

## GUIDANCE FOR THE SPECIFICATION MANUAL

You may want to print this off first as you may need to read it when going through the specification manual as it needs some explaining first in order that you can get going with it as soon as possible.

We attach 6 files - 3 are MS works documents which is what we use & 3 have been converted to Word which appears to be more popular.

Also enclosed is a really useful pdf file containing lots of various building element combinations for walls, roof, floors & glazing prepared by a Local Council Building Control Dept. that shows various ways of achieving the fairly complicated & recently changed 'U' values. This allows you to alter the specification manual very easily for various building elements if you want to & to suit your own preferences without the need for proving calculations of each elemental 'U' value.

Our Specification Manual is split into 3 sections to minimise paper printing & wastage when distributing to the relevant people.

Please note that these are 'master' documents that will have far more information than you will need for any one project. Please make sure that you always copy the master files before editing or you will lose the original file once edited. There is an explanation section at the start of each part of the specification manual that explains how to use that particular part of the specification. Once you have read this it will become more obvious but we would generally recap here & the following points should also be noted:-

1. The pagination, text layout, font, etc. will change dependent upon your word processor & printer set up etc. so be prepared to relay or reset the document to suit your own preferences on layout, style, fonts & printer/page set up etc.

2. The specification is in 3 sections:-

i). **The Preliminaries** - quite important & lays out conditions of contract etc. Simple editing of a few areas should only be required & most text will be retained. **The tender return page at the back:** We find that some builders are not very good at the admin so we try to make it easy for them so that they can submit a tender price without the need for additional paperwork. It is also a clever way of ensuring that you have in writing that they have read & understand ALL of the documents supplied which will form part of the contract documents.

ii). **The Main Specification** - This is the main document being fully site specific for most terms & clauses. You will need to go it through carefully, delete & edit the sections as required. **The notes section:** This contains general notes that will be relevant to various sections of the main specification & is a general 'dumping ground' for all those miscellaneous types of notes. Please be aware that a good proportion of the document will be deleted for non specific elements that do not apply to your particular project.

iii). **The General Specification** - These sections are all marked as 'generally' after the heading at the beginning are global descriptions of work & are not site specific & will contain descriptions of work that may not be applicable your particular project. We tend to only include this part of the Specification for the larger jobs. In fact this document can cause more problems than it solves so only use it if you feel that the extra detailed information is of value & relevant. They do need extensive editing in all places & selection of materials which can be a bit heavy for the smaller jobs that will probably put off most small builders from tendering for the works. They are more of a protection element for the client/building owner which can be used as a reference guide as to how things 'should have been constructed' if the builder makes a mistake or is taking shortcuts & is being difficult in putting things right. You will need to use your own discretion on this documents value & worth to a client or project.

3. You will find that editing the document(s) will likely be deleting a good part of the specification by 50 to 75% to suit your particular project. This is quite normal. Our 'master' specification manual has evolved over many years & from many sources to suit our own needs which we hope you will find useful. That is why there are several elemental sections of the same thing but slightly different in wording to suit works for a new dwelling & those works when extending for example. Editing this huge document for simple building works may seem daunting but it is worth reading every section to see if it applies to your particular situation & may take several days. As you go on its familiarity will become far easier & you will find that you can edit & delete stuff with ease - **ALWAYS REMEMBERING OF COURSE TO COPY THE DOCUMENTS FIRST INTO YOUR CLIENT FILES.**

4. Rather than 'plastering' the drawing with notes & schedules we simply place a reference box quoting 'REFER TO SPEC. SECTION S20' for example with a line pointing to the element concerned (foundations, floor etc). Therefore as a tip we compile the detailed drawings first as best we can, then compile the specification manual & then add these reference boxes all over the drawing making reference back to the relevant section within the specification manual. This also acts as a double check as often we have missed things off the drawing or it needs further enhancement & visa versa within the spec.

5. You will notice that our reference numbers are in fivers (P10, SW15, S20 etc.) This allows you to add extras in between the relevant sections as you deem necessary (S11, S16 etc.). When you have edited your spec. you will also find large gaps in the sequences (S10, S25 S45 etc). Don't worry about taking the time to reschedule all the numbering as it is not necessary unless you really want to. For the Part 2 Specification Manual we have not placed any numbers after the 'S' reference for you to install your own numbering sequence when you have edited the document. We recommend a sequence of 5, 10, 15, 20 etc.

#### ***SUB NOTE:-***

We do hope that these documents will be useful to you. It is likely that you will already have developed your own specification system so do not be afraid to mix & merge our clauses with your own if it makes you feel more comfortable.

