Defining Coastal Locations

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Introduction

This technical document provides additional guidance relating to how to determine whether a development is located within a coastal location as defined by Warranty.

Coastal locations: Defined

For the purpose of our Warranty, any development located within 500 metres (m) of the general UK coastal shoreline is defined as a coastal location.

Within this definition, the shoreline includes the foreshore (land between high and low tide marks) and all adjacent landforms such as cliffs, banks, barriers, dunes, beaches, mudflats, and sandflats.

Sites located in tidal estuarine zones are also considered coastal when they fall within 500m of the general UK coastal shoreline.

Applying the 500m guidance

The 500m distance is based upon environmental risks that are elevated even when the site is not directly on the coast.

When assessing whether a site falls within 500m of the coastline, the measurement should start from the high tide line, as this represents the point where the sea regularly reaches. From that point, the 500m distance is simply measured straight inland on an accurate official map of the United Kingdom such as Ordnance Survey (OS) maps.

This provides a clear and consistent basis for determining whether a development is close enough to the coast to be affected by salt laden air, wind driven moisture, and other coastal conditions. Although the 500m measurement is taken purely as a horizontal distance from the high tide line, factors such as elevation, aspect, and exposure can still influence how far coastal effects reach and should be considered in the overall assessment.

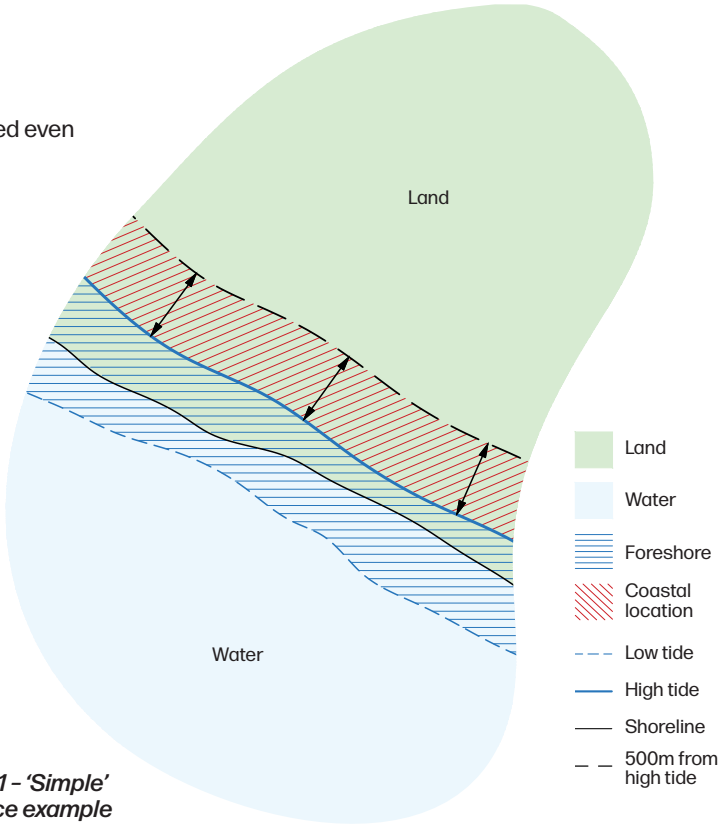

Figure 1 – 'Simple' distance example

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TS-4161-1.00-090726 - First Issued June 2026

In estuarine and similar tidal environments, coastal exposure can extend inland, beyond simple distance measurements due to effects of a tidal area where fresh and salt water constantly mix, and their salinity changes throughout the day. Due to those variables, a horizontal distance taken from the high tide line alone may be inaccurate, and site specific assessment may be required to assess any increased corrosion risk.

What are the Warranty providers concerns?

A saline rich environment can travel significant distances inland via waterways such as estuaries and remain especially aggressive to metals and concrete resulting in potential for corrosion and diminished durability and service life.

Warranty stance

Developments located within 500m of the shoreline are considered as areas that are directly influenced by marine conditions such as a saline rich environment, high levels of UV, offshore winds and wind driven moisture.

A failure to identify affected sites and providing appropriate protection to materials and adopting appropriate design methodology, is considered to compromise the ability of the constructed building elements and associated materials in meeting with the Functional Requirements and Performance Requirements stipulated by the Technical Manual, notably those relating to durability, and those relating to achieving an appropriate service life.

