

## **Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)**



### **Guidance Note 4**

#### **Use of Certificates of Design (Building Structures)**

##### **Introduction**

There are three different types of Certificate of Design that can be issued by Approved Certifiers of Design under the SER Scheme:

- New Building Certificate;
- Alteration, Alteration and Extension or Extension of an Existing Building Certificate;
- Conversion Certificate.

It is important that the certifier understands the differences.

Each of the certificates comprises a Part A which has to be signed and dated by the Approved Certifier and a Part B which has to be signed and dated by the Certification Coordinator for the Approved Body. There are also occasions where more than one certificate should be issued to support a Building Warrant application.

In addition to the certificate(s) the Certifier needs also to consider whether Schedule 1 (in relation to contractor designed elements) should be completed and attached to the original certificate which is issued with the Warrant application to the Verifier (currently the local authority). A Schedule 2 (a record of the manner in which the project has been certified) should be completed for both a New Building Certificate and an Alteration and Extension Certificate and kept with the record copy of the certificate. In the case of staged certificates, when schedules 1 or 2 are being completed, the information that the Certifier inputs onto the schedule should only be relevant to that particular stage.

Where a Building Warrant application includes work that is outwith the scope of a single certificate (New Building, Alteration and Extension, Conversion), each relevant certificate must be submitted. For example, where alteration and/or extension work is being undertaken in a building which is also subject to conversion, as defined in the Building Regulations at Schedule 2 to Regulation 4, then both an “Alteration and Extension Certificate” and a “Conversion Certificate” must be submitted.

Failure to submit the correct certificate(s) and schedule(s) may result in a delay in the Building Warrant application. It is important to check that the description and location of the project are compatible with the Warrant application, certificates can, however, be amended by the SER Administrator.

## **Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)**

Details of all certificates issued should be entered into the Certifiers logbook and copies of certificates and any associated schedules should be kept by the Approved Certifier for record and future SER audit purposes.

## **Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)**

### **1) New Building Certificate**

A New Building Certificate should be used in support of a Building Warrant application for the construction of a new building including a building in the curtilage of an existing building but not physically connected to it.

In the case of a staged warrant for a new building a certificate should be submitted in support of the initial warrant application (to qualify for the discount on the building warrant fee) and each staged amendment involving structural work or work having an effect on the structure.

A New Building Certificate should always be accompanied by a Schedule 2, which is used to record the manner in which the project has been certified (see SER Guidance Note 3 Options for Certification for further information). The Schedule 2 should be signed and dated by the Approved Certifier and appended to the record copy of the certificate. It is not sent to the Verifier.

**Staged Warrant** applications can be made in the cases where the design is not fully completed when the application for a Building Warrant is made. This method of certification allows an early site start to be made. Care must however be taken to ensure that, although the certificate covers the proposed work on the warrant application, only the design up to the particular stage of construction is certified.

It is recommended that Certifiers discuss and agree the details of the various stages with the Verifier and the Applicant prior to making application. The first certificate issued by the Approved Certifier is known as the parent certificate and will normally accompany the initial warrant application (first stage). Subsequent certificates are known as stage 2, stage 3 etc certificates. Where a Schedule 1 is appropriate it should accompany the relevant Stage Certificate(s). A Schedule 2 must also be completed for each certificate and kept for record purposes.

**Post Warrant Contractor Designed Details.** Warrant applications can be lodged when parts of the structure are to be contractor designed and these design details are not available at the time that the Building Warrant application is made. In this case the Design Certificate must be accompanied by a Schedule 1 listing any structural items or details which the certificate does not cover in detail. The warrant plans must contain a performance specification for the structural items or details listed on Schedule 1. The Building Warrant granted by the Verifier will be accompanied by a Form Q which the Approved Certifier and the Approved Body must sign. It is returned to the Verifier after the Certifier is eventually satisfied that the contractor designed details comply with the Building Regulations. SER recommends that the Approved Certifier or the Approved Body should return the completed Form Q to the Verifier directly with a copy being sent to the Applicant.

In the case of staged warrant applications where a schedule 1 is generated for more than one stage the situation will arise where there is more than one Form Q to be processed by the Approved Certifier and the Approved Body.

In the case of staged warrant applications for multiple plot housing projects SER recommends a discussion between the Applicant and the Verifier to agree the best

## **Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)**

way to stage the project in order to achieve the best solution in respect to requirements for Form Q.

For further information refer to Technical Bulletin No. 1.

## **Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)**

### **2) Alteration, Alteration and Extension or Extension of an Existing Building Certificate**

An Alteration, Alteration and Extension or Extension of an Existing Building Certificate is used in support of a building warrant application for the alteration, extension or combined alteration and extension of an existing building.

In the case of a staged warrant a certificate should be submitted in support of the initial warrant application (to qualify for the discount on the building warrant fee) and each staged amendment involving structural work or work having an effect on the structure.

An Alteration and Extension Building Certificate should always be accompanied by a Schedule 2, which is used to record the manner in which the project has been certified (see SER Guidance Note 3 Options for Certification for further information). The Schedule 2 should be signed and dated by the Approved Certifier and appended to the record copy of the certificate. It is not sent to the Verifier.

**Staged Warrant** applications can be made in the cases where the design is not fully completed when the application for a Building Warrant is made. This method of certification allows an early site start to be made. Care must however be taken to ensure that, although the certificate covers the proposed work on the warrant application, only the design up to the particular stage of construction is certified.

