

## Jack Simpson - News reporter of the year

*Revealed: the type of cladding used on Barking block destroyed in fire*

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/revealed-the-type-of-cladding-used-on-barking-block-destroyed-in-fire-61848>

Immediately before the second anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire, the country was given a sharp reminder of the ongoing dangers to residents of tower blocks with a huge fire at a timber clad property in Barking. Jack picked this story up for *Inside Housing* and preceded to deliver a series of crucial scoops in direct competition with the national media.

His first was to identify, via an email he unsurfaced from two years previously, the precise type and brand of the wood cladding which had caused the devastating spread of the fire.

This scoop meant that barely 24 hours after the fire started, managers and residents of other blocks were able to check whether or not they had the same material on the outside of their homes. This information was not available through official channels for weeks and gave people a crucial head start in checking whether or not their homes were safe.

The piece also features *Inside Housing's* trademark rigour – reference to a missed warning about balcony fires from 2016 and details of the various organisations involved in building the Barking block, which were not at that point available from other sources.

*Barking fire risk assessment identified significant risk from wooden cladding months before fire*

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/barking-fire-risk-assessment-identified-significant-risk-from-wooden-cladding-months-before-fire-61966>

If Jack's scoop about the type of cladding used was his most important, this was his most eye-catching. Almost three weeks after the fire, he used the relationship he had developed with residents to become the first journalist to discover the block's fire risk assessment – and the fact that it had specifically warned about a fire safety risk from the wood cladding.

This story was eventually covered on LBC and by *The Guardian*, but it was Jack who was first to it – cementing *Inside Housing's* reputation as the leading authority on fire safety in people's homes. He was able to get to this story through the persistence of attending meetings, speaking to and building trust with the residents so that they began to see him as the 'go to' journalist for new information

It is a crucial piece of the puzzle in establishing liability for a fire which left dozens homeless and was so nearly the cause of several deaths.

*Leaseholders in London block pay nearly £35m for cladding removal*

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/leaseholders-in-london-block-pay-nearly-35m-for-grenfell-style-cladding-removal-61262>

The scandal surrounding private residents having to pay for the removal of cladding from their homes has made headlines across the trade and national media this year, but Jack delivered one of the major scoops on this theme in May.

Working from information from sources he had slowly developed having covered this issue for many months, he discovered that residents of a block in Paddington had paid out for cladding removal – rather than just being threatened with bills.

This was a significant landmark, as it was the first time such a situation had made it into the public domain and contradicted comments from ministers that they would prevent such a scenario

occurring. The story ended up being covered by a range of media outlets – and landed just a week before the government finally caved to pressure and announced a fund to cover the work.

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## Revealed: the type of cladding used on Barking block destroyed in fire

NEWS 10/06/19 3:55 PM BY JACK SIMPSON

The cladding used on the development that was hit by a devastating fire in Barking yesterday was a wood-based material called ThermoWood with a Class D fire rating, an email seen by *Inside Housing* has revealed.



The block after the blaze (picture: Nathaniel Barker)

### Sharelines

- ▶ Revealed: cladding used on Barking fire building Class D-rated ThermoWood #ukhousing
- ▶ The cladding used on the development that was hit by a devastating fire in Barking yesterday was a wood-based cladding called ThermoWood with a Class D fire-rating, an email seen by Inside Housing reveals #ukhousing

Yesterday a fire ripped through the six-storey Samuel Garside House in Barking, leaving 20 apartments destroyed and a further 10 damaged. Two people were treated for smoke inhalation at the scene but there were no major injuries.

In an email to one of the block's residents in July 2017, seen by *Inside Housing*, the building manager confirmed that the cladding used on the block was ThermoWood with a "D – s2, d0 fire resistance rating".

ThermoWood, according to a brochure by its manufacturer, is wood that has been heated to make it "more stable".

The brochure says that its reaction to fire is rated as Class D.

Government guidance requires Class B for the external surfaces of walls on buildings above 18m and limited combustibility, or A2, for insulation. Class D is more combustible than both of these.

The height of Samuel Garside has not been officially confirmed *The Barking and Dagenham Post* reported the building was 13.75m - meaning there would be no limit on combustibility.

Balconies are also often considered to sit outside these regulations which apply to insulation and the surfaces of walls.

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**Barking fire: risk assessment identified 'significant risk' from wooden cladding months before fire**



**Sadiq Khan to speak to building owner about Barking fire**

The development was built by Bellway Homes in 2012 before the head lease was sold to Adriatic Land, which is part of the £1.6bn Long Harbour Ground Rent Fund.

