from the 22 December to 2 January, which will affect the completion date. The expected completion date per blocks are as follows:

- Blashford 9 December 2017
- Bray 16 December 2017
- Burnham 16 December 2017
- Dorney 22 December 2017
- Taplow 13 January 2018

3.3 For Health and Safety reasons, the safe removal of cladding is subject to suitable weather conditions and therefore the completion dates are also dependent on this. With the exception of Taplow the cladding removal for all other blocks is progressing according to our programme plan.

**Interim Measures**

3.4 The Council’s aim is to replace the cladding at the Chalcots as quickly as possible to minimise the disruption to residents and ensure their living environment is safe, warm and secure.

3.5 The gas heating supply for four blocks is delivered via the Council’s own gas network with Blashford supplied via the national grid. An analysis of fuel efficiency has been conducted to confirm the impact on resident fuel consumption while the cladding and insulation is removed. The analysis identified an approximate 30% increase in heating cost for residents of the four evacuated blocks and 40% increase for Blashford (due to the greater external surface area of the flats). The Council is working with residents to ensure bills for the affected period are based on the 2016 benchmark for gas heating consumption at the blocks. The total projected monthly cost for the Council to cover these charges is estimated to be £15,500.

3.6 Fire Wardens remain on site as part of the DCLG and LFB guidance on interim measures and waking watch. They are required to be in each block until the cladding is completely removed. Once the cladding is removed the current service outlined in paragraph 2.6 will be reduced further. There will still need to be a patrol in place while the scaffolding is erected at the base of the blocks and construction is underway.

3.7 The removal of cladding, presence of scaffolding on site and ongoing patrols will have a negative impact on living conditions for residents and the costs place additional pressure on the Housing Revenue Account. It is therefore imperative that the Council determines and procures its preferred cladding replacement system as soon as possible, the aim being to complete the replacement of the cladding during 2018.

**Permanent Cladding Options**

3.8 A specialist design team was appointed in September to investigate the permanent options once the cladding is ready to be replaced. This includes architects, quantity surveyors and structural engineers. The design team have undertaken investigations of the current cladding system and building design and compiled options for Camden to consider. A further Cabinet Paper is to be presented in January 2018 to make a recommendation to Cabinet regarding the options available, likely cost and procurement strategy.

3.9 The below is an outline of the cladding options presented during resident engagement:

<b>Cladding Options</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Existing concrete external wall	Building regulations state that the Council cannot leave a building with reduced energy efficiency.

Solid aluminium panels	Panels are inert, insulation material would be Rockwool. Panels would be a similar weight to the current panels.
Insulated render	Longest length of installation. Deterioration in aesthetic appearance means the render would require cyclical decoration.
Glass reinforced concrete	Panels are inert, insulation material would be Rockwool. Panels are heavier and therefore additional fittings may be required.

3.10 It should be noted that all options being considered are based on the highest fire rating standard to ensure resident safety is the top priority. The key consideration is that the insulation material and the panels themselves are inert and therefore resistant to the spread of flame. Guidance from the DCLG is to provide an A1/A2 safety standard option and all of the suggested systems adhere to this. The Council is continuing to work with the DCLG to ensure that the agreed option is a safe system. The Council has committed to test the final option, once agreed by Cabinet, using the BRE fire testing system used by the DCLG in June, and to publish the results of this test to residents.

#### 4. RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

4.1 The Council coordinated a consultation with residents on the proposed options for the cladding replacement. The Council put on the following events and opportunities for residents to receive information about the options and provide their feedback:

- A cladding engagement event on 31<sup>st</sup> October which was advertised to all residents in the weekly newsletter and by a door-drop leaflet to all Chalcots residents;
- A follow-up event on 6<sup>th</sup> November for residents to ask follow up questions, or who were unable to attend the previous event;
- Residents were able to submit feedback by email or letter for a following week until 12<sup>th</sup> November.

4.2 We had approximately 200 visitors to the cladding engagement event and had positive conversations with residents about the proposed replacement façade options. Alongside these discussions, we received 61 individual pieces of written feedback from residents as to their preferred option for the replacement system for the façade of the blocks.

4.3 In the context of taking forward a planning solution, the significant majority of residents indicated a preference either for the glass-reinforced concrete or for the aluminum panel system option. The Council presented a third option, insulated render, however this was not favored by many residents. The total results are as follows:

Aluminum	27 residents indicated a preference for this system
Glass reinforced concrete	27 residents indicated a preference for this system
Insulated render	2 residents indicated a preference for this system
Other	1 resident indicated a preference for a photo-voltaic (PV) panel system 1 resident indicated a preference for a brick system
None	6 residents did not indicate a preference for the cladding option in their feedback

Camden considered the proposals made by residents as to alternative options, which were not presented at the cladding engagement event.

