

BBA Certification and what it means

A BBA Certificate is an expression of our opinion as to a construction product or system's fitness for use in respect of its intended purpose. Certificates are not mandatory but are used by our Certificate holders as independent evidence of their products' suitability for their stated use. As such, our investigations cover all relevant aspects of the product's performance, including the relevant Building Regulations, the manufacturing process, physical properties and the practicability of installation.

The Certificates describe the products' performance in such a way as to give a potential specifier the information they need in order to make a judgement as to whether or not a product is suitable for a particular installation. Not all products are suitable for every situation. The Certificate is not a 'guarantee' and does not, and cannot, relate to individual buildings. It is the specifier's and installer's responsibility to use the information contained within the Certificate to decide if it is appropriate for their building.

You can find out more about this and the BBA from our website;

www.bbacerts.co.uk

BBA Statement relating to all enquiries regarding BBA certification and the fire testing of products

In-depth technical assessments are carried out prior to issuing a Certificate and the assessment work carried out will depend on the nature of the product and its intended use. These assessments are not restricted to testing, but of course tests do form an important part of the process.

The BBA has its own test laboratory, but we also accept test reports from other laboratories, subject to these meeting publicly available criteria.

In the case of fire, we do not carry out this type of testing and will only accept data supplied from UKAS accredited fire laboratories, such as the BRE or Exova (previously known as Warrington).

Frequently asked questions relating to Grenfell Tower.

Q1. What is the status of a BBA certificate?

A. BBA Certificates are an independent statement of a product's fitness for its intended purpose, when used as described above. They are not mandatory and so are used by our clients to aid acceptance by industry stakeholders such as specifiers, contractors and building control.

Q2. Were the reviews of Reynobond sufficiently thorough? Has the Certificate remained the same since 2008 or have there been amendments to it?

A. Our fire assessments are based on the requirements of the national Building Regulations and the reviews have included an assessment of the current status of those Regulations and whether there have been any changes to the relevant requirements. Had any updates been made to the requirements, we would carry out a reassessment of Certificates' compliance, but we do not believe that any such amendments to the national Building Regulations have been made.

The Certificate has remained in its current form since issue in 2008; as stated above there have been no significant Regulatory changes that would have required a Reissue of the Certificate.

We can confirm that Certificate 08/4510, Reynobond Architecture Wall Cladding Panels, has been the subject of regular three yearly reviews by the BBA since its issue.

UPDATE 4th August 2017: see Q&A14 for updated position.

Q3. Reynobond issues guidance on the use of the PE filled panels over buildings 18 metres tall. That guidance does not appear to be repeated in the Certificate?

A. Certificates are intended to provide the information that would be required by an experienced and competent building professional to make a judgement as to their suitability for a particular location, as defined in the Building Regulations. The Certificate makes no reference to suitable areas of use as we cannot be aware of the specific circumstances and specifications that will apply in each case.

Please also refer to the BBA statement above.

UPDATE 4th August 2017: see Q&A14 for updated position.

Q4. Some people see BBA certificates as a "passport" for a building material; if building control sees that a product has a BBA certificate they feel it is safe to use. Do you consider Reynobond PE safe to use?

A. The wording of every BBA Certificate is individual to that product and chosen so that a building professional can make an informed decision. Unlike a passport, the content is not the same in each case and each Certificate should be read with care and judgement before making a decision as to whether or not the product is suitable for use in a particular application.

We stand by the wording of the Reynobond Certificate but would emphasise that it needs to be used in the way that it is intended and not as a blanket assurance that a product is acceptable for all circumstances.

Q5. What are the implications for non-certified products that may have been used in Grenfell Tower?

A. The BBA assesses and certifies specific products for specific purposes. Our Certificates are not mandatory so we can only assess those products that are brought to us by our clients. Should a product not be certified by us, or should a certified product be used for a purpose other than that specified in the Certificate, we have no knowledge of its performance and so cannot comment on its suitability for that application.

Q6. What sort of fire tests were carried out on Reynobond panels prior to issue of the Certificate?

A. We have examined test reports for both versions of the panel covered by the Reynobond Certificate, as described in section 6.1 of the Certificate.

The standard version achieved a B-s2, d0 rating to the European Standard BS EN 13501-1: 2002 and the FR grade a B-s1, d0 classification when tested to the same Standard.

The Standard version was also tested to the British Standards BS 476-6: 1989 and to BS 476-7: 1997. When taken together, this means that this product can also be categorized as Class 0 by the Building Regulations.

As you may know, the rating systems are entirely separate, but the Building Regulations define the permissible areas of use of cladding materials by reference to both systems.

Q7. It has been reported that there have been other fires involving cladding around the world. Why hasn't the BBA done anything to change the UK Building Regulations in light of other fires?

A. The BBA is not a law-making body or a regulator. It is a matter for the Government to decide whether the national Building Regulations should be changed as a result of, for example, fires in other countries. Were the Government to change the national Building Regulations, the BBA would change its assessments to comply with any new legal requirements. We are not aware that any such changes have been made.

Q8. Many people, including employees of Local Authorities and Housing Associations may not have heard of BBA Certificates or know how to use them. What have you done to help inform people?

A. All our Certificates are publicly available via our website at www.bbacerts.co.uk. Also, we have written to 523 Local Authorities and Housing Associations inviting them to contact us for advice or to respond to any queries that they may have.

Q9. Why is Reynobond still certified by the BBA despite Arconic withdrawing sales and concerns over its role in the Grenfell Tower fire?

A. We have been attempting to contact the Certificate holder to clarify certain key facts and we will review our position in light of that information.

For the time being, the Certificate remains valid as we consider that the product remains fit for purpose, provided that it is used in accordance with the terms of the Certificate and with the requirements of the national Building Regulations. For clarity, this clearly does not mean it is suitable for use in all situations and all Certificates require that a judgement is made on a case by case basis by a suitably experienced and competent building professional.

