

# New Homes Ombudsman Case Study: **Kitchen Tile Quality Concern**



## Issue

The customer complained that the developer did not meet the Code by supplying kitchen floor tiles that were not fit for purpose, and by withholding known issues during the tile selection process and the after-sales service.

## Relevant sections of the New Homes Quality Code

Part 1

**Selling a New Home**

Part 3

**After-sales, complaints and the NHOS**

## Circumstances

- The customer raised concerns about the suitability of the porcelain floor tiles installed in their new home, saying that the tiles are prone to trapping debris and staining, making them difficult to clean. They claimed this makes the tiles impractical for a busy family kitchen and not fit for purpose.
- The developer had withdrawn their preferred tile choice due to previous customer concerns, and the customer had to make an alternative selection. They say they were not informed that the replacement tile shared similar characteristics.
- The developer provided information about the tiles in the showroom and referenced care advice available via the manufacturer and its own home maintenance guide. The customer's first-choice tile was withdrawn due to aesthetic inconsistencies rather than a defect.
- Following the customer's complaint, the developer arranged for the tile manufacturer to inspect the flooring. The manufacturer confirmed no defect was present and demonstrated that the tiles could be cleaned. The developer closed the complaint.

## Ombudsman's decision

The Ombudsman found that the developer provided the customer with sufficient opportunities to view and select the tiles, including detailed information about their maintenance.

Investigations by both the developer and the manufacturer found no fault with the installed tiles. The developer responded to the complaint promptly, investigating the issue and using the necessary stages of their complaints process before finally issuing the customer with a closure letter.

The developer also arranged a manufacturer visit, confirming the tiles could be cleaned using standard methods. The Ombudsman concluded that the developer met the New Homes Quality Code requirements and treated the customer fairly.

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## Outcome

Complaint **not upheld**.



## Learnings

- Be clear about why a product has been withdrawn to avoid confusion or concern.
- Keep communication open and involve relevant parties, like manufacturers, when investigating issues.

## Recommendations for developers

To help customers make informed choices, provide clear information about product characteristics and maintenance requirements during the selection process.

Implement full after-sales support that includes timely investigations and clear communication to address complaints fairly.

