

Contact: Timber Frame Homes Team
Tel: **0208 359 5348**
Email: TimberFrameHomes@barnet.gov.uk
Date: 24 April 2024
Reference: Timber Frame Homes

Copy

Original Sent via Royal Mail

Dear Resident

Thank you to those that attended the drop-in session on Saturday 6 April at Watling Community Centre. It was good to see so many of you there. If you feel you didn't have the opportunity to discuss your concerns or queries with a representative, then please do contact us so we can arrange a separate meeting or telephone call.

We thought it would be helpful to summarise some of the questions raised by you all and the responses. We have also highlighted the next steps (see page 4).

Regulations

- *Why are the council doing this to us?*
Under the Housing Act 2004 the council has a legal duty to keep the housing conditions in its area under review to ensure that they are safe. The standard is called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). One of the considerations set by government is in relation to fire. The fire last year has highlighted the potential of an increased risk linked to fire, and the council is therefore required to investigate further regardless of tenure. High risk hazards (category 1) and lower risk hazards (category 2) may be identified. If a category 1 hazard is assessed, then the council has a legal duty to make sure that the necessary action is taken.

Communications with government

- *Is the council lobbying government for funding?*
Council Members are currently lobbying government for funding. We will let you know their response, there are copies of some of the letters we have sent on our website. More information on current government support available for medium and high-rise homes can be found at [government/publications/building-safety-fund-guidance-for-new-applications-2022/building-safety-fund-guidance-for-new-applications-2022](#) or [Building Safety Fund guidance for new applications 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Surveys

- *What is the process?*
Step 1 – Barnet Council completes a survey of your property in order to complete an assessment under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This will be completed by an Environmental Health Officer and contractor and will be undertaken by appointment only. We will write to you to arrange this.
Step 2 – HHSRS assessment completed back at the office and results shared with the resident. If hazards are identified requiring remediation works, these will be communicated to the resident.
Step 3 – If works are required, plan will be agreed with residents on how to rectify these hazards.

- *Do I get a quote of works before I agree to any works?*
Yes – If you would like Barnet Council to organise these works for you then a full quote including details of works to be completed will be provided as part of the application process.
- *Are the surveys intrusive and, if so, will everything be put back? If something is damaged, will this be repaired?*
A full inspection of the property will be completed. This will involve the wall structure and the loft. The current external wall covering will need to be inspected which may mean removing to inspect behind. If anything is removed, it will be replaced, and any damage will be repaired. The contractors will take photos before and after the works as part of the project pack.
- *Are the surveys by appointment?*
All surveys will be by appointment only and completed by an Environmental Health Officer employed by the council. They all have photo ID with the council's telephone number on it.
- *Who pays for the survey and can I order my own independent survey?*
The surveys completed by the council are funded by the council. If you wish to have an independent survey these need to be by a competent HHSRS surveyor and funded by yourself.
- *If my inspector disagrees with yours what happens?*
We will work with residents and any privately employed inspectors. Areas of variation of opinion will be reviewed by a manager. The HHSRS assessments completed to date have been reviewed by two officers and no variation in decisions has been identified. The council is keen to work with residents to ensure that these properties have a reduced risk in the event of fire where an issue is identified.
- *My loft is full of items and access may be a problem?*
We are expecting lofts to be full. Sometimes we only need a small gap to access and inspect. If the items are easily moveable, then we can make arrangements. If you are concerned your loft will be inaccessible, then we can carry out a pre-survey to detail an inspection action plan.
- *Why does the council need to inspect the inside of my house?*
The HHSRS survey involves an internal and external assessment to understand the hazards relating to the property.

Remediation Works

- *Can I do the works myself?*
Yes. The work will need to be signed off and approved by Barnet Council. You will need to obtain the relevant approval before and after the work from Housing Regulatory Services, Planning, Building Control and in relation to any Party Wall considerations. Barnet Council are happy to share the works specification they are recommending with homeowners to ensure that accurate quotations are sought and that materials are correctly specified and certified.
- *If my surveyor provides a different solution what happens?*
If the alternative solution reduces the risk sufficiently and you have all the relevant permission (as above) then this should be acceptable. Approvals should be obtained prior to the commencement of any works.

