

## **Appendix 5**

### **Little Venice Towers Re-Cladding to 6 no. 20 storey tower blocks.**

#### **Example of a live Major Works project**

##### **Background**

Following the fire which destroyed Grenfell Towers prompted greater focus on tower blocks. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) – at that time had asked all councils to check any similar Aluminium Cladding Material (ACM) on their tower blocks and if appropriate send for testing.

Westminster identified 6 such tower blocks at the Warwick & Brindley Estate (Little Venice Towers). A proactive stance was adopted and we engaged with our then incumbent contractor in removing all cladding to the 6 tower blocks as such we chose to pilot this estate and to remove the existing aluminium composite material.

We then entered a full testing programme with various cladding manufacturers to review the testing data and live performances of multiple cladding proposals to ascertain the best option. After careful consideration it was decided to endorse the installation of a rendered external wall insulation system. This approach gave the city the confidence by way of compliance, the installation was carried out by our Term Partnering Contractor Axis Europe.

##### **Application for 100% Reimbursement and Liaison with Government**

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018, following an application with associated provision of evidence, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) confirmed that Westminster City Council were eligible for funding that would cover direct costs associated with the removal of the cladding and for the design, supply, and installation of the replacement cladding providing that it met the specific criteria of the suggested amended Building Regulations. This funding was part of the Government's £400 million 'Social sector cladding remediation fund'.

At that time City West Homes (CWH) submitted the application in August 2018 for £6.65 million with the External Wall Insulation system details updated and presented on the Greater London Authority (GLA) Open Project System.

It was confirmed in writing by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on 17 October 2018 that the works would qualify for funding and would be paid directly to Westminster City Council.

The funding would be paid to Westminster City Council in two stages:

Stage 1 (completed) – CWH and latterly Westminster City Council, provided initial information and cost estimates as part of the first stage of the process. Upon satisfactory provision of information, 80% of the eligible costs were paid. This equated to £5.322m

Stage 2 (on-going) – This is the final 20% and will only be paid once the final costs of qualifying works are known along with issuing of final payment certificate. This equates to £1.331m.

This project has now been final accounted, and we have submitted our summation for payment.

## **Delivering the works**

The basis of these works was to re-clad 6 Tower Blocks on the Warwick & Brindley Estate: aka (Little Venice Towers), with a non-combustible material that passes BRE 135 and tested to BS:8414.

Our Service Provider engaged a specialist from their supply chain to ensure that these programmed works were to be undertaken by a qualified contractor that would, upon completion provide a Solid Wall Insulation Guarantee Agency: aka (SWIGA) which is an insurance system backed guarantee for a minimum of 35 years.

SWIGA are the only dedicated solid wall insulation provider – their remit is to regularly attend site and inspect the ongoing works at varying stages to ensure that the installation practices are correct, and that the works are therefore compliant.

In advance of starting these works, the Service Provider Proposal included the submission of their Gantt Chart programme detailing how they would sequence these works to the 6 tower blocks – the programme outlined the critical path in how this task would be delivered with the least amount of impact to our residents and the surrounding community, the main feature outlined was that the installations would be carried out using Mast Climbers as being the most efficient method. The programme was evaluated by our construction team to ascertain the fluidity of work and lack of disruption, as such the programme demonstrated two tower blocks starting at any one time and this was an effective approach to execute these works.

The Gantt Chart acts as a tracker to demonstrate progress on the task project and allows Westminster Officers to accurately evaluate improvement based on their various visits. It would be fair to note – as the project matured and we approached COVID, the Gantt Charts were subject to revisions taking into consideration any delays to re-evaluate controls under the CLC guidance note.

Throughout the life of the task project, the project partnering team attended monthly task review meetings to jointly review the following:

1. Construction and programme of critical paths
2. Cost review, monthly valuation, instructions, and monitoring
3. Task Project Risk Register to evaluate and design out potential future risks
4. Health and Safety
5. Stakeholders' issues, concerns, and complaints
6. Resident Interaction
7. Quality matters and reviews.

As with any contract, there will be additions or omission to the scope of works.

Given this project had grant funding it was essential that any variations were controlled and to this end, the Service Provider would have to fully value engineer their costing for submission and once the project commercial team were satisfied an instruction would be formally issued by the Client Representative.

