

LDSA Sustainability Guidance

Reducing, Recycling  
and Reusing  
Demolition and  
Construction Waste

[www.londonbuildingcontrol.org.uk](http://www.londonbuildingcontrol.org.uk)





# Reducing, Recycling and Reusing Demolition and Construction Waste

## **Why Should We Bother?**

The vast majority of construction materials that we use come from natural resources such as the clay in bricks, aggregates in concrete, through to slates and timber.

The removal, processing and distribution of building materials such as these have an adverse effect on our planet and therefore we all need to consider carefully how we can reduce our use of them.

Millions of tonnes of construction waste are generated every year. Think about how you and your firm can make a real difference by reducing, recycling and reusing your demolition and construction waste

## Before Starting Work

Before commencing work on stripping out or demolition walk around the site and think about what could effectively be reused or recycled rather than just being thrown in the skip.

- If you are a demolition contractor make contact with the main building contractor, discuss with them what materials they might reasonably be able to reuse from your process
- Look for materials that can be stored and reused in their present state such as top soil, bricks, paving slabs or roofing slates or tiles.
- Consider if there are any materials that could be salvaged and reused on site after processing, for instance concrete or bricks for use as hardcore.
- Identify any special or unusual features such as period doors and windows, ironmongery, unusual gutters, hoppers or downpipes, look to see if there are any special masonry features such as arches or stone sills
- Metal components such as water tanks or window frames can be recycled. Lead has an obvious resale value if salvaged
- Allocate areas on site where materials can be safely stored once strip out/demolition commences
- Find out where the nearest Local Authority recycling centre is to where you are working



## During Strip-Out/Demolition

Make sure that all of your site team are trained and fully aware of your sustainability objectives. Encourage them to take an interest in what you are trying to achieve.

Plan the sequence in which materials are to be removed and stored and ultimately reused or leave site

- Remove roof tiles or slates carefully by hand and store
- Remove any timber doors, window frames and joists with care, remove nails and store. Waste timber can be shredded for plant mulch
- Identify reusable bricks, carefully remove by hand, clean and store on pallets on site for reuse or removal from site



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- Masonry that has been identified for reuse as hardcore should be set aside and if possible crushed on site
- Unwanted glass should be stored and not thrown away as it can be recycled
- Steel joists and structural sections can be salvaged and re-used
- Carefully dispose of materials that cannot be recycled such as UPVC windows,
- If you must visit the recycling/waste facility try to ensure that you take a full load and reduce the pollution impact that results from each journey you make
- Aim to reduce to the absolute minimum the amount of waste that goes to landfill

## Financial Considerations

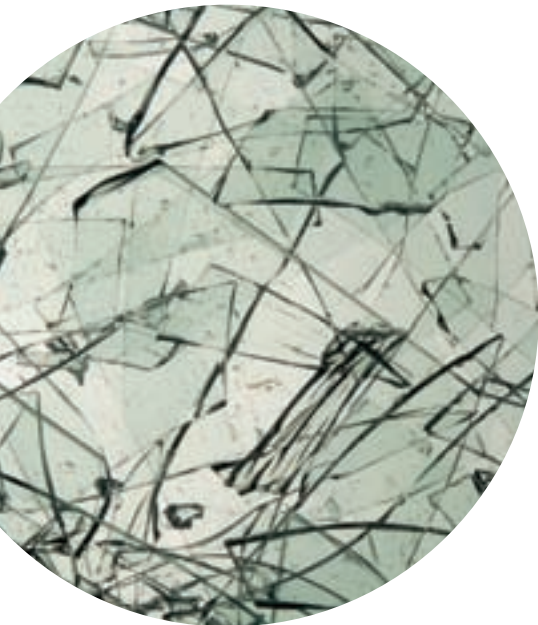
Whilst the primary aim of this Guidance Note is to encourage good, sustainable practice it cannot be overlooked that there are financial considerations involved too

- A standard size builder's skip will cost around £150, why fill a skip with materials that you may be able to be re-used for free on site?
- Remember that everything you dispose of will be subject to Landfill Taxes which are increasing every year
- If you have no use for them some materials may have a real value if carefully removed, cleaned and stored, for example both second hand stock bricks and Welsh slates can be worth around £1 each
- Period features such as fireplaces, doors, radiators and sanitary ware are also in great demand and can be sold through architectural salvage sites
- Think about your transport costs, why make unnecessary journeys to dump materials you can reuse on site?



## Refurbishment Works

- Talk to your client before commencing stripping out; ask if it is really necessary and appropriate to remove everything back to an empty box. Think of the waste involved in removing a suspended ceiling and all of the lighting, maybe it could be cleaned/ refurbished instead
- Some ceilings contractors now offer to remove and recycle existing ceilings as part of their contract
- Make others aware of the materials and components you are potentially discarding, maybe someone else in the community could make use of your unwanted materials
- Discourage the “throw away culture”



## On Completion

- Can you re-use the site hoarding on your next project?
- Are there any left over materials you didn't use on this project that you can store and use on the next one?
- Are there other contractors who you have professional dealings with who you could encourage or work with to improve your sustainability credentials?
- Think about what you have achieved on this project, could you do even better on the next one?

Demolition industry contractors already have an excellent record for recycling waste (over 90% of demolition “waste” was reused or recycled in 2005-06, NFDC figures)

To date the construction industry as a whole to date has paid less attention to the possibilities of recycling, reuse and reclaiming of materials but this has to change before the precious resources we all take for granted run out.

All of us whether acting in groups or as individuals have a role to play; we can all contribute towards making an impact

## For further help and advice

### **National Federation of Demolition Contractors (NFDC)**

Resurgam House, 1A New Road,  
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### **London District Surveyors Association (LDSA)**

[www.londonbuildingcontrol.org.uk](http://www.londonbuildingcontrol.org.uk)

### **CIRIA**

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