

Frequently Asked Questions

The following provides details of some of the most frequently asked questions Stroma Building Control has received concerning our services as an Approved Inspector. If you have a question that is not detailed below, please contact us using one of the methods detailed at <https://www.stromabc.com/contact>.

Who is Stroma Building Control and what do you do?

We are a CICAIR Approved Inspector providing a professional Building Control service on commercial and domestic projects. Our independent consultancy support helps our clients towards Building Regulations approval. Rely on your Stroma Building Control Surveyor to help you from initial advice at the planning stage, through all site inspections towards completion.

"We offer a friendly, locally-based service to help interpret complex Building Regulations and requirements. We're ready to help if you're at the concept stage or about to start on-site." Ian O'Connor, Managing Director.

What is meant by the term Building Control?

Building Control is the term used to describe the statutory function performed by either your local council or by independent, government-approved inspectors. Its purpose is to check if your works are likely to comply with the Building Regulations.

What are the Building Regulations and how are they used?

The Building Regulations are a set of standards which need to be considered and if required followed whenever a new building is erected or when an existing building is extended or altered. The regulations set the minimum standards that you must follow to meet the government's requirements for the health, safety, welfare and convenience of people in and around buildings. It also sets standards for the conservation of fuel and power, and for preventing the waste of water.

What is the role of Stroma Building Control?

Our role as a Building Control Approved Inspector is to provide guidance and assistance concerning the Building Regulations and to carry out reasonable checks to ensure that building works undertaken to comply with these Regulations; however, we do not provide a guarantee of compliance with the Building Regulations. We certify that as far as can be ascertained the works meet the requirements of the Building Regulations.

To discharge this duty and allow us to issue a Building Control Final Certificate, we conduct a detailed assessment of any architectural drawings issued and carry out periodic site inspections during construction. These inspections are to carry out reasonable checks of the building works; however, we are not employed to act as a Clerk of Works to monitor every stage of the construction process, and the onus remains with the person carrying out the works to achieve compliance with the Building Regulations.

What matters are Stroma Building Control not able to help with?

Our role as a Building Control Approved Inspector does not cover the following works, we have, however, provided recommendations on who you should direct your complaint to:

- Party walls - Independent Party Wall Surveyor
- Noise levels - Local authority Environmental Health department
- Hours of work - Local authority Environmental Health department
- Parking issues - Local authority
- Dirt and rubbish - Local authority Environmental Health department

How do I make a complaint?

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of our involvement in your project, you can make a complaint to Stroma Building Control. Please visit our website <https://www.stromabc.com/contact/complaints> for further details on our complaints process and access to our Complaints Policy.

Do I always need Building Regulation approval?

Most building projects – even small extensions, structural alterations or improvements - need to comply with the Building Regulations. They apply even if planning consent is not required. However, some types of small works are exempt from control under the Building Regulations. For example,

- Small ground floor extensions such as porches or conservatories that are under 30m² may not require consent if they are thermally separated from the main house
- Certain small, detached buildings like sheds, provided that they are constructed of non-combustible materials and they are not too close to boundaries or contain sleeping accommodation
- Other kinds of minor improvements such as replacement glazing or central heating may be covered by a Competent Person scheme. Although these works are controlled by the building regulations, you don't need to apply for consent from an approved inspector or the council.

How does the Building Regulation approval process work?

When you appoint an Approved Inspector, they will serve an initial notice on the Council. This registers your project as “building work” on a public register.

After an Approved Inspector has completed their inspections of your property and collated various certificates to satisfy themselves that, within certain limits, you have complied with the regulations, they will issue a Final Certificate to you and the local authority, so that the register mentioned above can be updated. This shows a property conveyancer involved in a property transaction in that the building work has been signed off as complete.

Can I start work without a Building Regulation submission?

You can only start work without notifying a Building Control body when using a Competent Person scheme.

When using an Approved Inspector for your building regulation work, the initial notice must be served upon the local authority at least five days before any controllable aspect of the works may be started. This does not normally include preparatory work but, if in doubt, please check with us.

When and who do I have to call for an inspection?

When controllable works are due to start on site, we will need to inspect. Just phone your local office and they will be able to organise an inspection. The contact details will also be on the building control Information Sheet which we send to you when we are instructed.

You will also need to notify us when your work reaches certain stages. The stages relevant to your build are shown here. If additional inspection stages are required, you or your agent will be notified when a plan check is undertaken of your drawings.

What happens if I don't contact you for an inspection?

If you do not contact us for an inspection, we can consider other evidence to show that you have complied such as photographs or professional reports. However, to avoid any complications it is advised that you contact us to inform us that you are ready for an inspection. The assigned project Building Control Surveyor will help you through the process and answer any questions or concerns you may have. If you do not notify us, this could result in us asking you to expose work for further inspection and sometimes start that work again if it is non-compliant. To undertake retrospective work can be expensive and will involve additional inspection fees be chargeable.

How do you complete a site inspection?

The Building Control Surveyor will contact you to arrange a suitable date and time for the visit to take place. They will inspect the element of work we have been called out to inspect, they will take notes and photographs of the work. The Building Control Surveyor will take note of any non-compliances they have seen during the inspection and will discuss these with you and email the inspection report to you, as soon as possible after the inspection.

How can you help if I am not happy with the builder's work?

Your Building Control Surveyor is available to help as much as possible. They can help you with any building regulation compliance concerns, but our function is limited to this aspect only. Building control surveyors only look for minimum levels of compliance but your expectations of quality, and the requirements of your contract with the builder, may quite understandably be higher than the statutory requirements.

What is a Final Certificate?

The Final Certificate is a statement by an Approved Inspector that the works should meet the minimum building regulations standards. Like the Initial Notice, the Final Certificate is sent to the local council for inclusion on the public register. Before we can issue the Final Certificate, there will be certain information that the Building Control Surveyor will need to collect from you.

If the works do not comply how long do I have to put them right?

If the works do not comply, Stroma Building Control will write to you and give you a reasonable time in which to alter the work so that it complies. If we believe that the non-compliance is serious enough to warrant formal action, we can serve a notice requiring you to remove or alter the defective work within 90 days. This time limit is set by the regulations themselves and if nothing is done within that time period, we will need to cancel the Initial Notice. The Local Council may then serve a notice on you to undertake such works as are necessary to comply with the regulations.

What happens if the works are not fully completed and I want to move in?

If you move into a building which is non-compliant for more than four weeks the local authority may deem our Initial Notice invalid and reject our Final Certificate. You, therefore, need to be sure and notify us of your intention to occupy the building and we will ask for an extension of time. This will give you a little longer to finish the work.

I have received a copy of a site inspection report for my property but I am not your contractual client, what should I do?

Whilst you are not our contractual client, as the owner of the property the Governments Building Control Performance Standards require that we notify you at the earliest opportunity where as part of our site inspection we have identified work being undertaken by your builder that is either non-compliant with the building regulations or is a potential non-compliance for instance where we need additional certification or information of some description.

It is important to note that as the owner of the property, you are ultimately responsible for ensuring the building's compliance with the Building Regulations, although we appreciate that you may have contracted with a builder to undertake the works for you in accordance with the Regulations. To reflect your ultimate responsibility we have provided you with a copy of our site inspection record as explained above. If the builder fails to rectify the non-compliant work or provide us with the necessary additional information it may be necessary for us to issue the requests in a more formal letter or in extreme circumstances a statutory notice which if ignored for a period of 3 months would result in us having to cancel our appointment as the Building Control Body and reverting control of the works to the Local Authority.

We would encourage you to discuss the content of the inspection report with your builder to ensure that the required alterations or information requests are dealt with promptly.