

Design & specification considerations

PAINTING BRICKWORK

Facing Brickwork should be attractive to look at and be virtually maintenance free throughout its design life if built in accordance with the appropriate Codes of Practice.

Ibstock produce a varied choice of facing bricks for aesthetic purposes and as such do not generally recommend covering them with surface treatments. Furthermore, if certain treatments are carried out to the brickwork there is a possibility of irreversible damage to the facings.

Sometimes, however, it may be necessary to specify bricks for painting usually for matching purposes on extensions or in keeping with local vernacular. This being the case, the following points should be taken into consideration:

- Bricks with a reasonable water absorption will allow effective paint adherence.
- Use bricks with a low soluble salt content (S2)
- Use bricks not prone to efflorescence or iron staining (check with manufacturer)
- Bricks of a similar absorption and suction rate should be used to achieve an acceptable uniform appearance.
- Sanded or 'stock' type products may not allow paint to adhere properly.
- Commons or Engineering bricks are not recommended.
- **Brickwork must be completely dry before any application is attempted.** New walls should not be painted but if it is the desire to paint a newly constructed wall, a curing time of at least 28 days must elapse, even then establish that the period has undergone good drying weather. Ideally 12 months will usually allow residual moisture and soluble material to stabilise. Brickwork must not have been cleaned or treated with acid solutions.
- Choose a plain brick, hearted or multi tonal products may produce iron or other salts or metallic deposits which may affect the paint colour.
- Any loose materials, or organic growth must be removed prior to painting

Performance

Brickwork, in common with other materials, is constantly moving through thermal expansion and contraction. Any surface covering would have to flex with the construction to avoid cracking. Once cracks have appeared, moisture is able to penetrate the masonry. Once inside, the drying capability could be greatly affected dependant on the restrictive effect of the surface treatment and frost action may result. Choose a breathable masonry paint.

Paint

The majority of masonry paints available at present carry a guarantee of up to 15 years as long as they are applied in accordance with BS6150: 1991: Code of practice for painting buildings, and the manufacturers own recommendations.

The constituents may contain resins which can expand and contract with the brickwork and avoid cracking. There are also vapour permeable systems available allowing the brickwork to 'breathe', allowing water vapour out but preventing water ingress.

Stabilising solutions or masonry conditioners are available which effectively seal the surface to prevent any soluble or friable material emerging from the substrate. These are not breathable and where they may be suitable for rendered finishes they are not recommended for new brickwork as they will seal in any moisture present if it has not already dried out thoroughly. Brickwork will then be prone to frost failure as a consequence.

Any sealing applications to bricks will invalidate Ibstock's durability warranty.

Mortar

Usually contains a high alkaline content which may affect paint application until thoroughly cured. Specify a low alkali cement.

Painted brickwork that pre-dates the 1960's probably contains lead and great care should be taken in the preparation for re-coating. When dry-sanding ALWAYS wear a mask.

In all instances, contact the paint manufacturer for advice on application methods and health and safety issues.

Painting brick does not preclude good construction and detailing practices.

For further information or advice regarding this topic please contact Ibstock's Design & Technical Helpline on 0844 800 4576 or email technical@ibstock.co.uk

Although the instructions contained in this publication and any other information published by Ibstock Brick Ltd are believed to be accurate at the date of publication, they are strictly for guidance only and Ibstock Brick Ltd accepts no liability in relation to their use or for any losses, howsoever caused. You are responsible for taking all reasonable steps to ensure your use of the product conforms to all applicable health and safety requirements from time to time. If in doubt, please consult appropriately qualified persons. All products sold by Ibstock are sold subject to Ibstock's Terms and Conditions of Sale, a copy of which is available on request.