BUILDING SURVEY REPORT
ON:
EXISTING CONDITION OF EXTERNAL WINDOWS AND BALCONY DOORS
AT

REGATTA POINT
38 KEW BRIDGE ROAD
BRENTFORD
TW8 0EB

FOR:

REGATTA POINT FREEHOLD LTD
REGATTA POINT
38 KEW BRIDGE ROAD
BRENTFORD
TW8 0EB

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Our Ref: PR/JM/7560

REPORT ON:
REGATTA POINT, 38 KEW BRIDGE ROAD, BRENTFORD, TW8 0EB

1. INTRODUCTION

Instructions were received via Stephanie Henderson-Brown representing the committee of Regatta Point Freehold Ltd (RPF Ltd) to undertake an inspection of a sample number of windows and external balcony doors to various flats the intention being to assess the condition of the existing elements and where necessary to make recommendations for repair / replacement works.

An inspection was undertaken on the 31st March 2016.

Prior to the inspections separate advice relating to the legal position on window / door replacement was provided to RPF Ltd the summary of which was that subject to Section 20 Consultation RPF Ltd have the absolute discretion to decide when repair / renewal is reasonably required.

No further comment on this advice is made herein as there is full detail of this advice available from its original source.

Inspections of the windows and doors following flats were undertaken

2nd floor A block flat 2
4th floor B block flat 25
5th floor B block flat 26
1st floor (adjacent to gym) flat 32
3rd floor C block flat 35
6th floor D block flat 56

An inspection of one of guest room A was also undertaken where recent renewal works to windows had been undertaken and separate comments on these windows are contained in Section 7 of this report.

In addition to the on site inspections details of their own windows / doors were provided by a number of owners / residents in January / March 2016 and reference to such comments was made for comparison purposes and to get a broader view on the overall condition. By this method, excluding the flats that were inspected as part of the survey, details of the following were obtained.

Flats 4, 5, 8, 17, 28, 40, 49 and 55.

2. FINDINGS – GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS

The flats inspected were a good cross section of the type and condition of both windows and doors the doors being located to the rear elevation where open balconies exist.

The doors and windows are all of double glazed aluminium framed units understood to be approximately 20 years old. The windows are all of a similar design having a large opening casement either fitted into masonry or with a fixed glazed pane below. The opening casements have heavy duty hinges to each reveal with restrictors which can be deactivated to fully open the windows for cleaning of external surfaces. The safety aspect of this form of window cleaning will be discussed further in the report.

The majority of balcony doors are of a sliding type with runners at threshold level. To some flats renewal of individual doors, some having side hung hinged doors, has taken place. It is assumed that door renewal has been carried out on an ad hoc basis by individual owners over the years and that this is why there is a mix of door types. From a visual inspection from the rear most doors appear to be of the older sliding type.

3. RESTRICTIONS

Windows and doors were operated to assess their general condition but no dismantling or significant investigation of moving parts particularly where these were hidden was undertaken. No testing for the extent of noise transmission or thermal insulation standards was carried out but a visual inspection was undertaken and comments from owners / occupants were taken on board in relation to the general condition and efficiency of the windows and doors inspected.

4. WINDOWS

As previously indicated the windows have large opening casements which push out from the bottom and which are fitted to heavy duty hinges both sides. The hinges incorporate safety restrictors but these can be over ridden relatively easily to allow for window cleaning. In the open position there is a large unprotected area at low level which has obvious safety implications. It is clear that although the opening mechanism was designed for cleaning of the external glass to be undertaken from within the flats the inherent danger of this operation and the strain on the hinges in the fully open position is not something that would be acceptable under current health and safety regulations.

Many of the windows are provided with various forms of secondary glazing and this is an indication that the original windows were unsatisfactory in particular regard to noise and thermal insulation standards. The secondary glazing is in itself of various standards some more effective than others but in many cases the secondary glazing itself had inherent faults. It is understood that secondary glazing has been fitted by individual owners / occupiers at their own expense over the years and no further comment on the secondary glazing systems is made herein.

With regard to the original windows it is clear that in many cases these are now very poor in relation to noise transmission particularly to the front elevation where road noise is a feature and with regard to draughts around the perimeter which also allow for atmospheric pollution to penetrate internally. Available evidence would suggest that when originally installed the windows were of a good and robust quality but over the years degradation of the perimeter seal and the latches in particular have led to the casements being poorly fitting allowing the noise and heat loss problems to occur and increase.

In addition some of the hinges appear to have been damaged and as a result there is some poor alignment of some casements and evidence of hinges making contact with the casements / window frames which in due course will increase the likelihood of serious damage to hinges in particular.

It is understood that already some hinge related problems have occurred and that with regard to flat 26 which is at 5th floor level replacement of 1 defective hinge costs in the region of £2000 due to the access difficulties and the complex nature of the remedial works required.

