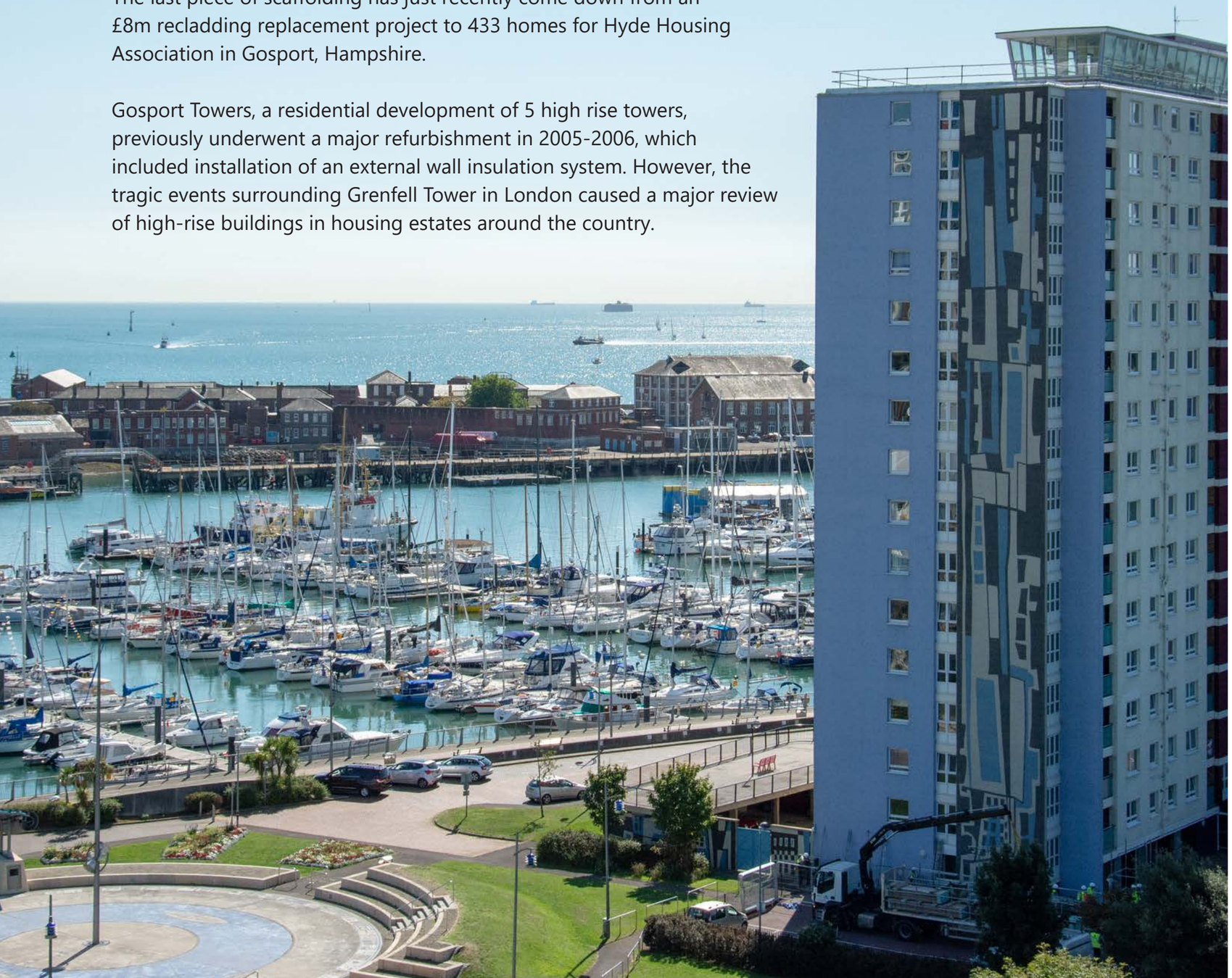
Project Focus

GOSPORT TOWERS

The last piece of scaffolding has just recently come down from an £8m recladding replacement project to 433 homes for Hyde Housing Association in Gosport, Hampshire.

Gosport Towers, a residential development of 5 high rise towers, previously underwent a major refurbishment in 2005-2006, which included installation of an external wall insulation system. However, the tragic events surrounding Grenfell Tower in London caused a major review of high-rise buildings in housing estates around the country.



A new cladding system

The project was to make the buildings' cladding safe in compliance with the latest industry standards for high rise external wall systems. The building work was carried out by contractor, Axis Europe, and Frankham Consultancy Group's architects and structural engineers designed the new cladding system.

Frankham Risk Management Services was appointed to carry out cladding investigations of the five high rise residential blocks, known as Gosport Towers, within days of the Grenfell incident in June 2017. During this investigation cladding samples were removed for testing. An initial report was submitted to Hyde, advising that the cladding system was highly likely to be non-compliant. This was confirmed when test results were returned.

In early July 2017, our Risk Management team provided observations on the test results and advice on possible remediation options.

Hyde decided that they would procure the remediation works by means of a design and build contract. Axis Europe approached Frankham to partner with them to provide the design. Part of the brief was to substantially retain the aesthetics of the towers as this was a requirement of the local Town Planning Department. The works comprised removal of the existing external wall insulation system back to the original substrate, this was then replaced with modern external wall insulation with through colour external render to those areas where external wall insulation was originally installed. The selected mineral fibre replacement insulation system is fully in accordance with the BR 135 fire test certificate and is fully inert.

Our integrated approach

Our architects have been monitoring the development of the industry approach to fire safety in higher risk buildings over 18 metres height both prior to and since Grenfell. We have been honing our solutions to meet the latest informed opinion and this has been incorporated into this design. Our fire technical advisory services support the design capability to provide an integrated approach in this niche expertise.

Re-cladding has obvious repercussions upon both dead loading and live (wind) loading of the existing structural system. The ability of a 50-year-old existing structure to take extra load is pertinent to the overall solution and our structural engineers' involvement in the solution was a key factor.

A further issue with respect to this project was the requirement to retain the mosaic facades to some elevations. Our architects have taken this into account in their design as well as the requirement for the new envelope to provide maintenance free weatherproofing in the hostile climate offered by this location adjacent to the Portsmouth Harbour.

Frankham is an industry leader in the field of recladding design to high-rise residential buildings. We will continue to contribute to the industry's response to the Grenfell disaster to reduce risk in the refurbishment of serviceable accommodation of this type.

We have created a working team internally and with our clients. We will use this knowledge and experience in our approach for further re-cladding opportunities to come.