

DPC cavity trays in cavity wall construction

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Question

On low to medium rise housing developments, what type of flexible damp-proof courses (DPCs) are acceptable for use as a cavity tray?

Considerations

NHBC Standards clause 6.1.17 states 'Cavity trays should be provided at interruptions to the cavity (e.g., window and door openings and air bricks) unless otherwise protected'. It goes on to state, 'Cavity trays should not be low density polyethylene and are to be used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendation'.

Polyethylene Damp Proof Course made to BS 6515: 1984 are categorised as low-density polyethylene. They are not suitable for use as cavity trays but are suitable for use as a DPC to prevent moisture rising from the ground. For guidance on the design and installation of damp-proof courses in masonry construction, the Code of Practice - BS 8215: 1991 should be referred to.

The purpose of a cavity tray is to prevent the downward movement of water within a cavity and ensure that any water is deflected from the cavity to the exterior of the building envelope.

Answer

Flexible (plastic or rubber) DPC used as a cavity tray should be designed to prevent the downward passage of water or moisture through the tray and meet the requirements of BS EN 14909 and have a third-party certification that confirms their suitability for use as a cavity tray.

Manufacturer's literature confirming their suitability for use as cavity trays should be readily available and their recommendations for appropriate use and installation should be followed.

Low-density polyethylene DPC conforming to BS 6515 alone, are not suitable as cavity trays.

Transition Arrangements

It has come to NHBC's attention that whilst we have provided this guidance within our Standards clause 6.1.17 for some time, several sites have not been following this correctly.

To address this situation, we hereby give notice that on **all plots starting or at DPC level as at 1st January 2023**, the use of appropriate flexible DPCs (as described above) will be required and use of low-density polyethylene DPC conforming only to BS 6515 will no longer be accepted.