



HMO

Practice Notes for means of escape in case of fire

A guide for Owners and Contractors



THIS DOCUMENT IS TO BE READ BY
THE HOUSE OWNER AND THE CONTRACTOR.

- These notes must be read in conjunction with your notice/licence schedules.
- After one fire door and frame have been fitted, please contact the HMO Team to confirm that the door reaches the required standards.
- Do NOT fit any others until you have had this inspection.
- Fitting of these doors and frames should be done only after all plastering work has been completed and the house has been allowed to dry out.
- When your contractor is on site, or about to start work, they should contact the HMO Team.

Telephone: 01792 635600

Email: evh@swansea.gov.uk

Fire doors (See Fig.1)

All fire doors will have three 100mm stainless steel roller bearing hinges fitted.

Do not fit rising butt hinges.

Locks (See Fig.2)

As a minimum all doors will be fitted with a metal mortice catch and handle set.

If a lock set is fitted you **must fit a Euro Profile Style or Mortice Lock and Handle Set** with thumb turn lock mechanism inside the room.

- Do not fit Yale type locks
- Plastic or metal ball catches cannot be used
- The cut-out for these locks should be the minimum necessary to prevent any voids and therefore lock weaknesses through which fire may penetrate. Any voids must be filled with intumescent paste or mastic.

Where a door opens to a wall or a radiator, a stopper must be fitted to prevent damage to the door, wall or radiator. A solid rubber or metal / rubber stopper should be used rather than the weaker coiled spring type.

Door closers

ALL fire doors must be fitted with an effective door closer.

They will either be:

- rack and pinion overhead arm type,
- stainless steel roller bearing hinge with closer built in

No other type of closer will be accepted.

Fire doors

- Your notice/licence schedule specifies fitting a fire door and frame set. These will usually be to **half hour standard** but can, in some circumstances, be one hour standard. Check your schedule carefully to confirm which type is needed.
- These door and frame sets can be purchased as a pack from specialist joinery workshops or from timber merchants. You should be aware that some suppliers' sets do not reach the standards set by this Authority.
- **Never fit more than one fire door and frame set before getting it inspected by an officer from the Council's HMO Team.**
- **Standard doors cannot be reduced or cut in any way.** The leading edge on the **hinge side** has to be bevelled to stop the door being hinge-bound but no other planing, reducing or cutting is accepted. The hardwood edge strip to the lock side must be left intact.
- If the existing door frame openings are oversized, it is possible to fit a **standard fire door and frame** set inside this frame. This will then reduce the making good needed to the wall around the frame.
- If, by prior arrangement, the existing door frames are used, all repairs to the frame must be made before fitting the door.
- In this instance, a standard fire door **cannot** be fitted and a **solid fire door blank** must be used. These doors can be cut to any size but they must be re-edged using a minimum 10mm hardwood strip the same thickness as the fire door blank. This can only be done in a workshop and not on site. These blanks will need to be re-edged on all 4 sides, glued and pinned in place.
- Whatever type of fire door is used the back face of the door must be flush and plumb with the frame edge and not the architrave.
- The depth of doorstop or rebate is between **12.5mm – 25mm**.
- Doorstops are to be glued and screwed in place. They must not overhang the edge of the frame. Before screw fixing the stops, drill a pilot hole and countersink the head to prevent the wood from splitting. At the time of decoration, the screw heads can be filled over and sanded flat.

Re-Hanging doors

On completion of works, the maximum gap at the base of door and threshold is to be 3mm. The gaps to hinge side, lock side and head will be dependent upon what type of intumescent and/or smoke seal strip is used. This gap will be approximately 3mm – 4.5mm. The main factor to gauge this gap will be that where smoke seals are required, the brush seal strip must contact the door edge or frame.

Intumescent and smoke seal strips (See Fig.3)

These must be fitted to **frames** and not doors.

The gap between the door edge and frame is dependent upon the type of strip used:

- i) If surface mounted strips are used, the approximate gap will be 3mm
- ii) If routed strips are used, the approximate gap will be 4.5mm.

N.B. Whichever strip is fitted, the brush strip must contact the door edge.

Intumescent material must also be fitted beneath both blades of the hinge. This will be to the door side and frame side.

