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Grenfell-style cladding yet to be stripped from 11 blocks in former Olympic Athletes' Village

NEWS 03/09/20 5:05 PM BY JACK SIMPSON

Nearly a dozen of the residential blocks that once housed athletes for the 2012 London Olympic Games have yet to see Grenfell-style cladding removed from their facades despite it being more than three years since the deadly fire, *Inside Housing* can reveal.






ACM was discovered on two of the blocks in East Village this summer (picture: Getty)

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 **Grenfell-style cladding still present on 11 blocks in former Olympic Athletes' Village #UKhousing**

 **ACM cladding was only discovered on two blocks this summer #UKhousing**

 **Some leaseholders have been unable to sell for more than a year due to difficulties securing mortgages #UKhousing**

Aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding, which was judged to be a major contributor to the spread of fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017, has still not been removed from 11 of the residential blocks in the East Village of Olympic Park in Stratford, east London.

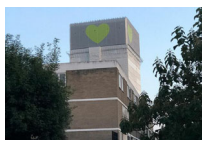
ACM was discovered only this summer on two of the blocks. Landlord Triathlon Homes said this had been found in “limited places” and was “no immediate safety concern to residents”.

The East Village, which housed 17,000 athletes, was converted into 2,800 homes across 65 blocks after the games and was seen as a key part of the ‘London 2012 Olympic Legacy’ and regeneration of Stratford.

The apartments are largely split between market rent homes managed by Get Living and social rent, intermediate rent and shared ownership homes managed by Triathlon, a joint venture between L&Q, Southern Housing and investment company First Base. East Village Management Ltd is responsible for the buildings across the development.

The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), the government's delivery arm, led the construction of the development. Lendlease was contracted by the ODA to manage a construction and development process, alongside a number of other contractors, designers and consultants.

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against irrational, unfair cladding funding rules



The time for half measures on the cladding scandal is long gone

A litany of fire safety issues have been uncovered on blocks across the site including the presence of ACM on several buildings.

Commenting on this, Triathlon said that early surveys identified very small quantities of ACM cladding on some buildings, which triggered a wider more extensive programme of surveys inspections and remedial works.

Shortly after Grenfell, the government ordered all landlords to remove dangerous ACM cladding from their blocks and

has since made £600m available for cladding remediation.

EVML said it has just secured funding from the government's fund and has started procurement for a contractor to remove the ACM, with work now expected to start in the coming weeks.

Yesterday, London mayor **Sadiq Khan wrote to 51 private and social landlords across London which have yet to start removing ACM** to accelerate their plans.

The dangerous ACM is just one of a series of fire safety issues with blocks across the East Village, as flammable non-ACM cladding and insulation, such as timber, are present on other blocks. Missing cavity barriers between apartments have also been found across the village.

Leaseholders living in the blocks are concerned due to mortgage providers unwilling to lend to them in residential blocks of multiple storeys due to cladding concerns. Many have been stuck trying to sell for more than a year.

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Like thousands across the country, the leaseholders are waiting for an External Wall System (EWS) check, a process that requires a qualified inspector to inspect a building and decide whether remediation work is needed. However, the sheer volume of blocks needing checks across the country and the lack of people qualified to carry them out has left many potentially waiting years for an EWS check.

Leaseholders at the village have voiced their frustration at the pace with which the landlord has moved to secure EWS checks and remediate the blocks and have now formed the Olympic Park Homes Action Group, which is currently supporting 180 leaseholders.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Simon Clark and Sam Williams said: "While Triathlon continue to engage with leaseholders, the pace of work remains extremely slow.

"We are living in the knowledge that there are widespread fire safety issues across the development which include ACM cladding, missing cavity barriers and timber balconies, all of which pose a real and immediate fire risk."

Leaseholders also fear that when the checks are carried out, they could be forced to pay for them, which could cost hundreds of pounds per leaseholder, and potentially be billed for the remediation costs afterwards, which could run into the tens of thousands of pounds.

