

Carry on clamping

With HAs constantly on the lookout for innovations that will allow them to build new homes more quickly, **Iain Aubusson** looks at a door and frame set that incorporates a unique clamping system to help achieve this goal.

In recent years housing associations have been placed under ever-increasing pressure to build large numbers of new homes, while ensuring that these properties set new standards in environmentally friendly building and sustainability. With the current economic climate making these already ambitious goals even harder to achieve, housing associations and their contractors are constantly on the lookout for products that can tick all the right boxes and ensure that the building process is faster, simpler and more efficient.

This philosophy has underpinned the growth in the adoption of off-site construction methods, with systems such as timber frame, steel frame and pod construction becoming ever-more popular. However, there is an increasing trend for specifiers to consider the advantages of off-site solutions for other elements of the building within the outer shell.

When it comes to hitting the higher levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes – as well as home-building targets set by both government and themselves – housing



associations will need to ensure that they have considered every aspect of the build process and have sourced the most innovative products to allow them to build sustainably and efficiently.

This includes the specification of products such as doors that will allow homes to be completed more quickly and environmental requirements to be met. The temptation for many housing associations and contractors is to specify doors as cheaply as possible in an attempt to stretch pounds a little further. However, there is an increasingly strong argument for the use of complete door and frame systems that can offer overall savings when you consider the 'as-built' cost.

While basic doors are now available at staggeringly low prices, installation still requires the skilled labour of a carpenter who is capable of constructing the door frame and adding door furniture with precision. Off-site-manufactured door systems, on the other hand, offer simple installation as the fittings that require precision are all taken care of while the product is still in the factory.

Full doorset systems

One such system is the Berdo Berklon combination of a steel frame and a wooden door from the Dutch specialist manufacturer, Berkvens. The system is widely used across Europe and is particularly popular in social housing projects, where housing providers appreciate the time savings that the system can boast, as well as the durability of the solid door and hard-wearing steel frame.

"The real innovation is in the frame rather than the door," explains the company's international business manager, Daniel Bindels. "The unique clamping system in the frame, which was invented in the early 1980s, means that we can fit a full doorset in 12 minutes, with no need for wet trades on site."

This concealed clamping system allows the fully painted steel frame profiles to be fitted into a door aperture in minutes. The profile consists of two uprights and a head section, which slot together to form a solid frame, with the patented clamps ensuring that it sits snugly and securely into the aperture, as well as allowing it to comfortably take the weight of the door.

Modern methods

This compares favourably with the traditional method of installing internal doors, which is more time-consuming, requires skilled labour and wet trades, and – as it is generally done during the second fix – has the potential for costly subsequent damage. The frame system, in comparison, is fast and requires unskilled labour – and because it is a third fix job the chances of the door or frame being damaged prior to handover are significantly reduced.

Berkvens sells 400,000 of these frames every year, as well as 600,000 doors. The frames – which are produced from steel and then cut, coated and moulded into shape before being delivered to the company – are produced

in a range of different sizes to accommodate different wall sizes.

The fully FSC-certified Berklon doors run through what is the largest door paint production line in Europe. Nine layers of paint are applied to ensure long life expectancy and FD30 and FD60 fire-rated options are available. As they are pre-painted, contractors can save even more time on site.

The nature of the frame system also makes for easier maintenance, as the door itself can simply be changed, while a damaged frame section can be easily removed and replaced without the need for an entirely new set. “When we talk to maintenance engineers at housing associations in the UK they are very keen to use this product because it is so easy to make repairs,” says Daniel Bindels.

Working with HAs

Berkvens has already had products specified by a handful of housing associations in the UK, including Chevin HA, Wakefield and District Housing – as well as forging relationships with several major social housing contractors.



The profiles incorporate fixing holes to tighten the clamps.

The company also offers an array of other solutions for more niche applications. These include a 1.5mm-thick frame for high traffic or extra care situations. Berkvens also lends its expertise in frame systems to sliding and pocket door systems, the like of which are becoming increasingly popular in the UK for their space-saving properties.

• Iain Aubusson is editor of HABM.

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How the Berdo Berklon system works...



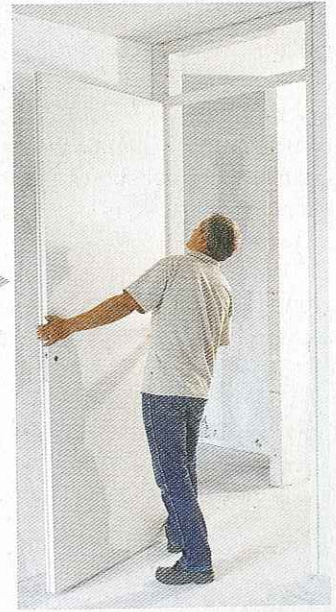
The vertical profiles are fitted onto the wall...



...the head and horizontal sections click into place...



...a spirit level is used to check that the frame is straight...



...fixings are screwed in and the door can then be hung.