

Case study

Sandwell Council chooses ROCKWOOL to help combat fuel poverty on high-rise refurbishment

The Crofts, Smethwick

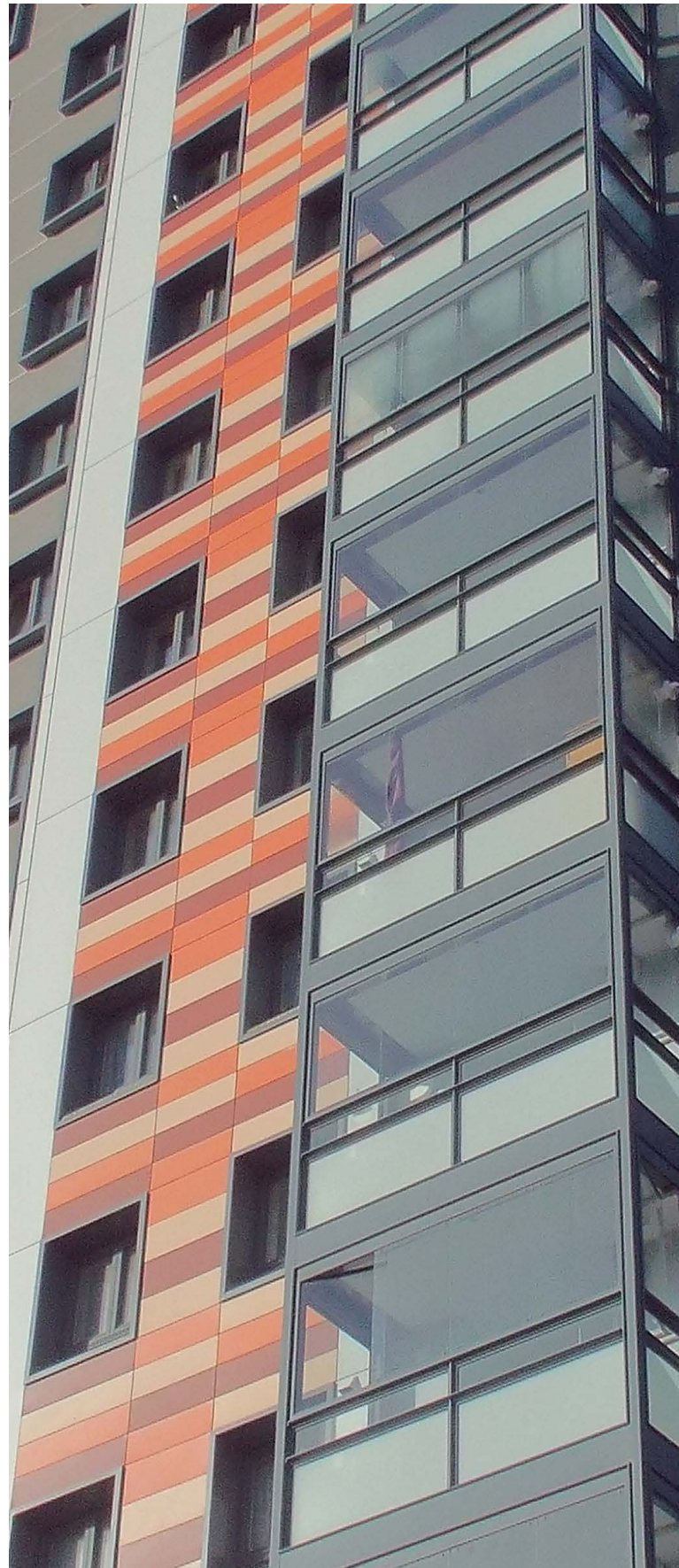




The project

ROCKWOOL® & Rockpanel® partner in award-winning midlands development.

ROCKWOOL and Rockpanel have joined forces to supply a non-combustible cladding solution which has transformed three high-rise residential towers for Sandwell Borough Council.





The challenge

The Crofts in Smethwick consists of 270 homes within Ashcroft, Birchcroft, and Elmcroft houses.

This development is located on a major arterial route into the city of Birmingham within a district that ranked 12th out of 326 in terms of deprivation in a 2010 study of the country. The three tower blocks, originally constructed in the 1960s, were in universally poor condition, showing signs of major wear and tear to the building fabric, windows, roofing, and balconies. In the absence of any wall insulation, they were also proving very difficult to heat and especially challenging to keep warm for those tenants living in fuel poverty.

Refurbishment at The Crofts also offered an opportunity for Sandwell Borough Council to rejuvenate not just these high-rise homes but also the wider area as they sought to bring a renewed sense of pride in their surroundings to residents and the local community.



