

TRANSITION FROM BS 476 TEST STANDARDS – ADVISORY NOTE

BS 476 Series

First published in 1932, BS 476 provided a testing method for assessing the fire resistance of building materials. Over the years, it expanded into multiple parts, covering various aspects of fire performance, including ignition resistance, flame spread, and heat release. The BS 476 series evolved in response to major fire incidents, changing regulatory needs, and advancements in fire science.

Significant updates occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the publication of Part 7 (1971) and Parts 20 to 24 (1987), introducing more precise methods for testing flame spread and fire resistance. By the late 1990s, BS 476 was gradually replaced or supplemented by European standards (the BS EN 13501 series) as the UK moved toward European fire testing procedures.

Standards evolution

The biggest change to BS 476 occurred in the late 2000s, when several parts were proposed for withdrawal following the publication of British adoptions of European standards. There was concern that the status of ‘withdrawn’ could be interpreted to mean that the affected parts could no longer be used. However, these parts were still referred to in the government’s guidance document Approved Document B (ADB) and were used extensively in other countries outside the EU with historic links to the UK.

The BS 476 standards remained available via BSi, but the foreword was amended with the statement:

‘This standard has been superseded by the current BS EN XXX, but it has been retained based on legitimate need for the standards within non-EU markets.’⁽¹⁾ As BS 476 was a conflicting national standard under CEN rules, updating and revising the parts wasn’t possible, although industry still had the option to continue using them instead of the relevant BS ENs, where appropriate.

The Transition to European Standards

UK building regulations have been amended to align with BS EN 13501-1 for reaction to fire classification, requiring materials to be classified under the Euroclass system (A1 to F) rather than the traditional BS 476 classifications. Although the UK has left the European Union, BS 476 has not been reinstated as the primary fire testing standard. In relation to fire resistance EN 13501-2 Fire classification of construction products and building elements: Classification using data from fire resistance tests, excluding ventilation services.



Following a consultation in 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) announced the removal of the relevant parts of the BS 476 series from the statutory guidance to the building regulations Approved Document B: Fire Safety.

Time frame

The first tranche of standards covering reaction to fire was removed on 4th March 2025, with a second tranche covering fire resistance being removed on 2nd September 2029. (See Table A).

EN 13501 classification standards

The European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) developed these standards to support the requirement for a harmonised system of testing and classifying construction products that could be adopted to meet the requirements of the Construction Products Directive (CPD). The CPD is superseded by the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) in 2011, however the same classification systems continue.

Change from British Standard to European Norms

British Standards and European Norms are not aligned or interchangeable. Therefore, test evidence under BS cannot be used within a EN classification report or be used to extend the scope using DIAP or EXAP rules.

As laid out in Table A the programme of change from BS to EN is underway. GPA members have before the government timeline announcements, have been proactive in adopting both EN test standards and classification reports. This transition at significant investment and in some cases system redesign allows the supply chain to future proof the design by selecting EN compliant solutions.

For system section, please refer to manufactures literature for EN compliant solutions: [British Gypsum](#), [Gyproc](#), [Knauf](#), [Siniat](#)

Approved Document B and Technical Handbook

In relation to reaction to fire in the United Kingdom, The Building Regulations – England & Wales, Technical Handbook – Scotland, Technical Booklet – Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland –Technical Guidance Documents (see relevant regulation) are aligned in the need to use the testing within the classification report EN 13501-1.

Fire resistance within the United Kingdom & Republic of Ireland can be determined as discussed in Table A. with British Standards currently up to 1st September 2029, however the Approved Documents, Technical Handbook, Technical Guidance Documents & Technical Booklet provide provision for adoption of the European Norm testing and classification report EN 13501-2.

Conclusion

During this period of transition in relation to fire resistance the members of the GPA can provide testing results to both BS and EN along with the classification report to BS EN 13501-2. It is the responsibility of the Project Design team to ensure the relevant fire resistance test standard is made clear from the outset. Dry lining systems tested only to the correct standards should be specified and installed. Failing to comply with this may lead to costly design changes, such as reduced maximum partition heights, or incompatibility with other products such as fire stopping or door sets.

Table A – Drywall Systems Equivalent BS 476 to EN (1) Source

British standard	Description	Status	British Standard/ European Norm		Status	Description
BS 476-4	Fire tests on building materials and structures – non-combustibility test for materials	Withdrawn	EN13501-1 (Classification Report)	EN ISO 1182 EN ISO 1716 EN 13823 EN ISO 11925-2 (Test Standard)	Current	Fire classification of construction products and building elements – Classification using data from reaction to fire tests
BS 476-6	Fire tests on building materials and structures – Method of test for fire propagation for products	Withdrawn				
BS 476-7	Fire tests on building materials and structures – Method of test to determine the classification of the surface spread of flame of products	Withdrawn				
BS 476-20	Fire tests on building materials and structures – Method for determination of the fire resistance of elements of construction (general principles)	Current until: 02/09/29	EN 1361-1		Current	Fire resistance tests – General requirements
BS 476-21	Fire tests on building materials and structures – Methods for determination of the fire resistance of loadbearing elements of construction	Current until: 02/09/29	EN 1365-1			Fire resistance tests for loadbearing elements
BS 467-22	Fire tests on building materials and structures – Methods for determination of the fire resistance of non-loadbearing elements of construction	Current until: 02/09/29	EN 1364-1			Fire resistance tests for non-loadbearing elements

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