- With regards to PV panels, these were not considered to be a viable option as their safety rating has not been confirmed to be either A1 or A2 (non-combustible or fire-resistant) by the BRE, and there are an extremely small number of previous examples of PV panel cladding on buildings of the height and type as the Chalcots blocks. As a result the Council cannot be confident of the safety and reliability of this option.
- With regards to a proposed brick façade, there would need to be a significant amount of additional engineering work to safely fix a brick façade to the building, which would cause disruption to residents, and as a result the Council did not consider this a viable option.

4.4 Camden also asked residents to indicate what was important to them with regards to the proposed replacement system.

- 26 residents indicated that safety, and fire resistance, was the most important factor to them when choosing a replacement system.
- 8 residents indicated that thermal insulation was very important to them in identifying a replacement system.
- 4 residents indicated that the requirements for maintenance and upkeep were important to them.
- 3 residents indicated concerns about how disruptive each option might be to install.

4.5 At this stage the Council proposes to focus its options on aluminium panels or glass reinforced concrete, as these are the strong preferences of residents. The council does not think that insulated render would be the best fit for the Chalcots due to its slightly longer insulation time, initial feedback from planning advisors and future cyclical decoration requirements.

4.6 The next phase of evaluation involves a technical review of the options as part of the preparation for the Cabinet decision on the final agreed system in January 2018. The Council will continue to engage with residents and representatives of the blocks during this time. Officers meet weekly with the Tenant Resident Associations for each of the five blocks and will continue to use this meeting to inform the process. Residents will also be formally consulted as part of the planning application for the cladding system.

## **5 PLANNING OPTIONS**

5.1 The Council is progressing with the designs for a replacement system, with a focus on ensuring quality and safety, with minimum disruption to residents. An important part of this process is obtaining planning permission. The Council will continue to develop proposals for the blocks based on the potential options outlined in this report, with the expectation that a single planning application will be submitted following selection of the final design and materials by Cabinet in January 2018.

5.2 Following submission of a planning application in January 2018 it is expected that the the statutory planning consultation process will be complete and the application will be submitted with resident comments to the member-led Planning Development Control Committee at the end of March 2018 for decision. This would allow time for further resident engagement, completing the planning process in 8 weeks. By working to this timeframe, construction on site can be mobilised 4-6 weeks earlier than otherwise. Following planning approval, the aim is to begin on site by the end of May or early June 2018.

## **6. WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS?**

6.1 This report is for noting in advance of the Cabinet Report in January 2018. The January

report will require a significant decision on the final cladding system for installation at the Chalcots estate.

## **7. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

7.1 The key impacts and risks have been outlined in part 5.

## **8. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN AND WHEN FOLLOWING THE DECISION AND HOW WILL THIS BE MONITORED?**

8.1 Officers and the Design Team will continue to prepare for the Cabinet Report in January 2018. The programme of works will be monitored by the Programme Team reporting to the Executive Director Supporting Communities, Director of Housing Management and Interim Director of Property.

## **9. LINKS TO THE CAMDEN PLAN OBJECTIVES**

9.1 Ensuring residents are safe and well in their homes and community facilities is key to delivering our responsibility and duties as a local authority. This particularly relates to the Camden Plan outcome around delivering sustainable neighbourhoods and will be a significant consideration for the next Camden Plan.

## **10. CONSULTATION**

10.1 The Council has committed to ensuring a fair transparent engagement process on decisions made regarding the Chalcots programme with residents.

10.2 Please refer to part 4 for further information on resident feedback on the cladding options.

10.3 A full planning consultation process is proposed to ensure proposed build approach and materials are shared prior to council authorisation.

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (comments of the Borough Solicitor)**

11.1 The comments of the Borough Solicitor are incorporated in the body of this report

## **12. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (finance comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services)**

12.1 This report sets out a strategy to start the planning preparation for two potential new solutions to replace the cladding on the Chalcots estate prior to the final decision being made on the preferred option, which is scheduled to be taken by Cabinet in January.

12.2 The anticipated costs and funding of the new cladding will be set out in the January Cabinet paper.

12.3 The Executive Director Corporate Services has been consulted in the drafting of this report and has no further comments to add.

## **13. APPENDICES**

13.1 None to add.

**REPORT ENDS**