

Guidance Notes Thermal Spacer Bar For Glazing Age

Convention 3.12a - Glazing age

Choose unknown date if there is no evidence of the date.

Multiple glazed units can be dated via the following methods:

- a) The manufacturing date on the spacer bar, or possibly on the frame;
- b) Presence of thermal spacer bar indicates post-2002 glazing age, 2003(Scotland) or 2006(NI);
- c) There is documentary evidence confirming the date of installation of the window e.g. FENSA / CERTASS / Building Control certificate or manufacturers guarantee.
- d) Property build date if after the following trigger dates: Post 2002(E&W), 2003(Scotland) or 2006(NI) where applicable.

If none of the above applies choose 'unknown'.

In this guidance note we are looking specifically at paragraph b)

The best way to clarify the intention and application of this paragraph of the convention is to provide the evidence that we submitted to the conventions group and based upon which the convention was written. (There are minor word changes for context only).

Our initial proposal (for background)

The existing (now previous version) convention does not recognise the fact that there was a significant change in spacer bar technology in around 2010. It was driven by the tightened energy efficiency requirement for windows which came in from 1st of October 2010. In order to meet the highest standards, window companies began to use warm edge technology, also referred to as thermal spacer bars. These are plastic spacer bars which significantly reduce the thermal bridging around the edge of the sealed unit compared to aluminium ones, and they did not exist prior to around 2007/2008, becoming prevalent from 2010 onwards.

A window with warm edge spacer will be significantly post-2002 and is likely to be significantly better than the standard assumed for a post-2002 window. However, the majority of these plastic spacer bars do not have a date stamped on them. In the absence of documentary evidence, under the current convention the assessor would be required to enter these as date unknown and allow the software to assume pre-2002 efficiency. Since the technology did not arrive on the market until several years after 2002 it should be possible to accept thermal spacer bar as evidence for a post-2002 window.

A **Proficiency** guidance document

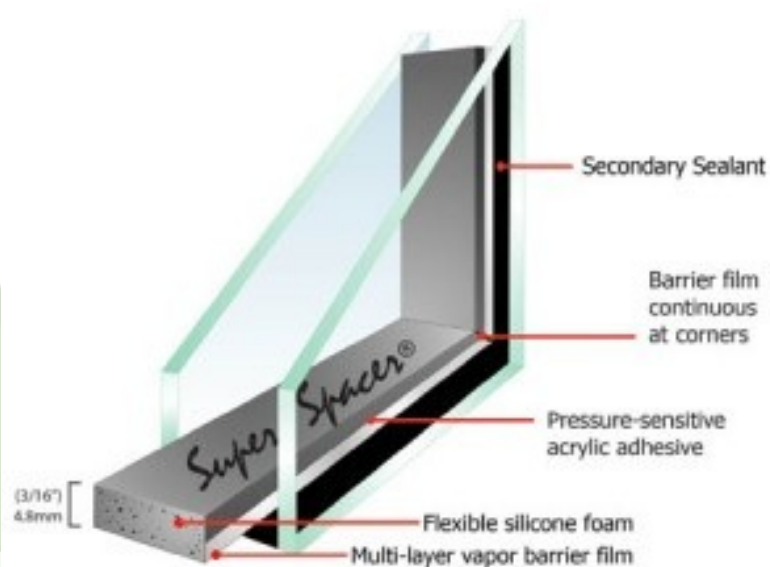
Evidence the convention is based upon

Re Thermal spacer

It is fairly unusual for thermal spacer to have a date stamp but it is possible, and if it happens it will not be a problem as the date will be post 2002 (probably post 2010).

If the house in question was a 2007 build and the windows are original they are probably not thermal spacer but simply standard spacer bar in black. (Dark brown is also common with wood grain finishes).

Thermal spacer is this type and looks like plastic. Holes if any are minimal.