- *Will my windows be taken out as part of the work?*
No. The windows will not need to be removed or replaced as part of the cladding related work.
- *Will my roof be taken off as part of the work?*
No, the roof will not be fully removed or replaced as part of the cladding related work, although some roof tiles may need removing and replacing.
- *Will my house need redecorating after the work?*
Any remediation works would be on the outside of the property and in the loft space, therefore no redecoration will be necessary.
- *Why has no action been taken against owners of properties with non-conservation area approved cladding? What happens to them as part of this process?*
We are not aware of any properties with non-conservation approved cladding in Burnt Oak. If there are any residents who are aware of such cladding, we would invite you to provide us with the addresses and nature of alleged breaches so we can investigate further. Please email: planning.enforcement@barnet.gov.uk or contact us via: <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-enforcement>
Planning Enforcement, London Borough of Barnet, Planning Department, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW
Telephone: 020 8359 3000
- *If I have the cladding removed from my house will the walls get wet in the rain whilst works are in progress?*
The works will be managed so during any periods of exposure, protection will be provided by the contractor.
- *How will you access the back of my house as there is no right of way?*
Access will be determined during the site surveys, but it will generally be accessed via the scaffolding.
- *If there is a fire whilst works are in progress who has the insurance to cover this? The council? The contractor?*
This would be dependent on the investigation. If the fire was related to the project, then it would be claimed through the contractor's insurance.
- *What insurance does the contractor have?*
All contractors completing works will have public liability insurance and all other relevant insurances.

Alternative works to what's proposed.

- *What were the exact details of the alternative solutions considered and why were they discounted?*

We have proposed a type of cladding as an option, but this is not necessarily the final decision as we are reviewing products and options. Currently no material has been disregarded as we are awaiting a further review from our fire engineer. Feasibility report sections 8, 10 and 11 highlight this review.

Procurement

- *What procurement process was followed for the contractors who won and how can you be sure they will be good?*

We are currently reviewing the procurement of this project. The current proposal is to use two contractors from a suitable framework. This will be trialled at the archetypes and if successful will progress to phase 2. The contractors have delivered fire safety and other similar works within Barnet.

Loan

- *When will the loan information be ready?*

We have prepared a policy and are in the process of having this approved through the council. We anticipate this will be approved within the next 4 weeks and as soon as this is ready, we will share this with you.

- *Why isn't the loan interest free?*

The council will have to borrow funds to complete the works and will need to recover any interest charged. We will not be making any profit on the arrangement.

- *What if I am concerned, I will not be able to pay – even with a loan?*

We understand the cost of any works could be unaffordable and have prepared the policy to assist those unable to repay on a monthly basis.

Planning and Building Control

- *Given the circumstances, can the Planning and Building Control fees be reduced?*

We have discussed this with both departments. Building Control fees are cost recovery only but they have confirmed that if there are reduced processing costs when dealing with large numbers of properties requesting the same permissions it may be possible that the cost will be lower. Planning fees are set nationally and cannot be changed.

Next Steps

1. Loan and Repayment scheme - Details of scheme to be circulated in the next 4 weeks.
2. Surveys – we will be writing to you to book an appointment and tell you how the survey process will work.
3. Environmental Health Officer and contractor complete property survey.
4. HHSRS assessment results shared with resident. If hazards are identified requiring remediation works, these will be communicated with the resident.
5. If works are required, the plan will be agreed with residents on how to rectify these hazards.

The full set of FAQs are regularly updated and on our website for reference. If you would like these posted to you again with the updates, please contact the team on **0208 359 5348**.

If you would like this letter to be translated, please email timberframehomes@barnet.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

The Timber Frame Homes Team