

Fire Safety in Timber Framed Properties

Burnt Oak Freeholders

June 2025

Welcome, Introductions and Housekeeping

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Agenda

- Background and what we now know – Belinda Livesey
- How to prepare for an inspection – Richard Lord
- Inspection Surveys and results– Richard Lord & Belinda Livesey
- Remediation Works – Peter Chapman
- Loan and Repayment Scheme – Belinda Livesey
- Vulnerable residents –Belinda Livesey
- F.A.Q – Team
- Q&A

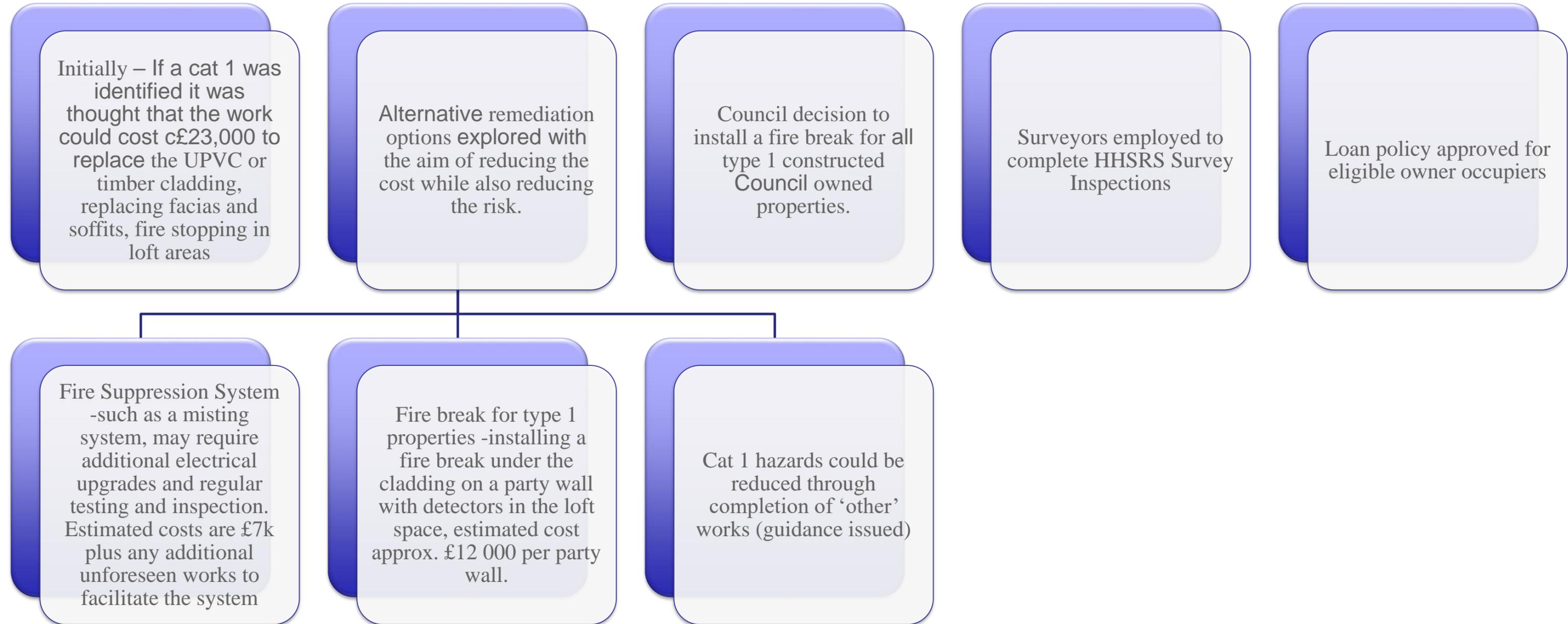
Background

- Summer 2023 - a fire was reported at 11 Moss Hall Grove, N12. The fire started in the rear garden, spread quickly and resulted in the loss of 4 homes across a terrace.
- Approx. 600 homes identified as having similar construction of which nearly 400 in private ownership (freeholders).
- Legal advice obtained and sample inspections undertaken
- Potential Category 1 hazard for Fire (Housing Act 2004) requiring further investigation
- Communications with Regulator of Social Housing, Greater London Authority, MHCLG, MP, Cllrs
- Dedicated team, webpage and communication channels set up
- Loan scheme worked up

Who are our freeholders: -

Type	Description	Who the council contacts	Who is responsible for any remediation works
Owner Occupier	You own and live in your property	The owner occupier	The owner occupier
Private tenant	You live in a property owned by a private landlord or a registered provider	The private landlord or the registered provider, and yourself	The private landlord or the registered provider You may have to let surveyors in
Private landlord	You own the property but don't live it	Private Landlord and tenant	Private landlord – you need to liaise with your subtenants
HMO	You live in a property with others on a separate tenancy agreement owned by a private landlord	The Private Landlord and private tenants	The Private Landlord

