

## **MEMO - Winterthur Way Replacement of Balcony Decking**

The requirement to replace decking is set out in the VEMCO "External Wall and Balcony fire safety report for Cherry, Holly and Elm" of March 2020.

The report finds that a fire starting on one of the wooden decked balconies could be transmitted upwards: Quote:

*3.2.4 From Table 3.1 it can be seen that the flame height varies between approximately 0.98m and 1.2m. The vertical distance between decking, from a lower balcony to the balcony directly above, is assumed to be approximately 3m. Despite the low flame heights, a smoke layer forming on the underside of the base could cause decking to reach ignition temperatures. The ignition temperature of wood is in the region of 390°C. Therefore, heat transfer from hot smoke (with temperature of up to 540°C) could raise the decking to ignition temperatures.*

and

*4.1.1 Although the estimated flame height generated by fire on balconies at Winterthur Way is around 1m (i.e. less than vertical decking to decking distance), there is a risk of a smoke layer igniting decking on balconies above. In addition, there is a small risk of horizontal flame spread across compartmentation lines. Decking should therefore be replaced with materials achieving classification A2-s1, d0 or better. However, it may be compliant with Regulations to replace alternate balconies where balconies are vertically stacked.*

**VEMCO have subsequently confirmed that if we do nothing with the balconies, the rating on the EWS1 form that they sign will have to be B2 (fail).**

Chaney's and VHMC have considered the possible merits of replacing alternate balcony decks, as suggested by VEMCO. We concluded that this option could be contentious amongst leaseholders, would probably have repercussions in the future and would be unlikely to achieve significant savings. In addition the necessary consultation process would inevitably cause further delay to the project which could cause consequent general cost escalation.

As the balconies are deemed by the Lease to be part of the Main Structure and not demised to leaseholders, the consultation process with leaseholders would not extend to which decks would be replaced and which would not; it would simply be confined to advice on the cost of the overall work. We have estimated that the cost saving to each leaseholder, compared with replacing all the decks, could be between £200 and £300. This potential saving could be nullified if an overall delay caused a general cost increase.

In conclusion VHMC and Chaney's are confident that the correct and equitable solution is to replace all balcony deckings in Cherry, Holly and Elm with compliant material.