

Edition 2

Business Policy



Building Control Surveyors Ltd – Corporate
Approved Inspectors

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Contents

COMPANY POLICY & OBJECTIVES	2
Building Control and the Building Regulations	2
Role of Building Control	2
Building Control Performance Standards (BCPS)	3
1: POLICY, PERFORMANCE and MANAGERMENTS SYSTEMS.....	3
Fee quotations and pre-application advice.....	3
Processing of applications.....	4
Site Inspections	5
Non Conformities	5
Data Capture:	6
Completions.....	6
Enquiries, support and complaints.....	6
2. MEETING LEGAL OBLIGATIONS FOR COMPLIANCE	6
The Initial Notice	6
Amendment Notices	7
Limit of function	7
Checking the information on the Initial Notice form.....	8
Professional or Financial interests.....	9
Optional Planning Requirements.....	9
Fire Authority consultation.....	9
Sewerage Undertaker consultation.....	9
Site location plan.....	9
Local Acts	10
Non-compliant work (Contraventions).....	10
Final Inspection	10
Cancellation of initial notice	10
Reversion to Local Authority.....	11
3. COMPLYING WITH THE CICAIR CODES OF CONDUCT	11
4. COMPLYING WITH BUILDING CONTROL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	12
Our commitment to support BCPS	12
Basis for Continuous Improvement	12
Summary of Building Control Performance Indicators	12

COMPANY POLICY & OBJECTIVES

Building Control Surveyors Ltd was incorporated in 2011 to satisfy demand for Building Control in the South East of England.

BCS Ltd became accredited as a Corporate Approved Inspector (No. 156) by the Construction Industry Council in June 2012.

We have our main office located just inside the M25 in Upshire, Essex which is very close to Waltham Abbey.

Building Control and the Building Regulations

These are defined by the CICAIR as minimum standards set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that cover the design and construction of buildings. They are also concerned with the health and safety of building users, energy and water efficiency, and access and facilities for people with disabilities.

BCS Ltd as an Approved Inspectors is authorised under the Building Act 1984 to carry out building control work in England and Wales. Approved Inspectors are required to adhere to the Construction Industry Council Approved Inspectors Register (CICAIR) Code of Conduct for Approved Inspectors and follow the Building Control Performance Standards in their working practices.

Role of Building Control

With all building work, the owner and occupier of the property or land in question is ultimately responsible for complying with the relevant planning rules and building regulations. The role of checking that Building Regulations are, as far as can reasonably be determined, being complied with falls to a Building Control Body – either an Approved Inspector or a Local Authority. The person carrying out the work has the choice of which Building Control Body to use.

A Building Control Body is to act as an independent third party check and Approved Inspectors are required to take such steps as are reasonable to enable the Approved Inspector to be satisfied, within the limits of professional skill and care, that the applicable aspects of the Building Regulations are complied with. A number of inspections are usually carried out during the building work. These are usually, but not necessarily, at specific stages to check, but not to guarantee, that the work complies with the Building Regulations.

It is not the role of building control to:

- Provide quality control of the Works.
- Provide a 'clerk of works' service monitoring every stage of the construction process.
- Provide a service to address issues such as the finish and aesthetics of the Works where these are not Building Regulation matters.
- Provide a service to offer contractual protection between the person carrying out the work and the parties engaged in the design and/or construction of such work.
- Provide a guarantee of compliance with the Building Regulations. The appointment of a Building Control Body does not remove the obligation of the person carrying out the work to achieve compliance.

BCS Ltd have committed by way of our Building Control Performance Standard (BCPS) Policy as demonstrated below to support the recommended standards.

BCS Ltd as a Corporate Approved Inspector will undertake a qualitative analysis of our building control service as a basis for our continuous improvement, which will follow the standards and guidance for Building Control benchmarked against the Building Control Performance Standards designed to assist the process.

Building Control Performance Standards (BCPS)

1: POLICY, PERFORMANCE and MANAGERMENTS SYSTEMS

1. Support for customers

BCS Ltd provides support to our customers through our conveniently located office with local area surveyors and support staff. Our Head office provides efficient and helpful administrative departments (including applications, accounts and completions teams). Additional support is provided by our dedicated project surveyors, and plans checking team. Clients are also welcome to visit at arranged appointments to our Head Office at Warlies Park House to discuss any project related matters, or arrange appointments to meet on site.

