Installation & Care Guide

SLATTED COMPOSITE CLADDING

Alpha Decking

Juniper Range · Capped with AlphaShield™ · 15-year residential warranty

alphadecking.co.uk 0203 011 1661

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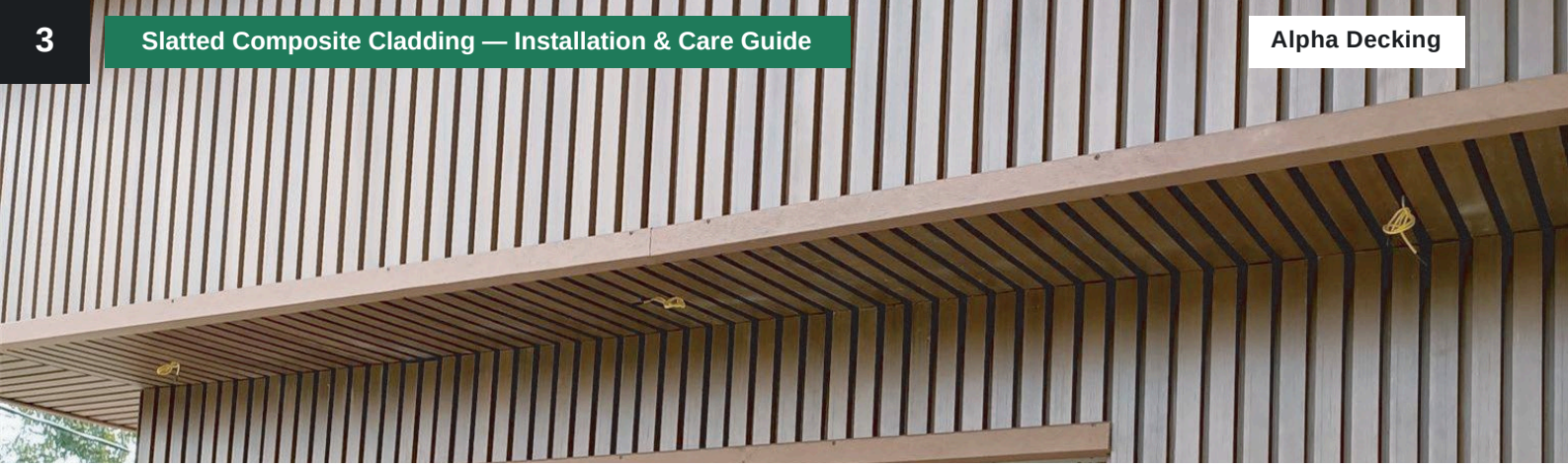


Alpha slatted composite cladding is a capped composite panel — recycled wood fibre and polyethylene, wrapped in our AlphaShield™ polymer cap — made to give the look of timber slats without the upkeep. Because it is a manufactured, pigmented product, order everything for one project at the same time: boards from one production run match, and you save on delivery too.

Before you fix anything, lay all the panels out and look at them together. Our brushed and woodgrain finishes carry natural tonal variation by design, and shuffling them now gives an even spread across the whole wall. As with any material in direct sunlight, a little weathering over time is normal.

The panels can be fitted to most wall types, and around windows, doors and corners, provided the right sub-frame and trims are used. If you are unsure which trims you need, talk to your builder or joiner — or to us — before you order.

Storage & handling

Keep the panels cool, dry and out of direct sunlight, flat on a level surface that supports their full length so they cannot bow. Leave them at the site for at least 24 hours before fixing so they settle at the temperature they will live at. Wear gloves when handling or cutting, and carry each panel with two people — a 3.66 m panel weighs around 11 kg.

Warranty

Alpha slatted composite cladding carries a **15-year residential warranty** against warping, cracking, rot and fungal decay, subject to our terms and conditions. The cladding must be installed in line with this guide; departing from it may void the warranty. This guide is for reference and is not an exhaustive account of every installation situation — if in doubt, ask.

Product specification

Panel	219 mm wide × 26 mm deep
Lengths	3660 mm and 2250 mm
Coverage	200 mm per panel
Area per panel	0.72 m² (3.66 m) · 0.45 m² (2.25 m)
Weight	10.83 kg (3.66 m) · 6.6 kg (2.25 m)
Profile	Four-slat face, hidden tongue & groove
Colours	Charcoal · Birch & Charcoal Silver Grey & Charcoal · Stone Grey & Charcoal

TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

Safety wear

Long sleeves and gloves whenever you handle or carry panels. When cutting, add a dust mask, ear defenders and safety glasses — composite dust is fine and you do not want it in your lungs or eyes.

