



I want bi-fold doors – Really!

Bi-fold doors are very fashionable but it is only a matter of time before architects and their clients realise they are not very practical. We saw this with conservatories and polycarbonate or glazed roofs which people are now changing to solid roofs – just not practical, too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer.

Most window and door products come with a 10 year guarantee. But, the easiest opt out of any guarantee is due to a lack of maintenance, notably cleaning and oiling moving parts - hinges, locks, handles, etc. Logically, the more openable lights, the more moving parts, the more maintenance that will be required and, if not properly maintained, the more likely such products will cause issues later on.

These issues are magnified in the case of timber windows and doors. Because timber is a natural material it is not only prone to

movement with climatic changes but also requires regular painting / staining for protection. PVCu and aluminium clad timber windows are less prone to movement. They will also require less maintenance since external painting is virtually eliminated.

In our view these issues are further magnified in the case of patio / sliding and folding-sliding (or bi-fold, as they are commonly known) doors, especially the latter. These products have far more moving parts than any window or standard entrance door.

Any product which employs a threshold track will require very regular maintenance to ensure its smooth operation and, as we know, most people do not do maintenance! If tracks are not kept clean, doors will jam and the users exert too much pressure to open and close them.

This will result in excessive wear / damage to rollers and hinges. Bi-fold doors, in particular, have so many rollers, hinges and locks that a lack of regular maintenance will render them virtually useless and/or result in considerable repair costs. Of greater concern is the reduction in weather performance if doors become out of alignment or weather seals become damaged.

There can be no doubt the admen have done a great job 'selling' the bi-fold door concept. We've all seen the images - vast openings connecting plush open plan living spaces with the garden and nature. All very enticing and people are simply seduced by this image and give no thought to the practical issues.

The reality, of course, is completely different. Unless you live in the south of England, there will be very few days in the year when the weather is good enough, for

long enough, that you would wish to open the doors. Then there are all the flies, wasps and other insects and birds which will fly in, making a nuisance of themselves and in the case of the latter leaving a fair mess through fright!

Nice idea but not very sensible. But, there are options. For most people it is the visual connection with their garden that they crave. This can be achieved by simple fixed panes of glass which will generally offer a lot less obstruction to the view than a closed bi-fold door. Also, most people can walk through a standard size door which can be closed behind them to avoid any 'intruders'.

The Norscot approach is fixed panes with adjacent single/double doors - simple and better - good views combined with superior weather performance and low maintenance. Fixed panes and doors can be arranged in any configuration to fill any size of opening. Practical and serviceable.