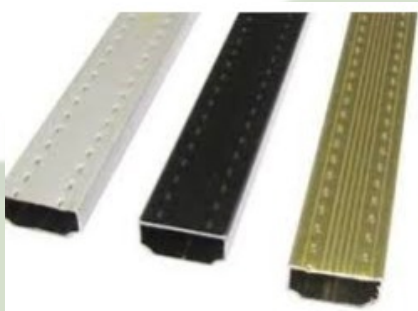
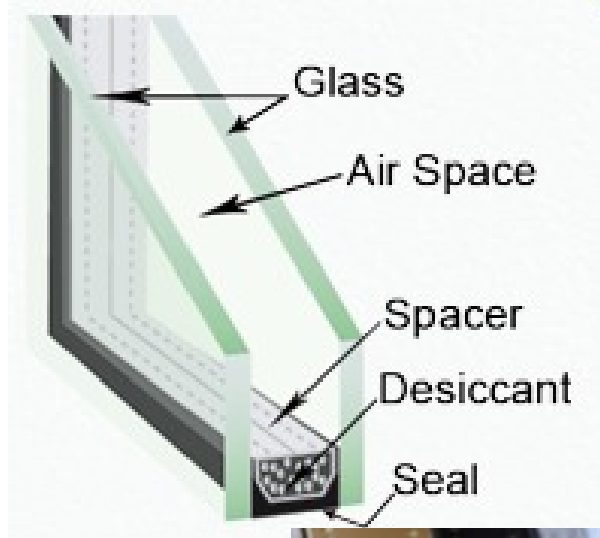


Proficiency

Professionals in efficiency

Traditional spacer is this type and looks like painted metal.

There will be a significant number of holes, usually in 2 rows, to allow air exchange to the desiccant contained within the spacer bar



This is the thermal spacer in my windows at home i.e. the sort of evidence photo I would provide.



As you can see, there is a manufacturer name put on at the point of manufacture of the bar, but there is no date of manufacture for the unit.

A **Proficiency** guidance document

Proficiency

Professionals in efficiency

The only other type of non-metal spacer assessors really need to be aware of is Swiggle. This was a semi rigid plastic spacer that came on a roll and was mainly used in the late 80s through to the early 90s so is definitely pre 2002.

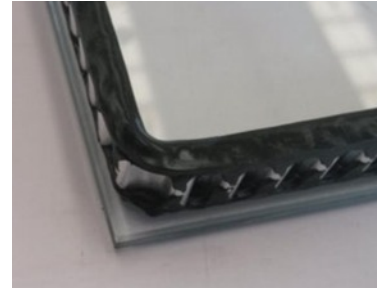
It came like this



You unrolled it along the edge of the glass like this



And then the second pane was laid on top and it was put in a heated press.



They are never dead straight, and they are bent around the corner rather than having a 90 degree joint.

It would be hard to mistake this for a post 2010 (ish) thermal spacer as the windows they are in will be at least 20 years old and probably looking like they need replacing. I have gone through my old jobs and found one with swiggle which looked like this.



The question that will be asked is "*is there a possibility an assessor could misidentify a thermal spacer*" and the answer has to be yes.

However there are many other things an assessor is far more likely to misidentify so if we only assessed on the basis of no possibility of error we wouldn't do very many EPCs.

Ultimately however the potential risk of misidentifying a thermal spacer is minimal compared to the vast number of windows incorrectly being treated as pre 2002 because the assessor is required to enter unknown date without date evidence and if the original build date is pre 2002 the windows are also assumed to be.

The type of windows fitted with thermal spacer units are most likely to be A or B rated ones so treating them as pre 2002 is simply wrong.

A **Proficiency** guidance document

Disclaimer

Hopefully this will provide some clarity on the purpose and application of the convention. It is not an interpretation of the convention; it is instead the evidence we submitted and which was considered by the convention group when the convention was written.

Ultimately the arbiters of what you must do are your accreditation scheme, and their decision is the final one. The above does not override any guidance or instruction you are given by your scheme.

(Should you receive guidance from a scheme which contradicts anything in this document, please let us know. In that instance we can explore the reasons and either update this guidance or challenge the scheme to justify or correct theirs).

This guidance is believed to be correct at the date of writing but may not remain correct should conventions or cross scheme guidance be altered. Conventions issue 11.3 is current at time of issue.

August 2023
V1.0

Copyright note

At the time the convention was being proposed, some images were found on the Internet to illustrate within the conventions group the points under discussion. They were not obtained for any other purpose. We would not at this point know where they came from but acknowledge any copyright of the owner, apologise if use of them in this way is considered inappropriate and will remove any that any copyright owner wishes us to remove.

A **Proficiency** guidance document