Threshold (See Fig.4)

When fitting a fire door, remember to take into account the fitting of a timber threshold to the door frame set. This will ensure a maximum gap of 3mm between the base of the door and the threshold.

Please note that the section of threshold the door sits over is flat. If any angled section is provided to prevent a footfall problem, the threshold must be extended past the back face of the frame. The depth can be 25mm to take into account sloping floors. If floors are level and the door opens to 90° to frame, the depth of the threshold can be reduced to 12.5mm.

A hardwood threshold will last longer than a softwood one but if the depth is reduced to 12.5mm, a hardwood threshold must be used. Depth will also be determined by the floor covering, so check if carpet and underlay are being used. The threshold is to be fixed using No. 10, 38mm screws at 230mm centres.

Levelling thresholds

If thresholds need to be levelled or packed up this must be done in the following way:

Timber strips must be placed across the width of the threshold. They may be of varying thickness but all will need to be securely fixed to the floor. Threshold then to be fixed on top to ensure a maximum gap of 3mm between base of door and top of threshold. On completion, provide intumescent mastic seal and timber cover strip to room side and hallway side of threshold.

Spandrel (See Fig.5)

The spandrel mentioned in your notice/licence schedule is the triangular area between the ground floor newel post and the first floor landing newel post and is usually constructed of a light timber frame and tongue and groove timber.

Your notice/licence schedule may stipulate that this area has to be shut off to protect the main fire escape route from the upper floors of the property. You will have the option of fitting a fire door and frame to the new partition but the owner will be the only person having key access to this area. **It will not be used as a storage area.**

Your notice/licence schedule may ask that all gas and electricity meters are moved. In some cases the electricity meters can stay but it is preferable to remove all meters and consumer units from this area. If the electricity meters stay, an extra fire detector must be fitted to this understairs area. The consumer unit can be fitted in the hallway or communal living room.

In most cases there is a requirement for the staircase to be **underdrawn**. This means providing a 12.5mm plasterboard with a 3.2mm gypsum plaster skim finish to shut off the exposed treads and risers of the staircase.

Check your notice/licence schedule for the specifics for your property.

Ceilings (See Fig.6)

The notice/licence schedule may specify either **half hour** or **one hour** separation. This means either fixing one or two layers of 12.5mm plasterboard, complete with a 3.2mm smooth gypsum plaster skim finish.

This may be done by 'renewing' the ceiling, fixing the plasterboard directly to the floor joists or by upgrading an existing ceiling by 'underdrawing'.

Underdrawing ceilings

- If this is done, adequate fixing of the additional protection is important. Chicken wire is to be securely fixed under the existing ceiling by nailing to the joist using galvanised clout nails at spacings of no more than 150mm.
- The ceiling must then be battened (*50mm x 25mm for example*) to receive the new plasterboard and gypsum plaster finish. The battens should ideally be screw fixed to the existing joists with the screws penetrating the joists to a minimum depth of 20mm. The centres of these screws should not exceed 150mm.
- The method of fixing is important due to increase in load. The chicken wire ensures that should any part of the existing ceiling become detached, its load is not transferred to the underdrawn plasterboard and battens.
- Before applying the gypsum plaster finish, all joints in the new plasterboard ceiling shall be filled and taped with 90mm wide scrim tape.

- The inspecting officer must be able to inspect the plaster finish before decoration works. **Artex cannot be used** instead of gypsum plaster as it does not provide a fire resistant finish to the plasterboard.

Fire extinguishers, blankets and signs

These can all be purchased and installed by local contractors.

Painting and decorating

It is recommended that all doors and frames are stained or painted to protect the surface finish. Any finish can be used so long as it is water based. If the words **highly flammable** appear on the tin, do not use this product.

Gas installation

The system must be inspected by a Gas Safe Registered Installer. You will need to provide the HMO Team with a copy of the landlord's gas safety record.

Electrical installation

The main power and lighting circuits must be inspected and tested to the current edition of the Institute of Electrical Engineers Wiring Regulations. Any defects listed in the report must be rectified. The contractor must be registered either with the NICEIC or ECA and must provide a test certificate.

