

Guidance on the preparation of codes of practice for building

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Committees responsible for this Published Document

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- BRE — Building Research Establishment
- Construction Confederation
- Construction Industry Research and Information Association
- Construction Products Association
- Consumer Policy Committee of BSI
- Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)
- HEVAC Association
- Institution of Civil Engineers
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) — represented by BRE
- Co-opted members

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Foreword

This Published Document has been prepared by B/-/13. It supersedes PD 6612:1997 which is withdrawn.

The BSI report *A strategy for building codes*, commissioned by the Sector Committee for Building and Civil Engineering and reproduced in Annex A of this document, recommended that BSI give high priority to the preparation of a document to give guidance to committees on the preparation of codes of practice for building. Issues to be addressed would include the use of a common framework for presenting information, the relationship of British Standards with European Standards, the structure, content and arrangement of codes of practice, and the presentation of text and graphics.

This revision incorporates guidance on how codes of practice for building should address environmental issues.

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

This Published Document is not to be regarded as a British Standard.

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Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 25 and a back cover.

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1 Scope

This Published Document gives guidance to committees on the preparation of codes of practice for building covered by the Sector Committee for Building and Civil Engineering, B/-. It does not cover civil engineering and structural design codes, or fire standards.

This document builds on the guidance given in previous editions of PD 6501 and makes reference to the most recent edition of BS 0-3 for detailed information on BSI requirements for the drafting and preparation of British Standards.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

BS 0-2:1997, *A standard for standards — Part 2: Recommendations for committee procedures*.

BS 0-3:1997, *A standard for standards — Part 3: Specification for structure, drafting and presentation*.

3 The purpose and use of codes of practice

3.1 General

Codes of practice are one type of British Standard. They have the following characteristics:

- a) set out recommendations of accepted good practice;
- b) can cover both performance (design) and execution (site practice) and are intended to be used by qualified readers;
- c) may be called up in building contract documentation, if specific, carefully chosen clauses are quoted;
- d) provide recommended options and the circumstances in which they should be used;
- e) give recommendations on the application of products in construction;
- f) give recommendations for addressing environmental aspects to be considered during design and execution (see Annex B);
- g) can contain means of compliance with statutory regulations;
- h) are expressed using the verbal form “should” in accordance with BS 0-3:1997, **10.3**, not “shall” which is used for requirements in a specification.

NOTE For information on the other types of British Standard (specifications, recommendations, methods, guides and vocabularies) see Annex C.

3.2 Accepted good practice

The main purpose of codes of practice is to:

- give recommendations of accepted good practice to achieve a standard of building, as followed by competent practitioners;
- set a series of good practice options or objectives for a range of circumstances and describe accepted ways of achieving them;
- enable the reader to make immediate use of the results of scientific investigation and practical experience.

They are not intended to:

- be a treatise or text book;
- cover every detail of the subject.

Codes of practice can provide information on the principles underlying a particular practice, the possible options for implementing the practice, the implications of adopting the recommendations and the circumstances in which they are applicable. In particular, with an increasing emphasis being placed on environmental aspects of construction, they should address the potential adverse environmental impacts of different options and offer practical guidance on reasonable measures to minimize them.

3.3 Different standards of practice

Codes of practice may include a range of standards of practice, each one being accepted good practice for different circumstances. For example, different standards of tolerance apply to brickwork for traditional masonry housing, timber frame housing and steel framed housing, with increasingly more onerous requirements for each method. For each constructional method, the different recommendations would represent accepted good practice.

3.4 Litigation

Codes of practice provide evidence of accepted good practice or a benchmark for good design and construction and are widely understood to establish criteria for judging performance. They are often used by the courts as evidence in determining disputes. For this reason, recommendations should be drafted so that their meaning is clear and acceptable circumstances are clearly defined; phrases such as “generally” and “in most instances” should be avoided.

