

Fire Safety and your legal duty as a leaseholder

FAQ

1. What is the purpose of the door to my flat?

There are three main functions of flat front doors. These are;

- To stop a fire inside a flat from spreading to the communal parts and preventing you from escaping via the corridor or staircase
- To stop a fire in the communal areas of a block of flats spreading into a flat, where you may be sheltering until the fire service arrives
- To provide you with security

2. The door was already in situ when I purchased my property. Do I need to do anything?

Yes, over time legal requirements and fire safety standards have changed. Therefore, a door installed when the building was constructed or prior to 2000 may not meet the necessary standard. As a result, you may need to upgrade some elements or replace your door to ensure the flat door meets current standards.

3. Do I have to have a fire-resistant door?

Yes. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, all flat doors which open into a communal escape route must be fire-resistant. Failure to have this in place could invalidate any property, contents, or landlord insurance policy you have in place. Insurers could refuse a pay-out, even if the door was not a factor, for example, refusal to replace a fire-damaged kitchen or any personal items, etc. as all the terms of the policy were not adhered to.

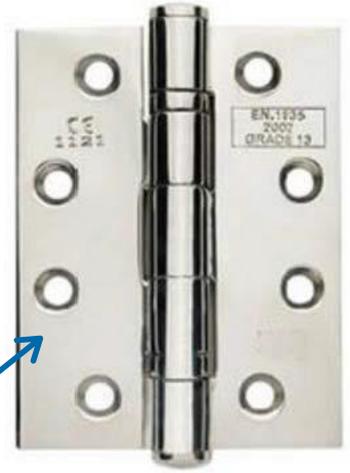
4. How do I know my door qualifies as a fire door and that it meets the current standards?

If you inherited a door from a previous owner, check with your solicitor. They should have confirmed if any alterations had been undertaken to the property and attained copies of any building control consents attained for alterations undertaken. This should include information regarding any replacement of the flat door.

If you have changed your door, either the supplier or builder who installed your door should be able to confirm if the door installed was a fire door set and provide you with a certificate confirming this. The door needs to conform to FD30S standards.

If you can't find any information about your door, there are some simple checks you can undertake to confirm if it is a fire door set:

1. Tap/knock your door, does it sound hollow? Look inside your letter box, does the door look like it's made of solid wood? Fire doors have to be of solid hardwood construction a softwood door would not be a fire door
2. Measure the width of the door (the thin edge) fire doors must be a minimum of 44mm (4.4cm) thick. If your door has panelled sections and the thickness of these timber panels is less than 44mm thick (i.e. they are thinner than the surrounding parts of the door) it is unlikely that your door is a fire door
3. Check if there are three hinges fitted, which bear the CE mark. This mark means the hinge conforms as a fire-rated hinge
4. Look for a coloured plug in the door itself or any label or markings, which may indicate that the door has been fitted by either TRADA's Q-Mark scheme or BWF's Certifire scheme
5. If your door has glazed panel(s) within it, the glass should either be Georgian wired or have a special fire-resistant glazing fitted (this will be indicated by an etched mark BS476:22 or a marking indicating it is pyro glass). If the glazing does not have either, it is unlikely that the door is a fire door
6. Is there a 25mm door stop fitted around the door frame which the door closes to? Or is there an intumescent smoke seal (or combination) fitted?
7. UPVC doors are not accepted as fire doors
8. Doors should not have any large openings in them, such as cat flaps. Letterboxes are permitted if there is no other provision for the delivery of post. Letterboxes should be fire-resistant (with an intumescent liner) and fitted in the lower third of the door. If being purchased separately, they should be purchased from a reputable supplier and fitted by a competent carpenter. Fire Door sets that come already fitted with letterboxes and ironmongery should be supplied with a certificate of testing which indicates its fire rating
9. Is the door self-closing? i.e. when you let it go it will shut itself. Fire doors are required to be fitted with either an overhead door closer or a jamb closer



If your door meets all of these criteria it is likely that it meets the standard and will perform effectively in a fire.

5. Can I change my flat entrance door?

No door should be changed without ensuring the door meets the legal fire door requirement which we can assist with.

6. I have already changed my fire entrance door since moving into my property. How do I check whether it is a fire door?

If you have changed your door in the past without notifying us, please submit details of the work to home.improvements@havebury.com as a matter of urgency.

As long as the new door meets fire safety standards, we will arrange for consent to be granted retrospectively. Here is a list of the fire safety standards.

- All new fire door sets to flats must be FD30s (they must have a minimum fire resistance of half an hour) standard in accordance with BS476: Part 22 1987 or BS EN 1634-1 2000
- New flat doors should meet 'security by design' standards
- A test certificate for all replacement doors should be provided to the homeowner by the contractor supplying/fitting the door confirming that the door set meets this standard
- Alternatively, fire door sets should be marked in accordance with TRADA's Q-Mark Scheme or BWF's Certifire Scheme.

