



**Goulden House
Bullen Street
London
SW11 3HF**

Wandsworth Borough Council
Housing and Regeneration
Department
The Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

Date: 8 November 2024

Dear Resident,

RE: Goulden House ventilation system/Section 20 Major Works

As you may be aware Wandsworth Council has been looking at a number of options with regard to the existing ventilation system serving your property. The systems serve the bathrooms and toilets through communal ducts that terminate in a series of roof fans.

This ventilation system was installed at the time the block was constructed approximately 50 years ago and unfortunately was poorly designed meaning that the ducts cannot be accessed to be cleaned of debris. This cleaning, which ideally should take place every few years, ensures that the ducts are not compromised by dirt and debris and the inability to clean them means that they are becoming increasingly ineffective. The cleaning also removes flammable materials from the ducts lessening the chance of a fire spreading through the block. In a new communal ventilation system access points would be built in to enable the mechanical cleaning of the ducts and fire dampeners would be located in the ducts to contain fire. None of these are present in the existing system in Goulden House. Therefore, the ducts have never been inspected or cleaned which over the years has compromised the effectiveness of the system and increased the risk of fire spread throughout the ducts.

The Council appointed specialist consultants to look at options for the ongoing service and maintenance of the communal ventilation systems and has also met informally with Building Control managers to gauge their views. We have also met with members of the Co-Operative Board and the Goulden House Manager to listen to their views and to brief them on progress; the last meeting being held on 17th May 2024.

The conclusion that we have reluctantly drawn is that it is not practicably possible to continue to maintain the communal ventilation system. To do so would require extremely invasive, disruptive, and expensive work to break into each duct through the roof slab and from each individual bathroom to clean or replace sections of ducting as necessary, to install cleaning points and fire dampeners in the system between each floor of the

blocks. It could also prove to be the case that the whole duct may need replacing along with individual roof fans.

As the freeholder of the block, the Council is legally responsible for the repair and upkeep of the fabric and structure of the block including any communal services. It is not possible to leave the existing ventilation system in place knowing that it cannot be cleaned or maintained as recommended. Therefore, the Council, in consultation with the Co-operative, have taken the decision to abandon the existing communal system and to retrofit individual ventilation systems within each property. We recognise that there are flats with different configurations and therefore, the individual ventilation systems will need to differ accordingly. In conjunction with the Co-Op Manager, we have already successfully fitted systems to a couple of empty properties. In those properties the costs of undertaking the required work in each property was approximately £4,500 (although these costs are expected to be lower as part of a block wide major works scheme).

We now plan to tender out this retrofit work seeking prices for installation to the various property types found in Goulden House. Wandsworth Council will tender to five contractors, residents will be consulted, and leaseholders will receive the normal statutory consultation notices. However, as we are proposing to undertake work within residents' properties, we will also give individual leaseholders the option of procuring this work privately rather than use the Council's contractor. Leaseholders who choose to undertake the works privately, will be provided with the necessary plans of their respective properties. If leaseholders choose to opt out and arrange for the work to be undertaken privately, they will not be charged for the work to the other properties in the block, and the remaining leaseholders will be charged a percentage of the total costs in line with their lease. As we will be undertaking work in phases before decommissioning the roof fans and sealing the communal ducts leaseholders will be given plenty of time to secure their own contractor and to complete the installation before the communal ventilation system is closed down.

It is hoped that we can be on site next year but meanwhile please feel free to talk to Wandsworth Council's Heating Manager, Peter Roberts, who is Wandsworth's Council contact for the proposed works. You can also ask to be shown one of the individual ventilation systems in an empty property by the Co-operative Manager, Annie Gleeson. If you wish to visit the pilot flat to view the individual ventilation system, please engage with the Estate Office either via the office email office@gouldenhouse.org or by calling the Estate Office direct on 0207 924 5213, within 14 days of receipt of this letter. The Estate Manager will then collate the number of residents who wish to view the individual ventilation system within the pilot flat, and you will then be advised of the date and time for your viewing. The Estate Manager or a representative from Wandsworth Council will be able to respond to any further questions that arise from that visit.

We are conscious of the fact that leaseholders have already been charged for some previous work to clean the communal ventilation ducts. I can confirm that those charges are being reviewed to ensure that leaseholders are only charged for work that was undertaken by our contractors and notification of any revised charges will be sent out shortly. The latter will include a breakdown of the costs incurred and confirmation on the number of flats which were inspected by Wandsworth Council's appointed contractor (T Brown Group). Wandsworth Council will also provide residents, upon request, with the T Brown Group's CCTV findings which resulted in the proposed decommissioning of the current communal ventilation system.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Crawley', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Crawley
Assistant Director of Resident and Estate Services
Wandsworth Council