The Term Partnering Contract allows for the client to view all supporting quotations and payments made by the Service Provider to ensure we have that transparency.

Little Venice Towers maintained good traction throughout the construction stages during the pandemic and maintaining quality and value for money was paramount. The Service Providers – Quality Management Plan (QMP) was the agreed model we adopted to monitor and deliver all elements of works to a required benchmark standard. Axis Europe worked very hard through these stages to maintain consistent management, resource, and support to ensure that we achieved time quality and value.

The project team reviewed these matters monthly to ensure compliance, each of the tasks were reviewed and methods of work were assigned a traffic light rating – red, amber or green to prioritise each component of work as a critical path to each task onsite.

Alongside Axis Europe's site management team, we visited the site regularly to track performance against programme and to ensure all agreed COVID-19 secure methods are adhered to, and still in situ.

### **Managing the contract during Covid and Resident Engagement and Leaseholder involvement**

Given the high priority of this programme it was felt that the key to the successful completion of these works, was communication between all stakeholders, but most importantly our residents.

Following the direction, discussion, and agreement with WCC, the Service Provider in conjunction with the council contacted our residents to advise them, on how the works will continue and how the Service Provider will respond to COVID.

During lockdown the service provider and council managed the Covid-19 and Coronavirus communications very effectively; this included, implementing Safe Systems of Work (SSoW) and as a result the outcome was to comply with the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) site operating procedures – this practice had been specifically designed to ensure the safe working for all throughout the pandemic.

This involved mandatory wearing of PPE, communal area working, resident engagement was continued by in-person visits to the site offices and housing centres being appointment only.

The CLC works between industry and the Government to identify and deliver actions to support UK construction. The guidance received assisted the team in carrying out risk assessments as the current working arrangements needed to be reviewed and then revised, this would include adopting social distancing and installing sanitised stations on site to allow the resources to work as safe and as best as possible. These parameters guided our Service Provider to provide new Risk Assessments and Method Statements

Examples of these risks that were identified under the re-evaluation by the Service Provider are as follows:

1. Individuals feeling unwell
2. How to deal with residents and those most vulnerable
3. Social distancing around a fully occupied site
4. Welfare amendments to allow works to keep social distance of 2m.
5. Evaluating the reality of working in "bubbles" – is it practicable

6. Communication with residents adopt new working methods such as online meetings.
7. Respond to complaints, make appointments via telephone, text messaging, email, or teams.
8. How do resident and visitors attend the site compound offices if they need to talk directly to personnel.

The overall resident engagement was a collective one using the “Teams” platform for all to communicate; however, this was not only limited to this format but extending to text messaging and email, the Comms Team issued fortnightly updates to both leaseholder and resident by an email newsletter and by updating the poster boards in the lobby areas of each block, giving an overview of where progress was at that time.

Moreover, our website had confirmed the above format of communication and sign-posted residents and leaseholders to additional web pages to offer support and guidance if needed.

### **Financial Outcome**

The Little Venice Towers project was a successfully delivered contract under difficult and unprecedented circumstance, and both our officers and partners displayed a collaborative partnering approach to ensure we kept our resident safe and informed. The main sense of satisfaction was to embrace the fact we had alleviated the concerns of those residents regarding the national uncertainty of cladding, and by giving them an external wall insulated system which is safe and compliant.

The finances were strictly controlled, monitored, and evaluated by our Project Manager and commercial team in conjunction with Axis Europe.

The task completion figures were accurately calculated and ratified and the figures below evidences effective commercial management within the Capital Programme team.

Y147 Axis task order value	£3,701,406
Y147 Axis agreed final account	£3,507,501

Our Project Manager throughout the contract period ensured that there was no major programme slippage that would impact our total delivery stage – the delivery of a project of this scale during COVID required a higher level of attendance and involvement, and the result was a landmark that highlights that the City of Westminster had completed a high-profile cladding project.

### **Dashboards**

As explained elsewhere within the report, monthly task based operational meetings are held with the Service Provider and from that a dashboard is populated to reflect programme and progress, the commercial position and the evaluation of risk as well as resident feedback. Below are excerpts of a status report Power Bi format capturing some of the project reporting on Little Venice Towers