



SUSTAINABLE TRADITIONAL
BUILDINGS ALLIANCE

Address 5 Baldwin Terrace, London N1 7RU
Telephone 020 7704 3501 • Email info@stbauk.org

STBA Project Report: Whole House Retrofit Application Process

Funded by BEIS Thermal Efficiency Innovation Fund

STBA has been working with Melin Homes on a BEIS funded project looking at the application of Whole House Approach on traditional buildings, particularly in wind-driven areas. The project has been successful in a number of ways and has highlighted the need for a new approach within the RSL sector. However, like so many projects it has been hit by Covid over the past 18 months. We are therefore well behind where we expected to be, but like all problems there are opportunities that arise from this.

With Melin's workplans radically affected by Covid and the associated delays / changes in emphasis etc the STBA had to expand its horizons to other RSLs. This process has not been easy or straight forward as all the local Housing Associations are in a similar boat to Melin. However, delays have meant that STBA has managed to connect with Rhondda Housing Association (RHA) over the use of a void. Delays have also meant that new products have emerged that could be significant for the retrofit industry in terms of traditional buildings.

The STBA along with RHA will be trialling a new IWI 'wet insulating lime plaster' system that incorporates aerogel, which proport to reach 0.7U in the walls just by the replacement of internal plaster. An external variant is also in development. This is potentially important for the sector. The cement renders and gypsum plasters conventionally used on traditional solid walled buildings are inappropriate and should be removed anyway, and so being able to just replace them with a breathable lime product that also insulates them to BRE recommended standards could solve many of the issues facing the industry. Co-benefits could also mean that thermal bridges around reveals can be eliminated, there is no need for expensive extensions to roof lines, no oversailing planning required, no space lost internally etc. We shall be specifying these new products on the properties and then monitoring their effectiveness in the real world, so watch this space.

Of course, there are still issues. Breathable paint is required for external and internal finishes. How will this be managed in the long term? The fact that the properties in this next stage of the project are empty, means that the IWI and paints can be applied, and the new tenants informed about the need to continue to use breathable paint. However, we shall be exploring solutions to this issue, but for the time being we are hopeful that the STBA is on the leading edge of positive change that will help bring about the truly sustainable refurbishment of houses in the UK.