DESIGN & SPECIFICATION CONSIDERATIONS

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT – RECYCLED CONTENT

The Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) have produced documents aimed to guide businesses and consumers to be more efficient in their use of materials. In an introduction to the document ‘Calculating and declaring recycled content in construction materials’ WRAP sets out a rule of thumb which includes a paragraph suggesting possible wording organisations may wish to use to set their requirements for projects.

Materials which are currently allowed to be classed as recycled include pulverised fuel ash (PFA) or fly ash, waste gypsum, blast furnace slag, fireclay extracted as a result of opencast operations, window fabrication scrap and recycled newspaper.

Clay facing bricks are currently manufactured from predominantly naturally occurring materials extracted from the ground adjacent or close to the manufacturing site.

To achieve required technical and aesthetic characteristics is dependent on the materials used, the source of clay, body additives and how the products are manufactured.

Adding recycled material to all brick products is likely to alter the properties and aesthetics, plus the transportation of recycled material to the manufacturing unit for inclusion may increase the carbon footprint.

Currently the only materials that can be classed as recycled and which are not detrimental to the integrity of clay brick by their addition are fireclay and PFA.

Fireclays produce buff coloured bricks; products manufactured solely from fireclay can claim 100% recycled content; however the specifier is limited with colour and technical properties.

PFA’s are often added in small amounts to aid firing and/or create a rustic look to the finished aesthetic.
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To achieve the engineering properties required for many building and civil applications currently no materials classed as recycled achieve the required technical properties such as strength and water absorption of the product although manufacturers continue to trial recycled material to this end.

Although Ibstock is working towards finding suitable inert materials to enable a recycled content classification, to base the choice of clay facing brick solely on its recycled content exceeding 10% is not the intention of WRAP and, as suggested, does not compromise the final environmental and sustainable impact.

- Ibstock Brick Limited manufacture to the Environmental Standard ISO 14001
- Ibstock also has BES 6001 accreditation to ‘Very Good’, allowing extra points in the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- Ibstock have a number of manufacturing locations countrywide reducing the impact of transportation with local supply.
- All recognised building applications involving clay brick achieve a Green Guide rating of A+.
- There is little waste on construction sites as products can generally be used internally, externally, above and below ground or crushed as inert hard-core.
- Furthermore clay facing bricks require little or no maintenance over their lifespan and can in turn be recycled to be used in other buildings if appropriate mortar specification is addressed.

By choosing brick the original recycled content becomes irrelevant compared to the longer term benefits of this sustainable and durable material.

Further information and advice can also be found at the Brick Development Association website www.brick.org.uk