



A glass wool quill suspended between floor joists keeps U-values low.

wool association Eurisol – Pilkington Insulation, Rockwool and Gyproc Insulation – are already using the draft regulations to promote their products.

The battle goes back to December 1986, when the department issued a consultative document setting out reduced U-values for different building types and elements. The draft of L1 that followed in the summer of 1988 went further down the road to conservation:

- walls of all new buildings to attain 0.45 W/m²K instead of 0.6 W/m²K
- U-value of dwelling roofs to come down from 0.35 to 0.25 W/m²K, non-residential roofs set at 0.25 W/m²K
- floor insulation introduced, with a 0.45 W/m²K requirement
- internal unheated spaces to be insulated to 0.6 W/m²K
- insulation of heating pipes and storage tanks and mandatory use of time switches and thermostats.

The quoted U-values set a target figure for new buildings,

but the draft incorporates two suggestions to broaden the options for designers.

The first is trade-offs between building elements – if floor insulation is increased to 0.35 W/m²K for example, a roof value of 0.35 W/m²K is acceptable. The second alternative sets a calculation, based on the Milton Keynes Energy Cost index, for the annual target energy costs of a building. Designers are allowed a free hand as long as their structures cost the same or less to heat as similar buildings that comply to the elemental approach.

In broad terms, the Approved Document on Trippier's desk is the one circulated for comment last year. The organisational responses ran 78-8 in favour of the recommendations. All of the points raised were considered on 1 March by the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, a body of industry figures convened to advise the Government on the technical matters.

Government rules on heat loss

BUILDING regulations are not usually the subject of heated political controversy. The 1989 edition of Approved Document L1 *Conservation of Fuel and Power* has proved to be an exception.

The most public squabble – a spirited exchange of letters between House-Builders' Federation director Roger Humber and Jonathon Porritt, director of Friends of the Earth – has helped to conceal disagreements in quieter but more influential quarters.

Since the 1985 regulations raised the standard for insulation in new buildings, arguments have continued to surround the issue. Is energy efficiency essential to health and safety? ask the critics. It may be important, they concede, but building regulations are not the right vehicle to save energy.

The debate goes as far as the Cabinet and throws into sharp focus two conflicting strands of Government policy – deregulation and conservation.

It is known that construction minister David Trippier has taken a particular interest in the energy proposals, which were passed to him this month by the Department of the Environment's Building Regulations division.

The Government is committed to including energy conservation in the regulations. Energy secretary Cecil Parkinson has even promoted the regulations as a part of the Government's green crusade. But his colleagues at the DOE had to contend with industry fears that the extra costs associated with conservation would be a further blow in a period of declining demand.

HBF director Humber was the most outspoken voice. He raised doubts that extra insulation might introduce risks of condensation and maintained that the proposed improvements involved too long a payback period. "Combating the ill side-effects of insulation will affect availability of homes in depressed areas," he said.

Humber represents an influential lobby – housebuilders are among the most generous contributors to Conservative Party funds.

The FoE accused the HBF of delaying the new regulations on purpose. "If you call a process of raising legitimate technical issues 'filibustering', then we're proud to have filibustered," Humber replied.

The other side of the divide has its own industry champions. The three members of mineral

Should energy saving measures be imposed by building regulations? The answer to this question, which has fuelled a fiery debate between house-builders and conservationists, now lies in the hands of construction minister David Trippier. John Stokdyk reports on the ongoing tug of war.

In the light of all the controversy, DOE officials were remarkably tight-lipped about the fate of the conservation proposals. The BRAC proceedings were classified and surrounded by reporting restrictions worthy of the Ministry of Defence.

Brian Hewett, technical director of Ideal Homes (London) carried the housebuilders' mantle into the final BRAC meeting. The arguments voiced in the public arena were replayed in a more technical form, but Hewett was unable to sway the panel.

The BRAC reached a consensus that if the Government wished to use the building regulations as a means to conserve energy, then Approved Document L1 set out sensible methods to achieve savings. If energy conservation is a political tennis ball, BRAC hit it firmly back into Trippier's court.

"We don't know what the minister is going to think," said an exasperated spokesman before the 1 March BRAC meeting. The department was equally unforthcoming afterwards.

The Government has not yet announced a date for laying the regulations before Parliament.