Tool kit

Ordinary DIY and woodworking tools: tape measure, spirit level, pencil, utility knife, chalk line and a square. A string line helps on long runs.

Cutting equipment

Any standard wood-cutting tool will cut the panels. A mitre saw with a fine-tooth blade gives the cleanest edge by a distance; a jigsaw or circular saw with a fine blade handles cut-outs.

Drilling & driving

A cordless drill/driver with a clutch is all you need. Bring a 6 mm masonry bit for the battens, a small pilot bit for pre-drilling panels, and a countersink.

Spirit level

Non-negotiable. The battens must be flat and level or plumb, and every panel must be checked as it goes on. A 1.2 m level plus a short torpedo level covers everything.

Fixings & consumables

ITEM	SPEC	FOR
Panel and trim screws	35 mm, corrosion-resistant	Panels to battens through the grooved lip; trims at 300 mm centres
Batten fixings	80 mm minimum + plugs	Battens to the wall — at least 50 mm into the substrate
Masonry bit	6 mm	Pre-drilling batten and wall
Pilot bit	3 mm	Pre-drilling every panel before a screw goes in
Packers / shims	Plastic	Levelling battens on an uneven wall

Tips & warnings

The panels, the wall and everything around it must be completely dry before you start. Never install onto a damp wall or in the rain.

Cut outdoors, never inside. Composite dust is fine and travels — stand upwind and wear a mask.

Do not dry-sweep dust or debris off the panels; it goes straight into the air. Wipe with a damp cloth instead.

Follow the tool manufacturer's safety instructions for any saw or power tool. Use a stable platform, not a wobbling ladder.

Getting your wall ready

STEP 1

Measure up

Plan the batten layout before you buy anything, so every panel is properly supported. Look closely at:

- **Butt joints** — wherever two panel ends meet you need twin battens, one for each panel end.
- **Features** — sills, door frames, soffits and downpipes all need batten support around them. See the trims on page 12.
- **Direction** — the panels are tongue-and-groove, so the trims you need depend on which way the panels run. Decide direction first, then count trims.
- **The substrate** — masonry, blockwork and render need plugs; timber frame wants battens on the studs; anything damp gets fixed first.

Important note on temperature

Composite expands and contracts with temperature. Leave the panels at the site for 24 hours to acclimatise before fitting, and avoid installing in very hot or very cold weather — a panel fixed on a frosty morning will grow when the wall warms up.

Check the substrate

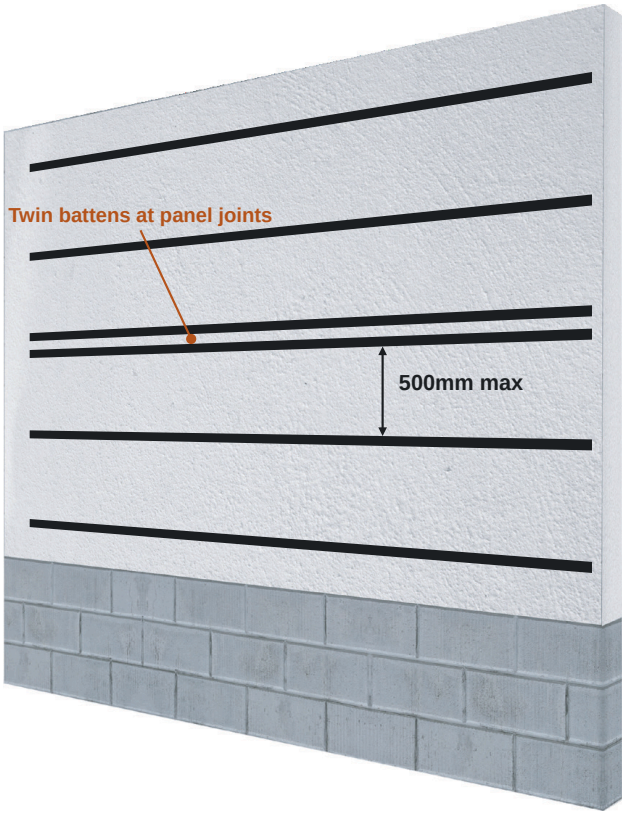
- **Masonry and blockwork** — sound, dry, and able to take a plug. Rake out loose mortar.
- **Render** — fix through the render into the masonry behind, never into the render alone.
- **Timber frame and sheathing** — fix battens into the studs, not just the board. Keep a breather membrane in place behind.
- **Damp** — find and fix the cause before you cover it. Cladding over a damp wall traps the problem.

