

GOOD SASH WINDOWS GO UNNOTICED

Masterframe recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. Started in 1988, the company has focused solely on the manufacture of high-end PVC box sash windows. In fact, Masterframe was the first company to achieve WERs on its products, with the first 5 licenses issued by the BFRC being awarded to Masterframe. In addition, the company was also the first to achieve Secured By Design (SBD) on a sash window. What's more, Masterframe has won the title of fabricator of the year, not once, but twice.

Managing Director, Alan Burgess, has been in the industry for over 40 years. He has agreed to share his views in this issue and the next two concerning heritage, materials and the history of the sash window. Here he shares his bugbears with Clearview about the lack of authenticity in sash window products...

"I have no prejudice against any of the materials that are used to fabricate sash windows, be it steel, aluminium, GRP, timber or PVC. What I am annoyed with is how the industry has destroyed the character of so many homes in the UK by flooding the market with cheap versions of sash windows that do not retain any of the authentic features of their original counterparts. It is for this reason why planners are so against PVC sash windows, which in turn has created a stigma that my customers continuously find themselves coming up against.

"It's not PVC that is the problem here though of course. It's all down to design. Not just of the product, but also the way in which the products are installed. In many cases, as a quick and easy option, due to a lack of knowledge and the right product, the original timber frame is left in and the new window fitted into it. As seen in many hotels, these fixed windows with top frame lights should be banned in my opinion. They don't provide proper ventilation and do not allow for emergency exit. This is the case where any cheap casement window is fitted where a box sash once was.

"In general, properties with sash windows tend to be older style in sensitive areas, by that they are protected either by article 4 or by being listed. The last thing planners want is for the windows to be changed without regard for aesthetics. Hence their aversion to the cheap versions that have flooded the market in recent years. Such windows should be replaced by something that reflects the beautiful, authentic details of the original window, such as butt



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joints. If this is recreated then the planners are more than happy to back them and, in my experience, when planners see our products they are genuinely and pleasantly surprised that such an authentic look can be achieved with PVC.

"As far as ventilation is concerned, in regard to new build properties, the stipulation is that the window should allow for 4 complete air changes in a room every hour. Although this is not measured, neither is there any real way of assessing this, the rule of thumb is that the window size should equate to one twentieth of the floor area of a room.

"However, where a top and bottom opening sash window is replaced by a casement window, it traps in a lot of heat and stale air, whereas a sash window will completely

empty the room of stale air and replace it with fresh air in just 5 minutes. This exchange of air helps to prevent mold and the dispersing of spores that is responsible for the increase in the number of cases of allergies and asthma.

"At Masterframe, we believe that a good sash window should go unnoticed. This means that they should blend in with windows of surrounding properties by being as aesthetically authentic as is achievable. Our dedication to this cause has meant that we only specialise in fabricating authentic looking PVC sash windows. We feel this is the only way to avoid the poor installation of below par replacement windows and the resulting issues that associated with this unfortunate and damaging industry practice."