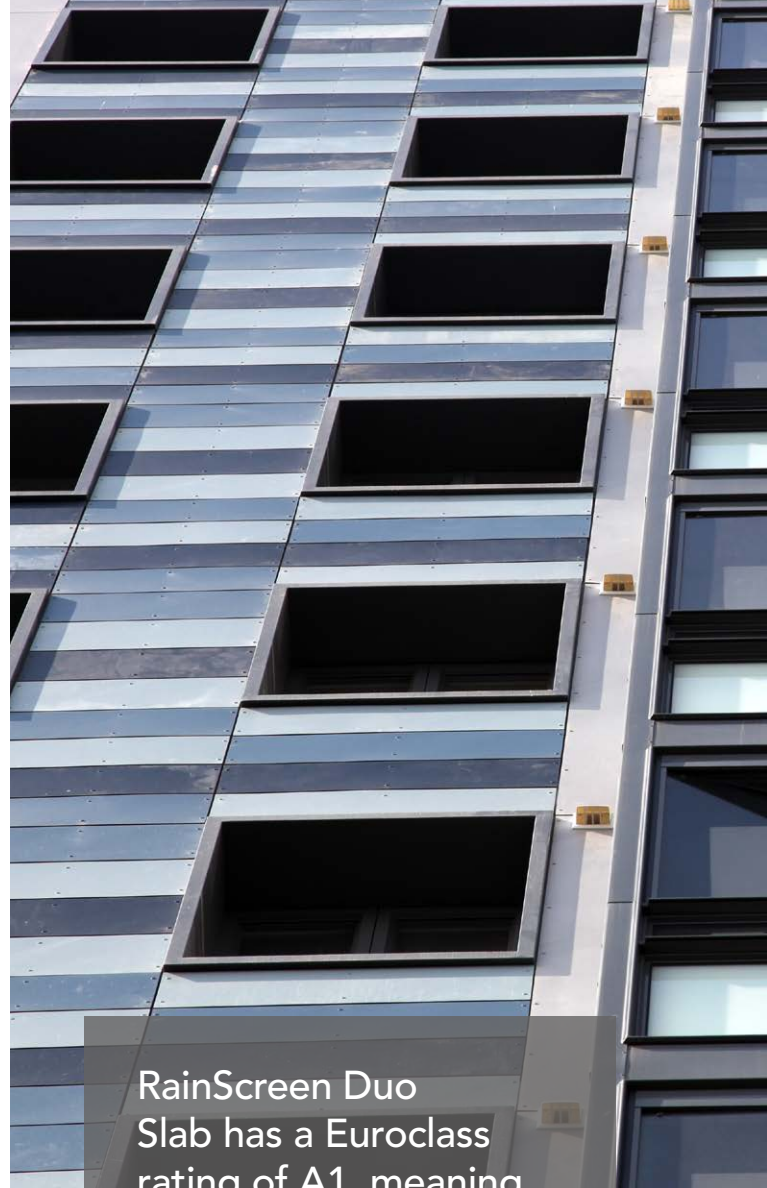
The solution

This two year, £11 million project for specialist contractor, Keepmoat, has involved a dramatic, top-to-bottom renovation of each tower at The Crofts.

Substantial improvements have included flat-to-pitched roof conversions with solar panel installations, new windows and striking new balcony enclosures, redecorated communal areas, asbestos removal, and the installation of a highly efficient, aesthetically attractive and non-combustible insulated cladding solution supplied by sister brands, ROCKWOOL and Rockpanel.

ROCKWOOL's Rainscreen Duo Slab® is the non-combustible dual density insulation board fitted at The Crofts, designed specifically for application to this type of high-rise development. Made from stone wool, RainScreen Duo Slab has a Euroclass rating of A1, meaning the product is non-combustible. It also has the benefit of resistance to wind and rain during construction which, together with the minimal number of fixings required, makes installation quicker and easier for contractors. The composition of RainScreen Duo Slab allows the product to be tightly butt jointed, with slab knitting together to deliver effective thermal insulation, and at the same time minimising any heat loss that could arise from gaps between the insulation boards.

For the exterior cladding, non-combustible Rockpanel FS-Xtra has been used to provide the attractive aesthetic finish on the project. Applied on top of an aluminium supporting structure and fixed with blind rivets, these Rockpanel FS-Xtra boards, have a Euroclass rating of A2-s1,d0. The boards also weigh very little compared to other cladding boards and can be easily worked with on site, with no special tools required. Installed on this project by Astley Facades, Rockpanel FS-Xtra boards are available in a wide range of different finishes and colours. A mixture of vibrant Rockpanel Colours such as RAL 3009 and 5011 have been supplied at The Crofts.



RainScreen Duo Slab has a Euroclass rating of A1, meaning the product is non-combustible. It also has the benefit of high resistance to wind and rain during construction which, together with the minimal number of fixings required, makes installation quicker and easier for contractors.

“I’m extremely proud of the work we have been able to do here at The Crofts. These improvements have made a massive impact on both the internal and external appearance of the blocks, as well as the local skyline. And, the much improved insulation offered by the eye-catching cladding will help reduce fuel bills for tenants.”

Darren Cooper
Leader of Sandwell Borough Council



The result

These improvements have resulted in a huge uplift in energy performance. In fact, Sandwell Borough Council estimates that, in total, approximately 9,600 tonnes of carbon will be saved every year.

The Crofts has picked up two awards for corporate social responsibility, including a Bronze in the 2015 International Corporate Social Responsibility Awards and a first prize in the Delivering Social Value category at the 2016 National Federation of Builders Awards.

Ultimately, the project has made a significant impact in the local community. These three tower blocks are not merely visibly transformed, more efficient residences, they are also beacons of hope for tenants and the community of Smethwick.

