

Robbing Peter?



When Lumi decided to launch an aluminium version of its ‘frameless’ window that looks similar in every way to its stablemates, some wondered if they were simply going to take sales from the established products. Nothing is that simple with Lumi, says MD Asa McGillian.

“As has so often happened since we launched Lumi in 2015, the market has behaved unpredictably, says Asa McGillian.,

When asked how the much-vaunted aluminium framed version of Lumi had been accepted by the market, the results were not as might be expected. McGillian says: “We sell Lumi, predominantly, through trade partners in the UK and Ireland. And they are reporting that whilst enquiries are substantially up for Lumi with the announcement of the aluminium version, when homeowners are presented with the Lumi portfolio, many switch to Lumi 2, the PVC-U outer framed version and even Lumi 3, the original, ‘PassivHaus’ version.”

against what they perceived as 'plastic' windows. In fact, we have received many comments that Lumi should always have been aluminium. And so Lumi Aluminium was born to suit market demand."

Robbing Peter?

Has Lumi Aluminium stolen sales from Lumi 2, if not Lumi 3?

McGillian says that the aluminium version has become the biggest seller but it has increased sales across the range. "Ironically we have increased sales significantly in Lumi 2 because it looks the same but is less expensive," he says. "And for higher end projects we have even swung sales in favour of Lumi 3 when the specification is simply for 'the best'.

Sales are divided approximately between 50% for Lumi Aluminium and Lumi 2 and 3 25% each. "Sales overall have surged for Lumi during the past year or so, just as they have for all home improvement products," McGillian told *The Installer*. "But the real surprise is Lumi 3, which has an extraordinary average order value of £33,000, with Lumi 2 averaging at £12,500 and aluminium, unsurprisingly between its siblings at around £18,000." "Trying to predict the market with a product for which the differences are hidden, yet which has completely different price points, has been incredibly difficult," McGillian admits. "Fortunately, sales have gone the right way for all versions – if nothing else, we know that home owners like the one thing all versions have in common – its looks." 

Pictures: Page 1 – Lumi Aluminium and Asa McGillian and Page 2 – The original triple glazed Lumi 3 with pultruded GRP sections.
www.lumiwindows.com

Identical trio

The Lumi window is identical at first sight but the quite major differences between Lumi Aluminium, Lumi 2 and Lumi 3 become obvious with closer examination. The contemporary appearance of all Lumi windows and doors is defined by the external, edge-to-edge glazing that conceals the sub-frame of the window beneath an opaque band that is printed to the reverse of the glass. The window is very distinctive and often favoured by architects and home-owners seeking a more contemporary, individual finish for their projects.

What's the difference?

The original Lumi 3 is so called because it is triple glazed as standard. Framing is manufactured using pultruded GRP sections which give the products extraordinary inherent strength and superb thermal performance. Lumi 3 windows are aimed squarely at upmarket specifiers.

Lumi 2

The decision to launch Lumi 2 – double glazed of course – came after the firm became used to receiving enquiries for the product from owners of mid-market homes and having them quickly move on when costs were dis-

cussed. "The original focus for Lumi was to manufacture a window that was uncompromised in its specification," explains McGillian "and it is therefore expensive. But of course, we reached people at all levels through our marketing and they liked the distinctive design of Lumi and wanted to buy it. So we introduced Lumi 2."

Designed unequivocally for the home improvement sector, Lumi 2 is double glazed, with outer-frames produced in PVC-U, with the sashes in pultruded GRP. Crucially, it is as easy to handle and install as conventional frames. Sales soared as a result.

Lumi Aluminium

The surge in interest for aluminium windows and doors did not escape McGillian and Lumi Aluminium was launched in 2020. "We have lost sales in the past for Lumi when people realised that it was not aluminium," says McGillian. "This revealed a sort of snobbery in the market. There is no obvious visual difference in Lumi in any material but homeowners and especially architects had this fixation on aluminium...or perhaps



Adding Value To Fenestration Design

Aluminium is so versatile it is used in design-led projects at both the commercial and high-end residential level. Despite the competitive nature of the sector, a few manufacturers are achieving clear differentiation through their technical and service capabilities.

