

Building Terms & Construction Jargon Explained.....

Building terms and construction jargon can be bewildering! If you are busy carrying out research for your building project, you've probably already been bombarded by dozens of new words and phrases. There are lots of specialist, technical words and legal requirements involved with carrying out building works.

Below is our attempt to de-mystify some of the most commonly-used construction terminology - we hope you find it useful!

CLPM Glossary of Terms



Budget / Estimate

A cost estimate is the approximation of the cost of a building project and is often used to establish a budget as the cost constraint for a project. In cost engineering (where architectural designs or specifications are modified to try to reduce costs), cost estimation is a basic activity.

Building Contract

The formal, legal document which forms an agreement between the client and the builder. CLPM generally prepare the Homeowner or JCT Minor Works Building Contract for clients. This is designed for domestic builds or basic construction projects where the work is of a simple nature. Minor Works Building Contracts are suitable for projects procured via the traditional Main Contractor (one main builder).

Building Control

Team from the local authority responsible for ensuring that the building works are adhering to building regulations in terms of structural safety and that the build is as per the planning permission that has been granted.

Building Regulations

Building regulations are minimum standards for design, construction and alterations to virtually every building. They are developed by the government and approved by Parliament. These would include depth of foundations, thickness of insulation, location of drainage or soak-away etc.

Change Order

A written document between the owner and the contractor signed by the owner and the contractor authorizing a change in the work or an adjustment in the contract sum or the contract time. A change order may be signed by the architect or engineer, provided they have written authority from the owner for such procedure and that a copy of such written authority is furnished to the contractor upon request. The contract sum and the contract time may be changed only by change order. A change order may be in the form of additional compensation or time; or less compensation or time known as a Deduction (from the contract) the amount deducted from the contract sum by change order.

Contingency Figure

A figure placed in the project budget that is not allocated to any specific item or service but which is put in to address any unforeseen expenditures, items or incidents that arise during the course of the building works.

Contract Administration and Administrator

The building contract is a legally-binding commitment between the builder and the client to deliver the project. The Contract Administrator administers this contract between both parties (client and contractor) and acts as the 'referee' (although the fees are generally paid by the client). The Contract Administrator is responsible for ensuring that the contract documentation is appropriate, and accurate and all items under the contract, such as variations and certificates, are properly signed and issued. He or she will carry out periodic site visits to monitor progress. The day-to-day supervision of the build itself is the responsibility of the contractor, who is also responsible for ensuring that the structure is built in compliance with the building contract, the planning permission, Building Regulations and Health and Safety requirements.

Defects Liability

A period of time, typically 26-52 weeks, after the building project has completed (ie. practical completion) during which a contractor has the obligation to come back to site to address any defects. During this period the contractor remains liable under the building contract for dealing with any defects. Any defects or faults which arise, for example due to defective materials or workmanship, must be put right by the contractor at its own expense. It may also be referred to as a rectification period or defects correction period.

Energy Audit/ Energy Assessment

An energy audit, also known as an energy assessment, is the first step to assess how much energy your home or building consumes and to evaluate what measures you can take to make it more energy efficient. An assessment will show you problems that may, when corrected, save you significant amounts of money over time. It is the first step in creating a greener, more eco-friendly home.

Estimates and Quotes

There is a difference between an estimate and a quote. They both give an indication on what a job will cost, but the main difference is that a quote provides you with a concrete figure whereas an estimate will simply give you a broad idea within a range of accuracy of perhaps 10-20%.

First Fix and Second Fix

First fix comprises all the work needed to take a building from foundation to putting plaster on the internal walls. This includes constructing walls, floors and ceilings, and inserting cables for electrical supply and pipes for water supply. *Second fix* comprises all the work after the plastering to a finished house.

Fittings

The additional accessories or items which fit onto the fixtures such as ironmongery, taps, shower heads and controls, door handles, power sockets, light controls and units.

Fixtures

The elements of the building specification which are fixed, but not structural. These would include doors, skirting boards, dado rails, fitted wardrobes or cabinets, kitchen units, worktops, and sanitary-ware.

Handover Phase

The handover of the site to the client happens once the contract administrator has agreed that the works defined in the contract are complete. During handover, the clients should be issued with elements such as the keys and transmitter controls for the development; the health and safety files; user manuals, log books and guides as well as any testing and commissioning data. It would also include all certificates and warranties in respect of the works. A defects reporting procedure and access arrangement to remedy any defects should also be agreed.

Method Statement

A description detailing the procedure to be adopted to undertake an item of work or service.

Notice of Completion (NOC)

Written notice issued by the owner of a project (or his or her agent) to notify concerned parties that all work on the project has been completed.



Practical completion

Practical completion is not defined in the standard JCT suite of building contracts but the works are generally considered to be practically complete when there are no outstanding defects (except for minor items or snagging) and the building can be put to its intended use.

Prelims

Preliminaries or prelims are the costs incurred by the builder that are not specific to the physical construction such as administering a project, providing general plant, site storage and security, site facilities such as a portacabin or portaloos, and other items not included in the rates.

Provisional Sum

A cost added to the budget for a service or goods the details of which are still to be defined. For example in the initial stages there might be a provisional sum of £20,000 for a new kitchen.

Quantity Surveyor

A professionally qualified cost specialist who is an expert in the role of establishing the costs of a building project, managing the tender process and the ongoing reporting on the financial position of the project.

Retentions

A sum of money from within the overall cost of the project held back from payment to the builder for an agreed period of time after completion to deal with any defects or repairs that might be required.

Snagging

The checking of the building works, and identification of defects to be repaired, replaced or completed.

Structural Engineer

A professionally qualified engineer who is an expert in assessing, and making the necessary calculations on both architectural designs and existing buildings, to determine they are safe and appropriate from a structural point of view.

Tender Process

The buying process for building works, where construction companies or tradespeople are invited to submit a detailed, priced proposal for undertaking the work or services required. The quotations (or returns) are then compared, line by line to enable the companies to be compared, and the most cost effective builder to be selected.

Value Engineering

Evaluation of construction methods and/or materials to determine which have the net result of reducing costs, consistent with specified performance, reliability, maintainability, aesthetic, safety, and security criteria.

Variation

An amendment (which usually has an associated cost saving or cost addition) made to the agreed building contract.