In the email sent on 6 July 2017, two weeks after the Grenfell Tower tragedy, managing agent Pinnacle said that the cladding was "applied as a decorative finish onto insulated masonry cavity wall".

It added that this "met all of the requirements of building regulations".

Pinnacle has since been replaced as managing agent by RMG, appointed by HomeGround on behalf of Adriatic Land.



Pre-Grenfell building regulations allowed combinations of combustible materials if they passed a large-scale test, or if they were assessed from previous data to comply – a process known as a desktop study.

According to the email seen by *Inside Housing*, Bellway took this route, although it did not say whether it carried out a test or a desktop study.

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The building was signed off by the National House Building Council, according to a statement put out by Barking & Dagenham Council.

As *Inside Housing* reported last year, the government was warned in 2016 that fire spreading across balconies up the external face of the building, as seems to have happened at Barking, could "pose a significant risk to life".

The warning came in a report from the Building Research Establishment, which also suggested that building regulations make "no statutory requirements in respect of external fire spread for the incorporation of balconies to a structure".

There were 32 units of social housing in the block owned by Southern Housing Group. It is not clear how many were damaged by the fire.

**The organisations involved in Samuel Garside House**





*Inside Housing* has identified the key organisations involved in developing and managing Samuel Garside House:

**Developer:** Bellway

**Architect:** Sheppard Robson

**Building owner (headlease):** Adriatic Land

**Freeholder of land:** Greater London Authority/L&Q

**Management:** HomeGround, which appointed RMG (part of Places for People)

**Building control:** NHBC

**Owner of affordable homes (32 of 80):** Southern Housing Group

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## Barking fire: risk assessment identified 'significant risk' from wooden cladding months before fire

NEWS 19/06/19 3:55 PM BY JACK SIMPSON

The fire risk assessment of the block of flats in Barking devastated by a huge fire last week identified the wooden balcony cladding as a "significant hazard" that "put residents at risk", *Inside Housing* can reveal.



Picture: Nathaniel Barker

Sharelines

► Barking fire: Block manager was warned about 'significant' cladding hazard months before the fire #ukhousing

*Inside Housing* has obtained a copy of the assessment, carried out in January on the Samuel Garside block where dozens of apartments were badly damaged by fire on 9 June.

The assessment said external cladding, wooden joists and deck balconies were a "significant hazard" that could put residents at risk of smoke inhalation and burn injuries.

The assessment, carried out for building manager RMG by assessor Osterna, said: "It is assessed that the wooden decks and joists are over 90mm thick and should have been formed of or treated with fire resistant materials but this could not be confirmed during the assessment.

"If a balcony does catch fire it should be noted that this will accelerate fire spread through either setting the balcony above alight or through entering the flats through open windows and this will put residents and visitors at risk of smoke inhalation and burn injuries."

The fire damaged 47 flats, including eight flats that will take six months to make habitable. Two people were treated for smoke inhalation.

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**Revealed: the type of cladding used on Barking block destroyed in fire**



**Sadiq Khan demands 'firm timeline' for Barking safety works**

Osterna recommended that a responsible person check whether cladding materials had been treated.

It also called for the building's manager to warn residents not to have BBQs on the balconies.

The BBC reported last week that a barbecue "may have been the cause of the fire". However, an investigation is yet to confirm this.

Last week, Ian Gorst, regional chair for London and South East at the building's developer Bellway, confirmed at a meeting with residents that the wood used on the block had not been treated and was not fire retardant.

The cladding on the balconies used on the block was ThermoWood, which has a Class D fire rating if not treated to make it more resistant to flame.

Government guidance requires the higher Class B for the external surfaces of walls on buildings above 18m and limited combustibility, but sets no standard for buildings below this height. The Samuel Garside block is understood to be below 18m.

A source close to Bellway said that the company had not received the report before the fire.

Bellway completed the Samuel Garside block and adjoining blocks in 2014. It sold the freehold of the block to property company Adriatic Land, which is ultimately responsible for the fire safety of the building. HomeGround, an Adriatic Land company, is the manager of the block but has contracted RMG for the day-to-day management. RMG is a subsidiary of Places for People.

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The assessment also raised concerns about fire safety in other parts of the building, including issues with the compartmentation of the block and the fire alarms used.

It said it found "gaps and holes" in the service cupboards where pipes and cables have been routed, which could allow fire and smoke to spread internally through the building and block escape routes. This, it added, would put residents and visitors at risk of smoke inhalation and burn injuries.