What's happened to date: -



What we now know- based on inspections to date

Good News - So far only 10% of properties inspected have been identified as having Category 1 hazards

The likelihood of having a Category 1 hazards for fire may be reduced by the completion of some home improvement works before the inspection

If a Category 1 hazard for fire is identified, more minor improvements may reduce it to a Category 2 hazard

Living next to a council owned property – more good news

Barnet Homes Neighbours (Council Owned)

67 residents are located either in the middle of two Council owned properties or are located at the end of a terrace next to a Council owned.

Barnet Homes are completing work to their properties that will make neighbouring properties safer

These properties should have any possible Category 1 hazards for Fire significantly reduced to Category 2

At this stage surveys will still be required, and freeholders will need to agree to Party Wall agreements.

Arrange your inspection asap to put your mind at rest

What should residents do now?

If you have these elements in your house the fire risk will be reduced, keeping you and your household safer:

- Smoke alarms that are ideally linked together.
- Fire resistant electrical consumer unit.
- At least 3 double outlets in the bedrooms (depending on size) and ideally at least 4 double outlets in the kitchen and living room.
- If you have ceiling recessed downlighters that these are LED.
- No portable fan or convector heaters in the house.

The Council are keen to arrange to inspect your home to check you are safe and to offer any advice to reduce any risk further if possible.

What should residents do now? - what to look for

Smoke alarms.

- Smoke alarms are probably the single most important fire safety measure you can have in your home. Ideally smoke alarms that are electrically powered and interlinked, that all sound at the same time are the best option.
- Sufficient numbers of battery-operated alarms may give you and your family adequate early warning provided you can hear the alarm sounding from the ground floor into the farthest part of all the bedrooms. If you are relying on a non-linked smoke alarm on the landing to warn you of smoke, it will already have spread in the house which will reduce the amount of time you have to escape.
- If sufficient working smoke alarms are installed in your house the overall fire risk will be reduced



What should residents do now? - what to look for

Electrical installation.

- The primary sources of ignition arise from electrical installation and careless use of chargers and appliances.
- Consumer units that have overload protection as part of the unit (mini circuit breakers (MCB) and residual current devices (RCD)) will reduce the risk of an overloaded installation leading to fire.
- Metal fire resistant electrical consumer units are considered to provide the best safety, which are installed in all new domestic buildings.
- If you have an electrical consumer unit in your house the risk of overloading and a resulting fire is reduced

What should residents do now? - what to look for

Metal consumer unit

- Metal consumer unit are considered as good mitigation against electrical overloading and possible electrical fire.



What should residents do now?- what to look for

Plastic consumer unit

- Plastic consumer units are older than metal fire resistant units, and may present a risk of fire, especially if the components fail or overheat. They are often placed enclosed spaces for example cupboards or under stairs, where ventilation is limited, increasing the risk of rapid fire spread.
- The Surveyor will note what type you have, the Council will not be requiring you to replace a plastic consumer unit, however, may recommend replacement as recommended best practise.



What should residents do now?- what to look for

Older consumer units.

- These may have cartridge or rewirable fuses with no RCD protection, older wiring and fewer plug sockets in the house. Due to the increased likelihood of fire it is recommend that the electrical installation is thoroughly checked for electrical safety by a competent person.



What should residents do now?- what to look for

- **Plug socket outlets**
- Having sufficient plug sockets in your house is an important fire risk control measure.
- *Not having sufficient socket-outlets may lead to risks such as:*
 - *DIY extensions to circuits undertaken safely if the work is carried out by unskilled persons*
 - *DIY extension to equipment flexes*
 - *Cascading (daisy chaining) of extension leads*
 - *Stacking of adaptor plugs*
- *All of the above will create potential hazards, such as risk of tripping over leads, electric shock or injury and damage to property through fire.*



What should residents do now? - what to look for

- **Plug socket outlets**
- Electrical plug socket-outlets should be suitably distributed around rooms, due account being taken of furniture, electrical equipment and future change of use. Guidance for the provision of sockets can be downloaded from electrical safety first website. <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/1204/guidance-on-minimum-provision-socketsv2.pdf>
- If there are insufficient plug sockets there is an increased risk of overloading plug socket outlets.
- The Surveyor will try to count the number of plug sockets in all rooms without moving any furniture. If any risk of overloading or burnt-out plug sockets is identified, you will be advised in writing.