Fee quotations and pre-application advice

- Potential customers and clients are provided with support on any proposed building project through our website that outlines in full the Building Control process. Enquiries and requests for fee quotations which can be in the form of phone calls, emails, post or through our helpful links on our website will be dealt with by our management team. All fee quotes are only issued in writing.

- Our plan checking and technical support team will answer enquiries either relating to a specific project or general building control items.
- They can be contacted 5 days a week via phone, email, and letter or through arranged appointments.

Processing of applications

Application forms are available through our offices or on our website (www.bcsurv.com), with our admin team available to advise clients on how to complete. Applications can be sent to our offices via post, email.

- Our admin team will process an application (within our target of 2 working days) sending out an acknowledgment email or letter confirming appointment, description of works, unique reference number, copy of the Initial Notice, and project surveyor's details.
- If there are any inadequacies or omissions our admin team will immediately contact the applicant to ensure that all correct information has been provided. Copies are sent to the property/homeowner so they are aware of the appointment, process and our company details. They are also advised to examine the Initial Notice details (particularly the description of works notifying BCS Ltd of any inaccuracies).
- A summary of the anticipated project specific inspections is also provided to outline when inspection request should be made. Where the project description or details change we can assist our clients by submitting an Amendment Notice.
- Agreed fees can be paid in a number of useful methods – via our secure Worldpay Payments Banking facility on our website, card payments made by phone, bank transfers or cheques by post. Customers are always able to contact our helpful accounts team to discuss payments.

Plan Checking

- Once an application has been received and processed any accompanying plans are uploaded to our project Online Storage Systems and sent to our plan checking team to examine for compliance within our target date of 10 working days. Structural details are sent to our structural engineer for checking and any relevant comments passed back to inform the applicant.
- In addition, Sewerage Undertaker Consultations where relevant are made with any comments from the Sewerage Undertaker referred to the applicant; build over agreements are very common so clients are made aware at the outset.
- Where applications have been provided without any plans/details a letter requesting these is automatically generated to inform the customer.
- After plans and details have been fully examined by our plan checking team a letter or email is sent to the applicant requesting any further information that may be required, noting any non-conformities.
- Additionally, if there are no further comments, details required and all consultations have been returned with a satisfactory response we can upon request provide our customers with a Plans Certificate (often required by Banks/Lenders, Freeholders etc.)

- Fire Authority Consultations will be required for certain projects i.e. flat common areas, commercial works and any designated premises. Where consultations are made customers are kept up to date with any matters arising.

Site Inspections

Customers are provided with details of their allocated surveyor (mobile and email) and project specific site inspection regime.

To assist customers all of our surveyors are expected to return calls and messages within the same day where possible. Where surveyors are on leave they are required to provide a clear 'voice message' and email 'out of office' response directing customers to the covering surveyor ensuring their project continues to run smoothly. Surveyors are also required to provide support to the client and project team by arranging convenient time slots for inspections.

- Customers requiring site inspections can request them only by contacting one email address (support@bcsurv.com) or via our main telephone office number (01992 710 763). Administration staff in the office will confirm the time and date and acknowledge this surveyor who will be attending back to the client. The inspection type, day (M/F 9am-4pm slots), as well as details of the person being met is recorded onto one central cloud-based diary system and recorded onto our database.
- Prior to a booked site visit an automated TEXT site inspection reminder is sent via our database to the client confirming a two-hour time slot for the day of the site inspection.
- During the period and day of the site inspection our company vehicle locations are tracked to assure that we meet the expected agreed timeslot the surveyor issues an estimated time of arrival from their vehicle using company mobile phones to the client.
- Requests for inspections can be made by a number of different methods – phone call, text message, WhatsApp and email to the project surveyor or relevant area office.

Non Conformities

- During site inspections our surveyors are required to highlight any identify non-conformities identified and raise minor items with the contractor or for any major items the client should be made aware.
- Any nonconformities are communicated in writing and recorded onto our database systems, a date for a follow-up which verifies whether the nonconformity has been corrected, is also recorded onto our calendar systems. In most cases our surveyors and technical support together with the project team are able to assist our clients in achieving a satisfactory outcome.
- Our administrative staff throughout the project assignment period will maintain contact with the client in accordance with the Building Control Performance Standards, and when contact has been lost, our office will issue standard written letters and make telephone calls to request that those carrying out building work contacts our offices to provide an update in respect of the status of the work (i.e building work still in progress, site has become dormant, project is finished, project is occupied)

Data Capture:

Every site inspection is photographed , or videoed . The captured data is uploaded to our secured network servers , the data is controlled under our GDPR policies .