3.5 Legislation

Increasingly, legislation is being written in the form of functional or goal orientated requirements. This is particularly true of the Building Regulations [1], [2], [3], which are increasingly drafted as performance specifications. For example, requirement L2 (Approved Document L2 [4]) relating to energy efficiency begins as follows:

“**L2.** Reasonable provision shall be made for the conservation of fuel and power in buildings or parts of buildings other than dwellings by:

a) limiting the heat losses and gains through the fabric of the building; ... ”

The method of compliance is not specified.

The Approved Documents (ADs) which support the Building Regulations give guidance on meeting the performance requirements. The ADs make frequent reference to standards, but this does not give the standards mandatory status. As the ADs are only guidance it is always possible for designers to meet the requirements in another way. However, where there is a standard and designers choose an alternative approach, they need to be able to demonstrate that the non-standard approach fully meets the requirements of the Regulations.

Other government departments also publish guidance, for example Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs) published by the Health and Safety Executive¹⁾, but these do not make mandatory references to standards. One standard to be expressly called up in UK legislation is BS 6658:1985, which is cited in The Motor Cycles (Protective Helmets) Regulations 1998 [5]. Even in this case the legislation permits helmets that meet equivalent standards accepted in other EEA states.

3.6 Building contracts

Reference to codes of practice in building contracts (unlike reference to standard specifications) may not be sufficient to convert them into contractual requirements, since it may be necessary to specify which of a number of alternative options is required for a particular building project.

It remains the responsibility of the user to ensure that any reference to a code quoted in a building contract is appropriate. When a code of practice is called up in a building contract, it is usually necessary to refer to particular parts of the standard or specific clauses.

3.7 Users of codes of practice

Codes of practice should be drafted with the needs of potential users in mind. Users fall into six groups according to their needs during the construction process. In considering their needs, the detailed role of individual types of user within each user group should be considered. The full range of potential users and how they relate to the six user groups is given in Annex D.

¹⁾ For further information see <http://www.hsebooks.co.uk/homepage.html>.

The six user groups are as follows:

- a) owner/occupier;
- b) designer;
- c) specifier/purchaser;
- d) product supplier;
- e) contractor/installer;
- f) inspector/tester.

Examples of the types of content for codes of practice with which these user groups are concerned are given in Table 1 in relation to each of the building project stages. The types of content are considered in more detail in 5.1. The make-up of the main user groups is considered in the checklist in Annex D.

4 Preparation and drafting process

4.1 Making the case for a code of practice

The scope of individual codes of practice should be as concise as possible (in accordance with BS 0-3:1997, 6.5.1) and should concentrate on issues for which there are positive recommendations required by industry.

The proposer of a code of practice should be certain that sufficient recommendations exist to warrant publication. The following steps should be taken to help check whether a code of practice is justified.

- a) Check whether technical guidance is available on the subject from other sources (see Annex A).
- b) Liaise with legislative bodies to determine related or relevant legislation. Discuss what they require of a code (in terms of content and timescale for publication) for it to be acceptable as a means of compliance. The Buildings Division of²⁾ the ODPM may also be consulted.
- c) Ensure that the relevant committee has a clear concept of what they have to produce, i.e. there is consensus between members as to the objective.
- d) Consult relevant Technical Committees for details of any conflicting/overlapping codes of practice, for example as a result of information obtained from application of the B/- *Framework for standards* in accordance with Annex A.
- e) Prepare a business case and financial template (standard forms are available from BSI committee secretaries) for the proposed code of practice setting out its scope, justification, market need, target audience, etc. and submit to the relevant BSI acceptance team (via committee secretary).

4.2 Programming the work

The planned programme of work for a code of practice should be short and intensive. Long programmes lose impetus and suffer delays through changes in representatives on committees. They may also be overtaken by new research and technological development.

4.3 External funding

The use of external funding for the development of codes of practice should be encouraged. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) funds the following two schemes.

- The ODPM Standards Support Scheme: assists in funding technical expertise to support the UK input to the development of priority European and international standards, and the development of priority British Standards for construction.
- The Experimental Data Scheme: designed to part fund specific tasks that are needed to underpin new or revised standards for construction, as well as development work required for the preparation of British, European and international standards.

BSI committee secretaries have details of these schemes, including a model brief for the Standards Support Scheme.