What should residents do now? - what to look for

- **Downlighters**
- Poorly installed halogen ceiling downlighters can present a fire risk due to the heat they generate, which could possibly be in an enclosed cavity. If halogen downlighters are in contact with flammable materials, there is an increased ignition risk in the ceiling void. You may not notice smoke and fire seeping through a floor/ceiling void until the fire was well developed.
- The Surveyor will not unclip recessed downlighters to check for fire rated caps, however will seek to identify if they are LED or halogen.



What should residents do now? - what to look for

House Heating System

- Full house boiler central heating systems supplying radiators are ideal to minimise heating system fires.
- Open solid fuel fires, portable fan and convector heaters can increase the fire risk especially if the portable heaters are left on for extended periods and sited too close to combustible items such as clothes drying on a clothes horse, curtains or bedding etc.
- If you need secondary portable room heaters, thermostatically controlled oil filled heaters with a time clock are safer as there is very little likelihood of careless ignition. The heaters are unlikely to reach a sufficiently high temperature on direct contact with clothes bedding or curtains so as to result in fire



What should residents do now? - what to look for

Means of escape windows.

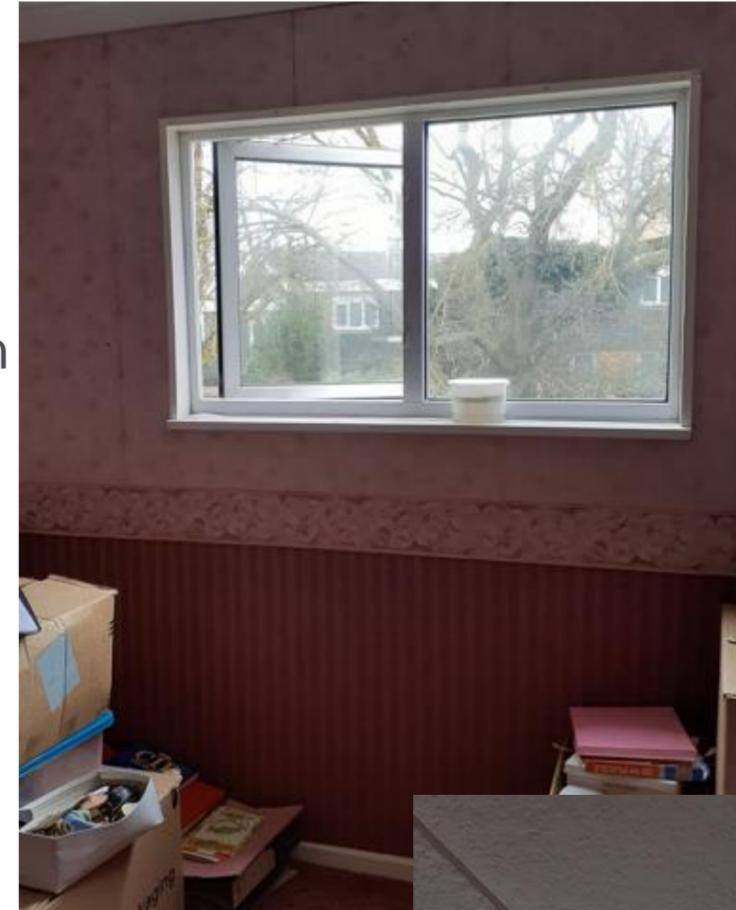
- We will be checking for adequate emergency means of escape windows from the first-floor bedrooms.
- If your house has escape windows you may wish to check if you think you can safely escape from the first floor.

Internal doors.

- Closed internal doors are important in preventing the spread of smoke in the early stages of a fire and flames in a more developed fire.
- The thicker and more solid the door, the longer a closed door will hold back smoke and flames from spreading in a house. Part glazed and lightweight egg box doors offer very little fire resistance.
- The Surveyor would recommend that these types of doors are replaced with a solid core door.

Ceiling linings

- Polystyrene tiles and stripped pine cladding to the ceilings are flammable



Survey

Survey

- Prioritise on blocks with PRS, then only 1 freeholder, then 2 freeholders etc - option to ask for a survey earlier if you wish
- Letter sent regarding an appointment
- **LBB Enforcement Team complete the survey – they will always carry ID**

During the survey

- Approx. 1hr
- Fire Hazards – Housing Act 2004
- Programme is c12 – 18months

Post Survey

- Confirmation of result in writing within 4 weeks

What happens after the survey- If Cat 2

Category 2 Hazards

- This does not mean that the property construction carries no risk
- No enforcement action will be taken
- You will receive confirmation in writing that you do not have any category 1 hazards
- Fire safety advice will be provided in relation to how the fire hazard can be reduced due to the higher risk caused by the construction type
- Residents still need to follow the fire safety advice provided previously

