

28th September 2007

NEWS RELEASE

Dacorum Borough Council Housing Maintenance Department adds infra-red thermography to toolbox following useful trial

The Housing Maintenance Department of Dacorum Borough Council has been using infra-red thermography (IRT) as a method for evaluating the thermal efficiency of housing stock by detecting defective insulation, air leakage and damp problems. This follows the Department's recent trial of infra-red thermography services from specialist company Thermal Inspections Ltd who provided Dacorum with an explanatory report including thermal images taken at three separate Council properties. The images highlighted suspected damp and heat loss problem areas, indicating problems that had not been suspected beforehand. Having established the facts with no need to use destructive or intrusive physical methods the Department was able to address the problems. There was minimal intrusion on the tenants; IRT surveys can be done from the outside of a property with no requirement to enter.

Against the background of increasing environmental concerns and changing regulations for buildings standards, Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Maintenance Department take an interest in any new developments that may help them 'work smarter' or more cost effectively with the ten and a half thousand properties in their care. They were therefore swift to note that infra-red thermography — a well-accepted method of imaging and evaluating heat efficiency of both public buildings and private homes in the United States and Canada — was being offered as a service in Britain by consultants who are specialised in this particular application area.

Neil Brown, the Council's maintenance manager, wanted to find out exactly what sort of results the method could provide and in what ways use of it might help his

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department. “We were aware of the technology, but we hadn’t previously known of it in this context, to establish damp or heat loss,” he explained. “We’re always up for trying things if we feel it might be of benefit to us.”

The Department’s team of surveyors know their housing stock very well, from regular visiting and attention. With knowledge of how damp occurs the surveyors are thoroughly experienced at diagnosing its symptoms. Richard Woods, building surveyor with Dacorum Council, noted: “At one of the properties the thermal imaging showed up where heat was being lost from the structure, through poor insulation, which you wouldn’t have seen with the naked eye. So it highlighted a problem there which we were then able to address.”

They found assimilating the information from Thermal Inspections Ltd’s report and thermographs straightforward. The artificial colours indicating the temperature differences need to be interpreted, but as Mr. Woods commented: “The report was quite thorough, and there was not a problem in understanding it”. The results were clear: “In one case I knew it was going to tell us we were losing heat from the building — and it showed that up quite significantly.”

Both men believe that for departments such as theirs, and for housing associations, infra-red thermography can bring useful insights to two distinct aspects of work. One — as in the Dacorum trial — is in-depth examinations of individual buildings, or parts of them, for various possible reasons, including political. Mr. Brown said: “When you get a particularly difficult or delicate problem, you have to cover every possible angle to diagnose it, so the thermal imaging is another useful tool”. IRT provides excellent support to help deal with legal disputes with tenants; if, for example, a tenant says the walls of his house are not sufficiently insulated, IRT can prove otherwise, with the evidence in a format which most people can understand readily when it is presented to them. The other aspect would be broader: “If we had to diagnose, say, a general fault in a whole street of houses, this system could help us. Or if a local

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authority was proposing to do a large survey of all of their properties, for instance for improvement of insulation, it would be very useful for that.”

Meanwhile, they are pleased to have done more than just read about a potentially useful technique. “Having now tried it we know what it does and the information it provides, and we have a better idea of where we would use it in the future,” said Mr. Brown.

Daniel Bobker, managing director of Thermal Inspections Ltd, commented: “IRT in the building industry is rapidly gaining momentum, regulations are being updated all the time, and ‘green’ aspects are steadily becoming more important. Dacorum Borough Council has been quick to envisage future need to prove, for example, that a building is losing very little or no heat. They have shown that thermal images are the ideal way to do that sort of energy auditing, as well as proving for themselves that infra-red thermography really is a useful tool for detecting problems and solving legal disputes”.

Notes to Editors:

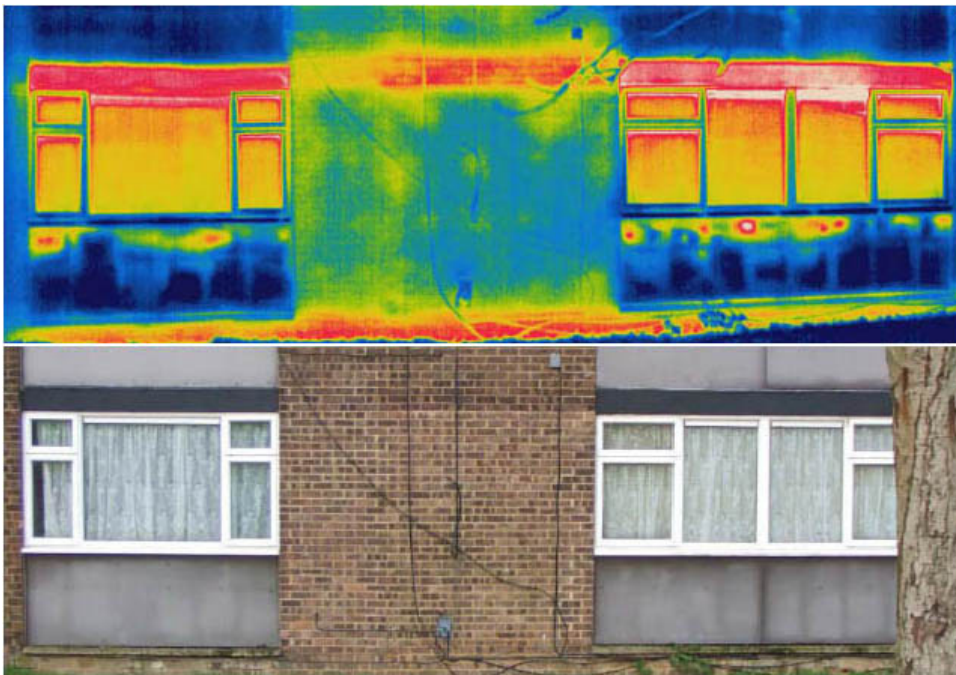
Thermal Inspections Ltd has specialised in infra-red thermographic surveys of domestic and commercial buildings since 2005. The company’s energy audits tie in with the Decent Homes standard set out by the ODPM, and the company advises on compliance issues to help Registered Social Landlords achieve their 2010 targets.

The Borough of Dacorum is in West Hertfordshire. It is composed of the main towns of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring, plus a number of large and small villages. The Council currently manages 10,500 properties
For further information go to: www.thermal-inspections.com

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Solid wall dwelling losing significant heat identified by Thermal Inspections Ltd for Dacorum Borough Council



Thermal Inspections Ltd work confirmed Dacorum Borough Council surveyors' suspicions of thermal bridging, sunken insulation, defective window seals, bridging wall ties and broken damp course