Working out quantities

Each 3.66 m panel covers **0.72 m²**; each 2.25 m panel **0.45 m²**. Measure the wall height and width, subtract the openings, divide by the panel area and add **10 %** for cuts — 15 % if there are several windows and doors.

Battens: total run ÷ 0.5 m, plus one, plus the perimeter, plus a twin at every butt joint. Trims: one per run edge and one per corner — they are handed, so fix your panel direction first.

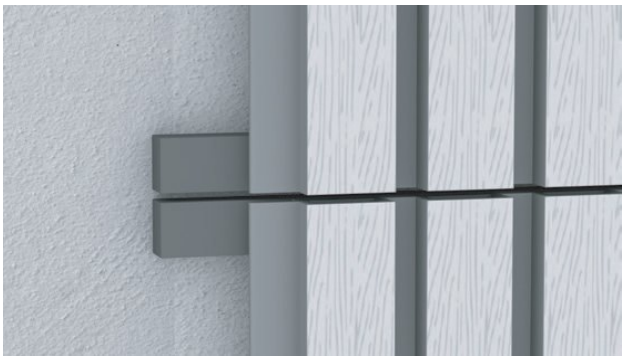
VERTICAL INSTALLATION



Horizontal battens at 500 mm maximum centres, twin battens where panel ends meet.

Twin battens

So that each panel is supported independently at a joint, fit two battens side by side — around 20 mm apart, never closer than 5 mm. That gap doubles as the expansion allowance.



Pre-drill

Pre-drill every panel and every batten before driving a screw. Composite splits if you go straight in.

Air movement

Whatever batten you choose, keep a minimum 25 mm cavity between the wall and the panels. That is what lets the wall breathe.

STEP 1

Install the battens

Any of these will support the panels correctly: **50 × 30 mm composite** (our Composite Joist), **50 × 50 mm recycled plastic**, or **50 × 25 mm pressure-treated timber**. Timber is fixed by the same method and gives the same support. Fix the batten flat to the wall; our 50 × 30 joist fixed this way gives a 30 mm cavity, comfortably over the 25 mm minimum.

Pre-drill both the batten and the wall behind it with a **6 mm** bit. Fixings must go at least **50 mm** into the substrate, so with a 30 mm batten you need screws of **80 mm** or longer, with plugs to suit the wall.

For vertical panels the battens run **horizontally**, at **500 mm maximum centres**, each one running the full width of the area to be clad. Always fix battens at 90° to the direction the panels will run.

Wherever two panels will meet end to end, fit twin battens so each panel end has its own support, with at least 5 mm between the two battens.

Run a batten round the whole perimeter as well. It closes the gap between panel and wall at the edges, and keeps debris, insects and small animals out of the cavity — while leaving the cavity itself open at top and bottom for air.

VERTICAL INSTALLATION

Panels go on left to right, each one hiding the fixings of the one before.

STEP 2

Fix the trims

End and corner trims go on *before* any panels, fixed to the perimeter battens with **35 mm** corrosion-resistant screws at 300 mm centres. Then fit the panels, leaving a **5 mm** expansion gap wherever a panel meets a trim. For a consistent finish, complete one section before starting the next.

Start and end trims are **handed**: because of the tongue-and-groove profile, each one fits only one end of a wall, and which end depends on your panel direction. Measure and count them against that direction before you order. See page 12.

STEP 3

Fix left to right

Stand the first panel against the start trim with its **grooved edge** facing the direction you are working, and set it truly plumb. Pre-drill through the grooved lip at every batten it crosses and drive a 35 mm screw into each — square, and stopped when the head sits flush. Do not overtighten.