The report did note that remedial work to fix the fire stopping was in progress.

It added that a fully automatic fire alarm had been fitted within the common parts of the building, which was at odds with a block purpose-built to building regulation standards designed with a high degree of fire compartmentation.

External elevations free Buildings under 18m)	N/A	
Fire risk on external balconies (or above)	N/A	
Fire risk on external balconies (or 18m)	No	Refer to 16.8
Fire risk from any other source?	No	External decorative cladding and wooden joist and deck balconies are fitted to the upper floors of the blocks. It is assessed that the wooden decks and joists are over 90mm thick and should have been formed of or treated with fire resistant materials but this could not be confirmed during the assessment. If a balcony does catch fire it should be noted that this will accelerate fire spread through either setting the balcony above alight or through entering the flats through open windows and this will put residents and visitors at risk of smoke inhalation and burn injuries.
Fire 3 FRA assessment	N/A	Type 1 Fire Risk Assessment.
Conclusion of the general	N/A	

A screenshot from the risk assessment

It also reported that there were no records of fire alarm tests, emergency escape lighting tests, or maintenance and testing of other fire protection systems. A RMG and HomeGround spokesperson said that there were records for all fire safety measures, but these are not held on site and would not necessarily have been reviewed as part of the process

The overall risk of the block was "medium", meaning it had normal hazards subject to appropriate controls for the type of occupancy.

The building was given a "tolerable" risk rating, meaning no major additional work was required but there might be some improvements needed.

Last week, residents claimed that the fire alarm for the block had been on silent at the time of the fire and had to pull open some of the building's

silent at the time of the fire and had to pull open some of the building's magnetic doors.

*Inside Housing* has also seen a fire risk assessment from Samuel Garside's adjoining block, Ernest Websdale House, which also includes concerns over the cladding, compartmentation and fire alarms.

In response, a spokesperson for RMG and HomeGround said: "RMG, as the managing agent for Samuel Garside House, commissioned a fire risk assessment for the building in January 2019. All of the actions identified by the risk assessor were followed up and tracked for compliance purposes.

"At the time the risk assessment was carried out, remedial works to address certain issues were already being undertaken in the building by Bellway."

Bellway declined to comment while an investigation into the fire is ongoing.

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## Leaseholders in London block pay nearly £3.5m for Grenfell-style cladding removal

NEWS 02/05/19 7:00 AM BY JACK SIMPSON

Leaseholders living at a major development in central London have been forced to pay out millions of pounds to remove dangerous Grenfell-style cladding despite no work starting on the block, *Inside Housing* can reveal.



Paddington Walk (Google Street View)



Paddington Walk (Google Street View)

management, that work cannot begin until it receives all the money to fund the work.

Paddington Walk was built in 2005 by European Land and Property, a joint venture development company owned by the billionaire Reuben Brothers and fellow developer the Jarvis family.

Contractor Carillion was chosen as the builder in 2005 but famously went into liquidation in January last year, owing an estimated £7bn to its supply chain.

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End Our Cladding Scandal: full coverage



London building manager demands millions from leaseholders despite government cladding fund

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**Residents evacuated after fire at private block with Grenfell-style cladding**



**Revealed: hundreds still face huge cladding bills despite government fund**



**Revealed: the mental health trauma of residents in private blocks with dangerous cladding**

The revelations come despite repeated calls by the government that developers and freeholders should protect leaseholders from the cost of re-cladding and assurances that "it will not rule anything out" for those companies that don't.

In a letter sent by housing minister Kit Malthouse in mid-February to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, he said the government was unaware of any buildings where leaseholders have been forced to pay for re-cladding.

*Inside Housing* has seen a letter from the lawyers representing Paddington Walk Management that states residents risk losing their homes if the money is not paid.

A resident of the block, who preferred not to be named, told *Inside Housing*: "We are being hit by increasing fees and claims for interest on sums of money that they are insisting on collecting in advance, without even a final schedule of works or a start date."

They added: "We feel completely abandoned by the government."

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It has also emerged that housing association Peabody is also on the hook for a hefty remediation bill as the head lessee for two of the blocks holding the development's affordable housing. Peabody secured the lease for the two blocks, Montgomery Court and Montgomery House, under a Section 106 agreement.

