

# Noise

Noise associated with laminate  
and wood flooring



Basingstoke  
and Deane

# Thinking of replacing a carpet with a hard floor finish?

## Please read this first!

Hard flooring surfaces such as timber laminates, sanded floorboards and ceramic tiles have become increasingly popular in recent years. This trend has, however, also led to an increase in the number of noise disturbances to neighbours, especially for residents in apartments and flats.

This guide provides highlights the potential noise issues of a hard floor and some advice to help combat them.



# Apartments and flats

## Noise and hard floor surfaces

Research has shown that when a carpet is removed and replaced with wood or laminate flooring the noise your neighbour in the property below experiences can increase significantly.

If you live in a flat or an apartment and do not have any properties below, this will generally not cause noise issues (see best practice for installation for houses).

The removal of carpet in your home could change the noise environment of your neighbour's home – especially those below you - from relatively quiet to unbearable. Noise nuisance can lead to significant distress for occupants

and tension and disputes between neighbours. It can also result in legal action being taken against you. To avoid disturbing your neighbour you should install a resilient underlay under your laminate floor. Extensive use of rugs in areas where you walk a lot will also help. Wearing soft soled shoes, such as slippers, will also reduce the amount of noise you generate.



# Minimising noise transmission

If you are considering installing a laminate or wood finish floor you should minimise the amount of noise which could be heard by your neighbours. The best way of doing this is by laying a resilient underlay. Please see the diagram below:

Advantages of underlays:

- They reduce noise transmission to your neighbours
- They prolong the life of your laminate or wood floor
- They reduce noise and vibration in your own home
- They allow the floor to be more resilient and reduce injuries to children and the elderly when they fall

## Relative impact noise performance of common floor coverings

**Worse**



Bare floor  
Laminate with no underlay  
Laminate with standard underlay  
Laminate with specialist underlay  
Foam backed vinyl  
Carpet  
Carpet with underlay

**Better**

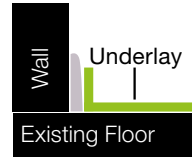


# Seven step best practice for installing laminates and wood floors

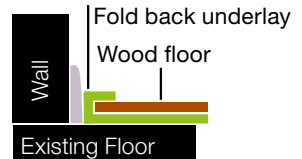
**STEP 1** – lay your underlay so that it lies flat and not uneven

**STEP 2** – ensure the underlay edges are abutted and do not overlap as this will create an uneven surface for your laminate/wood floor

**STEP 3** – lay the underlay so that it has at least 10cm extra, turned up at each perimeter wall



STEP 3



STEP 5

## If existing skirting is not being removed

**STEP 4** – lay the laminate/wood floor so that it stops at least 2cm from the wall or existing skirting

**STEP 5** – pull the underlay around the edge of the laminate

**STEP 6** – fix a small wood channel to the base of the skirting or wall, so that the underlay passes between the floor and channel

**STEP 7** – trim off the protruding underlay



STEP 7



STEP 3

## If using new skirtings or removing and re-using old skirtings

**STEP 4** – lay the laminate/wood floor so that it stops at least 2cm from the wall

**STEP 5** – pull the underlay around the edge of the laminate

**STEP 6** – fix the skirting to the wall, so that the underlay passes between the floor and skirting base

**STEP 7** – trim off the protruding underlay



STEP 5



STEP 7

## **For attached houses**

Noise transmission can occur horizontally if wood or laminate floor finishes are able to touch the shared party wall between the houses. To reduce the possibility of complaints the seven step guide should also be followed.

## **For detached houses**

To reduce noise transmission within your own home using such floor finishes the seven step guide should also be followed.

## **Renting a house or apartment**

If you rent your dwelling from a housing association, registered social landlord or private owner you should check your lease or rental agreement and contact the appropriate person to check if laminate or wood finish floors are permitted to be installed.

If you install such flooring without the appropriate permission you may be asked to remove it and re-install carpets at your expense.

## **What to do in the event of problems**

By far the best way to resolve problems with noise from neighbours is through talking to your neighbours and explaining your concerns. It is more than likely that they are unaware of the problem and will be happy to discuss a solution.

Suggest that if an underlay has not been installed that the floor be lifted and one installed. Alternatively laying rugs on the area of the floor where problems are most experienced may be less costly and would be far more effective at reducing the noise level.

## Mediation

An alternative solution could be to consider mediation. For further information contact:

Mediation UK, Alexander House, Telephone Avenue, Bristol.  
BS1 4BS

+44 (0117) 904 6661 [www.mediationuk.org](http://www.mediationuk.org)

If mediation has not been successful you can make a complaint to the council by letter or in person to:

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council  
Environmental Health, Civic Offices, London Road, Basingstoke.  
RG21 4AH

telephone 01256 844844  
email [ehteam@basingstoke.gov.uk](mailto:ehteam@basingstoke.gov.uk)  
website [www.basingstoke.gov.uk](http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk)

## Further Information

A guide entitled “*Noise Control from Laminated and Wooden Flooring*” is available to download from the Defra website:  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

The full report prepared for Defra into the extent of problems of noise from laminate and wooden floors is available upon request from Defra. Contact Defra by telephone on 08459 33 55 77 or by email at [helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Please also see our other leaflets entitled ‘*Noisy Neighbours*’, ‘*Neighbour Noise – Advice on how to be a considerate neighbour*’, and ‘*How to Take Your Private Action Against Nuisances*’.

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