

# The future of building control

As SiteLines goes to press the consultation document from CLG on the 'future of building control' is yet to be published. LABC Chief Executive Paul Overall focuses on what both building control surveyors and their clients in the construction industry might be seeking in the consultation process

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First, we must be clear as to what building control exists to achieve. Traditionally it made sure that buildings were safe and healthy for those in and around them, but increasingly the system has been expanded to include accessibility, energy efficiency and other aspects of sustainability.

This has perhaps inevitably led to some confusion as to the correct interface with other regulatory systems, in

particular planning. For example, some planning authorities have sought to require homes to have higher levels of energy efficiency than those set out in the Building Regulations. In future, everyone must know what each system is there for, and must stick to it.

Secondly, we need to improve the efficiency of the building control system in both the private and public sectors. Not only is this necessary because of the current shortage of building

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control surveyors - and we must aim to remedy that too by pointing out how attractive the job can be - but also because we must make the costs of the service to our clients as low as possible. This can be partly achieved by a greater reliance on risk-based inspections - good builders need less visits than bad ones. We also need to try to ensure that all building control providers deliver high standards of performance; a new system of performance indicators was introduced in 2007, and we must use the results from this to encourage the weaker providers to do better.

Building control surveyors need improved powers to require compliance with the regulations. Good architects and builders have nothing to fear from this. Indeed they should welcome it because it will help squeeze out of the industry those involved in bad building. Stop and fixed penalty notices would be valuable additions to our existing powers, as would greater fines and more publicity for non-compliance.

Finally, we must work closely with the Government and other stakeholders to deliver better regulations and clearer advice on how to comply, coupled with upgrading our systems to work better in an electronic age. If we can do all of this, then we can really look back on 2008 as a year of achievement.

