

Fabric-First Approach

The Fabric-First Approach is a strategy in the retrofit sector that prioritises enhancing the building's fabric—its walls, floors, roofs, windows, and doors—before considering other energy efficiency measures. This approach is particularly relevant in the UK house building and retrofit sectors, where improving the thermal performance of the building envelope can significantly reduce energy consumption and improve comfort levels.

The Fabric-First Approach focuses on enhancing the thermal insulation and airtightness of a building's fabric to reduce heat loss and improve energy efficiency. By addressing the building's fabric first, this approach aims to create a more energy-efficient and comfortable living environment before implementing additional measures such as heating system upgrades or renewable energy technologies.

Key Steps Involved:

- 1. Draughtproofing:**
 - Sealing gaps around windows, doors, and other areas where heat can escape.
- 2. Insulating Loft:**
 - Adding or improving insulation in the loft to reduce heat loss through the roof.
- 3. Insulating Walls:**
 - Installing cavity wall insulation or solid wall insulation to minimise heat loss through the walls.
- 4. Insulating Floors:**
 - Adding insulation to floors to prevent heat loss through the ground.

A typical retrofit project using the Fabric-First Approach might start with a comprehensive survey of the building to identify areas where heat is being lost. The project would then focus on improving insulation in the loft, walls, and floors, and sealing any draughts around windows and doors. Once the building's fabric has been enhanced, additional measures such as upgrading the heating system or installing solar panels can be considered.

By focusing on the building's fabric first, the Fabric-First Approach ensures that the most significant energy efficiency improvements are made before considering other measures. This approach is essential for creating sustainable and energy-efficient homes in the UK, ultimately leading to reduced energy consumption and enhanced living conditions.