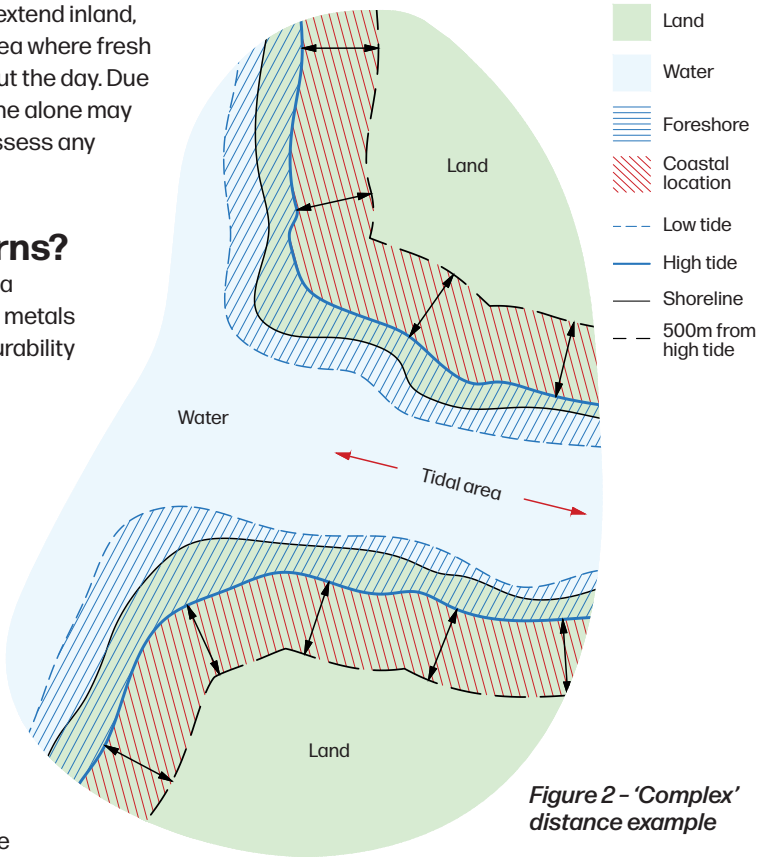

Figure 2 – 'Complex' distance example

What Developers should action after reading this document?

Completing an assessment of a coastal location

Developers should undertake an early assessment of the site's geographical location using digital mapping tools on recognised authoritative platforms (e.g. Ordnance Survey maps). This assessment should identify and measure distances to areas classified as coastal locations, applying the principles set out in this guidance.

As part of this evaluation, consideration should also be given to other environmental factors associated with coastal locations, including exposure to wind-driven rain. While exposure may be assessed in accordance with 'BS 8104: Code of practice for assessing exposure of walls to wind-driven rain', this standard must not be used in isolation to determine a site's vulnerability to coastal conditions.

Further guidance on identifying and classifying coastal locations is provided in 'Appendix B: Coastal Locations' of the Technical Manual.

Engagement, discrepancies and specialist input

Developers must discuss their preliminary assessment with the Warranty provider at the earliest opportunity. Where there is a discrepancy between the Developer's assessment and the position of the Warranty provider - particularly in complex scenarios such as tidal or estuarine environments where the extent of saline influence may be difficult to define - this should be identified and discussed promptly with the aim of reaching agreement.

If agreement cannot be reached, the Developer shall appoint a suitably qualified specialist to undertake a detailed assessment and provide a reasoned determination. The findings of a specialist will be considered by the Warranty provider in reaching a final decision. Any specialist appointed must be appropriately qualified and affiliated with a recognised professional body (e.g. The Hydrographic Society UK & Ireland or RICS).

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Application of coastal location requirements

Where a development is considered to be in a coastal location, designers and specifiers shall apply the requirements set out in Appendix B 'Coastal Locations' of the Technical Manual. This includes compliance with any enhanced protections and/or limitations relating to material specifications and architectural detailing.

Appendix B 'Coastal Locations' contains comprehensive guidance in relation to external walls, render, external cladding including rainscreen, external windows and doors, balconies, and protective coatings. Any elements that are not referred to directly shall be raised to the Warranty surveyor at the earliest opportunity.

Designers should select appropriate materials and appropriate detailing, informed by environmental exposure classification data and reference made to maps contained within Appendix C 'Materials, Products, and Building Systems' of the relevant Technical Manual.

Developer's site teams must ensure that materials used are as the issued design and specifications – material substitutions should be avoided. Where they are considered unavoidable, any proposed change must be raised to the Warranty surveyor as early as possible, and any alternative materials proposed supplemented by a full specification completed by the Developer's design team.

Developer's site teams must ensure appointed subcontractors understand enhanced detailing and regularly undertake Quality Assurance (QA) checks to ensure deviations do not occur.

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