# Building Terms (for client)

As building language is sometimes not so straightforward to the general public, we have created a list of some of the most commonly used building terms that builders use and that you probably have already heard your architect use. They may help you in your new building project.

(In alphabetical order):

1. Architraves: Timber moulding fitted to the surrounds of internal doors.

2. B.S.: Abbreviation for “British Standard”.

3. Barge Boards: Timbers that are fitted onto gable ends.

4. Blinding: Layer of normally soft sand, laid down to prevent stones puncturing polythene although this term can also be used to lay sand or cement over hard-core.

5. Block & Beam: Concrete suspended floor, made up of pre-stressed concrete beams and concrete blocks laid between.

6. Boxing: Casing normally fitted around pipes/ waste pipes.

7. Building Control: Council authority that inspect the works, and can insist on additional works being carried out if they see fit, their job is to make sure all building works are carried out to the latest regulation.

8. Ceiling ties: Timbers normally fitted in roof, timber fitted from rafters to form the ceiling and tie the roof together.

9. Celotex Board: Insulation board, more expensive than other insulations, but is necessary to use in some cases where the “U” value cannot be achieved with standard insulations.

10. Clay board : Expansion board fitted to sides of foundations, to prevent the pushing of foundations from swelling of clay, normally used where deep foundations are required in clay soils.

11. Contingency Figure: Normally used on works that a price cannot be worked out on at the time of pricing the works, this is often used when there is a chance additional works maybe needed but cannot be determined until works have been started.

12. Coving: Normally a plaster moulding, fitted to perimeters of room where wall abut ceilings.

13. DPC: Abbreviation for “Damp Proof Course” that is fitted in walls to stop rising damp.

14. DPM: Abbreviation for “Damp Proof Membrane”. This is used to stop damp, mostly used under a concrete floor to stop rising damp.

15. Eaves: The over hang of gables.

16. Fascias: Timber board fitted to the end of rafters that the bottom tile sits on and the guttering is fixed to.

17. Floor Slab: Ground floor concrete.

18. Foul Drainage: Sewage and waste water drainage from baths and sinks etc.

19. Furfix Profiles: This is a profile for fixing new walls to existing walls.

20. Glue lam Beam: This is a large timber beam normally fitted to carry loads, the beam is constructed from many smaller pieces of wood glued together. The reason for this is there is less chance the timber will twist or warp as the grain is not all going the same way.

21. Hard-core: Waste masonry, normally broken bricks or concrete.

22. MU: Term used for the gauge of polythene, often used for the DPM which needs to be of a high quality and certain thickness.

23. Outer Leaf: Most external walls are cavity walls (two walls with void between). The outer leaf is the external one of the two walls - often the brick part of the wall.

24. Over-site: The ground floor structure.

25. Pad Stones: Pad made to site steel beams or large timber beams, these are built to prevent the weight of the beam and its load crushing the walls. The pad stone is normally constructed out of engineering bricks or concrete.

26. PC. Sum: Provisional Cost, normally used as a sum that has been allowed for works that cannot be priced at that time of quotation, normally this is because there is not enough information to gain a price and is often used on items such as sanitary-ware, kitchens, doors, where the client has not had time to sort out the exact items required.

27. Purling: Timber or steel normally fitted in gables and run along centre span of roof rafter, to support the centre span of rafter.

28. Rafters: Timbers fixed in roof to form the sloping area of roof.

29. Raised tie: Roof where you have the ceiling raised into the roof.

30. Reclaimed: Normally used with bricks, tiles and timbers that have been reclaimed from old buildings for reuse.

31. Regrade bricks: Bricks that are not good enough for facing bricks and sold at a cheaper price. They normally are used where they will not be seen, such as in foundations.

32. Render: A sand and cement plaster.

33. Restraint straps: Normally used with gable restraint straps or wall plate restraint straps. Gable restraint straps are used to restrain the gable walls by fixing them into roof and the wall plate restraint strap is for holding down the roof to the walls.

34. Roof vents : These are a form of vent to ventilate the roof, and can be fitted in the soffit, on top of fascias, in the ridge, in a roof tile and in the gables.

35. Skim coat plaster: Thin layers of plaster to finish walls.

36. Skirting: Moulded timber fitted to perimeters of rooms at base of walls.

37. Soffit: The over-hang of a roof that is at the base of the roof (not the over-hang of gables).

38. Storm water: Rain water, normally used in the context of surface water that runs off the roof, driveway etc.

39. Strip foundation: This is where the foundation is excavated and a strip of concrete is laid normally only about 450 mm deep and then is bricked up to ground level. This form of foundations is old-fashioned and very rarely done, although Architects still sometimes draw these on plans. Nowadays the foundations are normally concrete up to about 150 mm below ground level.

40. Sub-soil: Soil beneath top soils.

41. Toothing out: Normally done where new walls run flush with an existing wall and it is required to cut out some of the old bricks so the new bricks can be bonded into the existing. This is done so you do not end up with a straight joint to the area where new walls abut old, (can also be called “stitching”).

42. Trusses: Roof trusses are a pre-made section of roof.

43. U-Value: This is terminology for measuring heat loss. New buildings must obtain certain U-Value to comply with the latest building regulations. This is mainly used with reference to heat loss through windows, walls, floors and roof.

44. U-Beam (“Universal Beam”): Steel beam normally used as a lintel to carry a load over an opening.

45. V313 flooring: Code for moisture-resistant chipboard flooring, useful for fitting to bathrooms, toilets, kitchens etc. The moisture-resistant flooring must be fitted as many problems have been found from the moisture in these rooms caused by cleaning and sometimes leakage from items in these rooms.

46. Vapour barrier: Barrier to stop the vapour in the air passing through, commonly used on dry linings walls to prevent the moisture in the warm air passing through insulation and causing condensation on a cold surface. This also is often used on ceilings and timber floors.

47. Vegetation soils: Top soils. Top soils are soils still decaying and therefore should not be built on as the soils will decay in time causing subsidence.

48. Wall Plate: Timber fitted to tops of walls, for roof to be fixed to.

49. Warm Roof: This is a method of fitting an insulation board to the top side of roof construction (under felt). This is often used where cross ventilation to a roof cannot be obtained and by fitting the insulation this way, it prevents the condensation from forming in roof space, hence the cross air flow is not required.

50. Weather Rail: Timber moulding fitted to bottom of external door that opens inwards. This is to shed water away and stop it driving under front door.