Despite the government setting up a £400m fund to pay for re-cladding on social housing blocks, social landlords are still liable for the many homes they own in private developments. According to documents seen by *Inside Housing*, upwards of 90% of the £3.5m fund has already been collected from leaseholders. Private leaseholders expected to fund 69% of the total fee, with Peabody funding nearly 27%. The remaining money is expected to come from leaseholders of commercial units in the development. The service charge amount demanded in the legal letter sent by the management company includes interest due to late payment, as well as a bill for the management company's legal costs. The re-cladding bills come on top of money residents have spent on interim fire safety measures, including a £21,000-a-week waking watch service and £263,000 for the installation of an internal alarm system.

Pressure is ramping up on the government to take action and speed up the remediation of dangerous cladding from private blocks and protect leaseholders from the large bills.

Last week *Inside Housing* teamed up with residents' groups from affected blocks to launch the #EndOurCladdingScandal campaign.

European Land and Property has developed much of the Paddington Basin area where Paddington Walk sits, including the Merchant Square and Canalside Walk developments.

The current building owner is Paddington Walk Ltd, which shares directors with Paddington Walk Management Ltd. Both companies also list European Land and Property co-owner Bruce Jarvis as a director.

In addition to the presence of aluminium composite material cladding, a recent survey of the buildings found a litany of other fire safety issues including missing fire breaks, air gaps, between windows and panels, and combustible insulation.

An MHCLG spokesperson said: "Ensuring the safety of those still living in buildings with ACM cladding is of the utmost priority."

"Due to the lack of progress, the government is looking at a range of new additional measures to get building owners to do the right thing and get on with it."

Paddington Walk Ltd said it was unavailable to provide a response.

**End Our Cladding Scandal: campaign aims**



# END OUR CLADDING SCANDAL

- › Government provides a fund to cover the cost of cladding removal and remedial works on private blocks
- › A firm timescale is set out of no more than two years for the work to be carried out
- › Residents are reimbursed for the interim fire safety costs incurred, and funding is to be provided for necessary internal fire safety measures identified by a competent fire risk assessor

*Please email [peter.apps@insidehousing.co.uk](mailto:peter.apps@insidehousing.co.uk) if you want to support the campaign*

## End Our Cladding Scandal: campaign backers

- › Martin Hilditch, editor, Inside Housing
- › Manchester Cladators
- › UK Cladding Action Group
- › Natasha Elcock, chair, Grenfell United
- › Kate Henderson, chief executive, National Housing Federation
- › Terrie Alafat, chief executive, Chartered Institute of Housing
- › Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
- › Lord Gary Porter, chair of the Local Government Association
- › Polly Neate, chief executive, Shelter
- › Jane Duncan, chair of the expert advisory group on fire safety, RIBA
- › Andy Dark, assistant general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union
- › Christina McAnea, assistant general secretary, UNISON
- › Sir Peter Bottomley, Conservative MP and chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Leasehold and Commonhold Reform
- › Jim Fitzpatrick, Labour MP, and member of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Leasehold and Commonhold Reform
- › Mark Amesbury, shadow employment minister and Labour MP for Weaver Vale
- › Emma Dent Coad, Labour MP for North Kensington
- › Lucy Powell, Labour MP for Manchester Central
- › Rushanara Ali, Labour MP for Bethnal Green and Bow
- › George Howarth, Labour MP for Knowsley
- › Graham Stringer, Labour MP for Blackley and Broughton
- › John Biggs, mayor of Tower Hamlets
- › Paul Dennett, mayor of Salford
- › Suzanne Richards, councillor and executive member for housing and regeneration on behalf of all Manchester's Labour Councillors
- › Sir Richard Leese, Labour councillor and leader Manchester City Council
- › John Leech, Manchester Liberal Democrat leader on behalf of all Manchester's Liberal Democrat councillors
- › Darren Rodwell, executive member for housing at London Councils and leader of Barking and Dagenham Council
- › George Clarke, TV Architect
- › David Walker, bishop of Manchester
- › Graham Tomlin, bishop of Kensington
- › John Roberts, founder of AO.com
- › Josh Beaumont, professional rugby player, Sale Sharks and resident of affected building
- › Bill Beaumont, former England rugby captain
- › Jeremy Dyson, co-founder of the League of Gentlemen
- › Andy Moss, actor who has appeared on Channel 4's Hollyoaks and resident
- › Ross Mullan, actor who has appeared in Game of Thrones
- › Get Cape Wear Cape Fly, musician
- › Nour-eddine Aboudihaj, spokesperson for Justice4Grenfell
- › Mike Leonard, chief executive, Building Alliance
- › Kate Kendrick, founder, National Leasehold Campaign
- › Martin Boyd, chair, Leasehold Knowledge Partnership

