



TEL: 01258 451 145

## Frequently used Building Terms Explained

**As builders will sometimes use unfamiliar technical words or terms, we have put together this list to help you understand:**

**Architect:** A professional with a degree in building design who will plan, design and produce detailed drawings of your build project. The architect works closely with your builder and the surveyor throughout the project's construction.

**Architrave:** A timber moulding used to hide the gap between the wall finish and the door/window frame

**Asphalt:** A bitumen based product often used for waterproofing flat roofs, cellars or other areas subject to damp conditions

**Balanced Flue:** Equipment that allows gas heating appliances to draw fresh air from outside the property whilst also allowing burnt gases to escape, in effect replacing the chimney

**Ball Cock:** A valve used in toilet cisterns and water tanks to control the flow of water

**Baluster:** One of a set of posts supporting a stair handrail (also known as a spindle)

**Bargeboard:** A gable roof trim, made from timber, plastic or metal, which follows the pitch of the roof. Traditionally decorative and acts as a protector to the roof timbers

**Batten:** A section of timber often used for fixing roof tiles and slates or other building materials

**Beading:** Usually timber or plastic bead used to hide a gap. For example, laminate floors laid after the skirting is in place will have a bead fixed to the skirting

**Bleeding:** Process of removing trapped air from central heating systems

**Blown:** A term used to describe a bonding failure. For example, when a layer of plaster or cement rendering has come away from a wall possibly due to age or poor application

**Building Control:** Local Authority controlled process to maintain building standards

**Casing:** The timber lining of a door or window opening

**Cavity Wall:** Usually an exterior wall made up of two single walls, separated by an air space

**Cornice:** Continuous horizontal moulding between the walls and ceiling of a room

**Coving:** A prefabricated moulding used to make a cornice

**Damp-Proof Course (DPC):** A layer of material that prevents moisture rising from the ground into the walls of a building

**Damp-Proof Membrane:** A layer of material that prevents moisture rising through a concrete floor

**Drip Groove:** A groove in the underside of a windowsill to prevent rainwater running back to the wall

**Eaves:** The lower edges of a roof that project beyond the walls. It is made up of the soffit and fascia

**Efflorescence:** A white powdery deposit caused by soluble salts. Often found on new bricks or plaster

**Fascia:** Horizontal strip of wood or PVC that covers the end of the rafters and to which the external guttering is fixed

**Flashband:** Temporary self-adhesive strip giving an instant waterproof seal

**Flashing:** A weatherproof junction (often made of lead) between a roof and a wall or chimney

**Flaunching:** A mortared slope at the top of the chimneystack used to secure the chimney pot and channel rainwater from the structure

**Fuse Board:** Where the main electrical service cable connects to the house circuitry via the consumer unit, controlling the electricity supply to the property

**Gable:** This is usually the triangular area of wall between the roof pitch, the "Gable End" extends to the ground level

**Galvanised:** Metal sheeting, covered with a protective coating of zinc

**Grout:** Material used to fill gaps between tiles

**Gutter and Guttering:** A gently sloping channel used to remove rainwater

**Hardcore:** Broken bricks or stones used to form a sub base below paving/foundations

**Hip Tiles:** Tiles used where two angled roofs meet

**Insulation:** Materials used to reduce the transmission of heat or sound or a non-conductive material surrounding electrical wires

**Jamb:** The vertical part of a doorframe or window frame

**Joist:** A horizontal wooden or metal beam, used to support a structure such as a floor, ceiling or wall

**Lath & Plaster:** Traditional method of finishing timber frames, walls or ceilings. Narrow strips of wood nailed to the stud or joists to provide a supporting framework to accept a plaster finish

**Lintel:** A horizontal beam used to support the wall over a door or window opening

**Mastic:** A non-setting compound used to seal joints usually around windows or door frames

**Mono-Pitch Roof:** A roof that slopes in one direction only

**Mortar:** A bonding mix of sand and cement

**Newel:** The post at top or bottom of a flight of stairs, which supports the handrail

**Overflow Pipe:** A pipe that channels flowing water away from the building, in the event of a valve failure

**Partition Wall:** A separating wall between rooms, not usually load bearing

**Party Wall:** The wall between two houses, over which each of the adjoining owners has equal rights in law

**Pelmet:** A board fixed over a window to conceal a curtain rail or blind fastenings

**Planning Permission:** A statutory process to be followed seeking approval from the local authority before most (but not all) building work can commence

**Plinth:** The recessed base of a cupboard to provide foot space – Also called Kick boards

**Pointing:** The mortar joint between bricks

**Primer:** Paint applied to a bare surface of wood, metal or new plaster

**Radiator Valve:** A valve located where the pipework connects to the radiator and used to control the flow of water in the system and in some cases also controls temperature (thermostatic valve)

**Rafters:** A series of sloped beams that extend from the roof ridge down to the eaves, designed to support the roof deck and its associated loads

**Rendering:** Weatherproof finish to external walls usually made of sand and cement or sand and lime in older properties

**Ridge Tile:** A roof tile that is bedded in mortar (some modern systems are clipped in place) at the roof apex

**Sarking:** Roofing felt or timber boarding laid under the slates or tiles of a pitched roof

**Screed:** A layer of cement and sand mortar laid on solid floors. It provides a smooth surface ready for the final floor finish

**Silicone Sealant:** A flexible material used to seal joints usually in wet areas such as baths or sinks. Sets to a rubber like consistency

**Soffit:** Boarding under the gutter area

**Spindle:** One of a set of posts supporting a stair handrail (also known as a baluster)

**Tanking:** A waterproofing system, used to keep cellars or basements dry

**Valley:** The area where the two pitches of a roof meet, traditionally finished in lead or valley tiles. Modern properties often use GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) or other materials

**Verge:** The edge of a pitched roof at the gable