It is quite probable that in the relatively near future hinge related defects will become an ever increasing maintenance liability.

To some windows there was evidence of tape being used to seal opening casements as draught problems had become so acute and in other areas D.I.Y. type adhesive insulation strips had been provided to some casements in an attempt to improve the draught stripping qualities.

Available evidence would suggest that to the front elevation in particular that the vast majority of windows are reaching the end of their serviceable life and that serious consideration would need to be given to the total replacement of all window units.

It is likely that similar defects will also effect the rear elevation windows but whether the total replacement of these windows is carried out in conjunction with renewal of the front elevation windows or is left until such time as scaffolding is in place for other purposes i.e. external decoration to the rear needs to be the subject of further discussion.

With regard to the front elevation windows it is assumed that no radical design change would be acceptable to either the freeholders, residents or the planning authority but as previously indicated external cleaning of windows is a problem that needs to be addressed. A solution such as self-cleaning glass may need to be considered using a glass like Pilkington Active and again some further discussion on the exact specification / design of any replacement windows would need to be the subject of further discussion.

The provision of acoustic glass particularly to the front elevation where road noise is a significant consideration and some form of solar control glass to the rear are also items in relation to the design and specification of any replacement units that would need to be considered.

It should be appreciated that with particular regard to the front elevation windows that unless total replacement is undertaken in the near future the life expectancy of the existing windows without the need for ever increasing costly and potentially dangerous repairs will be relatively short.

5. DOORS

The original sliding doors have been retained to the majority of the flats inspected and in the main these operated satisfactorily.

No detailed investigation was carried out but available evidence would suggest that the doors operate on wheels fitted inside the bottom rail of the opening door sections bearing on runners in the threshold and that draught stripping to the perimeter is provided via a bristle type draught strips.

General corrosion to the exposed vertical runner fitted to the door threshold was noted in a number of areas and this would indicate that general lack of maintenance and lubrication has occurred and this in turn will have had an effect on the internal mechanisms within the door frame which in extreme conditions will make door opening difficult.

In addition it was noted that in many areas the bristle type draught stripping had been damaged and / or had become dislodged and this will have the effect of making the doors less draught proof and heat loss around the perimeter of the door / frame will result.

In addition a number of failed sealed units (with condensation between the 2 panes) were noted as well as some cracked double glazed panels. This feature was restricted to the rear elevation which appears to be largely South facing and it is quite probable that the effects of the sun and greater temperature variations have contributed to this type of defect. The overall condition of the doors however does not appear to be beyond economic repair and there are companies available who offer a service to replace defective draught seals and door runners. It is probable therefore that the majority of doors can be overhauled without the need for major repairs / replacement for the foreseeable future.

This maybe a situation where a trial on some of the worst operating doors is carried out to see the effectiveness of repair systems prior to a firm decision being made in relation to all doors.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ASSOCIATED CONSIDERATIONS

As previously indicated the recommendations would be as follows:-

1. **All front elevation windows to residential units to be replaced with similar style windows the final design / specification to be confirmed**.
   If a decision is made to phase the major works to windows there is no reason why the front elevation windows could not be undertaken as 1 contract and replacement of rear elevation windows carried out in conjunction with other works when scaffolding was in place.

   The front elevation window replacement works would necessitate full working scaffolding with hoisting provision for removal of old units and provision of new windows.

   In relation to areas where rendering / railings are provided it is likely that the replacement works would necessitate a degree of replacement and repair of affected surfaces and with scaffold in place all other high level repair and redecoration should be included in the overall contract.

   As previously indicated the specification for new windows should include specific reference to at least the following issues.

   - *Design – assumed to match existing unless redesign (probably requiring planning consent) is required.*
   - *Materials – powder coated metal (steel / aluminium) or PVCu likely to be main choices.*
   - *Self cleaning glass (or change in design to allow safe cleaning of external surfaces).*
   - *Solar reflective glass.*
   - *Acoustic glass.*

2. **Subject to a satisfactory trial on sliding balcony doors it should be possible to conduct repair and upgrading of all sliding door gear / draught proofing systems to return them to a good standard.**

   The work to the sliding doors can be carried out without the need for scaffolding as all such doors open onto individual flat balcony areas.

7. TRIAL REPLACEMENT TO GUEST ROOM A

The inspection included the guest room A where it is understood that fairly recently some older windows have been replaced with new double glazed units. These units are of a similar outward opening type but these are clearly not of the same quality of the original windows.

It was clear that the hinges to the casements had already dropped and that the casement was catching on fixing screws and the latch was hitting the casement frame. The windows were slightly better from a sound insulation view point but this is almost certainly only due to the newness of the perimeter draught strip and it is clear that windows of a much higher standard will be required elsewhere in the building as part of any overall major repair / replacement scheme.

Signed ---------- Dated 2/6/16.

Philip L Robson FRICS
Chartered Building Surveyor