Traditional style, modern technology

THE CLASSIC ELEGANCE OF TIMBER FRAMED WINDOWS AND DOORS HAVE AN ENDURING, ASPIRATIONAL APPEAL THAT REMAINS POPULAR AMONG HOUSEBUILDERS AND DEVELOPERS. HOWEVER, THE GROWING TREND FOR ENGINEERED MATERIALS IS OPENING UP A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES THAT TIMBER ALONE CANNOT PROVIDE. HERE, GARY HUTTON FROM BLACK MILLWORK DISCUSSES THE AESTHETIC, STRUCTURAL AND MAINTENANCE BENEFITS OF ENGINEERED TIMBER.

Combining the strength and stability of wood with the low-maintenance features of vinyl, engineered timber enables specifiers to create ambitious architectural structures – and when it comes to designing windows, manufacturers such as Andersen from Black Millwork have also been looking to new materials in order to create unique installations. For example, Andersen's patented composite timber product, Fibrex® enables the creation of enormous arching shapes and dramatic expanses of glazing that would never have been possible before.

Fibrex is formed by blending 50% pine wood fibres with polymers. The blended mixture is then processed into pellets that can be extruded into the required profiles and cut into specific sizes and shapes. As a thermoplastic material, these can easily be heat-fused to create the desired structural effect, delivering the major advantage that composite timber has over wood – its ability to be moulded to meet almost any desired spatial requirements. What's more, the durability of the composite material means it does not require the same long-term upkeep required of traditional wood.

Slim profiled windows that bring more light into a building greatly contribute to the look and feel inside and large glazed areas are becoming increasingly popular as a means of creating a sense of space. Manufacturers' products vary in profile size but many specifiers recognise that elegant, small profiles give a less obtrusive view, allowing for more light and the illusion of a large, seamless outlook. Slim profiles can only be achieved, however, if the structure has the strength to cope with larger spans of glazing and engineered timber products are a simple way of achieving this.

In addition, engineered timbers, such as Fibrex, perform much better than traditional woods when it comes to maintenance. More resistant to moisture, they do not suffer from the same issues of rot or insect infestations and can be produced in a variety of colours so do not require painting. Similarly, engineered timber does not require the regular upkeep of treatments and varnishing that traditional woods need to stay looking at their best. Finally, many engineered timbers are manufactured using wood fibres reclaimed or recycled from the production of other timber products – thus reducing wastage within the timber manufacturing industry.

When purchasing engineered timber products, specifiers should look for reputable suppliers and manufacturers who are able to advise on the most suitable product for the particular application. For example Andersen from Black Millwork has a long history of producing engineered timber, having patented its revolutionary Fibrex in 1995, and so is well placed to provide guidance on its uses and benefits.

For more information please visit www.blackmillwork.co.uk