Fire detection system

The notice/licence schedule will advise you of what system to install. This may be a number of mains operated linked smoke and heat detectors or a full L2 system.

The installer must be an NICEIC or ECA approved contractor. A fire detection commissioning certificate must be provided whichever system is fitted.

Instruction in the event of a fire

Fire instructions should be displayed adjacent to each fire alarm call point.

The action to be taken is set out below:

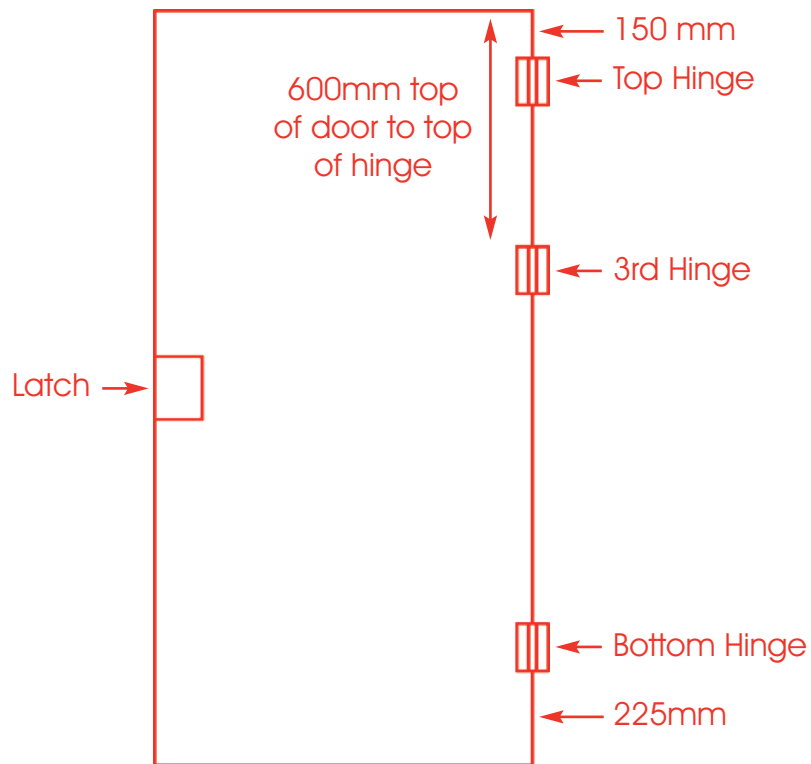
1. If you discover a fire, operate the fire alarm immediately.
2. Call the Fire Service from the nearest telephone, dialling 999
3. Give the operator the telephone number and ask for **FIRE**
4. When the Fire Service answers give the message distinctly / clearly.
5. Do not replace the receiver until your address has been repeated by the Fire Service.
6. Attack the fire, if possible, but do not take personal risks.
7. Leave the building.

