

Fire Risk Assessors response. In consultation with [REDACTED]

External Escape Route

- Items 3 of the Enforcement Notice issued on 23 June 2023

The kitchen door at the base of the staircase is required to be a fire door fitted with a self-closer. The windows within 1.8 metres horizontally of the external staircase should be fire resisting and fixed shut.

All doors, windows roof lights and ducting within 3m of the escape route should be fire resisting.

In reply to Item 3, we intend to replace the existing final exit door in the kitchen with one which will conform to BS476-22, designed to achieve a minimum fire resistance of 30 minutes and which will feature a positive action, overhead self-closing mechanism.

In terms of the two-bedroom windows which are situated within 1.8m from the first-floor external escape route, we are of the opinion that the sprinkler system installed across this floor is suitable and sufficient to protect [REDACTED] in the event of a fire. When taking this measure into account, we strongly believe that the requirement to replace the existing windows with ones which are fire resisting and fixed shut is completely disproportionate and unreasonable.

Furthermore, we feel that it would be considered completely undesirable and against the interests of [REDACTED] not to be able to open a window to let fresh air circulate around their accommodation.

The floor currently meets building regulations for a fire strategy based upon a progressive horizontal evacuation. The floor is divided by compartment walls and split into three separate protected areas. The maximum distance from the furthest point on the floor to reach a place of relative safety is slightly excessive but this is mitigated by the installation of a sprinkler system, as advised by the Fire Authority when a previous audit was undertaken. As you are aware, then building is fully protected by a fire alarm system that is to category L1. This ensures that a fire will be detected quickly wherever it may originate, thus ensuring that staff are given the maximum time in which to evaluate the situation and respond accordingly without undue delay.

In the unlikely event the route across the external escape route should become compromised by fire and smoke, staff are able to evacuate the residents safely via an internal escape route to the ground floor. Staffing levels are considered adequate during the daytime and silent hours to be able to complete a safe and timely evacuation. This has been demonstrated by undertaking planned evacuation drills, with one drill conducted when staffing levels were at their minimum.

We firmly believe that the approach adopted in terms of PHE across the first-floor accommodation is fully compatible with the building design and the fire safety measure in place.