What happens after the survey- If Cat 1

Category 1 Hazards

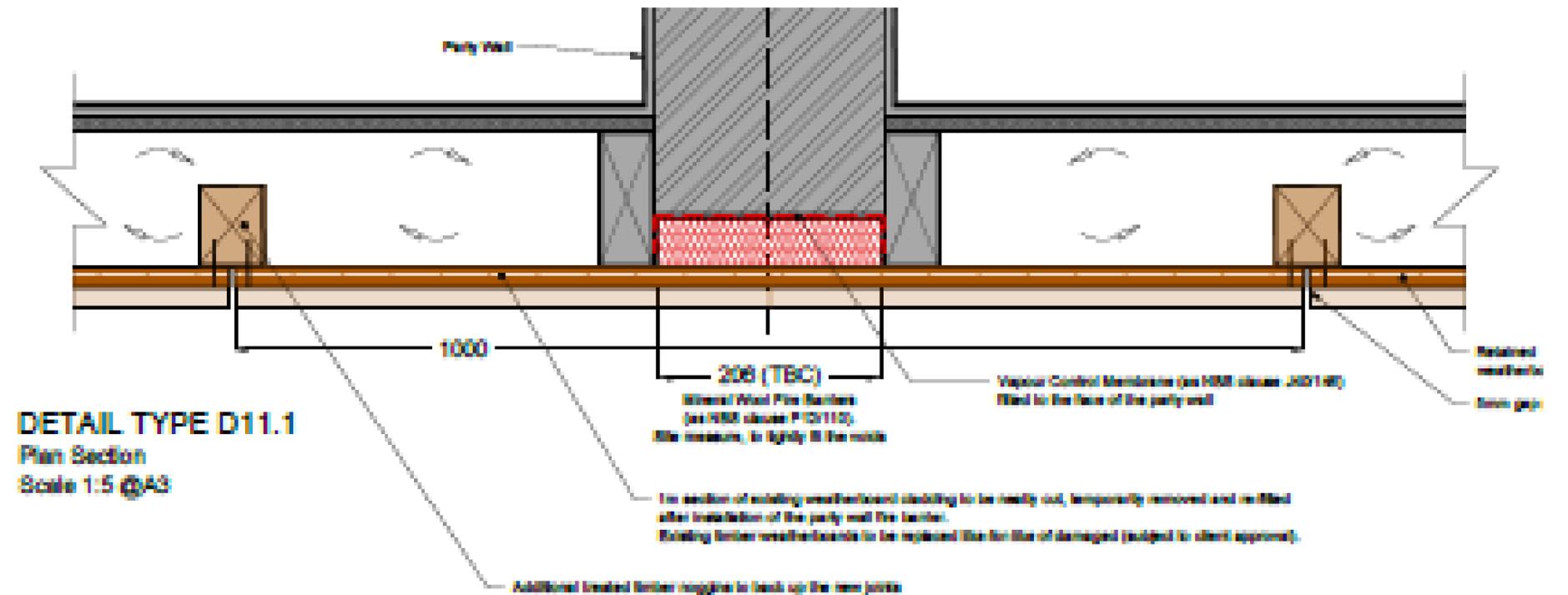
- Provided with details on the hazards (Fire and any other)
- Options on how to remove cat 1 Fire hazards and advice - Remediation options could include:
 - Fire Suppression System – i.e Misting system
 - Fire Break
 - Other options – you may have another option that could work – this will need agreeing with your Surveyor
- Agree timescales to complete the works with the Surveyor
- Details provided re Loan Scheme if required
- Inspection of completed works

Is there any help available for completing Cat 1 Works?

- Barnet Homes (BH) are able to deliver the fire safety remediation works which form part of their programme if a freeholder decides to undertake these works i.e. fire break detail and fire stopping
- Other than this BH are able to support residents with providing advice also but generally do not engage works within freeholder properties for installation of a misting systems or electrical works

Work completed by Barnet Homes - fire break detail

- Programme of works for council owned properties with the same construction as the Burnt Oak timber framed homes.
- Estimated cost £12k per Party Wall and certification



Work completed by Barnet Homes - fire break detail (cont)

- Cladding is retained
- Passive solution
- Less disruptive
- Fire Engineered solution
- Has been piloted on other properties



Fire Suppression Systems

- Suppress fire without input from the occupant
- Active system
- Individual heads which activate only on heat detected and only in the region of the fire
- Can reduce insurance costs
- Requires yearly service
- Heads are unobtrusive