Fire routines

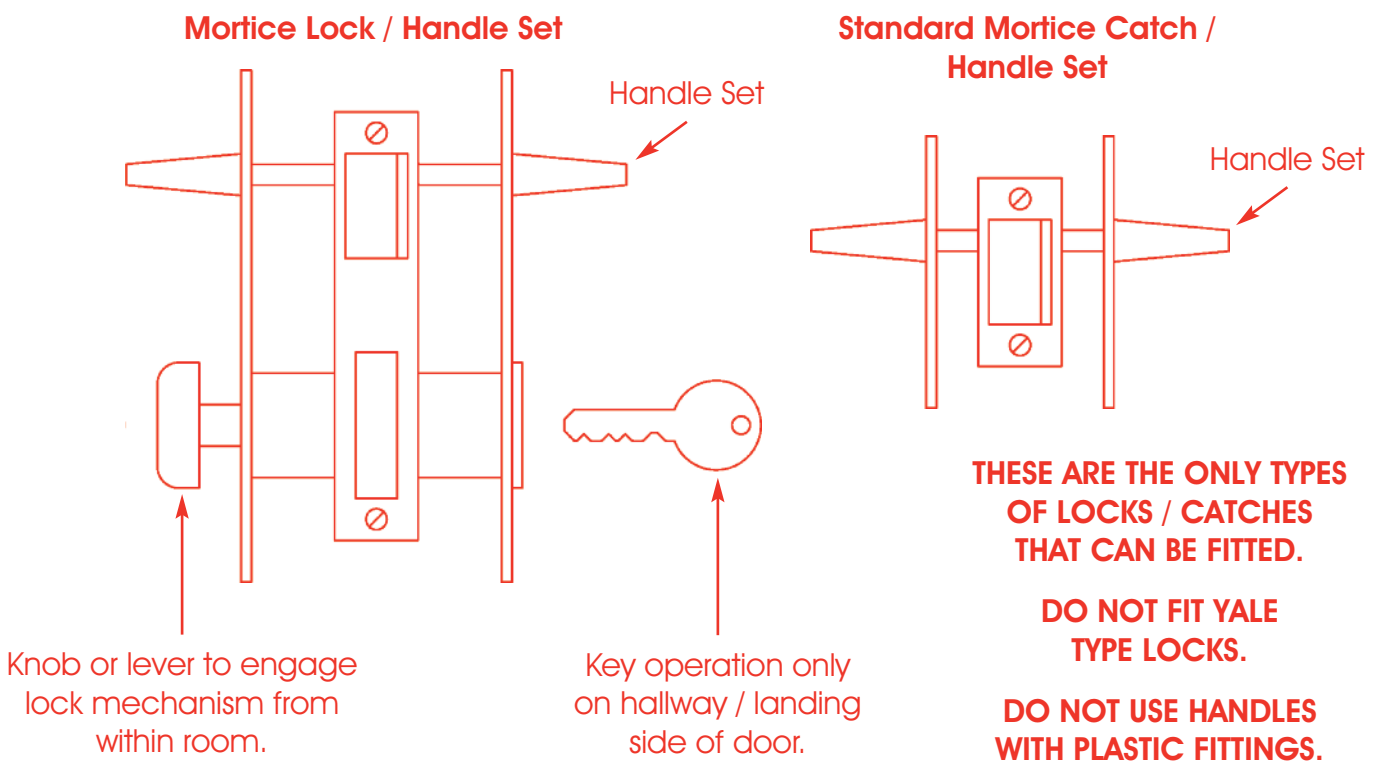
Ensure all occupiers are aware of the following basic fire precaution measures:

1. Familiarise themselves with the main means of escape route.
2. Main means of escape route is not to be used for storage or be obstructed in any way.
3. Do not leave children alone especially in rooms with heating or cooking appliances. Keep matches and lighters out of their reach.
4. Use of chip pans should be avoided if at all possible. However, if one is used never fill it more than a third full and never leave unattended with the heat on. In the event of it catching fire, turn the heat off and smother it with a fire blanket. Do NOT throw water on it.
5. Keep an eye on the elderly and other vulnerable persons, particularly with regard to cigarettes, pipes and electric blankets.
6. Do not smoke in bed. Make sure cigarette ends and pipes are properly put out before leaving them.
7. Do not use, or allow the use of portable heaters, especially gas or paraffin heaters.
8. Do not place laundry in front of fires to dry them.
9. Before bed time:
 - switch off all electrical appliances
 - check for burning cigarettes or pipes
 - put a guard on any open fires
 - close the doors of all rooms: **fire doors only work if they are closed.**

