
HARRIS
ASSOCIATES
ASBESTOS
REMOVAL
CHALLENGES

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Harris Associates are an award winning RICS building consultancy providing advisory and project led services at every stage of a buildings life cycle, across commercial and residential sectors.

THE CHALLENGES OF ASBESTOS REMOVAL

Historical Background

For much of the 20th Century asbestos was considered a miracle material primarily due to its proven longevity, strength, heat and fire resistance, insulating and water resistant qualities. Asbestos was used extensively and featured in a variety of materials / components including:

Wall / ceiling linings, decorative textured coatings

Vinyl floor tiles, sheet flooring

Mattresses / quilts for fire stopping and sound insulation

Thermal insulation lagging (for boilers, pipework etc.)

Insulating boards cladding panels, roof sheets

Electrical equipment (fuse box doors, flash guards etc.)

Today, we are well aware of the health problems associates with asbestos exposure and its use in the UK has been progressively prohibited by law since the 1980s (culminating in a complete ban in 1999). The use of asbestos within the buildings has left an enduring legacy that is as complicated as it is hazardous.

Managing Asbestos in the 21st Century

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 places responsibilities on property owners and managers to protect those using or working in their premises from asbestos exposure and the associated health risks. Such premises include residential common parts. This has particular relevance when undertaking refurbishment works that inevitably disturb materials and generate dust.

Most property professionals will know that prior to any refurbishment project as asbestos refurbishment and demolition (R&D) survey must be carried out by a competent asbestos consultant. The only exception is where a building was constructed after 2000, or where exciting records prove that no asbestos is present.

An R&D survey is a comprehensive inspection of the subject area which seeks to ascertain the location and condition of any asbestos. A risk assessment id then carried out and thereafter measures are recommended to reduce or eliminate those risk identified.

Asbestos Removal

The removal of asbestos containing materials (ACMs) is usually recommended in one (or a combination) of the following situations:

Category 1: Where large quantities of ACMs are identified

Category 2: Where ACMs are identified and in poor condition

Category 3: Where is ACMs are located in exposed locations

As an example, decorative textured coatings could fall into all three categories. These coatings are often located in high quantities (Cat 1) applied across entire wall / ceiling surfaces, can exhibit signs of physical damage (Cat 2) and are likely to be damaged further due to location (Cat 3) such as a corridor walls and ceilings.

Where a common parts refurbishment is suck that damage or disruption to ACMs is likely or where the ACMs are in such a poor condition that removal is required, then the formulation of an effective strategy in how to deal with the ACM removal is the next step

ACM Removal

As a first step, an R&D survey will be commissioned and the subsequent rick assessment will help quantify the extent of the ACM removal.

The ACM removal needs to be considered in the overall context of the refurbishment package. The Building Surveyor (or other property professionals) will now need to take the following actions:

Ensure accurate quantifying of the extent of ACM removal

Clarify ACM condition and risk to residents

Locate and accurately schedule the works required

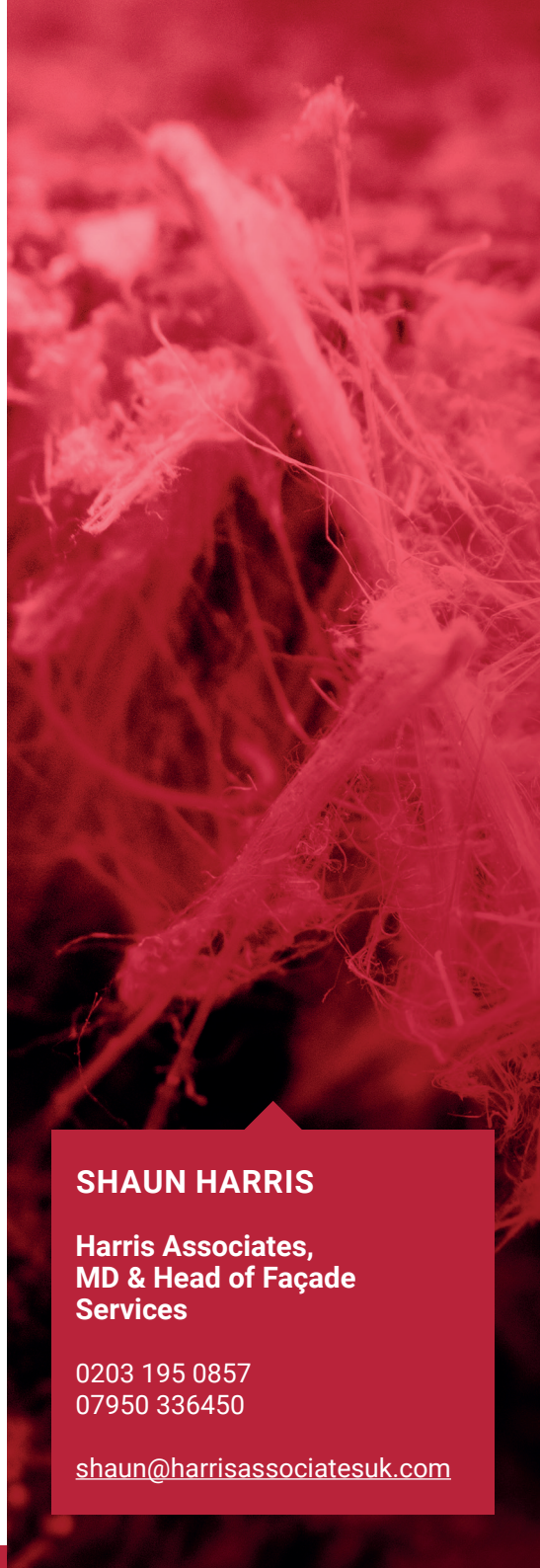
Careful selection of licensed contractors (if works dictate that this is required)