The increasing preference for aluminium in window and door frame construction owes much to its versatility and design life value.

Widespread specification is resulting in increasingly diverse projects across the client spectrum, from prominent commercial clients in the public and private sectors to 'high end' self-builds.

Despite the competitive nature of the sector, a few manufacturers are achieving clear differentiation through their technical and service capabilities. This has been prompted by increasing demand for a high level of flexibility of product performance and assistance given to specifiers throughout the design process.

Lead times

Tight building schedules associated with many urban developments in particular has also put added pressure on lead times. This has made a 'just in time' approach to manufacturing impractical so maintaining a stock of the extensive range of standard profiles used in window and door fabrication has become essential.

Typically, this requires ongoing availability of profile lengths from 1.1 to 6.1 metres. This enables fabricators to keep wastage levels to a minimum and provides lasting assurance that tendering can be maintained at a consistently competitive level. The knock-on effect has been a clear trend in the proportion of commercial and

residential work accounted for by aluminium rather than PVC-U.

Bespoke but fast

For orders in which bespoke features such as RAL colours are involved, the production methods and equipment need to enable quick turnaround. Where once the norm for delivery to site was several weeks, the demand now is for just a few days. This requires the use of the very latest fully automated production techniques and the necessary confidence to invest accordingly.

The need also for sustainable manufacturing is paramount – the best manufacturers will recover the highest levels of the powder coating possible during the colouring process.



Windows and doors influence building design

In terms of the visual aesthetic, window and door design has not only kept pace with the requirements of contemporary architecture but is positively influencing it. The use of sleek profiles which maximise the glazing area while remaining secure, inherently strong and energy-efficient have become commonplace. However, there is cause for concern in terms of the aluminium thickness being used by some manufacturers. For effective long-term performance, a specifier should make clear the minimum requirement in accordance with standards such as BS4873 – Specification for aluminium alloy windows and doorsets.

BREEAM

To put the value of technical input of a manufacturer into perspective, fenestration accounts for up to 40 credits of the 119 available in a BREEAM assessment for new buildings.

Coton House

Individual projects which have benefitted from such collaboration include a housing project in which aluminium window and door systems have been installed as a primary feature is the development of five and six bedroom houses by CALA Homes on the Coton House Estate near Rugby.

Designed to maximise natural light, the architect specified the Kestrel Aluminium 100mm box and plate curtain walling system incorporating Kestrel 60mm windows to create a dramatic frontage to the houses. Curtain walling is more commonly thought of as a commercial product, however with positive benefits in terms of installation speed and cost it is becoming increasingly common for it to be installed in the home creating a light and airy living space. The 60mm casement window system creates a stylish and simple frame that provides maximum thermal efficiency meeting the exacting standards of Document L.

Folding sliding doors

Used in conjunction with low U-value double glazed units the homeowners can be sure that their homes are safe, secure and energy-efficient. To complete the project Kestrel folding sliding doors were specified that can be stacked on either side once opened, ensuring they occupy the least amount of usable space as possible and allow natural light to flood into the building.

Growing

Whether for highly complex architecture or a simple feature of housing design, aluminium window and door systems offer the widest range of uses. With its critical combination of aesthetics and high functionality, the material is surely set to secure a steadily increasing market share. [i](#)

Pictures: Page 1 – A contemporary commercial project and Page 2 – Coton House Estate development featuring Kestrel Aluminium.



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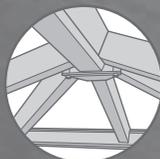
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Sliding Doors 4 City & Suburbia

Wojciech Brozyna – MD of Aluprof UK says there are several design choices when considering the specification of sliding doors. Not only are the opening styles important there are also factors that will make the door look and perform better for longer.

There are several design choices when considering the specification of sliding doors for use in a city high rise or in a typical residential setting, writes Wojciech Brozyna – MD of Aluprof UK.

Not only are the opening styles important to suit the client's needs, there are also choices which will make the door both look and perform better for longer, if specified correctly. The types of sliding door can be broken down into two basic operational functions, these can be simple inline sliding or folding sliding.

