Golden Lane Estate: Crescent House Residents' Meeting
Tuesday 8 April 2025

Meeting Notes

Greg Wade (City of London Corporation Head of Major Works department) and Nick Condon (Consultant Project Manager) shared a presentation with residents of Crescent House with the content including:

- Apologies to residents
- The current project team
- Background to the project
- What is a Higher Risk Building ('HRB')
- How this affects the programme
- Indicative programme & next steps

The presentation was followed by a Q&A session. An overview of questions asked and answered can be found below.

<u>GLERA questions</u>:

Could you please give us a statement outlining the objectives of the Golden Lane Investment Programme (as opposed to the scope of the work)?
The objectives of the Golden Lane Investment Programme are to ensure the following:

- That all buildings are wind, weathertight and maintained to a good standard in terms of building fabric condition
- That the thermal efficiency of all buildings is optimised through improved glazing and upgraded roof insulation (in line with current Building Regulations), which will in turn help to reduce residents' heating costs
- That upgraded ventilation will help to combat future damp and mould within individual properties, to the benefit of residents
- That the Corporation fulfils its landlord obligations in terms of cyclical decorations and also health and safety with regard to electrical compliance

How will the Corporation calculate the consequences of their neglect of the Estate, particularly in relation to the windows and roofs? Expecting leaseholders to ignore this issue is unrealistic and compensation of some kind should be offered.
This is a matter which is currently under consideration by both Peta Caine and Judith Finlay. Initial discussions have focused on the matter of 'meanwhile' repairs (which will be carried out at no cost to Leaseholders) and the possibility of further winter measures (which were implemented on a one-off basis previously). There are further potential

items which will be discussed in greater detail at the next scheduled meeting with GLERA. This will form part of an ongoing dialogue, once the full scope of the project has been defined and costed.

When can residents expect to receive the promised fact sheet relating to HRB status of almost all the estate?
This is available in hard copy at today's scheduled resident consultation event and an electronic copy will be freely available thereafter. NB GLERA has further information they would like provided on the fact sheet, which will be followed up by the project team.

The Corporation has provided residents with a timeline rather than a programme for the proposed works. Can we be provided with a programme highlighting the critical path and key milestones?
The Activity Timeline (which is currently available online) will be updated and uploaded periodically, so that residents can be kept fully informed as to progress alongside key milestones.

General queries

In terms of temporary relocation of residents – does this include those who are privately renting?
The temporary relocation will be provided for all residents, whether they are tenants, leaseholders in occupation or private renters.

In the last month, two flats in Crescent House (202 & 108) have had their windows repaired. Why can't you do that for all? Don't the regulations apply to them?
The application to classify Crescent House as an HRB was made to the Building Safety Regulator before Christmas, but the building has not yet been formally registered, so it wasn't deemed an HRB when works to these 2 flats first started. We therefore have an obligation to complete the work because it pre-dated the registration.

You're asking us to let you know problems with our windows – there is a document dated March 2020, commissioned by the City, with detailed analysis of and photos of every single flat. Start with that.
Noted, we will review, although this will naturally need to be updated, given the passage of time.

We appreciate the change of tone in the latest letters from Peta Caine but are not happy with the lack of urgency. What is the justification of extending by 2.5 years –

it only takes 6 months to register as HRB and who made the decision to include the extra works?
We understand your frustration. It has been determined that to refurbish the windows in Crescent House, the temporary relocation of all residents will have to take place. To undertake monumental work of that nature, there is no value in leaving out works that could be done at the same time in terms of cost, efficiency and practicality. It will be very challenging to deliver this project, so every opportunity should be taken to carry out all the required works at the same time to minimise disruption to residents as far as possible.

You are carrying out building condition surveys – to what extent does this cover the structure and fabric of the building? Are you aware of subsidence and cracks on the 3rd floor of Crescent House (issues with expansion joints).
The building condition survey is general in nature – focussing on the building fabric, it will not pick this up. NC to pick this up with resident; a structural engineer will be brought on board to look into this.

What about the liveability of the rest of residents whilst these works are happening – disturbance for 3 years, how will safely access our flats?
In terms of the methodology of how the works will be carried out, we will need the input of the appointed contractor so it's difficult to go into detail at this very early stage. There are a number of different approaches, and we have time to prepare for this properly. It will be a challenge, and we need to make sure we give residents sufficient support during this time, including the provision of dedicated staff.

Regarding the scope of works – how will existing damp be dealt with?
This is a detail that needs to be thrashed out. In terms of tenanted properties, if damp and mould treatment is required this is likely to be undertaken via referral to our Repairs and Maintenance Team, but the position on leaseholder properties needs to be clarified. Mould treatment and internal decoration of individual properties (aside from the windows) does not currently form part of the scope of works and including this could have major implications in terms of the overall project costs. Further discussion to take place within the Resident Liaison Group.