It is recommended that Certifiers discuss and agree the details of the various stages with the Verifier and the Applicant prior to making application. The first certificate issued by the Approved Certifier is known as the parent certificate, subsequent certificates are known as stage 2, stage 3 etc certificates. Where a Schedule 1 is appropriate it should accompany the relevant Stage Certificate(s). A Schedule 2 must also be completed for each certificate and kept for record purposes.

**Post Warrant Contractor Designed Details.** Warrant applications can be lodged when parts of the structure are to be contractor designed and the design details are not available at the time that the Building Warrant application is made. In this case the Design Certificate must be accompanied by a Schedule 1 listing any structural items or details which the certificate does not cover in detail. The warrant plans must contain a performance specification for the structural items or details listed on Schedule 1. The Building Warrant granted by the Verifier will be accompanied by a Form Q which the Approved Certifier and the Approved Body must sign. It is returned to the Verifier after the Certifier is eventually satisfied that the contractor designed details comply with the Building Regulations. SER recommends that the Approved Certifier or the Approved Body should return the completed Form Q to the Verifier directly with a copy being sent to the Applicant.

In the case of staged warrant applications where a schedule 1 is generated for more than one stage the situation will arise where there is more than one Form Q to be processed by the Approved Certifier and the Approved Body.

For further information refer to Technical Bulletin Number 1.

## **Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)**

### **3) Conversion Certificate**

A conversion certificate is used in support of a Building Warrant application for the conversion of an existing building to a new use as defined in the Building Regulations at Schedule 2 to Regulation 4. The certificate may only be used alone where no work, subject to the requirement to obtain a Building Warrant, is being carried out to the building. Conversion Certificates relate to Regulation 12 which only requires compliance “as far as is reasonably practicable and in no case be worse than before the conversion”.

As the certificate does not relate to building work it is not accompanied by either Schedule 1 or Schedule 2. In most cases of conversion however some structural work will be involved (e.g. strengthening the floors etc) and in these cases an “Alteration, Alteration and Extension or Extension Certificate” will also be required.

Conversions can be complex and the Certifier is advised to discuss the work with the Verifier if he or she is in doubt as to the certificates required for a particular project.

## Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)

### Appendix

#### a) Amendments to Warrant

Where a Warrant has been issued on the basis of a certificate any subsequent amendment to the design will create the situation where, either a new design certificate (with a new schedule 1 or 2), or a confirmation letter stating that the current design certificate is still valid, will need to be submitted with the amendment to warrant application. In all cases of amendments to warrant (including staged warrants) the certifier must be notified of the changes. The certifier will then, after consideration of the amendment, decide whether a new certificate or a confirmation letter is appropriate. The following table provides guidance on this procedure:

<b>Amendment to warrant due to:</b>			
Type of change:	<b>1. Change to building structure (certified work)</b>	<b>2. Changes affecting building structure</b>	<b>3. Changes not affecting building structure</b>
Certifier action	Check of existing design	Check of existing design	Assessment required
	New certificate required	New certificate required	Confirmation letter required

As the certificate fee was paid when the original certificate was generated, and unless the value of the project has altered significantly, the fee for a new certificate that should accompany an amendment to warrant will be limited to £25 plus VAT.

#### b) Change of Certifier or Approved Body

It is the intention of the scheme that an individual Certifier should certify all of the structural aspects of the entire design of the building. In the case of amendment to warrants, including “staged warrants”, each design certificate should therefore normally be signed by the same individual. However, in some cases this may not be possible. Reference should be made to section 4.6 of the Scheme Guide for details of the action to be taken in such circumstances. In the case of an amendment for a Staged Warrant the SER Administrator should be notified so that the necessary changes to the SER database can be made to allow the new Approved Certifier or Approved Body to create subsequent certificates.

#### c) Amendments to Building Regulations

The design certificate has to relate to the Building Regulations in force at the date the Building Warrant application is made. A certificate could be signed and dated some time before a warrant application is made. During this period it is also possible that a change to the Building Regulations could come into force which was not considered by the Certifier initially. In this case it is the responsibility of the Certifier to establish that the design complies with the amended Regulations or to instigate any necessary design change before the Building Warrant application is made. Therefore the

## **Scheme for Certification of Design (Building Structures)**

Certifier should advise the client accordingly when a change in legislation is anticipated.

### **d) Amendments to Certificates**

Minor amendments to certificates such as project location and project description can be made free of charge by the SER Administrator either before or after a Building Warrant application is made. An amended certificate is automatically generated by the SER IT system.

Sometimes the decision to use a staged warrant application is made after the original certificate is generated. In these circumstances the original certificate can be amended by SER into a Parent Certificate, further staged certificates can then be generated by the certifier.

### **e) Cancellation of Certificates**

Sometimes although a certificate has been created a Building Warrant application is not made (perhaps there is no funding or the client changes his or her mind etc). Occasionally an Approved Body may have difficulty obtaining fees from a client. In these circumstances SER has been requested to cancel certificates. Approved Bodies should be aware that once a Certificate has been submitted to the Verifier it can not be cancelled and others have a right to depend on the contents of that Certificate regardless of whether the Approved Body has been paid.

SER can cancel a certificate that has been created but not issued to the Verifier. A refund of the certificate fee will not normally be made.

### **f) Changes to email address**

Should the email address of an Approved Certifier or Approved Body change it is important that SER is advised as soon as is possible. Failure to do so could result in delays to the issue of certificates or the processing of any amendments to certificates.

### **g) Payment methods**

Payment for a certificate may be made by Credit or Debit card on-line or by cheque to SER Ltd. An Approved Certifier has the option of having the invoice made to himself or herself or to the Approved Body.

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