

Improving Panelled Door Fire Resistance
to an Acceptable Licensing Standard
for Small HMO's.

BANES and Victorian panelled doors

BANES amended its Housing Standards in 2019, introducing the word “solid” with reference to doors.

“All bedroom doors and doors of risk rooms onto hallways, circulation spaces and the means of escape should be well-constructed, solid, of conventional construction, in sound condition. Solid timber doors and panelled doors of substantial construction may be adequate in these lower risk situations (lightweight doors and doors with very thin panels are not acceptable).”

BANES and Victorian panelled doors

- HMO inspectors now saying these doors must be replaced or upgraded.
- **Issue:**
 - For a property of this size fire doors are not compulsory, however, solid, well-constructed, close-fitting doors will be required to protect the escape route. The doors to the following rooms are thin panel which will offer little fire resistance:
 - Ground floor rear right bedroom
 - First floor rear right, rear left and front bedrooms
- **Action Required:**
 - The doors to the rooms listed above require replacing with solid, well-constructed, close-fitting doors. The thin panel doors could be upgraded by increasing the thickness of the thin panel areas. If upgrading the doors, please ensure that a competent person completes the upgrading work so that you can be sure the work is completed correctly.

So what does LACORS say?

- Para 9.7 - In all buildings a fully protected escape route (staircase) offering 30 minutes fire resistance is the ideal solution and it will usually be appropriate for all bedsit-type accommodation. However, in lower risk buildings (i.e. single household occupancy of up to four storeys and low risk shared houses), due to the lower risk and shorter travel distance to the final exit, this need not be insisted upon as long as all the following conditions are met:

- ? the stairs should lead directly to a final exit without passing through a risk room;
 - ? the staircase enclosure should be of sound, conventional construction throughout the route;
 - ? all risk rooms should be fitted with sound, close-fitting doors of conventional construction (lightweight doors and doors with very thin panels should be avoided); and
 - ? an appropriate system of automatic fire detection and warning is in place (see table C4).
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- Note: LACORS does not define “very thin panels”

- Para 21.6 - In lower risk premises where a full 30-minute protected route is not required (see paragraph 9.7 and case studies in Part D), it should be possible to accept existing, well fitted and constructed solid doors, providing they are in sound condition. Solid timber doors and panelled doors of substantial construction may be adequate in these lower risk situations
- Note: LACORS does not define “solid”.

Just out of interest, what do other councils say?

- BCC – for HMOs of 1 or 2 storeys, shared occupancy and up to 6 occupants, (in other words, low risk);
- For kitchens, a 20-minute fire door has been assessed as the appropriate fire door for this type of HMO and occupancy.
- All other doors should be sound, well-constructed and close fitting. Non-fire-resisting glazed doors, doors of flimsy construction or hollow infill-type doors will not be accepted.
- Note that the word “solid” is not used.
- Other councils such as South Gloucs, North Somerset, Oxford and Southampton all say similar to the above.

It's a case of interpretation

- My view is that they have interpreted the word “solid” incorrectly. I think LACORS means “solid = sturdy”.
- BANES says “solid” means 35mm thick across the whole surface of the door
- BANES has failed to provide any evidence that panelled doors will not provide the necessary fire protection
- Are all the inspectors consistent?

What's to be done?

- Appeal to the First Tier Tribunal?
- the problem is, BANES is the legal authority and has the power to enforce
- Fit FD30 fire doors – cost around £100 plus carpenter, new hinges and doorstops – disruptive
- Fit 35mm solid core doors – risk that BANES later says they aren't good enough - disruptive
- Upgrade doors – 6mm fire certified mdf provides 60 minute fire protection – cheaper solution, £40-£48 for 8' by 4' sheets may cover 2.5 doors on one side - disruptive

So what are the options?

Option 1 – fit 35mm fire doors

Option 2 – upgrade the doors with fire resistant mdf panels (thickness ranges from 6mm to 24mm)

Option 1 35mm fire door



6 panel Unglazed Contemporary White Woodgrain effect Internal Fire door, (H)1981mm (W)762mm (T)35mm

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Option 2 – upgrade the doors

- 9mm fire resistant mdf – Medite Premier FR - 8' by 4' sheet £43 approx [fits 2+ doors]
- supplied by Sydenhams Ltd, Pixash business estate, Keynsham
- intumescent silicon, cost £5, Toolstation
- screws, paint



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Page No. 1

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Queries via sales.avon@sydenhams.co.uk PAID IN FULL C/Card Ply&P 85.22		Goods: £ 71.02 VAT: £ 14.20 Total: £ 85.22		

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