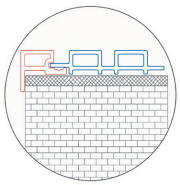
Slide the next panel's tongue (the un-grooved lip) into that groove. It covers the screws of the panel before it. Push it home along its full length, give it a gentle pull to confirm it is tight to the battens, then fix through its own grooved lip. Repeat, checking plumb every third or fourth panel.

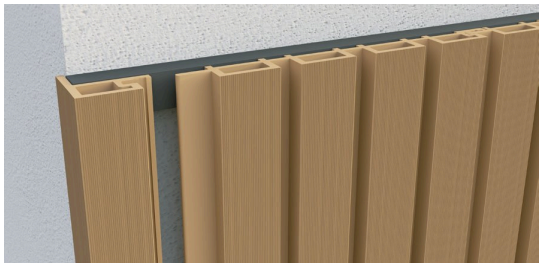
Where a panel meets an end trim, leave **5 mm**. At an internal or external corner trim, leave **5–7 mm**. The gaps let the panel sit into the trim without forcing the profile — cut panels to size on site where needed.

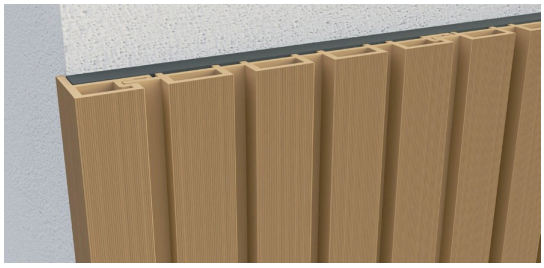
Top tip

Where panels meet end to end, leave at least a 5 mm expansion gap between the ends, and land each end on its own batten of a twin pair spaced about 20 mm apart. One batten shared by two panel ends gives neither a solid fix.

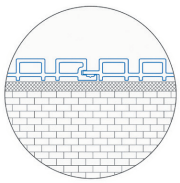
VERTICAL INSTALLATION

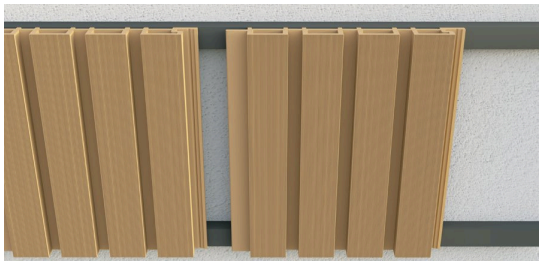


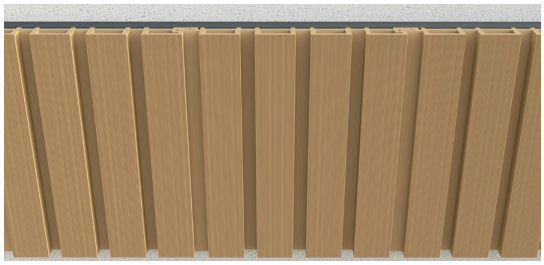




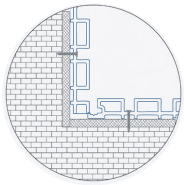
Start trim. Fix the start trim to the perimeter batten first, then locate the first panel into it with a 5 mm gap.

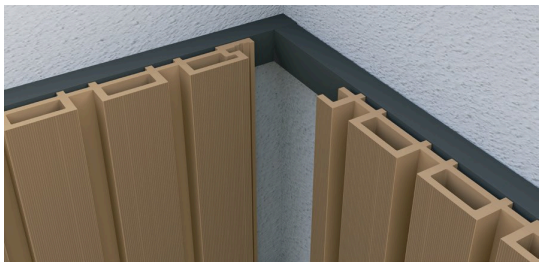


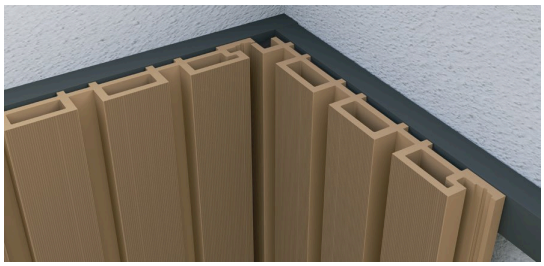




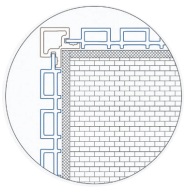
Joining panels. Tongue into groove; the new panel hides the previous panel's fixings. Push fully home before fixing.