Inline sliding doors

Inline sliding doors consist of large sliding panels which slide within the door reveal to open the room up to the outside. In their most basic form, they are two sliding panels, normally with one fixed and one sliding. Along with the basic sliding doors, there are 'tilt and slide' doors and 'lift and slide' doors. These doors offer higher weather ratings than the basic sliding door systems.

The 'tilt and slide' is basically a large open-in sash which is fully sealed with a centre seal and is locked with multiple points around the frame. The hardware



allows the panel to open in and then slide to one side behind the fixed panel. The 'lift and slide' offers a lift facility with a large handle, that once operated, lifts the sliding panel up very slightly off the bottom seals and then allows the panel to slide with little effort. These systems can be specified with 2, 3 or 4 tracks allowing the door panels to stack behind each other within the door reveal. There is also the option to hide the door panel or panels into a side wall given the space, to offer an almost clear opening.

Folding sliding

Sliding folding arrangements allow the doors to 'concertina' open. Doors are stacked perpendicular to the track, either on one side or both sides, depending on

their design. These doors can either stack internally or externally, again, depending on the design option. Because of their frame design and ease of installation, they are often specified in home improvement applications.

Installation

Crucial to all large sliding door installations is the need to have a substantial structure to fix to on all sides. Often the head of the opening can cause issues, particularly on a wide door installation. If there is any settlement of a lintel or structure, this can cause issues with future operability. Live loads should also be considered to ensure that the sliding door does not bind in certain loading conditions. Colour can also become an issue, such as a dark door facing south, so expansion

Aluminium Systems

should be allowed for in the construction. Clear guidance should be sought on these issues from the systems company and structural engineer to ensure ease of operation.

Style over substance

Given the styles of door available, the choice comes down to visual appearance and practicality. Externally stacking sliding folding doors may not be suitable in a high-rise application due to limited space on a balcony. Sliding doors do offer more clear glazing per opening with much less aluminium visible but may not offer a full opening. With more available outdoor space, sliding folding doors are often chosen for home improvement or new traditional home build or grand designs type projects.

Always the weather

Weather performance is crucial, especially in high rise applications. Basic sliding doors often will not meet the exposure requirements of a high rise location but lift and slide doors that rely on their weight once closed to rest weather seals, can offer exceptional weathering capability. Aluprof's MB-77HS system, for example, offers an impressive maximum Class 4 air tightness when tested to BS EN 12207 and a Class 9A (600Pa) for

watertightness when tested to BS EN 12208. This door has also been successfully tested to CWCT standards when used within a high rise facade and is possibly the door style most often chosen by specifiers for high rise use.

Thresholds

Key for most designers and specifiers on high rise applications is the threshold arrangement which is to be kept as low as possible in order not to create a trip hazard. Basic sliding doors and tilt and slide doors will need some form of step or visible frame at the threshold but the lift and slide only needs a low or flush threshold, with a groove for a guided roller, the weather seals being carried in the sliding panel. The choice is with the specifier, yet the lift and slide door option offers the best combination of ease of use, best use of space, flush threshold, high weather rating and minimal maintenance requirements.

Noise

In a traditional residential application sound attenuation may not be an issue but on high rise, particularly on lower levels, an acoustic glass may be required. It is possible to specify systems which can accept thicker acoustic glazing at lower floors and on upper floors revert to a more

traditional double or triple glazed unit. This can often be accommodated in one design of a sliding door system. Sound attenuation may also be required through any trickle vents so the accommodation of these larger vents will need to be considered when specifying a sliding door system.

Security

All sliding doors are well equipped today with quality locks that meet PAS 24, however for traditional residential applications at ground floor level, possible additional security is required dependent on the location. Remote control options are also becoming more popular on sliding doors where doors can be opened from a remote control or an application on a smart device.

As with all user operated devices, at some time in the future, all doors will require some form of maintenance. It is worth considering this regarding the availability of parts so, choosing a systems company of repute, such as Aluprof, would be strongly advised. 

Pictures: Page 1 – Wojciech Brozyna and 2 – Aluprof's MB Slimline.

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