



With a portfolio of 5,000 homes, many of which are over 30 years old, Ashford Borough Council is continually striving to ensure its social housing meets regulatory standards to provide maximum security and comfort to its residents. Ed Humphreys reports

When the time came for the council to renovate its existing portfolio, it was looking to improve thermal efficiency and reduce the maintenance requirements of the current windows. The council needed to work with a reliable team including a supplier, fabricator, and installer, and use products that could meet high standards and be replicated across several properties.

Sizing up the challenge

The Stock Condition Survey, which is primarily carried out to help housing providers plan future maintenance and investment, identified 35 flats from Luckley House, an independent living scheme for older persons, and nine general needs flats from Clockhouse.

With issues at both sites and some parts unavailable or hard to source, the existing PVC-U windows at both sites had come to the end of their life. Ashford Borough Council opted to install new windows and doors that exceeded minimum requirements to future proof its housing stock.

A relationship built to last

After a competitive tender process, the contract was awarded to The Window Company (Contracts), as part of a wider five-year rolling social housing upgrade project. The company's experience in the sector, and the U-values of Rehau's products, were both leading factors in winning the tender.

Rueben Brown, building surveyor at Ashford Borough Council, said: "Rehau windows and doors were the ideal product to meet our aims for this project. The thermal efficiency of the products is excellent, and we've never had a bad experience with them in the past. On top of this, the replacement parts are always readily available when needed, so we knew it wouldn't be an issue if we needed to carry out repairs in the future."



David Thornton, chair at The Window Company (Contracts) celebrates the completion of the 250th refurbishment with the homeowner.

For over 10 years, The Window Company (Contracts) has worked with fabricator, Polyframe, on a variety of projects, mainly in the commercial sector. Polyframe was actively looking to grow its presence in the social housing



sector and take on more refurb programmes in the area. It had also just completed a £2m investment into its factory, which ensured it could fulfil the demands of the project. Polyframe's existing relationship with Rehau made the project a perfect fit for all parties.

Phil Walker, chief operating officer at Polyframe, says: "The Window Company (Contracts) is a valued partner of Polyframe and we've worked with them on a number of projects over the years. Our recent investment in a new cutting centre and a new automated welding and cleaning line allowed us to offer greater speed and efficiency in fabricating the Rehau frames for this project.

"Like The Window Company (Contracts), Rehau is similarly experienced in the commercial space and their team was a great help on this project. It acts as that 'critical friend' and assists us with quoting, tenders and technical expertise. It just makes the whole process a lot smoother from start to finish."

Fit to last

Since the project started last year, 137 Total70 windows, four rear doors and six French doors have been installed at Luckley House, and 63 Total70 windows have been installed at Clockhouse. All the products which have been installed are in line with the PAS24 security standard and the windows exceed the minimum standard thermal efficiency requirement.

The improved thermal performance of these new windows and doors has also helped Ashford Borough Council increase the viability of air source and ground source heat pump installations. Brown says: "In some



Luckley House ,Wye

cases, the improved thermal efficiency of the windows and doors has acted as the deciding factor that has persuaded tenants to accept heating upgrades.

"The windows have also allowed us to improve ventilation options, helping to prevent the occurrence of damp and mould – especially as the colder months approach."

Hannah Smith, area sales manager at Rehau, says: "This ongoing project with Ashford Borough Council has been great to work on. We have existing relationships with both The Window Company (Contracts) and Polyframe, which has meant that communication, delivery and timeframes have all run smoothly. It is brilliant to see what a difference our products can make to the residents at Luckley House and Clockhouse, and we look forward to continuing our work with all parties as the upgrades to social housing in the area continue." □

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