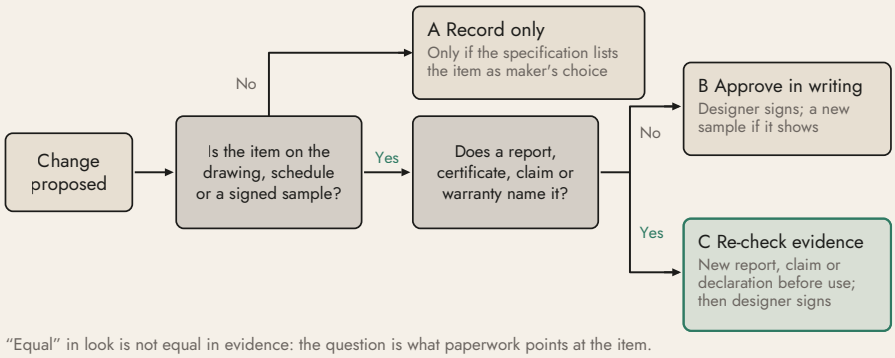
The *substitution* and value-engineering register

What each kind of substitution puts back in question, a decision flow for the three outcomes, and wording for a no-substitution-without-written-approval clause.

AT A GLANCE

Type of change	Sample sign-off	Fire evidence	Certificates, claims and declarations	Warranty, care and drawings
Finish (colour, sheen, process)	Re-sign. A new process or finish is a new sample.	Check, if part of a classified build-up.	Check: emissions data, any EPD.	Check: finish warranty, care.
Veneer or solid timber (species, cut, supplier)	Re-sign. Approve a range.	Check, if the panel is classified.	Re-check: certificate code and claim.	Check: movement, sizes.
Board or core (MDF, ply, fire-retardant)	Check: a finish on another board proves little.	Re-check. A class applies to the build-up as tested.	Re-check: declaration of performance, emissions, timber claim.	Check: thickness, fixings, weight.
Upholstery cover (fabric, leather)	Re-sign: colour, pattern, handle.	New test. Any change but a simple colour change is a new composite.	Check: abrasion, cleaning data, label.	Check: care code, yardage.
Foam, filling, interliner	Repeat the sit test.	New test. New filling or component supplier is a new composite.	Check: feather and emission declarations.	Check: build-up drawing, seat warranty.
Hardware (hinges, runners, locks)	Re-sign if it shows.	Check: a fire-rated door certificate lists tested parts.	Not usually affected.	Check: load class, cut-outs.
Metal (alloy, plating, finisher)	Re-sign: new batch or process.	Not usually affected.	Check: mill certificate, coating data.	Check: corrosion warranty, thickness.
Luminaire parts (driver, LED, glass)	Re-sign colour temperature on a mock-up.	Not usually affected.	Re-check: conformity marking, test records.	Check: dimming, warranty.

Re-sign: a new sample or signature. New test: the evidence is void until a new report is issued. Re-check: ask for the new certificate, claim or declaration. Check: confirm in writing. Practice guidance, not a standard: see Sources and caveats.



"Equal" in look is not equal in evidence: the question is what paperwork points at the item.

Substitution decision flow: three outcomes, decided by what evidence points at the item. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

NO SUBSTITUTION WITHOUT WRITTEN APPROVAL

No substitution, alternative or 'equivalent' for any item, material, finish, component or supplier named in the drawings, specification, FF&E schedule or approved samples is to be made without the written approval of [designer], given on substitution register [ref] before the item is ordered. The proposer states the reason, the effect on appearance and function, the evidence that names the original (test reports, certificates, claims, declarations, warranty), what will replace it, and the effect on programme and contract sum as stated in the maker's revised quotation. 'Equivalent' means an item approved under this clause, not an item the supplier judges equivalent.

EVIDENCE FOR A SUBSTITUTED ITEM

A substituted item is not approved until the supplier provides evidence of the same kind and standard as for the item it replaces: [a test report for the new upholstery composite, from a UKAS-accredited laboratory, dated within [12] months] [the supplier's certificate code and claim on the delivery document] [a declaration of performance and emissions class] [an EPD to the same PCR, in date] [warranty terms]. Where that evidence cannot be supplied, the substitution is refused.

MAKER'S CHOICE LIST

[Maker] may change the following without prior approval, if the register is updated and the item is named in no approved sample, report, certificate, claim or declaration: [concealed fixings of the same type and rating]; [assembly sequence and jigs]; [ ]. Everything not listed needs approval.

UNAPPROVED CHANGES

Work that departs from an approved item without written approval on the register may be rejected. [Remedy, and who bears the cost of removal, replacement and re-testing, to be agreed with the project's contract adviser.] Approved changes are made by new drawing revision and, where they move the price or programme, by written variation.

TERMS USED

Value engineering

A structured review of a design to cut cost without losing the function or performance the client needs. Done badly it swaps materials and quietly drops compliance evidence, so each change should be recorded and re-approved.

Variation order

A written instruction to change what was agreed after the contract or sign-off, stating the effect on price and time. Verbal changes to items already ordered are a common source of dispute.

Upholstery composite

The exact combination of cover, interliner and filling that was tested together. A fire certificate only applies to that combination, so changing the foam or cover can make it invalid.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- FIRA and BFC: Fire safety of furniture in the contract and non-domestic sectors (2010, updated 2011): A1.1 and A1.3 read. BS 7176 itself not read.
- Approved Document B volume 2, Appendix B, B2 and B8 (2019 edition, amendments to 2026): England, buildings other than dwellings. Read.
- FSC UK: new buyer guides (7 Jul 2026): delivery checks and claim types.
- International EPD System: General Programme Instructions 5.0.0, section 6.8: hosted copy read; 5.0.1 not read.
- Make Bespoke Studio: Pricing; How we work: alternatives beside the as-drawn price.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/substitution-and-value-engineering-register. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.