Assess whether HSE to be notified

Set out contractual arrangements

Set out how to achieve dovetailing of ACM specialist works with refurbishment works

Once the scope of works from a technical standpoint has been ascertained then careful consideration is to be given as to how the execution of these works can be best achieved. This will require an assessment into whether ACM removal is possible with / without residents in occupation. If we assume for this article that temporary relocation is required then it is important to ensure sufficient planning / lead-in time is worked into the overall programme to enable time for arranging alternative accommodation.



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Historical Background

As with many common parts works it is often the managerial and logistical aspects that present the biggest challenge. With this in mind the following headline factors need all due consideration:

Drafting of a logistics and management plan to be adopted / developed by all parties

Consider the need for setting up temporary exclusion zones / sealed enclosures

Consider arranging additional security measures if property is to be vacated temporarily

Ensure effective implementation of air monitoring during the ACM removal works

Ensure effective waste removal regimes and recording procedures are set up

Agree how residents delivers and post will be dealt with during the ACM removal work

Agree clear procedures for communicating with residents and property managers

Agree move out schedules / work durations

Agree "Works-In-Progress" update process (for residents and property managers)

Agree "Safe To Move Back Into Flat" procedure

Understandably, residents can be apprehensive about the nature of ACM removal work and also about leaving their homes unattended. The overseeing surveyor will have a pivotal role in allaying any anxieties or concerns that may exist. The procedures and processes relating to health and security must be efficient, simple and easy to understand by all parties.

Case Study

in 2015, Harris Associates were appointed to specify and project manage the internal common parts refurbishment of nineteen early 20th Century mansion blocks in West London. The works included extensive asbestos removal. The works were further complicated by the renewal of landlords and tenants electrical supplies as well as a full interior refurbishment.

Each block contained 10 flats, accessed by a single common stairwell. Asbestos was identified throughout each of these stairwells and featured in textured wall coverings, ceiling coatings, electrical equipment, and stair infill panels.

Key aspects of this project are as follows:

Residential vacated each block during ACM removal

Formal letters issued 3 months in advance

Move out schedules were set out (block specific)

ACM removal work carried out one block at a time

ACM removal works carried out by a licensed asbestos removal contractor

HSE notified

Common stairwells formed an exclusion zone for duration of the works

Warning signs installed

Flat entrance, doors, windows, fanlights and ducts taped / sealed

Safe zone at ground level located outside each block

Access to stairwells limited to specialist asbestos contractors only

Air monitoring procedures implemented during the ACM removal period

Regular updates provided by overseeing surveyor

Written notification given to the property manager – confirming on the day when each block was safe to re-enter

Residents advised verbally and via text and email by property manager

The ACM removal work was carried out successfully, safely and securely and in accordance with the agreed programme. The very precise planning for the ACM removal and the effective team work and liaison between ourselves, property managers and residents resulted in a potentially tricky element of the refurbishment works package being rolled out without a hitch.

If we can be of any service or if further advice is required regarding ACM removal or any other property related matter please contact Shaun Harris.

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