If you are unsure, please let us know when you email us and we will arrange for our Fire Risk Assessor to come out and inspect the door.

7. Can I replace or remove internal flat doors and make internal layout alterations?

Like flat entrance doors, certain doors inside your flat such as kitchen door, or if you live in a maisonette all the doors between a room and your staircase, also fire doors.

Their purpose is to prevent a fire from spreading from the room it started into another room and to stop the fire and smoke preventing you from leaving the flat.

If you want to remove or replace any internal doors or alter the layout of the flat in any way, you must get Building Control consent from your local council. We must make sure that the work you want to carry out won't prevent escape if a fire starts in the home.

If the work includes anything that includes knocking or drilling a hole in a wall, floor or ceiling, such as installing a flue or run cabling, we also need to ensure that the integrity of the wall, floor or ceiling is reinstated. This is so that fire and smoke can't pass through into another part of the building.

8. Can I replace windows or install security grilles or shutters?

In flats located at ground and first-floor level, or in flats accessed from communal walkways/balconies, the living areas and bedroom windows are designed to be escape windows so residents can use them to escape through in the event of a fire.

If you would like to replace your windows, they too will need to meet Building Regulation requirements regarding their design and the size of the opening required. The council cannot, where a window is an escape window, provide consent for security grilles or shutters to be installed as the window must be maintained unobstructed to enable escape.

9. Can I Install smoke detectors in my property?

We strongly recommend that all homeowners install smoke detection within their homes. If you don't already have smoke detection, please contact your local Fire and Rescue Service and arrange a home safety visit. The fire crew will fit smoke detection free of charge, where necessary.

10. What happens if I have replaced doors or completed alterations without prior consent?

If you believe that your door meets the necessary standard, you can apply for retrospective consent for the alteration from us. This is the same for alterations. However, you may have to reinstate /alter the layout or features of the flat if the work carried out does not comply with Building Regulation requirements.

If you do not get the necessary consent, it may be difficult to sell the property in the future, as solicitors now require more detailed information regarding fire protection within blocks of flats as part of the conveyancing process.

11. What are the laws?

There are three main pieces of legislation which apply to fire safety in residential buildings.

- **The Building Regulations 2000** - (also known as building control regulations) which requires all homeowners to comply with building control requirements when undertaking any alterations to their property
- **The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** - which requires lessees to cooperate and coordinate with the council to ensure the risk from fire is reduced as far as possible
- **The Housing Act 2004** - which requires leaseholders to reduce the risk from fire within the home (particularly relevant where a property is sublet). Leaseholders have a duty to ensure this and this requirement may be detailed in your lease

12. How long will it be between my door inspection and the installation of my new door?

We will aim to have a lead time of no more than 6 months between the inspection of your old door and the installation of the new one. This will be in line with our safe working practices and government guidelines with regards to the Coronavirus pandemic.

13. How long will it take to install my new door?

We anticipate the installation of your new fire door will take approximately half a day.

14. Who will be responsible for the maintenance of the door?

For the first 12 months, our contractor CLC will be responsible for the maintenance of your new fire door. After the first 12 months following installation of the door, you will be responsible for all ongoing maintenance. If any part of the door needs replacing, such as the letter box, hinges, handle or self closer, please contact CLC for parts or for an approved supplier. Only approved parts can be fitted as the fire resistance of the door has been specifically tested using the approved parts. Fitting alternative parts will invalidate the fire resistance certificate of the door.

15. Will Havebury do any safety checks on the door?

In order to ensure the ongoing fire compliance for the block, we will require periodic access to survey the door to make sure it meets all fire compartmentalisation requirements, e.g. the door has not dropped creating excessive gaps and the self-closer is working, ensuring it closes the doors fully into the frame. This is required for us to meet all of our legal obligations and to ensure the ongoing safety of yourself and other residents of the block.

16. Will my new door have a manufacturer's warranty?

Yes, when your new door is installed, you will be provided with a warranty from our contractor CLC.

17. There is a problem with my new door, who do I need to contact?

If you do have any issues with your new door after it is fitted you will be able to contact our contractor's CLC directly. You will receive their contact details once the door has been installed.

18. My current door has my property number or name on it. Will these be replaced?

We will endeavor to supply new numbers for your door when it has been fitted.

19. Will I get to choose the colour of my new door?

Through our contractor, we are delighted to be able to offer you a selection of colours and styles for you to choose from.

20. Can I refuse to get the door replaced or use my own door?

Yes you can. However, should a fire occur within your property and the door fails (lets smoke and fire out within 30 minutes), you could, as the owner/landlord of the flat, be personally liable for damage to the communal area or for any injuries incurred by endangering the communal escape route. By not having a fire-resisting door fitted to the front of your flat, you could also be placing those within the flat in danger should a fire occur within the communal area.