

Technical Guidance

Conversions and renovations

Question

Should NHBC Standards Chapter 1.2 'A consistent approach to finishes' be applied to conversions and renovations projects?

Considerations

- NHBC Standards Chapter 1.2 'A consistent approach to finishes' is intended for new homes and not for conversions and renovations.
- Much of its guidance is, however, relevant to certain aspects of conversion and renovation projects, e.g. most new work carried out during the conversion or renovation.
- The NHBC Standards for Conversions and Renovations state "Some irregularities in the existing background and finish, beyond normal building tolerances, may be acceptable for conversions and renovations" (Guidance, page 1).
- It is essential that looser tolerances don't compromise performance and durability of the converted or renovated building. An example would be a fire door, not fitting its frame correctly.
- For some 'historic' projects, e.g. the conversion of a 17th century barn, part of the 'charm' is that everything is not entirely straight and the finishes are not perfect. therefore new work specifically intended to match deviations may be out of tolerance. Such issues should be agreed between the interested parties (Builder, NHBC, English Heritage, conservation officer, etc.) at the outset.
- For other projects, e.g. the conversion of a 1970s office block, it is reasonable to expect that standards closer to those for new build should be achieved.
- Listed building consent may impose some limitations on certain elements and finishes. It is, however, important that these limitations are not accepted by NHBC if they are likely to conflict with the performance of the building and/or reasonable homeowner expectations.
- If these issues are not addressed during construction, homeowners may be dissatisfied and NHBC may be asked to carry out a Resolution. It will be more difficult to deal with problems at this stage.

Answer

New work

Generally, the standards for tolerances and finishes set out in NHBC Standards Chapter 1.2 'A consistent approach to finishes' should be applied. However, there will be exceptions where this may not be appropriate, for example where the new work adjoins existing work - it may be better for a new ceiling adjoining the feature ceiling of a historic building to match the line of the feature ceiling rather than to be perfectly level.



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Existing work

For existing work the standards for tolerances and finishes set out in NHBC Standards Chapter 1.2 'A consistent approach to finishes', will be a useful guide but not a pass or fail test. Discretion will need to be used in its application, particularly in the case of "historic" buildings.

All work

In all cases, it is essential that looser tolerances don't compromise performance and durability of the converted or renovated building beyond acceptable limits.