

Planned Work at Rosebrook Grove

1. Please provide full details of the tendering process that was carried out, including who carried out a survey of the building and a full breakdown of planned work and costs from all surveying participants, including those of Cooke & Kettle Ltd.

Response

Consultancy appointment after an Open Public Tender.

Preferred Contractor selected after an open tender.

Estimated costs were issued to leaseholders on 17 June 2022.

2. Cavity wall insulation - what insulation is currently in the building? What procedure was carried out to assess the condition of any insulation? I have read the Housing Executives Cavity Wall Insulation Plan March 2022, I would draw your attention to the following statement contained within "a major contributory factor to the condition of cavity wall insulation in the properties was the standard of maintenance".

Response

Walls to all blocks have been drilled at various levels to allow checking of the existing cavity insulation with a borescope. The findings are that, at the drill points, there was evidence of blown fibre insulation present within the cavities. In certain instances, significant voids were found in the insulation. This was the case at both high and low level in the wall elevations. Insulation appears to have settled at upper levels and borescope inspections indicate areas of the cavities that have no insulation present. Once insulation is inserted into the cavity, there is no annual maintenance procedure to retain the expected performance of the insulation.

3. My understanding is that External Cyclical Maintenance (ECM) should be carried out periodically every 5 years. Has this been followed? If not, why not? When was the last ECM completed?

Response

ECM policy is to undertake maintenance every 8 years. Works to this scheme have been held up while the solution to the damp issues were assessed and a plan to resolve the damp issues prepared.

4. What analysis was done to ascertain the condition of external wall brickwork that has resulted in the proposed need to repoint the entire building?

Response

The external wall brickwork was inspected visually by Cooke & Kettle building surveyors. The mortar pointing to existing brickwork is badly weathered, particularly around Bridewell Drive.

The deterioration of the mortar is not equal across all locations and it can be visually acceptable but still be friable. We must anticipate that it will continue to deteriorate, and the problems observed will become more of an issue.

The proposal to repoint the entire building is based on:

- a) the need to future-proof the external fabric to obviate the need for further maintenance;
 - b) the need to obtain a Cavity Insulation Guarantee Agency (CIGA) guarantee which requires (as per the CIGA best practice guide) that the exterior wall should be inspected for unsound or badly eroded mortar joints (which may increase the risk of water penetration);
 - c) NI Building Regulations (Part C) 6.16 which states, “when the cavity of an existing building is being filled, special attention should be given to the condition of the external leaf of the wall, e.g. its state of repair and type of pointing”; and
 - d) the desire to get a consistent visual finish to the brickwork elevations.
5. What inspections have been carried out on concrete window surrounds to justify replacement?

Response

The concrete surrounds to windows are a known issue and NIHE remove all concrete surrounds where encountered on current schemes.

The precast concrete window surrounds project forward from the external face of the wall. They form a cold bridge across the cavity to the internal reveal of the living room. This tends to promote the formation of condensation and mould on the internal reveal. Rainwater running down the external face of the wall will run onto the top of the concrete window surround which creates a problem of water ingress as water can bridge the cavity at this point. This is causing plaster staining to window heads. Most of the surrounds have a lead flashing fitted to counteract this.

6. Dwelling specific work, my balcony. What inspections have been carried out?

Response

It was observed in the building surveys that the asphalt skirting detail to the drying balconies is incorrect and the drainage holes from balcony to neighbouring balcony and into the hopper are of a small diameter and are becoming blocked. This construction is common to all the drying balconies as can be observed from the exterior of the flats.