

Guidance note on external wall insulation

Introduction

This note provides guidance on the installation of external solid wall insulation on dwellinghouses (but not flats or other types of buildings). In many cases, this sort of development does not need planning permission from the local planning authority, because permission has already been granted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, as amended (“the Order”). However, even where it is permitted development, the cladding insulation must comply with the requirements of the Order.

Permitted development

Class A of Part 1 to Schedule 2 of the Order provides permitted development rights for the enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a house. The addition of external wall insulation falls within the definition of “the enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a house” and is therefore capable of constituting permitted development.

However, Condition A.1(d) provides that development is not permitted by Class A if –

- (d) the enlarged part of the dwellinghouse would extend beyond a wall which -
 - (i) fronts a highway, and
 - (ii) forms either the principal elevation or a side elevation of the original dwellinghouse.

Is external wall insulation ‘enlargement’ or ‘improvement’?

In the case of *Bradford City Council v Secretary of State for the Environment* [1977], the court took the view that the addition of external cladding to a residential property could amount to enlargement of the dwelling, but accepted that if the cladding does not project forward of windowsills, it could be regarded as being permitted development.

In the Government’s view, “the installation of solid wall insulation constitutes an improvement rather than an enlargement or extension to the dwellinghouse and is not caught by the provisions of d(i) and d(ii)” [see page 11 of “Permitted development for householders – Technical Guidance” published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in April 2014].

When permitted development rights do not apply

These permitted development rights do not apply to properties situated in conservation areas and certain other locations, including areas of outstanding natural beauty, national parks and the Broads. In addition, these permitted development rights will not apply to any property situated in an area covered by an Article 4 Direction which relates to Class A development. The Council can advise as to whether there are any special restrictions that apply to a particular property. Where permitted development rights do not apply, a planning application is required for the installation of external wall insulation.

Appearance

Whether regarded as enlargement or improvement, external wall insulation which is permitted by Class A must comply with the following condition:

- the materials used must be of a similar appearance to those used in the construction of the exterior of the existing dwellinghouse.

This means that, for example, where the exterior of a property is constructed in brickwork, the external wall insulation must have a similar appearance. If the original property is partly finished externally in render and partly in brickwork, then the requirements of the condition would be met if the external wall insulation had the appearance of either render or brickwork.

Overall, the aim should be to ensure that the addition of external wall insulation is in keeping with the character of the area and the existing property. In addition, where properties have existing detailed features, such as date stones, brick detailing and soldier courses in contrasting materials, decorative brickwork at corners or around windows, or transitions between render and brickwork, these features should be retained and/or replicated.

Further guidance

For more advice and information from the Council about the installation of external insulation, email enquiries@threerivers.gov.uk or telephone 01923 776611.

The Hertfordshire Building Futures website provides a useful source of advice about good practice in sustainable development. It is designed to provide practical, user friendly and up to date guidance on how to make development in Hertfordshire more sustainable and of a higher quality in design terms. See more details at <http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures>.

Among the resources available on the Building Futures website are a number relating to 'retrofitting'. Of particular relevance is the document entitled "Retrofitting: A Guide For Home Owners And Tenants", which can be downloaded from: <http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures/>