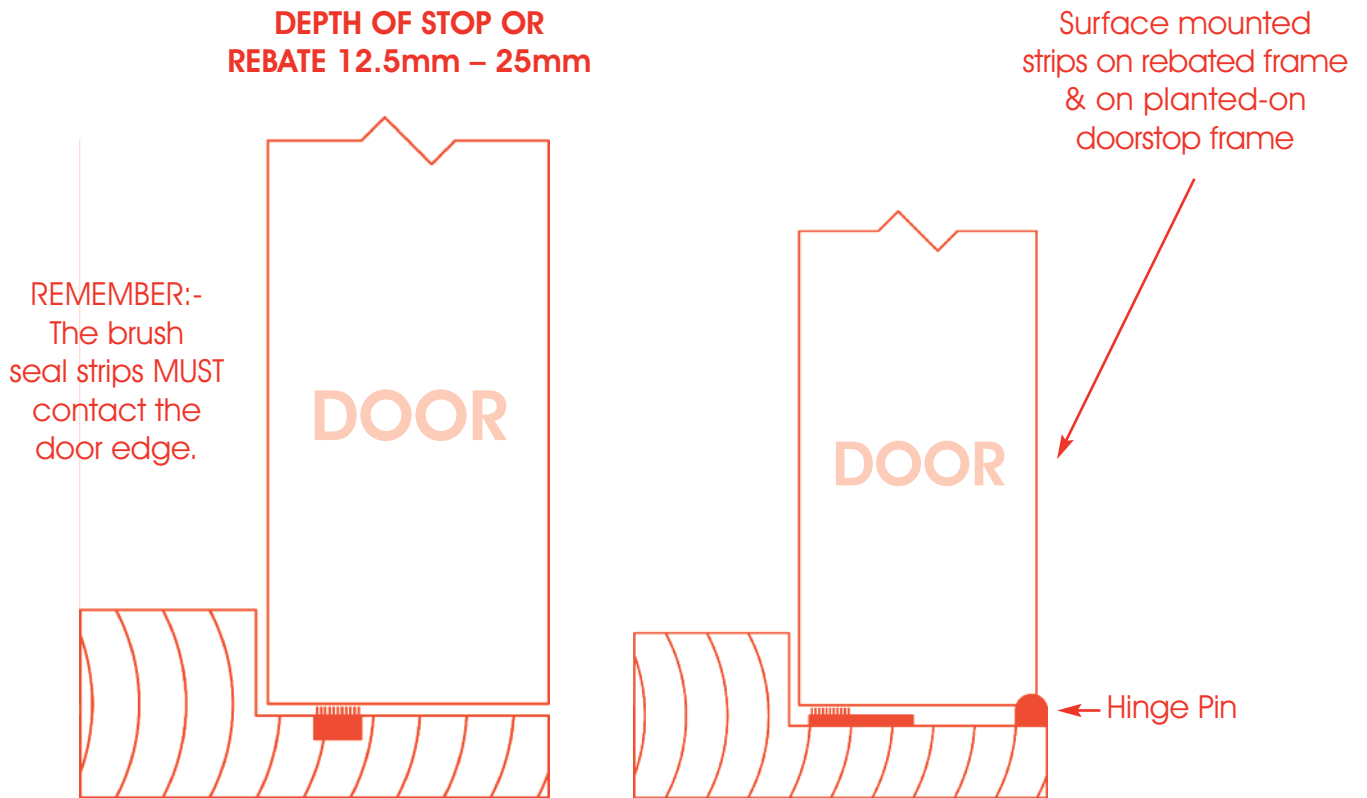
(Fig.1) Fire Door



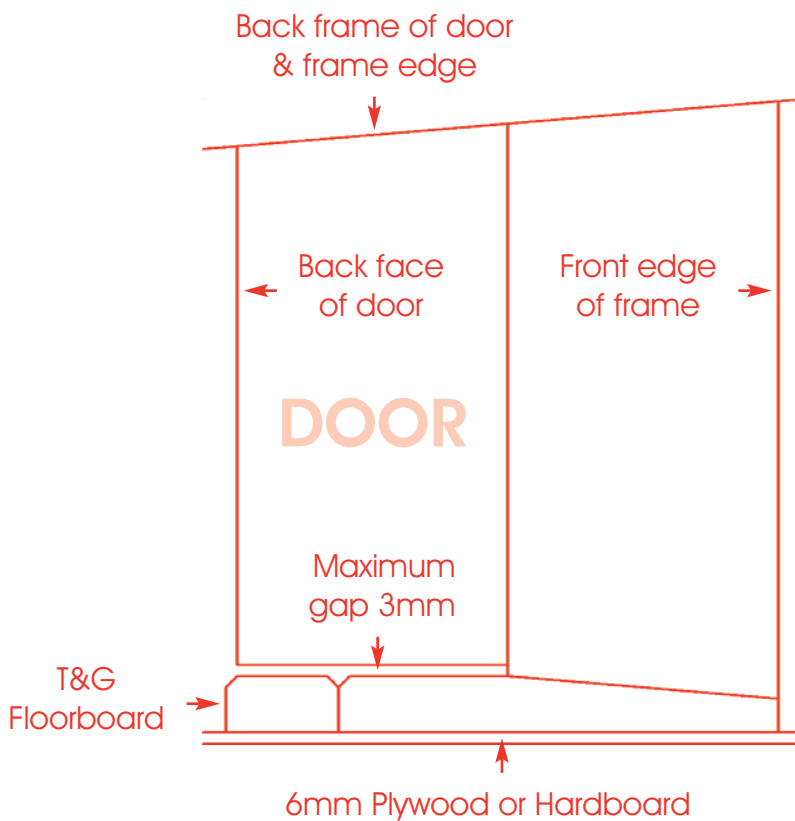
(Fig.2) Handle Set



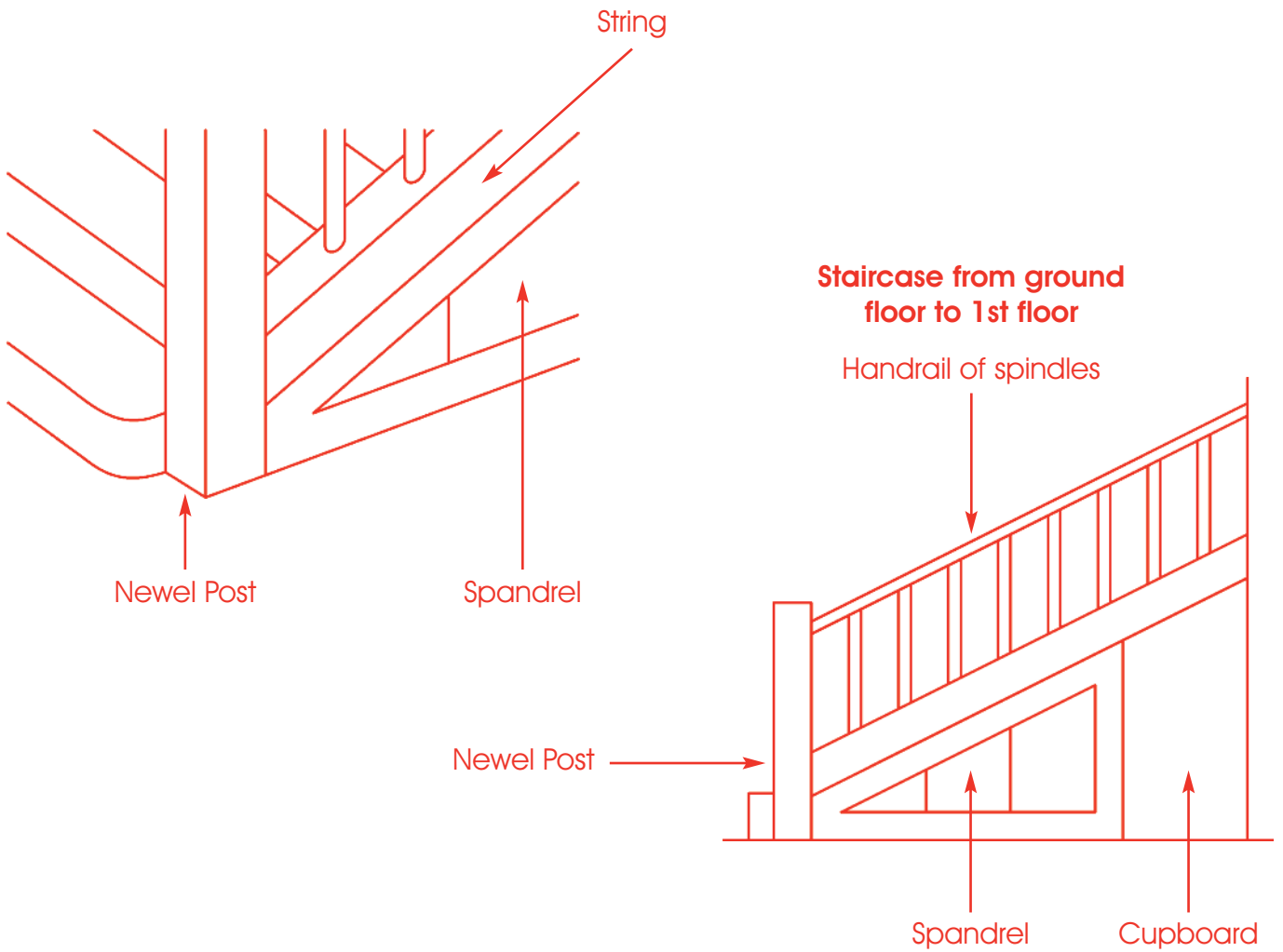
(Fig.3) Intumescent & Smoke Seal Strips



