

ATTACHED NEW BUILD DEVELOPMENTS

An increasing number of single (and multi unit developments) utilise and flank or gable wall of an existing property as a new party wall. Such developments can pose difficulties for both warranty providers and Building Control professionals in determining both insurability and compliance with the relevant regulations.

Where a new home is built onto the side of an existing home, LABC New Home Warranty can provide warranty cover, and, it is generally preferable for a new leaf of wall to be constructed on an independent foundation adjacent to the separating wall. The reasons for this are as follows:

1. The existing wall and/or the foundation may be structurally unsound.
2. If the two homes are not constructed independently there could be differential movement: this could cause structural damage to one or both homes and/or affect the weatherproofing.
3. The existing wall may not adequately resist the passage of sound.
4. The existing wall may lack the necessary damp proofing.
5. Excluding the existing wall, by the use of an endorsement, from warranty cover will diminish the cover for the homeowner, and may not negate all issues.
6. If a new leaf is not to be built, it is necessary to demonstrate that the owner of the existing wall recognises that the existing wall is to become a party wall.

In most cases the new home should be an independent structure (this would also be our preference), normally with a new wall constructed alongside the existing wall. The wall should be supported on a new foundation, independent of the existing foundation, which may require engineer design.

However, there may occasionally be situations where it is possible to retain the existing external wall as the new separating wall. In these cases:

1. There should be a Party Wall Agreement (not Scotland) in accordance with the Party Wall Act and this should be made available to LABC NHW Surveyors.
2. Confirmation is required that the separating wall meets the relevant requirements of the Building Regulations.
3. The existing foundations and wall structure should be exposed to determine whether they are suitable to support any proposed increased loading resulting from the construction of the new home.
4. The junction of the new walls to the existing walls should ensure that dampness cannot track back into the new home or the existing home.
5. An effective damp proof course (DPC should be present in the existing wall, linked to the new DPCs and DPC of the new home).
6. At the junction of the existing and new structures, detailing should allow for differential movement without cracking. Any settlement should be limited to 2-3mm, which would not normally adversely affect the roof covering.

As an alternative to the above it may be feasible to design the proposed house such that no additional loads are applied to the existing wall. For example the new house may be formed from steel or timber frame construction and has no reliance on the existing building for support or restraint.

For further advice you should contact either the Technical Services Department of LABC New Home Warranties (technicalservices@labcnhw.co.uk) or your local Building Control Officer.

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