²⁾ Contact the Buildings Division of the ODPM at Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 26 Whitehall, London SW1A 2WH
Tel: 020 7944 4400 www.odpm.gov.uk.

Table 1 — Type of content of codes of practice likely to be needed by users at each project stage

Project stages	Groups of users (contracting parties) with similar needs					
	Owner/ occupier	Designer	Specifier/ purchaser	Product supplier	Constructor/ installer	Inspector/ tester
General	Briefing	Briefing	—	—	—	—
Basic and building design	Design	Design	—	—	—	—
Construction design	—	Design selection	Design selection	—	Design selection	—
Work off site	—	—	—	Preservation	Preservation	—
Work on site	—	—	—	—	Installation Storage Quality control	Installation Storage Quality control
Operation/ Maintenance	Management maintenance	Maintenance	Maintenance	Maintenance	Maintenance	Maintenance
Disposal	Decommissioning Demolition Recycling Disposal	Decommissioning Demolition	—	—	Decommissioning Demolition Recycling Disposal	Decommissioning Demolition Recycling Disposal

4.4 Collection and structuring of information

The following procedure should be adopted for collecting together the raw material for a code of practice.

- a) List the recommendations (or subjects on which recommendations are required) to be included together with the potential users and work stages for each item of information.
- b) Ensure that subjects for codes fit the *Framework for standards* in accordance with Annex A.
- c) Sort the recommendations into categories according to Annex A in which there are distinct uses and types of information, e.g. building types. Arrange the information in the order it is most likely to be needed, i.e. in the order of the project stages of a project. This will indicate whether there is a case for splitting the code into several parts and on what basis.
- d) Look up all relevant product specifications to which reference should be made in the code. Check the content of European Standards which have superseded British Standards.

4.5 Use of specialist expertise

Committees should consider making use of the following types of expertise to assist in the preparation of codes of practice.

- *Technical expertise* for specialist knowledge of the subject, e.g. a consultant might be responsible for an initial draft of the code, in consultation with the committee representatives.
- *Technical writing expertise* to take the raw material provided by the committee members and prepare text in a style which will be acceptable to a particular readership.
- *Graphics expertise* (combined with technical knowledge) to take the illustrations sourced or sketched by committee members, interpret the content in relation to the text and prepare suitable draft figures either as pieces of artwork or in a form that can be prepared for publication by BSI staff.

4.6 Co-ordination and liaison

It is vital that there is co-ordination between BSI committees and regulatory bodies outside BSI on the development of codes of practice. Committees whose interests may be the subject of recommendations in a number of codes of practice should co-ordinate texts across the various documents. Committees should maintain regular contact with these special interests committees to monitor technical developments. Committees responsible for codes of practice should liaise with committees dealing with products relevant to their codes, particularly in respect of the application or installation of the products. Overlaps with other British Standards should be checked and resolved.

The maintenance of lists of the contents of the *Framework* boxes provides a mechanism for enabling gaps and overlaps to be identified.

4.7 Consensus

Codes of practice should be drafted and developed on the basis of consensus. The need for standards to be based on consensus is written into the BSI Charter³⁾, consensus being defined as “general agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues” by the interested parties, having taken their views into account and tried to resolve any conflicting arguments. Consensus does not imply unanimity. Consensus is required on both the content and the decision to publish.

4.8 Disputes procedure

Experience suggests that the majority of disputes on the content of codes of practice originate in the early stages of committee work. Work should not start on a code of practice without there being a clear purpose, scope or structure. If there is a dispute, the committee should refer to the BSI standards dispute procedure in BS 0-2:1997, 8.10.

4.9 Consultation and the recording of decisions

At key stages during the drafting and development of codes of practice, consultation with interested parties should take place in accordance with the guidelines in BS 0-2.

4.10 Preparation of a summary

When the drafting of a code of practice is completed, the committee responsible should draft a summary giving the list of contents, the stages in a project when it would be used, and a list of prospective users.

³⁾ For further information see <http://www.bsi-global.com/Corporate/News+Room/royal-charter.pdf>.