Completions

- After a satisfactory final inspection and on submission of all the required details/certificates each and every project will be audited and ‘signed off’ by senior surveyors or management team prior to releasing the Final Certificate. As-Built plans are requested where buildings are subject to the requirements of Regulation 38 (fire safety information).

BCS Ltd have a designated list of competent and trained personnel to either; (1) prepare the internal audit final certificate checklist, (2) Managers to check and sign the final certificate check sheet and (3) print and issue the Final Certificate. The list is updated and circulated by our Office Manager.

- Customers are then provided with a copy of our Final Certificate, 10 days after it has been given and accepted by the local authority.
- BCS Ltd will issue the certificate by hard copy and electronically upon request. Customers may request a Part Final Certificate (Partial) for certain works following the BCA (Building Control Alliance) guidance.
- If we are unable to issue the Certificate we will contact the client to inform them of any outstanding items and assist them in any way we can to bring the project to a satisfactory conclusion.

Enquiries, support and complaints

Customers are able to contact our admin support and technical teams or their project surveyor for assistance in a number of ways (through phone, emails, post). Each project has an allocated site surveyor with full contact details (mobile and email) should the need arise for customers and their project teams to make contact regarding a particular enquiry. Depending upon the enquiry customers will be directed to either administration, accounts, technical, project surveyor or completions team.

Any enquiries relating to a complaint will be passed to Director Level. Customers will be informed of our Complaints procedure which is available on our website and includes a step by step guide following the CICAIR procedures. Our administration team have been trained to identify, assist and explain our complaints procedures referring to our Directors where necessary.

2. MEETING LEGAL OBLIGATIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

The Initial Notice

- Building Control Surveyors Ltd always requires an application form to be completed and signed by the client or on their behalf. An Initial Notice (IN) will be processed and submitted to Local Authority (details of the AI’s accreditation and insurance being held on the CICAIR website).

- The Local Authority is not obliged to acknowledge the Initial Notice, but is obligated to register it at the council offices. Customers are advised that works must not commence until 5 working days after the Notice has been received by the LA.

Amendment Notices

- An Amendment Notice may be served by the AI on the council if details to the scheme have changed. A Plans Certificate may also be requested by the client, which is issued when the AI has checked that all the necessary drawings and specifications submitted comply with the Building Regulations. At the satisfactory completion of works,
- A Final Certificate is issued to the LA (with a copy to the client or agent). All Notices, such as the Initial Notice, Amendment Notice, Plans Certificate and Final Certificate shall only be signed and issued by appropriately trained staff appointed to do so. Additionally, all Final Certificates prior to issue undergo a detailed internal audit by BCS Ltd senior surveyors and management team. (Internal Audit Final Check list).
- New building works (such as new buildings or extensions at or below ground level) require a public sewers consultation with the Sewerage Undertaker, to ensure that there are no public sewers in the vicinity (i.e. within 3m) otherwise a “building over agreement” may be required between the client and the Sewerage Undertaker.
- A site location plan showing the proposal should therefore be submitted to the AI to pass to the LA and Sewerage Undertaker, at a scale of no less than 1:1250 (showing the footprint of the proposed work and, for new buildings only, proposed connections to the sewers). As of 1st October 2011 the adoption of private shared sewers took place, meaning the Sewerage Undertakers have responsibility for those laterals shared by two or more properties.
- Commercial building work and work concerning common areas of flats will need to have fire safety plans submitted which are suitable for consultation with the Fire Brigade. The AI will make their comments and recommendations and pass these on to the Fire Authority for their consideration and comments.
- At satisfactory conclusion of works, the AI will issue a Final Certificate to the LA for their records, with a copy to the client.
- (Note : completion is usually required to be within 4 or 8 weeks of occupation, for commercial and domestic work respectively; this can be extended with the express permission of the LA).
- Whilst setting out briefly the process of the Approved Inspector Building Control service, the full statutory duties for all relevant parties can be referred to in the Building Act 1984, Building Regulations 2010, and Approved Inspector Regulations etc 2010, as amended.