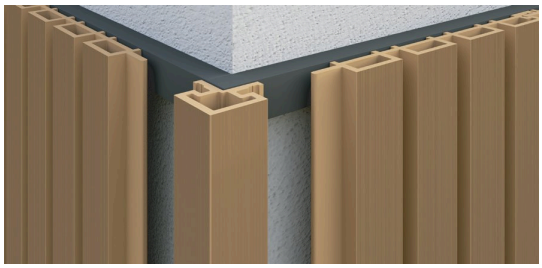


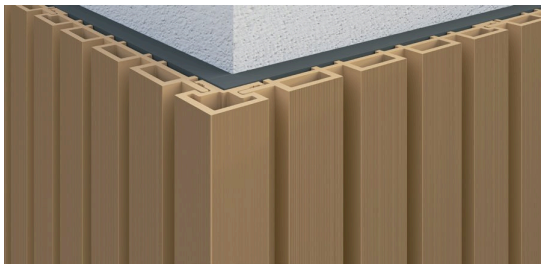




Internal corner. Batten both faces into the angle, stop both panels 5–7 mm short, and close with an internal corner trim.







External corner. Panels on both faces stop short of the corner; the external corner trim wraps over them.

Please note

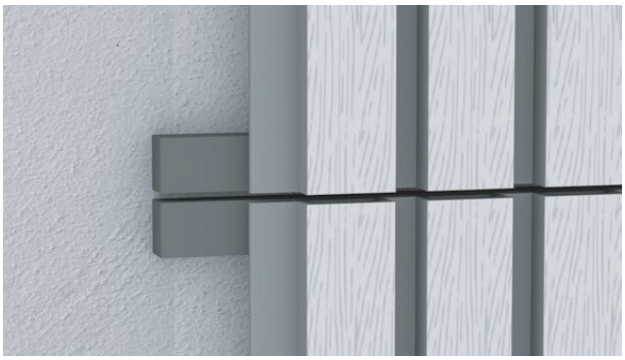
Leave both the top and the bottom of the cavity open. That is what lets air move through and any water that gets behind the panels drain away. A perimeter batten closes the edge gap; it should never seal the cavity shut.

HORIZONTAL INSTALLATION

Vertical battens at 500 mm maximum centres, twin battens where panel ends meet.

Twin battens

Two battens side by side at every butt joint, around 20 mm apart and never closer than 5 mm, so each panel end has its own fix and its own room to move.



Pre-drill

Every panel, every batten, every fixing. It takes seconds and prevents splitting.

Air movement

Minimum 25 mm cavity behind the panels, open at top and bottom.

STEP 1

Install the battens

Same sub-frame as for vertical: **50 × 30 mm composite**, **50 × 50 mm recycled plastic** or **50 × 25 mm treated timber**, fixed flat to the wall with a minimum 25 mm cavity behind the panels.

Pre-drill batten and wall with a **6 mm** bit. Fixings at least **50 mm** into the substrate — **80 mm** screws or longer with a 30 mm batten — with plugs suited to the wall.

For horizontal panels the battens run **vertically**, at **500 mm maximum centres**, each one running the full height of the area to be clad, and always at 90° to the panels.

Twin battens wherever panel ends meet, at least 5 mm apart. A perimeter batten round the edge closes the edge gap without sealing the cavity.

Check every batten with a spirit level as you fix it. An error in the battens becomes an error in every panel above it.

HORIZONTAL INSTALLATION

Panels go on bottom to top, grooved edge uppermost.

STEP 3

Fix the L angle trims

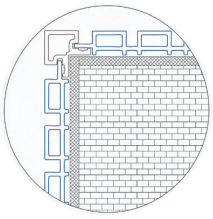
L angle trims give the cladding a clean, finished edge at ends, corners, the top and the bottom. They can go on before the panels as a start or end trim, or after all the panels are in as a cover trim. See page 12.

