

## **Advice for schools on condition surveys**

The following advice is for schools intending to submit bids for capital funding and explains what is behind the requirement to submit a condition survey.

### **What is a condition survey and why do we need one?**

A condition survey provides objective information about the condition of the asset. It uses a common grading system and enables fair comparison across sites and effective prioritisation.

A model survey should include:

- Site name and number
- Description and narrative of findings
- Clear condition grades of individual identifiable elements
- Recommendations i.e. remedial works or replacement
- Costings of any recommended remedial works
- Costings of any replacement works including what the costing is based up (£/square meter, etc).
- Identification of associated risks and priority
- Information about other benefits - energy savings etc
- Date survey was conducted
- What the weather conditions were on the day of the survey and if there was heavy/prolonged period of rain a week prior to the survey taking place.

A condition survey is required when bidding for capital funding from HCC.

### **Who should undertake condition surveys?**

It is expected that condition surveys are carried out by appropriately qualified surveyors who understand the grading system and provide an independent determination of condition and priority. Schools are expected to commission (and pay for) their own surveys. The County Council's Consultancy Framework can be used to secure a surveyor for this purpose. The cost will vary from a few hundred pounds to just over a thousand depending on the size of the school and the number of elements being surveyed.

### **What is meant by a Condition grading?**

The existing methodology for determining condition is one that is recognised by surveyors across the construction industry as a means for determining priorities. The system utilises an alphanumeric code that indicates both condition and priority and was used by the DFE in their national property surveys undertaken in 2013. The grading system has been consistently applied since the bidding process was introduced as part of the schools capital programme and is used to determine investment priorities. It is also adopted for HCC's own non-schools condition surveys in order to determine priorities. There is a degree of overlap between categories as the following table illustrates:

<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>D BAD</b> Life expired. Exhibits major deterioration Serious risk of imminent failure or a health and safety hazard.	<b>C-POOR</b> Exhibits major or multiple defects and or not operating as intended.	<b>B OK</b> Performing as intended but exhibiting minor faults / repairs	<b>A GOOD</b> Performing as intended and operating efficiently
<b>URGENT</b> - needed to prevent closure of premises, address High H&S risk to occupants or remedy serious breach of legislation	<b>D1</b>	<b>C1</b>		
<b>ESSENTIAL</b> - within 2 years to prevent serious deterioration of fabric / service, address Medium H&S risk to occupants or remedy less urgent breach of legislation		<b>C2</b>	<b>B2</b>	
<b>DESIRABLE</b> - required with 3-5years to prevent deterioration of fabric / service, address Low H&S risk to occupants and remedy minor breach of legislation		<b>C3</b>	<b>B3</b>	<b>A3</b>
<b>LONG TERM</b> - required outside of 5 years planning to prevent possible deterioration of the fabric / service. Ongoing planned cyclical works.			<b>B4</b>	<b>A4</b>

#### How condition is used to assess priorities?

Condition grades are used to determine broad priorities along the following guidelines (subject to sufficient funding being available):

- D1 – high priority to be progressed as unplanned works in current financial year
- C1 – high priority to be progressed in the following year’s planned programme
- C2 – medium priority to be progressed in a future years planned programme
- C3 and below – to be reviewed again in a future year

It is however routinely necessary to apply some additional judgements between schemes of equal priority, reflecting the following limitations of condition:

- The grading is a simplified means of defining condition for a whole building element on a site or block. It may be that some elements of a lesser condition have a greater impact upon the day-to-day operation and it would be sensible to recognise this in decision making.
- It is sometimes beneficial to promote lower priority works in order to maximise value for money on the programme.
- Schools may submit evidence of further deterioration which proves where the published condition rating may no longer valid. A project of a lower condition grading may therefore be chosen out of order.
- There is sometimes inconsistency between condition grading and the associated narrative. It is known through dialogue with surveying firms that their overall ratings often factor in other site risks or benefits, for example, a roofing scheme may be graded as a higher priority where it is known to have other structural complications or where its thermal efficiency is particularly poor.

### **Are any other factors taken into account?**

The current process uses condition as the primary factor for determining priorities. A project will currently only be progressed in the current year if it is in poor condition (usually D1 or C1) and there is sufficient budget available to undertake the works and the school can demonstrate that all routine servicing and/or remedial works have been undertaken and all reasonable measures/endeavours have been employed (as it read, it implied to me that if we were given a C1/D1 survey we would add it to the programme in the same year). A number of additional factors could however be considered alongside condition. These include:

- Environmental / energy benefits
- Financial (revenue) benefits
- Sensitivity / complexity assessments
- Sequencing / value for money benefits
- Health & Safety implications??

There are occasions when these are used as secondary factors to decide between schemes of equal condition. They are not used to promote a scheme where condition is satisfactory.

Condition reports frequently emphasise these additional benefits although they should have no bearing on the grading. By and large all schemes (roofing, window walling and mechanical / electrical) deliver significant environmental and energy benefits and therefore it is not an effective means to prioritise schemes.

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