



**Consultant Terry Wolfe on the failure of asphalt under solid wood**

# Problem may not be the fault of asphalt

AS you may know, my principle work is dealing with flooring problems and resolving disputes. I also get many telephone enquiries asking my opinion on a variety of related topics. Through this, I sometimes notice a new trend.

A few months ago, I wrote about the delamination of engineered flooring, particularly over underfloor heating. I had personally met this problem two or three times, but I received a half-dozen other enquiries, which prompted me to raise the issue in this column.

Some manufacturers were aware of this problem, because one or two admitted to me, of the record, that they were changing the glue used to manufacture their boards; it seems to me, that this problem has gone away.

However, a new and very different problem has suddenly come on the scene. I will not say I have met it dozens of times, but I have seen one example, and received enquiries regarding three similar instances. It is the

***'Most current flooring manuals (for example the CFA Guide to Contract Flooring) suggest you can lay over asphalt, possibly using a latex or other cementitious screed first, provided the asphalt is sound and has no cracks'***

failure of asphalt under solid wood flooring.

Many years ago, before the introduction of epoxy surface dpm's, we used what we called 'rock asphalt' over a damp screed before laying a flooring material. It was carried out by dedicated asphalt contractors, usually about 18 mm in thickness. It was quite expensive, but I considered it 'the cat's whiskers' in subfloor preparation.

Most current flooring manuals (for example The CFA Guide to Contract Flooring) suggest you can lay over asphalt, possibly using a latex or other cementitious screed first, provided the asphalt is sound and does not contain any cracks.

We now have the vexatious question of adhering solid

hardwood boards to solid subfloors. Even though the procedure has been common for about 10 years, there are still flooring contractors reluctant to adhere solid boards in this way.

Personally I now recommend it provided the subfloor is (a) flat, (b) sound and (c) dry.

**So if the asphalt is flat, sound and dry, can we adhere boards directly?**

Firstly, watch out that the adhesive does not affect asphalt. Perhaps insert a smoothing screed, although the screed must then adhere to the asphalt sufficiently well to withstand the stresses of seasonal moisture movement in the timber.

Assuming all that is OK, we now lay our wood flooring. All is well in summer, when it expands, but

what about winter, when it shrinks?

I, and others, have found that the adhesion is sufficiently strong to lift the asphalt off its subfloor.

Remember, the asphalt does not really adhere to the subfloor; it is, in a way, a floating base. In one instance, with a boarded floor, the edges of the room were lifted and in another, a wood block floor, the centre of the room lifted.

I am not sure if these are isolated cases, or if other readers have met it too. I have been considering what action to advise in the future. I am hoping to visit Elastilon in the near future, and I wonder whether that is the best way forward, i.e. to use a separating layer.

People like F Ball, Uzin etc all manufacture separating layers, as well as Isola Platon, which I often consider the definitive in this field. **CFJ**

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**Dids MacDonald on responding to business opportunities**

# Avoid the tender trap when tendering

TENDERING for a contract or responding to a retail buying department's interest in a new product range is a no brainer, but not without its potential IP hazards.

No-one could ignore potential business opportunities, but we all can fall prey to the tender trap without safeguards – it happened to me many times. That is why I started ACID (Anti Copying in Design) to raise awareness about the basics of intellectual property law and to highlight practical aspects which can be included in everyday commercial risk taking strategies.

Take the situation where a flooring or carpet designer or manufacturer responds to a tender for a major hotel group involving several thousand units.

Economies of scale, unit costs, ergonomics, design, materials, environmental compliance, health

and safety, sustainability all involve time and a costly investment necessarily to respond competitively to a specific brief.

Those who invest in this pre-tender work do so believing there will be a level playing field. Often this is not the case. Many find their IP has been infringed because their designs or products, if selected, are forwarded to other potential suppliers to provide cost comparisons and alternative manufacture.

At this stage the tender originator or their procurement staff may lay themselves open to legal challenge because at this point they do not have your permission.

ACID's Design Data Bank accepts copies of tender documents, providing independent evidence of the date a company responded to a

tender.

This is a free service to ACID members. It is always good business practice when responding to a pitch or tender to highlight the fact that 'All IP rights remain with the originator (you) and that any infringement of your rights will be pursued vigorously'. Sending a subliminal warning shot can be a deterrent.

Intellectual property is about ownership (i.e. yours – as a designer or manufacturer allowing third party use!).

Quality, health & safety specs may often be compromised by price, look and feel with scant regard to intellectual property ownership.

It is also relatively easy for third parties to reverse engineer (and replicate) rather than invest in original design and skilled manufacture.

Apart from the BRIC countries,

many now also experience copying problems when responding to tenders in UAE. This poses serious threats for many, whilst leading to shortcuts on quality, reliability and safety on the original spec.

The standards to which reputable manufacturers conform may not be maintained by copycats, leading to compromise in design.

This can affect a carpet design spec, for example, when its pile structure is compromised or health & safety issues are not adhered to. Copyists rarely worry about flaunting specification details. **CFJ**

**Dids MacDonald is the chief executive of ACID**

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