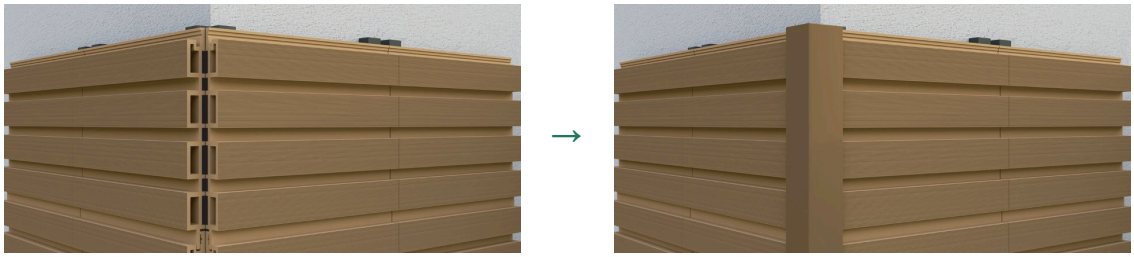
STEP 2

Fix the panels

1. **The first panel.** Start at the bottom. Sit the first panel on the base batten with the **grooved edge uppermost**, facing the direction you are working, and check it dead level. Pre-drill through the grooved lip at every batten it crosses and fix with 35 mm corrosion-resistant screws. Snug, not crushed — the panel has to be able to move.
2. **The next panel.** Bring it down so its tongue engages the groove of the panel below. That hides the fixings. Check level, then pre-drill and screw through its own grooved lip into every batten.
3. **Repeat.** Slot, level, pre-drill, fix. After each one, give it a gentle pull to confirm it is tight to the battens and the joint is closed. Where panels meet end to end on a long wall, use twin battens and keep a 5 mm gap between the panel ends, each fixed to its own batten. Stagger butt joints from one course to the next.
4. **Cut to fit.** At the end of a run and around openings, measure and cut with a fine-tooth saw, remembering the 5 mm gap between the cut end and any trim or wall. A cut end is uncapped — keep it inside a trim or a covered joint.
5. **Finish.** Once all the panels are on, check for loose screws or uneven joints, fit any cover trims, and wipe the panels down with a soft cloth and lukewarm water to remove installation dust.

HORIZONTAL INSTALLATION





External corner. Both runs stop short of the corner over their own battens, then the corner trim wraps over the panel ends, fixed at 300 mm centres.

A spirit level is essential when installing slatted cladding. Check every batten, the first panel, and then every third or fourth panel after it.

Top tip

Where panels meet end to end, always leave an expansion gap of at least 5 mm. Land each end on its own batten of a twin pair spaced about 20 mm apart, so both ends get a solid, secure fix.

Working the height

The last course will usually need ripping down. Cut it from the *tongue* edge — never the grooved edge — so the lip you fix through stays intact. Face-fix the top panel into the batten, pre-drilled and countersunk, and cover the fixings with the head trim.

Windows, doors and penetrations

Shallow reveals

Frame the opening with trim, mitred at 45° at the corners to picture-frame it. Keep 5 mm between every panel end and the inside of the frame.

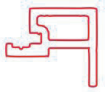
Deep reveals

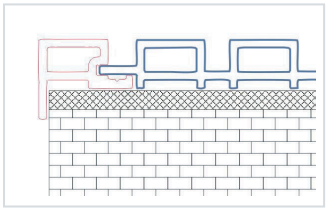
Line the reveal: batten the return faces, panel them, and use corner trim where the reveal meets the wall face. Make sure the sill throws water clear of the cladding below.

Pipes and vents

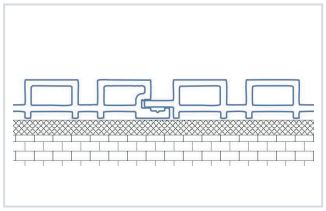
Cut the hole 10 mm larger than the item and cover with a collar fixed to the item, not the panel. Never seal a panel rigidly to a pipe with silicone — it has to move.

TRIMS & PROFILES

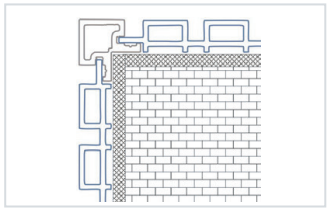
	PROFILE	PART		USE
A		**Slatted cladding panel** 219 × 26 mm · ref 219H26		The panel. Four-slat face, tongue on one edge, grooved fixing lip on the other. 200 mm coverage.
B		**Start / end trim**		Closes the first or last panel edge on a run. **Handed** — fits one end of a wall only, depending on panel direction.
C		**External corner trim** 2.25 m · colour-matched · AlphaShield™ capped		Wraps an outside corner and covers the panel ends on both faces. Also used at edges and heads.
L		**L angle trim**		General finishing angle for edges, corners, heads and bases. Goes on first as a start trim or last as a cover trim.