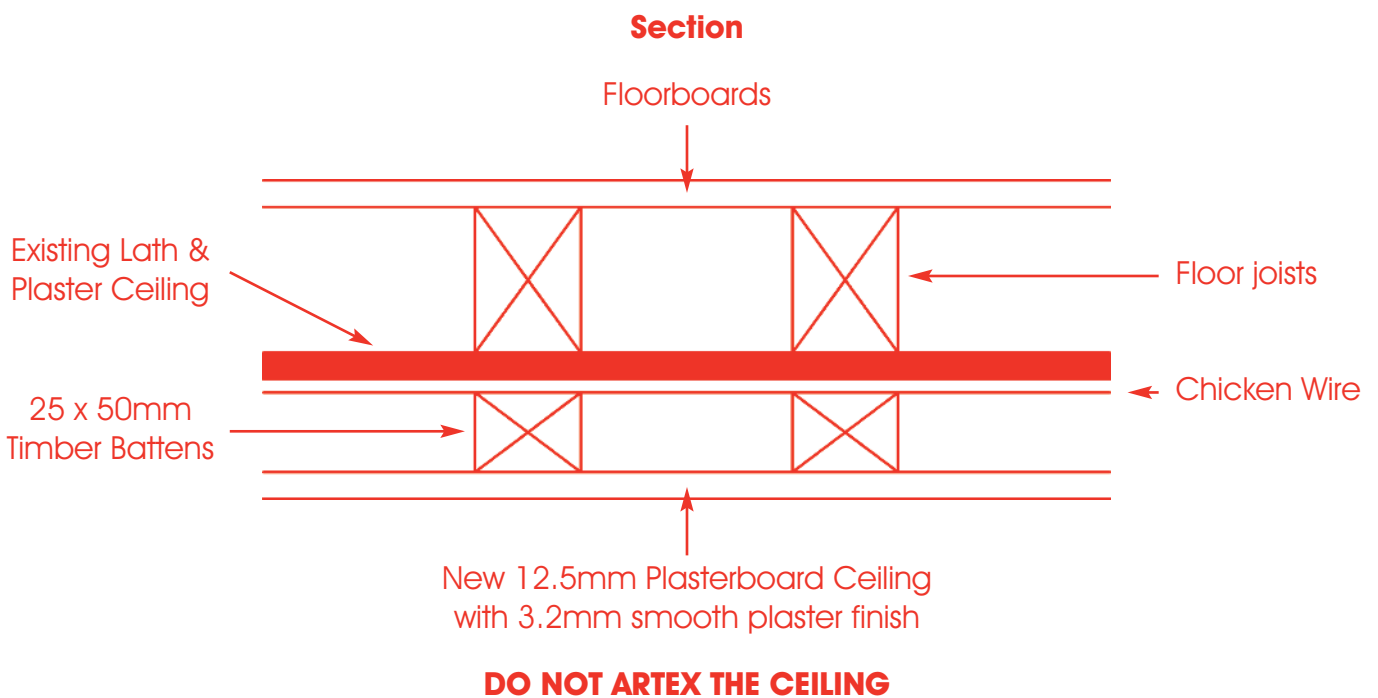
(Fig.4) Threshold



(Fig.5) Spandrel



(Fig.6) Underdrawing Ceiling



City and County of Swansea
HMO Team
Housing & Public Health Division
Housing & Public Protection
Directorate of Place
Civic Centre, Oystermouth Road
Swansea, SA1 3SN

 01792 635600
 01792 635797
 evh@swansea.gov.uk
 www.swansea.gov.uk/hmos