Limit of function

Approved Inspector’s Regulations limit the function of AI’s with respect to carrying out work, in particular:

- i). That works have not commenced on site within the prescribed 5 working day period within which LA’s are permitted to check the details of the Initial Notice and reject it if necessary. This is also noted on our fee quotation templates and acknowledgment letters to the clients/agents on submission of an application,

- ii). That another AI Building Control Body has not already put a Notice in place for that project, which would first need cancelling. LA's would notify us on submission of our Notice if this was the case and we would immediately inform the client/agent.
- iii). That enforcement is required for non-compliant works (which have not been rectified within the required 90 day period since the client/agent was duly notified), requiring cancellation of the Initial Notice and reverting work to the LA to action (AI's have no power of enforcement),
- iv). That no professional or financial interest is held with regard to the proposed work (except for 'minor works', i.e. work to one or two storey dwelling houses, which may also include a loft and basement) – this is noted on our Initial Notice Form.
- v). That consultation and due consideration must be given to the relevant Sewerage Utility (for basement/ground floor extensions and new build) and the Fire Authority consulted (for commercial buildings and common areas of flats). Statutory Consultations are carried out in relation to Sewer Checks and Fire Safety Checks and also noted on our Initial Notice.
- vi). The contract must note that the AI is permitted to sign Notices on behalf of the relevant person carrying out the work. In addition satisfactory CICAIR accreditation must be in place together with adequate AI's Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurance (held on the CICAIR website).

Checking the information on the Initial Notice form

The details on the Initial Notice form need to be checked to ensure that all the necessary details for the IN have been submitted. For new build dwellings, there may be 'Optional Requirements' set by LA development control; this must be disclosed on the application form by the applicant and is to be noted on the Initial Notice. The Initial Notice requires the following information before it can be submitted to the LA :-

Local Authority Address

The Initial Notice requires the address of the relevant Local Authority to be entered on it.

Reference Number

A reference number is given for each INITIAL NOTICE (IN).

Description of proposed works

A full and complete description and location of the works is required on the Initial Notice. It is important to establish the location of the work within the building.

Approved Inspector's name and address

The Approved Inspector's name and address is required on the IN.

'Person carrying out the work'

The Initial Notice should include details of the person carrying out the work. For the purposes of clarity "the person carrying out the work" shall be taken as the person procuring the work. This will normally be the owner but may be another person such as a tenant. An Initial Notice may be signed

by a third party on behalf of the “person carrying out the work” or the Approved Inspector providing they have the necessary authorisation to do so from that person.

Minor works

The Initial Notice form also requires that works be described as either minor works or not. ‘Minor works’ are described in the Approved Inspector regulations as a dwelling house which after the works does not exceed three stories, or underpinning, or alterations to a controlled service.

Professional or Financial interests

The AI must state if anyone in the company has any interests in the site/ project. Approved Inspectors may not have personal, professional or financial involvement in works other than minor works.

Optional Planning Requirements

From 1st October 2015 the Building Regulations were amended to include Optional Requirements which are set out in planning permission for new dwellings to provide a higher level of provision in respect of water efficiency and access.

The duty to tell the building control body that an optional requirement has been imposed falls on the person carrying out the work. Note: BCS Ltd have provided a note and declaration section concerning this on our application form for the applicant to complete.

At present the ‘Optional Requirements’ are:

- (i). Optional water efficiency requirement of 110 litres per person per day,
- (ii). Accessible and adaptable dwellings design, and
- (iii). Wheelchair user dwellings design.

Fire Authority consultation

The relevant Fire Authority needs to be consulted for all commercial works and works concerning common areas in flats to check that the fire safety is adequate.

Sewerage Undertaker consultation

The relevant Sewerage Undertaker also needs to be consulted for new buildings and extensions - with this consultation requirement noted on the IN form. Note: Since 2011, shared laterals serving more than one property are now controlled by the Utility Authorities as public sewers.

Site location plan

For extensions and new buildings, a site location plan is also required to be submitted to the LA with the Initial Notice at a scale of at least 1:1250 (showing the footprint of the proposed works and proposed connection to sewers).