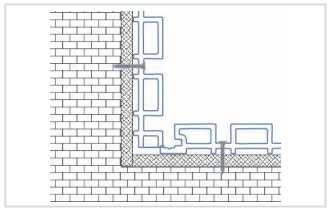
B + A start trim



A + A panel joint



Internal corner



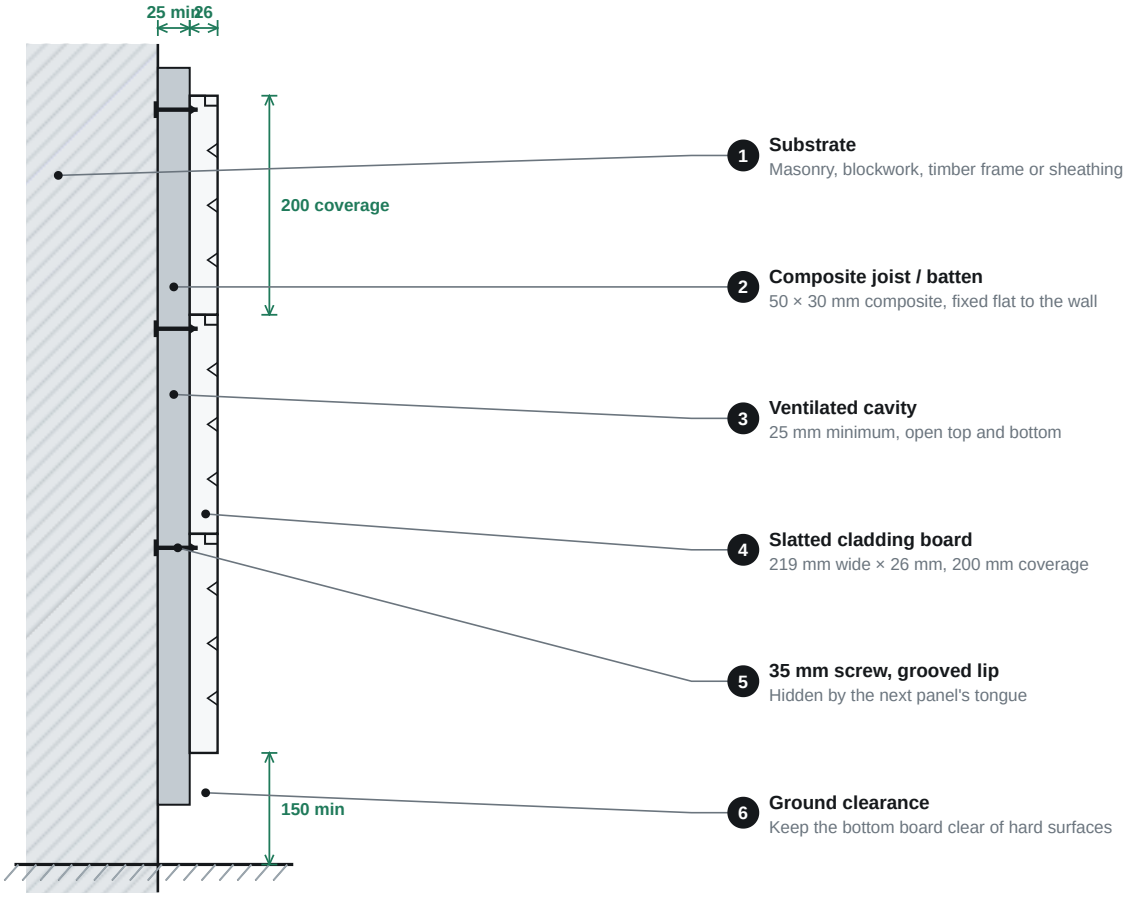
C + A external corner

Where each detail occurs on a typical elevation: start trim at the first edge, plain joints across the run, an internal corner where the wall returns, and an external corner trim on the outside corner.

Fitting trims

35 mm corrosion-resistant screws at 300 mm centres. 2 mm between two lengths of trim end to end. 5 mm between a panel end and a start or end trim; 5–7 mm at a corner trim. Fit trims before panels wherever you can — except L angle trims, which can go on afterwards as a cover.