EVML said the cost of inspections alone across its blocks is £1.9m and it is currently considering how these costs were recovered, but said that no decision had been made on this and it would be wrong to speculate.

EVML has now carried out archetype tests on four blocks which it said will inform a more detailed programme of work that will start in early September. The company has said it will prioritise those blocks over 18m or those that contain the highest number of leaseholders.

It also said 63 buildings in East Village inspected for a EWS1 certification by You are viewing 1 of your 1 free articles

When asked by *Inside Housing* whether it was making renters aware of the fire safety issues within the East Village blocks, a spokesperson for Get Living said that all new residents are taken through the fire safety measures when they move in, from testing the smoke alarms and sharing Team East Village's fire safety guidance.

Update: at 07.14 on 04.09.20 This article was updated to make clear that East Village Management Ltd is the company responsible for the buildings across the east village and had bid for the government's ACM fund.

Responses from organisations

Kath King, managing director at Triathlon Housing, said: "The safety and well-being of everyone at East Village, residents, workers and visitors, is our first priority. Ever since the government updated its advice regarding the external wall systems used in places like East Village, we have been working with the responsible parties to support the safety of our residents and, importantly, to help EVML, the estate's management company, complete the surveys, inspections and all necessary works as thoroughly and as quickly as possible. We will never compromise on the safety of residents.

“Early on, building surveys identified very small quantities of ACM type cladding on some buildings. This triggered a wider and more extensive programme of surveys, inspections and remedial works. The inspection and analysis process is ongoing because it is thorough in scope and complex and, as a consequence, so is the development of a schedule of works.

“Although EVML has made important progress, especially this year and despite COVID-19, there is still a considerable way to go. For example, 63 buildings in East Village will have been inspected for EWS1 certification by March 2021 and the work to remove ACM will commence this year. However, other unsuitable materials including the limited amounts of decorative timber fascia, which has been identified, will take longer to complete.”

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“On top of this disruption is the issue of costs. Across East Village, the cost of the inspection programme alone is estimated at £1.9m. The board of EVML has agreed to look at how these costs are attributed and, similarly, the board of Triathlon is considering how these costs should be recovered. As was discussed at a recent meeting with residents, no decision has been made and it would be wrong to speculate. We have been clear that Triathlon’s aim is to protect all leaseholders, including ourselves, from the cost of remediation as a result of any breach of building regulations or poor workmanship. At our request, EVML has applied to the government’s Building Safety Fund and to the Private Sector ACM Remediation Fund.

“We know how frustrating and upsetting this level of uncertainty is for some of our residents and we will always try to support individuals with specific concerns. It is, of course, a national challenge. This is one of the reasons why we support the efforts of the residents’ action group.

“It is only by working together and raising awareness of the issues that have contributed to this situation that we will resolve this situation but also make sure it is not repeated.”

Get Living spokesperson: “All East Village residents are kept regularly updated on the building works by

Team East Village. The lettings and management team is briefed to share these updates with new and existing residents.

“The safety of residents is paramount and the comprehensive fire safety measures we have in place at East Village have been assessed as appropriate by the London Fire Brigade, local authority and our own team of specialists.

“Fire safety is taken incredibly seriously by the team, with all new residents taken through the fire safety measures when they move in; from testing the smoke alarms in the home to sharing Team East Village’s fire safety guidance.”

A spokesperson for Lendlease said: “The Olympic

Delivery Authority was the developer of the village. You are viewing 1 of your 1 free articles
construction of the athletes village and its
transformation into a residential neighbourhood. Any enquiries regarding East Village should be directed to the current owners.”

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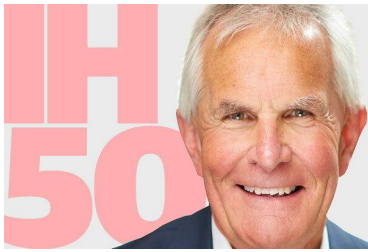


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