Local Acts

If there are any Local Enactments affecting building work within the Local Authority, this should be noted on a letter sent with the IN submission to the LA. Most Local Acts were repealed 9/01/2013 but access for the fire brigade still remains in force in some areas (such as The Surrey Act and East Sussex Act). Further consultations may be required in such cases, concerning access for firefighting vehicles to new buildings and houses.

Non-compliant work (Contraventions)

Non-compliant works or poor quality work (unfit for purpose) should be brought promptly and clearly to the attention of the responsible person (usually the client, builder or site agent) identifying the contravention and indicating measures to remedy the situation.

Effective follow up procedures in the form of a letter identifying the issues, and a 90 day period to correct the works are put in place with further inspections as necessary, where previous non-compliant items have been noted. If the works have not been addressed within the prescribed period our cancellation procedure is followed.

Final Inspection

At the Final Inspection, the inspecting surveyor must ensure that all works as described within the application have been completed to a satisfactory standard and that all the necessary tests have been carried out, such as drainage tests and tests on the fire safety installations.

Clients are required to provide all relevant Certification relating to the project, i.e. electrical, fire safety certificates, SAP/EPC/SBEM, sound, air pressure testing, water calculations, proof of thermal performance for all new glazing, PAS24 (security) conformity certificates, etc.

If occupation is likely before the Final Certificate can be issued, an extension of time may be sought from the Local Authority.

Cancellation of initial notice

- (1) An approved inspector who is of the opinion that any of the work described in an initial notice, which has been carried out, contravenes any provision of building regulations may give notice in writing to the person carrying out the work specifying-
 - (a) the requirement of building regulations which in the approved inspector's opinion has not been complied with, and
 - (b) the location of the work which contravenes that requirement.

- (2) A notice of contravention given in accordance with paragraph

(1) shall inform the person carrying out the work that if within the prescribed period that person has neither pulled down nor removed the work nor effected such alterations in it as may be necessary to make it comply with building regulations, the approved inspector will cancel the initial notice.

(3) The period within which the person carrying out the work is to remedy the contravention as described in paragraph (2) is three months beginning with the day on which the notice is given.
Cancellation

of the Initial Notice will be given if there is a failure to remedy the contravention in the prescribed time. Or, if the cancellation of the Initial Notice is requested in writing by the person intending to carry out the work, Or, if works have not commenced within 3 years of the date of the Initial Notice being served to the Local Authority.

Cancellation will be issued in accordance with the guidance specified in Part 3 of The Building (Approved Inspectors etc.) Regulations 2010 in the prescribed relevant format. The reasons for cancellation should be provided on the cancellation form, specifying any contraventions to the building regulations.

Reversion to Local Authority

A project may revert back to Local Authority Control where a contravention of the regulations is not remedied as specified by the Approved Inspector.

3. COMPLYING WITH THE CICAIR CODES OF CONDUCT

BCS Ltd ensure that all surveying and administration staff are made aware of the CICAIR Code of Conduct (CofC) for Approved Inspectors and are required to undertake a computer based training exercise to confirm their understanding of the code. Our regular team meetings always agendas CofC matters in each meeting. All new staff are provided with an Induction file which includes a copy of the code of conduct.

Furthermore, all surveyors are expected to have or be in the process of working towards Professional Membership of a relevant accredited body of either the RICS, CABE, CIOB or another relevant organisation. All such bodies require as part of their membership adherence to their own Code of Conduct.

4. COMPLYING WITH BUILDING CONTROL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Our commitment to support BCPS

BCS Ltd have committed by way of our Performance Standard Policy to support the recommended Standards for the performance of building control, as set out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government).

Basis for Continuous Improvement

BCS Ltd as a Corporate Approved Inspector will undertake a qualitative analysis of our building control service as a basis for our continuous improvement, which will follow the standards and guidance for Building Control benchmarked against the 4 Building Control Performance Indicators designed to assist the process, i.e.

Summary of Building Control Performance Indicators

1 – Best practice Process Management of Building Control Compliance Operations.

2 – Complaints Handling Processes.

3– Breakdown of Building Control Work.

4– Building Control Staff:

- People and Skills
- Experience of Staff
- Specialist Knowledge
- Age and Gender Profile
- Staff Retention and Training