- › Paula Higgins, chief executive, HomeOwners Alliance
- › Mark Henderson, chief executive, Home Group
- › Ben Clay, founding member of the Tenants Union
- › Hilda Palmer, acting chair of the Hazards Campaign
- › Susan Bright, professor of law, University of Oxford
- › Gill Kernick, consultant and former Grenfell Resident
- › Phil Murphy, fire safety expert and tower block resident

*This list will be updated. Please email [peter.apps@insidehousing.co.uk](mailto:peter.apps@insidehousing.co.uk) if you want to support the campaign*

### End Our Cladding Scandal: what our supporters say



- › **Terrie Alafat, chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing**, added: "It is shocking that out of the 176 private blocks with dangerous cladding that have been identified since Grenfell, only 10 have had the necessary safety work completed. While the government has pledged to fund the replacement of dangerous cladding in the social housing sector, there is no such promise for residents in private flats, which is why we are supporting *Inside Housing's* new campaign to change this now."
- › **Kate Henderson, chief executive of the National Housing Federation** said: "It should go without saying that everyone must be safe in their own home.  
  
"But dangerous cladding has been used on tower blocks of all tenures across the country because government fire safety regulations were not fit for purpose. The government must now take financial responsibility for ensuring that each and every home affected, no matter who owns it, is made safe and fast."
- › **Jane Duncan, chair of the Expert Advisory Group on Fire Safety at the Royal Institute of British Architects**, said: "It is appalling that nearly two years on from the Grenfell Tower tragedy there are still buildings with cladding systems that have been identified as a risk to public safety. This must be rectified with immediate effect and individuals should not face financial hardship because of a past failure in regulation."
- › **Suzanne Richards, executive member for housing and regeneration at Manchester City Council**, said: "I have heard first-hand the stories from residents about how living in a block that is not deemed fire safe can impact on their emotional health and well-being.  
  
"On top of this they have the additional worry of the threat of bills, of up to £80,000 in some cases, landing on their doormat.  
  
"This is unacceptable and government must now step in and fund post-Grenfell remediation works."
- › **Paula Higgins, chief executive of the HomeOwners Alliance**, said: "Cladding has not been removed because freeholders and warranty providers do not want to take responsibility. These homeowners are stuck in a void with no end in sight.  
  
"Government needs to bang heads together and find a solution quickly because these people have been sold a duff product. If no one will take responsibility then government must step in and take action to protect people urgently."
- › **Andy Dark, assistant general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union**, said: "It's a scandal that residents who are living in tower blocks covered in flammable cladding and where basic fire safety is substandard have no certainty whatsoever that their homes will be made safe.  
  
"Whether publicly or privately owned, the remedial work needs to be completed quickly and the government must take responsibility for getting the job done."
- › **Martin Boyd, chair of the Leasehold Knowledge Partnership**, said: "It has taken far too long for government to take action to remove dangerous cladding from thousands of people's homes.  
  
"This has always been either the fault of regulations or the failing of the developer but nobody seems willing or able to challenge either group."
- › **Jim Fitzpatrick, Labour MP for Poplar and Limehouse and co-**

**Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Leasehold and Commonhold Reform**, said: "No one should be left in the position of having worked and saved for years to become a property owner, to then learn – through no fault of their own – their home is no longer safe.

"This campaign rightly highlights the consequences of inaction and I urge the government to take responsibility as a matter of urgency."

▶ **John Biggs, mayor of Tower Hamlets** said: "I fully support the campaign from Inside Housing calling on the government to fully fund all works needed to remove dangerous cladding from all housing blocks.

"Ministers have rightly said their top priority must be to ensure that people are safe in their own homes, and it is entirely unfair to expect residents to find tens of thousands of pounds to fund this without any help whatsoever."

▶ **Rushanara Ali, Labour MP for Bethnal Green and Bow**, said: "It is outrageous that two years after the Grenfell disaster there are still 40,000 leaseholders across the UK who are stuck living in unsafe blocks with dangerous cladding.

"The government must move fast to replace flammable cladding on every building, no matter who owns it, and must do it now."

▶ **David Walker, bishop of Manchester**, said: "In Manchester and beyond, many months after the Grenfell tragedy, too many people are still living in apartments that do not adequately protect them against fire. Many are now faced with five figure bills to make good the deficiencies, and find their homes have become practicably unmortgageable. I applaud the efforts of Manchester Cladators to bring together residents and others who share their concerns. The challenge is simple, to get developers, freehold owners and government to step up to the plate and accept responsibility for urgently rectifying this scandalous state of affairs."



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