UPDATE 4th August 2017: We have corresponded with Arconic who have confirmed to us that they have not withdrawn sales and continue to offer Reynobond PE and FR to the market. We stand by our response as described in Q&A4 above and will keep our position under review.

UPDATE 22nd September 2017: We have received correspondence from Arconic who have now clarified to us that they continue to offer Reynobond PE in the UK only for non-architectural applications, which are outside BBA Certificate 08/4510. They continue to offer Reynobond FR for architectural applications and the Certificate will be amended accordingly.

Q10. Concerns have also been raised for other types of cladding with a similar low fire risk score and active certification by you including alubond, vitrabond, elval colour cladding, CEP, Carea.

Will you be reviewing the certification of any of these materials in the near future?

A. As stated above, the Certificates remain valid as we consider that the products remain fit for purpose, provided that they are used in accordance with the terms of the Certificate in question and with the requirements of the national Building Regulations. For clarity, this clearly does not mean they are suitable for use in all situations and all Certificates require that a judgement is made on a case by case basis by a suitably experienced and competent building professional.

We will continue to review their status as information becomes available such as from the official enquiry and other authoritative and responsible sources.

The BBA cannot arbitrarily change the law of the land but we will of course comply with any future amendments to the national Building Regulations.

UPDATE 4th August 2017: see Q&A14 for updated position.

Q11. Will you be offering updated guidance on what "fit for intended use" means in light of the Grenfell tragedy?

A. Each Certificate must be considered specifically in the context of each building for which its use is being considered. Therefore, we have written to over 500 local authorities and housing associations inviting them to contact us for bespoke advice concerning any queries that they might have about a product's fitness for its intended use.

It is clearly of paramount importance that users of BBA Certificates understand the purpose of Certificates and the way in which they should be used. Certificates are intended for the building professional, not the casual user, and as such these individuals should be aware of their responsibilities.

Q12. Is it true that the BBA has issued a Certificate to Kingspan Kooltherm K15, as recently identified as a component used in the Grenfell Tower construction?

A. The BBA has issued Certificate 14/5134, Product Sheet 7, for this product, which has been assessed for use as external thermal insulation on new and existing steel frame or masonry walls, in association with a rainscreen cladding.

As described in section 8 of the Certificate, the use of the product is restricted to buildings of up to 18m in height, unless the specific construction in question has either met all of the criteria given in BRE Report BR135, including a full-scale fire test, or has been the subject of a fire engineering assessment by a suitably experienced and competent individual.

The BBA has not assessed the product for use in conjunction with any other insulation material.

A copy of the Certificate can be downloaded from the BBA website by following the link below:

<http://www.bbacerts.co.uk/CertificateFiles/51/5134PS7i1a16112015.pdf>

Q13. Why do you state that the fire performance quoted in some Certificates may not be achieved by all colours of the panels and the classification of a particular colour should be confirmed by comment or testing by a UKAS accredited laboratory?

A. The performance achieved in fire testing is influenced by the colour chosen. The effect is normally only of minor significance, but if a particular product is close to the border between classifications, two different colours could potentially achieve different ratings.

In some Certificates, sufficient data are available to enable us to make a statement that covers all of the colours in the range. However, in other cases, only a single colour has been tested and so the results quoted are representative of what can be achieved by the product, but may not cover the whole range. In these cases, the performance of the colour to be used on a building must be assessed on a case by case basis and potential users should approach the Certificate holder for confirmation of the appropriate fire rating for that colour.

The BBA's policy is to move to a position where the performance quoted will cover all colours in the range, but in the transitional period the process described above should be followed.

Q14. Why has the BBA re-issued 9 Certificates for Aluminium Composite Material Cladding Certificates?

A In early 2017, the BBA began to highlight and make clearer in ACM Cladding Certificates the requirement to adhere to the national Building Regulations, particularly with regard to advice about height restrictions. Following the Grenfell Tower fire, we have decided to accelerate that highlighting process and not wait for the usual review and re-issue cycle that each Certificate periodically goes through. We must make clear, this was a pre-existing requirement of the national Building Regulations and we have not added any requirement that was not already there before the Grenfell Tower fire.

Q15. Why wasn't this re-issue exercise done before the Grenfell Tower fire?

A The process had commenced before the Grenfell Tower fire with the first Certificate with the highlighted wording being issued in April 2017. Rather than await the normal review and re-issue cycle, we have decided to expedite re-issues to ensure that all Certificate holders and users have this key issue highlighted for them.

Q16. Why wasn't this re-issue exercise done sooner after the fire?

A There has been a lot of comment about the possible causes of the tragedy and in our judgement, it is appropriate to highlight the Certificate requirements that relate to national Building Regulations i.e. that certain products should not be used above 18 metres (unless specific conditions have been met). We must make clear, this was a pre-existing requirement of the national Building Regulations and we have not added any requirement that was not already there. Rather, we are highlighting a requirement that was in the Regulations already.

Q17. Were the Certificates inaccurate before this re-issue?

A No. Reynobond and other ACM Cladding Certificates were, and remain, accurate. Our intention is to highlight the 18-metre height restriction requirement for building professionals and other Certificate users. This requirement was in the national Building Regulations already and is not a new requirement.

Q18. Why has the reference to NHBC changed on recently issued BBA Certificates?

A Following consultation with a number of our key partners, the BBA has revised a number of standard statements within our Certificates. The new statements are designed to improve clarity.

Please note that the changes to the NHBC Standards compliance statement does not reduce the acceptability of BBA Certified products on homes registered with NHBC.

Q19. If anyone has queries who should they contact?

A. Please contact us via clientservices@bbacerts.co.uk.