

## **Annex 9D - UK evidence supporting independent construction assessment**

In the 1970s, designers and often clerks of works would be commissioned to check construction as it progressed. In an effort to reduce costs, this independent on-site checking role is now a rarity.

The lack of independent checking on site has led to construction frequently falling short of the design, resulting in potentially dangerous buildings and unnecessary remedial costs. Designers who seldom see their designs being implemented now have a reduced awareness of site constraints. Without on-site input from designers and clerks of works, the construction workforce can repeatedly make the same errors from project to project until they do not recognise them as errors.

There is widespread evidence to support the introduction of independent checking on site:

- *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Construction of Edinburgh Schools*, Feb 2017, 9.2.1 “*the primary cause of the collapse of the wall at Oxbgangs School was a direct result of poor quality construction...*” The issue led to the collapse of 9 tons of brickwork onto a school pathway and the subsequent inspection of 17 schools constructed around the same time. The costs of the buildings being unavailable exceeded £5M. Consequently, 19 other public buildings in Edinburgh were identified as having defects similar to Oxbgangs School.
- CROSS (Confidential Reporting on Structural Safety) is recognised in *Building a Safer Future* (1.36, 6.20 and recommendation 1.4) and receives reports from engineers when they note an issue that could affect structural safety. CROSS has prepared a chart (below) showing that with effective independent checking on site, which would have prevented shortfalls in competency, site supervision, communication, and unapproved changes, then 78%-96% of the construction issues reported to them would have been avoided.
- There have been some high profile examples of residential blocks facing demolition/major repair work only a short time after completion due to construction defects, for example Solomon’s Passage in Southwark, built in 2010 (ref: Briefing paper number 07665, 17 December 2018 *New-build housing: construction defects - issues and solutions (England)*).
- The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Excellence in the Built Environment carried out an open inquiry into the quality and workmanship of new housing for sale in England and published *More Homes, Fewer Complaints* in July 2016. In the summary it states “*There is a perceived flaw in the system of checking quality and workmanship.....Some of those giving evidence pointed to the need for more on-site inspections by independent organisations, in order to drive up quality....*”
- The role of building control officers in ensuring compliance with the Building Regulations has been the subject of two Westminster Hall debates, one in 2015 and another in 2016 (ref: Briefing paper number 07665, 17 December 2018 *New-build housing: construction defects - issues and solutions (England)*).

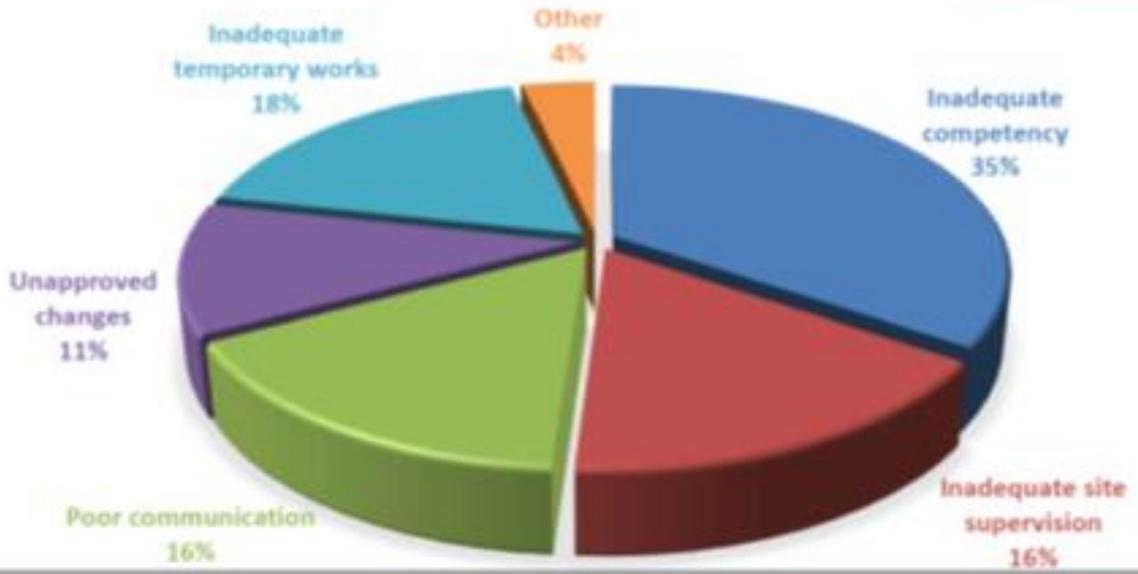
Most practitioners increasingly relate many other similar examples.

The involvement of an Independent Construction Assessor would effect change in the culture on construction sites and in design offices. Tradespeople and designers would need to eliminate shortfalls in their work in order to gain acceptability from the independent Construction Assessor, helping to turn around the “race to the bottom”

described in *Building a Safer Future*.

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### ROOT CAUSE DURING CONSTRUCTION STAGE



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