WALL BUILD-UP & EXPANSION



Vertical section — horizontal board installation

Section through the wall. Substrate, batten fixed flat, ventilated cavity of at least 25 mm, 219 × 26 mm panel, and a 35 mm screw through the grooved lip that the next panel's tongue hides. Keep the bottom panel clear of hard surfaces.

Expansion gaps

Composite moves with temperature; every gap gives it somewhere to go. In cold weather work to the larger figure; in heat the minimum is enough.

JUNCTION	MINIMUM
Panel end to start / end trim	5 mm
Panel end to panel end	5 mm
Panel to a corner trim	5–7 mm
Panel to window or door frame	5 mm
Panel to pipe, bracket or sill	5 mm all round
Trim length to trim length	2 mm
Between twin battens	5 mm · 20 mm ideal

Clearances

Never in standing water, never bridging the damp-proof course. Minimum distances from the bottom edge of the lowest panel.

FROM THE CLADDING TO	MINIMUM
Ground, path or patio	150 mm
Flat roof or deck surface	100 mm
Gutter, downpipe or soffit	10 mm
Damp-proof course	Never bridge it
Cavity, top and bottom	Left open

Care & ongoing maintenance

Routine cleaning

Wash the panels with lukewarm or cold water. For stubborn marks — bird droppings, for instance — add a little mild washing-up liquid and use a soft brush or sponge, then rinse. Wipe dust off with a damp cloth rather than a dry brush.

Annual check

Once a year, inspect the panels and clean off any build-up of dirt, pollution or staining. While you are there, check that the bottom of the cladding is still clear of the ground, that nothing has been stacked against it, and that any planting has not closed off the cavity.

Caution

High-pressure cleaning systems must never be used. A pressure washer or jet wash damages the AlphaShield™ cap and the panel finish, forces water into the cavity behind the panels, and any damage it causes is not covered by the warranty. Lukewarm water, mild soap and a soft brush will shift anything a jet wash would.

- × Pressure washers, jet washes and steam cleaners
- × Bleach, solvents, acid-based cleaners or abrasive powders
- × Paint, stain, oil or sealant — the cap will not take them
- × Dry sweeping or dry brushing

Alpha slatted composite cladding — capped on every face with AlphaShield™, so the colour and finish you fit is the one you keep.

Questions & contact

Can I fix the panels straight to the wall?
No. They need a batten sub-frame with at least a 25 mm ventilated cavity behind them. Fixing to masonry or render directly voids the warranty.

Which way should the panels run?
Either. Vertical suits garden rooms and modern extensions; horizontal suits long, low elevations. The battens always run the opposite way, at 500 mm maximum centres.

What screws do I need?
35 mm corrosion-resistant screws for panels and trims, always pre-drilled. For battens into the wall, 80 mm or longer with plugs to suit, giving 50 mm into the substrate.

How many panels?
Wall area in m² ÷ 0.72 for 3.66 m panels, or ÷ 0.45 for 2.25 m. Add 10 % for cuts, 15 % if there are several openings.

Which trims, and how many?
A start or end trim for each edge of a run and a corner trim for each corner. Start and end trims are handed, so fix your panel direction before you count. We will check a trim list for you.

Can I paint or stain it?
No. The AlphaShield™ cap is designed not to accept coatings — that is why it never needs them.

Will the colour fade?
The cap is UV-resistant and holds its colour far better than uncapped composite or timber. A slight, even softening in the first months of full sun is normal and then stabilises.

Can I cut the panels down their length?
Only the last panel in a run, from the tongue edge, then face-fixed and covered by a trim. Ripping through the joint anywhere else destroys the system and voids the warranty.

Do I need planning permission?
Usually not for domestic cladding, but listed buildings, conservation areas, National Parks and AONBs are exceptions. Check with your local planning authority first.

Can I use it indoors?
Yes, on a batten sub-frame — feature walls, garden rooms and offices. Same spacing and expansion rules.

Need a hand?

If anything on your wall does not match what is in this guide — an awkward corner, an odd substrate, a wall you are not sure about — call us before you start. We would much rather talk it through first.

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HOURS
Mon–Fri 8am–6pm
Sat–Sun 10am–4pm