

World's End Residents' Association



16 Blantyre Street
World's End Estate
London SW10 0DS
Tel: (020) 7795 3095
Email: wera@worlds-end.org.uk
Web: www.worlds-end.org.uk

Notes of the WERA Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 16th of April 2019 at 6.30pm in the WERA Clubroom, 16 Blantyre Street

1 In Attendance:

WERA – Eryl Humphrey Jones (Chair), Margaret Grayling, Caroline Fairchild, Maggie Byrne, Nabila Khadr, Cathrin Vowinckel, Robert Taylor, Kai Choudhry, Ali Ahmed, Jules Montero.

Apologies – Nazar Annayer, Jan Ole Kiso, Joanna McDermott.

2 Summary of meeting:

The meeting had been called to discuss recent correspondence between the Association and the Council in relation to the front (fire) doors to individual properties and communal fire doors on the estate.

A summary of the current situation was tabled and discussed.

Committee members were concerned that the Council appeared unable to confirm whether a Russell Door, of the type fitted to the (approx. 550) tenanted properties on the estate, had actually been tested and deemed safe. It was noted that in one exchange the Council appeared unsure as to the actual design of the doors, referring to them as both “wooden” and as “composite” doors.

It was noted that the open design of the estate made it difficult to determine which parts of the Building Regulations actually applied and how.

It was noted that the Building Regulations appeared to assume that the communal parts of a block of flats would be enclosed, which was clearly not the case on World's End.

It was noted that the Building Regulations stressed the need to protect any stairwells acting as emergency exit routes. This appeared to highlight the need to ensure that all of the communal fire doors on the estate, and particularly those protecting the stairwells, were up to current specifications and worked properly; neither of which was currently true.

It was agreed that the Committee look into whether it might be able to contract an independent surveyor to determine whether the existing front (fire) doors and (possibly) the communal fire doors were safe. It was suggested that as other estates were likely to be in the same situation that it might be sensible to work with their Resident Associations to identify and contract a suitable surveyor.

It was suggested that the Committee consider writing to the estate's leaseholders to inform them of the current situation and in particular of the Council's plan to require them to prove that the front (fire) doors of their properties complied with the latest fire safety and building regulations. It was suggested that the Council's Home Ownership Team be approached and asked if they would distribute a letter to all leaseholders on behalf of the Association.

The meeting then closed.

Front Doors on the World's End Estate

Summary of Current Situation - April 2019

General Issues

There is a general question as to what level of fire protection is required on World's End given the estate's design. Current Building Regulations assume that all spaces between an individual flat in a block of flats and the nearest fire exit (the "protected stairwell") are enclosed. This is how the requirement for FD30 ("30 minute") front doors to prevent fire spread comes about. This is obviously not the case on World's End where the tower landings and the access walkways in the low rise blocks are not enclosed and are actually exposed to the elements. It may be worthwhile seeking a professional opinion on this question.

Russell Doors

There are approx. 550 Russell Doors installed on the estate. They are "composite" doors with a laminated timber exterior and an artificial interior/core and small glass panels at the top of the door. Many of these doors also have glass side panels. The doors were originally installed by the TMO in 2005. The majority of these doors are fitted to Council tenanted properties but a small number are fitted to leasehold properties.

The Council do not appear to have any evidence that these doors are safe or meet the relevant standard (BS476-22) but they have decided to assume that they are safe and do not have to be replaced.

The Council are therefore currently carrying remedial works to these doors - fitting door closers and carrying out minor repairs (e.g. replacing faulty letterboxes). The contractor employed to carry out this work is London Fire Solutions. It is unclear whether the contractor is also carrying out this work for leaseholders (at cost or otherwise).

The Council have advised that: (i) the door closers being fitted can be adjusted; and (ii) that a special door closer is available for residents with special needs.

Issues:

- Are we satisfied with the Council's determination (which does not appear to be based on any actual documentary evidence) that these doors are safe?
- Should the RA seek further assurances or guarantees as to the safety of these doors?
- Are we satisfied that the Council has advised residents how they can arrange to have the closers fitted to their doors adjusted or how they can request the "special" closer?

Original 1970s Doors

There are approx. 150 original 1970s front doors on the estate. They are solid hardwood doors, with large glass panels top and bottom (the bottom panel has usually been covered up) and a "Perco" closer

(not always in working order). Many of these doors also have glass side panels (also often covered up). Given the history of the estate these doors are likely to belong to leaseholders.

The Council do not have any evidence that these doors are safe. These doors will not have been tested against the current relevant standard (BS476-22) as the standard was not introduced until 1987. The Council have therefore assumed that they are NOT safe and need to be replaced.

Many of these doors were inspected in late 2017/early 2018 by a contractor engaged by the TMO. This contractor deemed many of these doors safe. The Council appears to have decided to ignore the results of this audit (they currently claim they know nothing of it).

The Council intends to make use of various clauses in a typical lease to require leaseholders to change these doors at their own cost. The relevant clauses are present in the leases in use on World's End.

The Council is currently in the process of tendering a contract for the supply and installation of new front doors/door sets across much of its tenanted stock. They have stated that they will offer these replacement doors to leaseholders on an at-cost basis.

Issues:

- Are we satisfied with the Council's determination that these doors are not safe and need to be replaced?
- Are we satisfied with the Council's decision to ignore the results of the audit carried out in late 2017/early 2018?
- Are we satisfied with the manner in which the Council intends to require leaseholders into replacing their front doors?
- Should the RA be involved in organising a challenge to the Council's plan through an LVT?

Other doors

There is a small number of other doors (perhaps 30-40) installed on the estate. Some of these were fitted to tenanted properties by the TMO after 2005. Some belong to leaseholders.

The Council have stated that they will require all of these doors to comply with the current relevant standard (BS476-22) or be replaced.

If the doors are fitted to a tenanted property and there is no evidence that they comply the Council intends to replace them with a new door. The new door will be supplied and fitted through the Council's recently tendered contract for new front doors/door sets. A date for this work has yet to be announced.

If the doors are fitted to a leasehold property the Council will require the leaseholder to provide evidence of compliance with BS476-22 or replace the front door (as above). The Council intends to offer leaseholders a new front door/door set through their recently tendered contract (as above).