There was discussion over the quality of works - inadequate repairs have taken place every 20 years. Are we learning from previous mistakes? It was noted that nothing has been done since 2003, when very superficial decorations took place - the frames were repaired, paint added which then cracked. If wood is maintained properly, then it wouldn't need repairing every 20-25 years.

What is the legal advice given on no maintenance to wooden frames?

This is a matter which will require legal consultation to better understand the Corporation's position. It is acknowledged that a history of poor maintenance and neglect has contributed to the current poor condition of the windows.

How confident are you in the programme?
It is currently showing as 3.5 years, but this is very high-level at this stage. It could potentially stretch to 4 years because the programme will be entirely dependent on gaining access to people's properties within specific timeframes and the window repairs being assessed, quantified and undertaken in a timely manner. Given that Crescent House contains over 150 dwellings and each household will have its own individual concerns, requirements and circumstances, we would be naïve not to anticipate potential delay – although we will do everything possible to manage it effectively. We need early engagement with residents to ensure we can deliver the project successfully.

This engagement shows a very refreshing attitude. Why do you need a PR company? We want a direct relationship with you.
We don't currently have a Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) or Resident Liaison Manager (RLM) within the Major Works Team so there is a clear gap in resource. The team is responsible for all 13 estates which make up the Corporation's portfolio, including Golden Lane Estate. GW is in the process of re-structuring the team which will take a further 12 months to implement fully. Every member of this project team is very much needed.

<u>Leaseholder specific questions</u>

Not a question, but numerous attendees expressed their disagreement with the CoL's position outlined in the recent leaseholder letter on whether the window refurbishment constituted repairs and not improvements.

Comments were made on the legal position stated, and whether the CoL as a landlord could carry out the works.

The legal opinion is presumably from counsel. Can we see that advice and see instructions to counsel, or do we need to do a FOI?
GW to take away and advise whether this is possible after escalating to Peta Caine (Assistant Director for Housing) and Judith Finlay (Executive Director for DCCS).

Was any legal advice sought on the ability for CoL to carry out the works in the first place. It was suggested that CoL can't do so in terms of lease and statute.

To be advised. In GW's opinion the scope of works (in the main) constitutes typical planned maintenance items that any responsible social housing landlord would expect to undertake as part of their repairing obligation.

The Quantity Surveyor produced a detailed breakdown in May 2024 – the idea was that this would include which items were rechargeable, which weren't and where there was a grey area. Did the legal team look at this before providing the advice that was set out in the letter?
GW: Letter represented first step, CoL has set out its initial position and now this has been confirmed in writing, it provides a starting point for further discussion.

Action: Meeting required between leaseholders and home ownership team sooner rather than later.

The people who make overall decisions – are they aware of the decades of neglect? Do they understand what they have to do – morally and not just legally?
There is an acknowledgement of where the Corporation has been remiss in the past. It was noted that Chris Hayward did speak about this at the latest Court of Common Council and referenced neglect (transcript is available on the GLERA website).

Cost figures
Attendees expressed their unhappiness that we have a situation where there is evidence of neglect, but this will be paid for by leaseholders. There were discussions about various costs that have been provided by home buyers packs, and even by Estate Agents. Leaseholders explained they were frightened about negative equity, and being unable to get a cost so they can't budget or sell their property.

It would be useful to get provenance of figures that home ownership are providing.
GW – very keen to get this information.

Action: GW will sit down with Home Ownership as a priority and aim to ensure that the information being provided in respect of Right-To-Buy and Pre-Sales enquiries is consistent. Until a formal update has been provided via Committee, then the cost position is as per the published Committee Report of March 2023, which confirmed an estimated figure of £11,948,695 for Crescent House.

It was noted that the project team was still working on the costs.

If there are people admitting to neglect, has there been a discussion on compensation?
GW: It is on the table for discussion.

What happens if you can't pay?
CoL are working on a loan agreement – details to follow c/o Housing Management.

What happens if you're in Year 3?
C/o Home Ownership – the lease stipulates that Leaseholders can be recharged for major works undertaken during the previous financial year. A long-term project (lasting for potentially 3 or 4 years) and encompassing a range of different work elements, may mean that Leaseholders are recharged for a proportion of the total project costs, before the refurbishment work has actually been undertaken to their windows. However, the recharges will be based upon the actual work which has been undertaken to date and will have already been valued/certified by the Corporation's appointed Contract Administrator.

If CoL was reasonable and took on board if had failed and deducted costs, then people would be more reasonable.
GW: Agreed, without working in collaboration with residents it won't work. Where there's delay there's cost.

The above is a recap of questions asked on Tuesday 8 April. A comprehensive set of FAQs will be provided following the Wider Estate Community Meeting on 1 May 2025.

ENDS