



Date: 10 January 2024

Dear resident,

Barton House residents' update – Wednesday 10 January

Many thanks to those of you who have joined us in City Hall this morning for the latest update on Barton House and for your continued patience as we make progress on securing the safety of the building for you to return. In this letter I will provide an overview of the information given during the meeting for you to refer back to and for those who could not attend.

Today we hope to share a useful update that will give you a much clearer sense of what our detailed investigations have found inside the building's structure and the reasons why we are clear that, with some further effort, you can return to your homes safely and with high confidence in the building structure.

I hope this summary provides you with a clear understanding of the current situation but, if not, please feel free to ask questions by emailing barton.house@bristol.gov.uk, or call **0800 694 0184** or by speaking to a member of staff. Please also visit our website where you will find all the latest information in relation to the situation at Barton House – bristol.gov.uk/barton-house – including the latest developments I will detail below.

Investigation results

As we shared in the last residents' meeting in December, the latest reports have confirmed the existence of safety measures we initially thought may be missing. This means the block is safer than thought in November but needs work to make it safe enough for you to return. Our contractors have set out some recommended actions for us to take before you can return home. In the interests of your and your family's safety, we've agreed to carry out these works immediately.

The initial surveys identified two main concerns with the building's safety:

- Some structural ties connecting the floors and the walls were thought to be missing;
- Concrete cover that protects the building's metal reinforcement may have been too thin.

That report found some structural ties in place but not others. These structural ties support and distribute the weight of the floors throughout the structure. The initial surveys were limited. That is why we ordered more detailed and thorough surveys to check more locations to confirm the status of these ties.

Having now had the chance to go deeper into the building, our contractors have confirmed the ties are in place and in good order to provide appropriate support. To ensure these ties can do their job effectively some additional fireproofing is required which I refer to below.

The latest investigations have also confirmed the thickness of the concrete cover is generally good throughout the building. Where the cover is at its thinnest, there is a layer of blockwork or cement in place, adding additional protection.

In short, the results from the reports sent to us by the contractors give us greater confidence in the building's safety measures than we had in November. Despite this renewed confidence, some work is needed to make the block safe for you to return to.

Work needed at Barton House

We've already moved into a phase of delivering necessary improvements to make the block safe. This is a process that requires work across Barton House – both in communal areas and individual flats. Thanks to those who have already given us quick access to their flats in the last few days. Working with you to get access to all the flats is vital to getting this work done quickly.

There are three strands of work we are undertaking to make the block safe:

- Installing a new central fire alarm system
- Introducing new fireproofing measures at key locations around the block
- Carrying out water testing in unoccupied flats

Fire alarm system: The latest reports from the surveyors recommended the installation of a central fire alarm system. This would be a system that could detect a fire in any part of the block and sound an alarm in flats and communal areas. The purpose of the alarm would be to immediately alert all residents of a fire and allow the building occupants to undertake an orderly evacuation in the shortest possible timeframe.

The installation of this alarm system has begun in communal areas. We will need to access all flats to finish this work. We will speak to all residents individually about scheduling this work in. The pace at which we can complete this work to make the building safe will depend on us all working together to make sure contractors have the access they need in good time.

Fireproofing work: Barton House was designed in a "T" shape. At the point where the two sections of the block meet, there is a steel framework that supports the brickwork. This framework, like the metal structure that reinforces the vertical outer walls of the block, plays an essential role in supporting the building's structure.

The protective cover over this steel frame is good but the option exists to increase this level of protection. To do this we intend to install new fireproof panels on top of the steel beams. This work will need to be done in 42 flats. We're making contact with residents of these flats to gain access for this work to take place. We have a contractor ready and able to start immediately.

Water testing: We won't need to carry out water testing in all flats, just the ones that are currently unoccupied. Legally, as a landlord, we must test water systems if they have not been used for a prolonged period. The water testing is just a precautionary measure to check for legionella bacteria, even though the chance of contracting Legionnaires' disease is very low. This testing has already started, and residents will be contacted to arrange appointments to gain access to their flats. If you haven't been approached to set an appointment for testing in your flat, please bear with us and we will speak to you as soon as possible.

Repairs and maintenance

While we are carrying out the works described above, our maintenance teams will be undertaking a series of repairs to fix issues that have been reported but are yet to be seen to. They will look to carry out general repairs to fix issues such as leaking taps or broken windows, while also making a note of further areas that need to be revisited later.

Timeline for return

While these additional works are carried out, I must ask you to continue to stay away from Barton House apart from brief visits to gather essential items and allow contractors access to your flat when requested. We have contractors in place either carrying out these additional works already or are prepared to begin immediately.

To deliver these essential works and carry out all necessary testing we all need to work together. If we do manage to maintain a good pace with high levels of cooperation, we are aiming for you to be able to move home by **Friday, 23 February**.

I am grateful to those residents who have already given permission for us to gain access to their flat to start some of the work described above. I hope that this spirit of co-operation is one we all share for the benefit of securing the safety of Barton House quickly so you can return home as soon as possible.

For those of you staying in the Holiday Inn, we and the hotel staff will make all necessary arrangements to ensure your stay is comfortable. More information on the arrangements that continue to be put in place will be shared with you shortly, as well as details of any additional support on offer.

Payments to cover the additional costs of those living with friends and family will continue to be made. If you have not received any payments or if your circumstances have changed, please contact a Housing Officer, email us on barton.house@bristol.gov.uk, or call 0800 694 0184 to let us know.

Yours sincerely



John Smith

Interim Executive Director, Growth and Regeneration

Additional support

We appreciate that this is a stressful time for you and your families, and we are working to put in place the support you need. If you feel you need some mental health and emotional wellbeing support, there are services available to help you.

- Samaritans offer support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 116 123 for free.
- Shout 85258 offers confidential text support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Text SHOUT to 85258.
- If you need advice or have any concerns around any form of **domestic abuse**, please contact the Next Link Domestic Abuse Service on 0117 925 0680. For 24 hours a day, seven days a week advice, as well as out of hours refuge options, call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247. In an emergency, please contact 999.
- **Family Hubs:** During the week, your local Family Hub can give information and support about anything relating to you and your family. This includes activity groups, health and wellbeing services as well as parenting support. The nearest Family Hub to Barton House is the Wellspring Settlement Hub, 43 Ducie Road, Bristol, BS5 0AX. Groups taking place this week:
 - Barton Hill High-Rise Homes Group on Wednesdays – 10am until 11.30am
 - Baby hub with Infant Feeding Support on Fridays – 1pm until 2.30pm

Welcoming Spaces network: Welcoming Spaces are still open across the city. These are free to use and open to anyone. You can use your local Welcoming Space to meet with other people, take part in activities or access support. Find your nearest on our website: www.bristol.gov.uk/costofliving