Generally, we have found that it's all about managing & containing risk & by risk I mean risk of having a claim made for errors & omissions usually generated by claims of extra costs from the builder due to the amount of work in those 'grey areas' that always occur on any project such as extent of making good, provision of electrics, heating & plumbing etc. In an ideal world there would be another professional to sort out these items such as a Quantity Surveyor. For most domestic & residential type of development work that we get involved with it seems uneconomic for the client to spend out further on such services unless the projects value is in excess of £150K. On the occasion they do the poor small jobbing builder gets frightened off at the 300 page schedule of works for a single storey rear extension & many good builders are able to 'cherry pick' their work, so the poor client is unable to get anyone to quote sensibly for the works. However & conversely, just doing enough on the drawing in order to secure Planning & Building Regulations is no longer acceptable in professional liability terms unless you are very clever & able to strictly limit the scope of your services by offsetting a large amount of liability back onto the client.

We think the Specification Manual that we have evolved over the years is a 'half way house' that tries to cover or 'outline specify' to the builder most of the works in plain English that are required that also satisfies most of the Building Inspectors checking regimes. A lot of the detail of the work is still left up to the builder to implement to a good standard but at least he has a 'broad brush' view on what is expected for our own projects. Remember, many builders are very skillful at exploiting deficiencies or vagueness in plans & specifications to claim extra costs that are never priced with the same sharpened tendering pencil.

You may also find some of the BS numbers may be out of date. We pay more attention to trying to word the item of work in plain English for the builder than simply quoting BS numbers without any back-up. What builder keeps a concise set of all the British Standards relevant to construction within their business?

With the inclusion of Prime Cost sums (PC sums) for the clients selections of goods or works yet to be specified by them & a healthy clients contingency, this normally allows for a 'level playing field' for all quoting builders & allows the tender to proceed. We try & obtain a 'fair' specification where we can control, monitor & schedule the pricing as work proceeds but also allows a degree of flexibility for both client & builder. It must be remembered that all clients normally change things as work proceeds when they can start to see the scheme develop on site in 3D.

Lastly, please bear in mind that you will always get a query schedule from the Checking Building Inspector - that's their job. No matter how we continually reword or add to our Specification they always want to clarify something. This is normal. However, we do pride ourselves on only getting lists of between 1 & 6 items so it's never that bad normally & a lot of the time it's just a matter of bringing their attention to the relevant section within the spec. or they want a spec. item added onto the drawing.

We would be pleased to receive any feedback (good or bad - provided it's constructive) & if you have any queries or having difficulty understanding any elements that may be applicable to your particular situation then please do contact us & we will try & assist further.

Thank you for your order.

Regards.

**MSM**

#### **INFORMATIVE WARNING & DISCLAIMER (Specification Manual)**

Any 'Lay person' attempting Building Design as part of their DIY project or engaging tradesmen or a main contractor direct on their own account without the aid of their own experienced Local Building Design Agent is at additional risk (financial, health & safety) of completing or engaging works that may be deficient in standard, detail & description unless they engage a suitably qualified & experienced Building Design Agent to act advise on their behalf based upon site specific knowledge. This 'specification manual' will NOT take the place of a Building Design Agent. The performance of how the 'specification manual' works in conjunction with the applicants own drawings is very much dependent upon their own editing procedures of the 'specification manual' & their interpretation of how certain sections may apply to their particular project.

All of the material in this 'specification manual' is for information only. It does not constitute & must not be treated as advice on the merits purchasing, selling or developing land or buildings. Viewers of this 'specification manual' must not place any reliance on material included in any investment or development that they make or refrain from making. While reasonable care is taken in the compilation of material for this 'specification manual', the author makes no warranty or representation on the accuracy or completeness of any material this 'specification manual'. The author does not accept any liability whatsoever including liability for negligence for any losses or damage (whether direct, indirect, reasonably foreseeable or otherwise) resulting from this 'specification manual'. This 'specification manual' ONLY deals with general construction issues for traditional building works to residential extensions & the like & some of the areas scheduled will require other consents such as Planning Approval, Party Wall Act approval, CDM health & safety etc. which do not form part of this 'specification manual'.

**By purchasing & reading this 'specification manual', you have agreed to the following:-**

1. Indemnify the author against any claim from yourself or any third parties for any loss whatsoever.
2. Any purchaser must decide for themselves the value of any specifications, schedules, statements etc. & how they may be applied &/or adapted for your particular application.
3. Every 'specification manual' user is advised to consult with their own Planning Consultant or Building Design Agent to review & discuss the merits of the 'specification manual' before implementation of any sections to reduce the risk of abortive fees, risk to health & safety, possible fines & time etc.

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