Cladding Disasters - Here are 5 you'll want to avoid

Timber cladding looks great. There's no doubt about that. That's why it has become one of the trendiest building materials in the market - with many homeowners using it on add-on extensions, if not a large proportion of the entire build.

But like most trends, its enduring practicality is often questioned. Some architects will discourage the use of timber cladding, fearing the maintenance will be too much. So how can you strike the balance between what is visually beautiful, long lasting and easily maintainable? Well, using a cutting edge timber alternative like SAM Trimax, which has been inspired by the traditional Scandinavian look of real timber cladding, will tick all the boxes.

Here are some of the cladding disasters it will help you avoid.

1. Discolouration

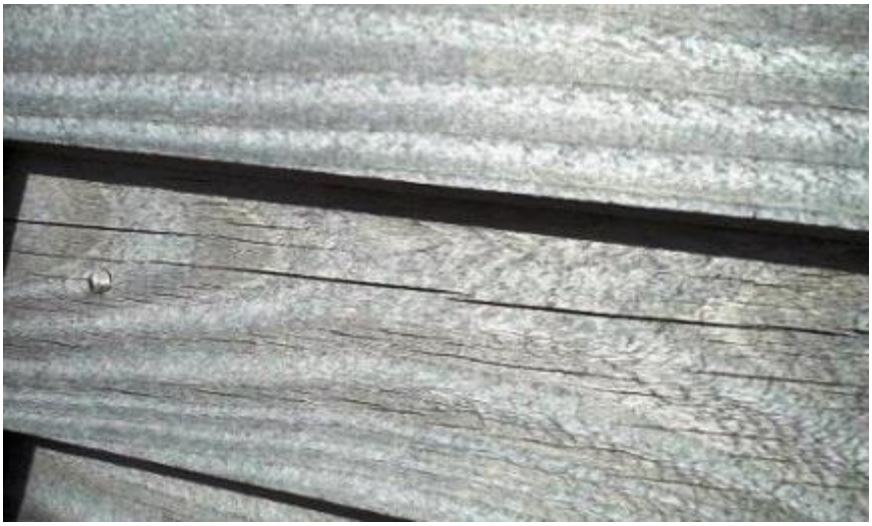
Although some architects can quite like the silvery grey colour that most untreated timber cladding achieves, for most people this discolouration represents a regrettable departure from the warm timber colours they loved when the cladding was planned and erected.

This weathering is due to a number of contributing factors. Firstly, it is often caused by the natural oils in the timber being released. However, insect attack and fungal decay of damp timber can also damage the appearance of the cladding.

2. Splitting and ‘shelling’

One of the most alarming aspects of natural timber cladding is its likelihood to expand and contract with inevitable weather changes. As timber loses moisture, it can shrink by up to 7%, while in humid conditions, the timber absorbs moisture.

The effect of this can be a splitting or warping of the timber, which is unsightly as well as impacting on the amount of maintenance required. Different types of timber have different levels of dimensional stability, so selecting the correct timber according to BS EN 350 and BS EN 335 is imperative. Using ‘Heartwood’ as opposed to ‘Sapwood’ for any given species, but for many the use of a modified timber product or extremely durable fibreboard such as SAM Trimax will ensure better visual appeal, longer service life and less maintenance.



3. Poorly fitted cladding

Despite its aesthetic appeal, the original purpose of cladding was not solely decorative. Instead, it was designed to serve as insulation for a house and to protect a building from moisture and wind. The addition of cladding can increase the building's overall ecological performance, and as a result, lower heating costs significantly. Shoddy, ill-fitting traditional timber cladding can function poorly in this regard. It is recommended that you replace it with modified timber or extremely durable fibreboard cladding plus a layer of insulation to ensure your cladding insulates effectively, while also looking good. SAM Trimax cladding is fitted with slight air gaps in between panels to allow for ventilation. Cladding fitted without this ventilation can lead to damp and dry rot, which can be dangerous. To keep the house warm, a layer of insulation such as dry-lining is recommended. A better insulated home is always welcome in this part of the world, where our summers are short-lived.

4. Corrosion of metal fixings

Another issue architects will have with timber cladding is its ability to corrode steel and galvanized steel fixings such as screws and nails. This occurs because when timber has a moisture content above 20%, it produces acetic acid. It is this acid that corrodes the fixings, making the finish less appealing. Worse, the heads can break off and this compromises the security of the boards.

Using a modified timber cladding or extremely durable fibreboard such as SAM Trimax will help to keep the moisture level below 20%, but ultimately, even with that, you need to make sure to use stainless steel grade A2 or A4 fixings.

5. Unsustainable and not ecologically sound

Perhaps the most important potential disaster to consider with cladding is its sustainability. Cladding is awarded a grade in BRE's Green Guide to Specification and the international Forestry Stewardship Council Scheme. If the cladding material is sourced from responsibly managed forests it can gain credits under the Code for Sustainable Homes. Put simply, the more sustainable your build is, the more funding you will receive. Not getting the money you could? Now that is a cladding disaster!

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