

New Homes Ombudsman Case Study: Mastic Beading on Flooring



Issue

The customer complained that when they moved into the property, they noticed that a mastic bead had been applied around the perimeter of the Amtico flooring. This was a surprise as they had researched the product and had not expected mastic to be used, especially given that it was not recommended by the manufacturer. When the customer raised this with the developer, they were told that this was standard practice on all homes where Amtico was laid. However, the customer was concerned that at no point during the purchase of the flooring was it made clear that mastic would be applied.



Relevant sections of the New Homes Quality Code

Part 1
Selling a new home
Part 3
After-sales, complaints and the NHOS

Circumstances

- The customer completed a pre-reservation checklist confirming that they understood the process of ordering, paying for optional extras, and choosing standard finishes. They had not chosen any optional extras when reservation occurred.
- Sometime after reservation, the customer chose Amtico flooring for parts of their home, at a cost of nearly £11,000.
- The customer was surprised to see the mastic beading when they moved in; they were not aware that the flooring would be finished in this way, and they consider that it should have been made clear in writing that there would be a mastic finish when choosing Amtico flooring as an extra.
- Amtico do not apply a mastic bead to flooring in any residential installations as it is not required. The customer feels that the mastic makes the overall flooring finish look cheap and it is difficult to keep clean. They would like the mastic bead removed with any resulting gaps being remedied.

Ombudsman's decision

The Ombudsman reviewed the evidence available and found that the developer had not provided complete information about the flooring options available to the customer. It should have been clear that white mastic would be applied to the flooring when the customer made their choices.

The developer did not make information available to the customer to explain their approach; the specification does not seem to support their standard practices. Further, the flooring is an expensive item for the customer to buy and the finish of the item they have purchased should be clear.

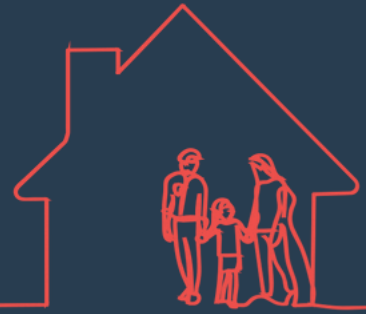


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Outcome

Complaint upheld. The mastic and any residue to be removed from the perimeter of the Amtico flooring. The developer is to issue an apology to the customer.



Learnings

- Developers must make sure that the content of any sales material relating to the new home is not misleading. If the developer had always intended to apply mastic beading, this should have been clearly communicated at the point of sale.
- Developers should recognise when they are at fault and take responsibility for putting right any issues or problems as part of good after-sales service.

Recommendations for developers

Listen to customer concerns and acknowledge that their complaints are being taken seriously, particularly in this case where communication was unclear from the point of sale.

Offer a genuine apology for mistakes with a phone call.
Reassure the customer that a path to resolution is underway.

