
Your how-to guide #11

ENVIRONMENT

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As individuals, communities and businesses we have a responsibility to reduce the impact that we have on our environment and safeguard the planet for future generations. This guide is intended to help the environmentally conscious buyer make an informed choice.

Energy saving products

Perhaps the most obvious consideration when choosing windows and doors is the thermal performance. This is generally a measure of heat loss through the window or door and (to a lesser extent) the extent to which the window or door lets in energy from the sun. The products with the best thermal performance will help reduce your household heating bills.



Product life cycle

A certain amount of energy will be used up in the manufacturing, delivery and installation of your windows and doors. Once they have been installed, the longer they are in place and functional, the lower the impact is on the environment. Aluminium and uPVC frames could be expected to last longer than timber frames.



Use of recycled material

Windows and doors can be made from recycled material. Recycled glass is not suitable for use in windows and doors, but it is possible to find aluminium frames that use only recycled material. uPVC frames can also contain a proportion of recycled material.



Recyclable products

Another consideration is the extent to which the window or door can be recycled when it reaches the end of its useful life. Glass is widely recycled, timber can be reused (as fuel, wood chippings, paper etc), uPVC can be recycled into (poorer quality) uPVC and aluminium can be recycled (to make more aluminium) an infinite number of times without loss of quality.



Timber sourcing and certification

Timber really does grow on trees, and can therefore be considered a renewable resource. It is relatively easy to find softwood that comes with a reliable chain of custody, certifying that it comes from carefully managed forests that are replanted responsibly. Hardwood comes

from trees that are slower growing and whilst it is possible to find hardwood with a chain of custody, much of it comes from developing countries (especially West Africa, SE Asia and South America) where the reliability of the chain of custody may be questionable.



Other considerations

There are a number of British and European standards that are designed to provide a framework within which environmentally conscious companies can operate. Typically these standards require companies to have processes in place to reduce their energy consumption and to recycle their waste as much as possible.



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