Loan and Repayment

- Loan is from London Borough of Barnet
- Administered by The Barnet Group

Eligibility

- Timber Frame Property
- Cat 1 hazards for fire as defined by the Housing Act 2004 and identified by LBB
- Owner Occupier

Amount

- A maximum of £7,000 towards remediation works plus interest

Loan and Repayment

Financial eligibility

Applicants Circumstances	Payment Option	Interest Rate (N.B. as per June 25 tbc)
Applicants in receipt of full benefits	No monthly repayment. Charge will be placed on property with interest until repayment sale of property, when repayment is required from the sale proceeds.	If release in 10 years – 5.63% If release in 25 years – 6.11%
Household income less than £70k*	5-year repayment plan. Charge will be placed on property with interest until debt repaid, or sale of property when repayment is required from the sale proceeds.	5.10%

Loan and Repayment

Interest calculation

- The loan is calculated on an annuity basis so that the monthly payment for the whole period is the same.
- The Council would not be profiting from issuing any borrowing.
- Interest rates will be set on an annual basis are based on PWLB weighted average rate and could be subject to change depending on the year you apply.
- A loan guide will be provided if you wish to consider this option.

Loan and Repayment

Financial repayment example

- **Receive state benefits and no other income**
 - Would have a charge on the property for £7,000 or amount borrowed
 - You would make no monthly payments
 - If you decide to sell in 10 years the council would receive £7,000 plus the annual interest currently calculated at 5.63% at the time of sale.

- **Household Income of £50,000**
 - Would have a charge on the property for £7,000 or amount borrowed
 - Interest to be charged at 5.10%
 - Equal monthly payments until loan and interest is cleared in 5 years
 - Once debt repaid charge is removed

Vulnerable Residents

- BH can install smoke detectors and support with advice for any CAT 1 hazards
- Refer to Adults & Social Services for an assessment
- Assist you with application for Loan and Repayment if required
- Advice from BOOST

FAQ

What works were carried out on the houses in Playfield Road? We have seen pictures and there are no visible firebreaks

Three properties were carried out as part of the pilot schemes. Please see image right for the fire breaks, the fire break is beneath the cladding and should not be visible after completion



FAQ

We believe the concrete pillar at the back of our houses constitutes a firebreak as it runs from top to bottom and have attached pictures. We are in a row of 6 and every 2 houses at the back of our row has a concrete pillar – is this sufficient fire-breaking for our terrace?

Yes, this could quite possibly constitute a firebreak, depending on the width of the masonry between houses. We would identify this in the survey and be considered as a mitigation. Please get in touch to arrange the survey.

FAQ

At the back and front of our houses there is cement/stone running across the bottom of the wall. When we had French doors installed the fitters had to use an industrial kangol to get through so how will new concrete pillars be constructed around this?

The works are not to install concrete pillars, rather to introduce a fire stopping material at the junction of the properties if deemed necessary by the HHSRS inspection. If existing masonry/concrete exists between properties, it is likely to provide enough fire proofing, but will need to be clarified on the surveys

FAQ

If the fire stopping detail is undertaken what will happen with works at the back and front of the house where there are downpipes, drains and gas meter boxes?

The works are to fire stop behind the cladding and within the timber frame. If there are fixtures that are attached to the cladding areas that need to be removed, it will be set aside and refixed upon completion. In the example below, the rain water goods would be removed and reinstated.



FAQ

We understand from your latest letter that as our house is in a row of 6 comprising 1 council tenant only, that our row will be one of the last to be surveyed and worked on so are you able to provide a rough time when we will hear from you as to where our row is on the timetable of works?

Residents keen to be inspected can be prioritised, especially where neighbours collaborate to provide access

FAQ

We live next door to one owner that we know very well but on the other side of us is a rented house and the landlord is uncommunicative. Will you be able to assist in contacting the landlord as we have previously been unsuccessful? We have been chasing this landlord for years to apply fireproof paint to his property, but he has taken no notice of us whatsoever!

Yes - We are currently prioritising contacting all properties that appear to be occupied by private tenants.

FAQ

Can I conduct my own survey?

You can of course, but the Council will also need to do this to meet their legal requirements.

FAQ

Can I have an inspection out of office hours?

The Council will try and fit in with property owner requirements within reason

Summary of next steps

- Start thinking about what you can do to reduce possible Cat 1 hazards
- Talk to your neighbours to try and get your block inspected
- Contact us to go on the priority inspection list
- Follow the fire safety advice issued

Q&A

Please ask any questions or contact us

Email – TimberFrameHomes@barnet.gov.uk

Telephone –0208 359 5348

Website – <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/fire-safety-timber-framed-homes>