

Working with an architect for your home





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Employing someone to design or remodel and build your most valuable asset is likely to be a nerve racking experience. Unless your project is very simple it makes sense to at least talk to an architect for advice before you get going.

Architects are highly skilled and professionally trained to turn your aspirations into reality. They will guide you through the design, planning and construction process whether you are constructing a new building or adapting an existing property.





First things first

Before contacting an architect, you will need to draw up a project brief. This is your wish-list for the project. Focus on what you want to achieve, noting down all your requirements and highlighting any problems that need solving. Think in terms of how you will use the space now and in the future, rather than what needs to be built.

You should also try to establish your overall budget. This will help you discuss costs upfront with the architect and avoid disappointment at a later stage.





Do you really need an architect?

Once you've agreed your initial project brief and budget, it's a good time to consult an architect. Most architects offer one-off consultations and these can be incredibly useful. They will give you guidance on all the aspects of your project from design and cost through to planning and construction. In a short space of time you can gain an enormous amount of valuable information which will help you realise your project.

Generally architects begin to offer a full service for projects with a budget of £30,000 or more, but for a smaller fee an architect can help you figure out how to get the best out of your project, regardless of size and whether they are needed later on.

If you need planning permission then it is likely that you will need an architect.





Live/Work

Family



Relaxation



Energy Efficiency



Detailing



Practical



Space



What does an architect do?

The first thing an architect will do is ask questions, listen and understand what you are trying to achieve.

They will work with you to develop your project brief and finalise the budget. It is essential that you agree this between you before starting the project.

A good architect will develop solutions and propose ways to reduce costs whilst coming up with a design that will increase the building's value.

They'll guide you through a whole range of processes – from coming up with an initial design to seeing the project through planning and construction to completion.

Architects have a very unique ability to see things from the widest possible perspective and also focus in on very small things that make the difference to the project.



Storage



Security



Modern





'We've been in touch with all four practices. Following their responses we've shortlisted two. Many thanks for your help with this process.

It has been entirely successful as a method of selecting an architect – and I have to commend all four practices on the time and attention they have given us.

Their patience and openness has been commendable. What a pity we have to pick just one!

Paul Smythe

Finding an architect

Choosing an accredited RIBA Chartered Practice will give you peace of mind. They comply with strict criteria covering insurance, health and safety and quality management systems.

Look for a practice with experience of your type of project or one that shares your aspirations. Check how many similar projects they've actually built, their contacts with planners and their track record of approvals. Follow up their references too. Find out how responsive they were to changes and how effective they were at managing the budget.

The first conversation is usually free so it pays to look around for the right practice.

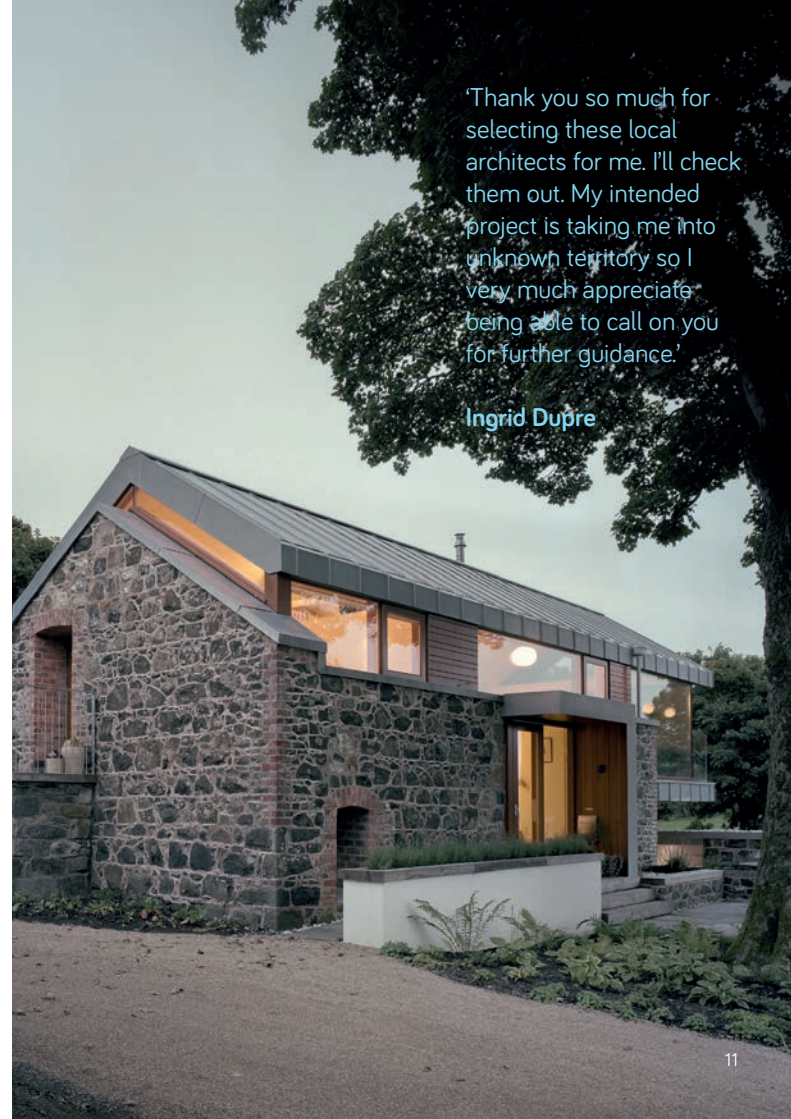
Our Find an Architect service can help you create your own shortlist from over 3,000 RIBA Chartered Practices and 40,000 projects. www.architecture.com/findanarchitect

Alternatively, you can talk to us and we will create a tailored shortlist of practices with the appropriate skills and experience on your behalf. The service is confidential and provided free of charge.

Contact us on 020 7307 3700 or email clientservices@riba.org

'Thank you so much for selecting these local architects for me. I'll check them out. My intended project is taking me into unknown territory so I very much appreciate being able to call on you for further guidance.'

Ingrid Dupre





Appointing an architect

Once you've made your decision, the first thing to do is tell your chosen architect and notify any others.

You and your selected architect should discuss and agree on the scope and cost of architectural services before any work starts. It is important that this agreement is in writing, setting out the services to be provided and outlining the obligations of each party. We recommend you use the RIBA Domestic Agreement. This can be purchased from www.ribabookshops.com/agreements. For smaller projects the agreement may be set out in a self-contained letter of appointment that outlines the obligations of both parties.

Fees

Fees will vary depending on the location and complexity of the project and level of the service expected from the architect. Some architects will charge you on the basis of a total project cost, others on a fixed price lump sum or on a time charge basis.

How much or how little you commission an architect is up to you – from coming up with an initial design to seeing the project through to completion.



The Process

This is an outline of the services that can be provided by an architect. Full details of the architect's services along with the terms and conditions will be specific to your project. They will be itemised and agreed with you by your appointed architect.

You can commission an architect for any of the stages you need for your project.

The RIBA's 'Plan of Work 2013' sets out the key stages of a construction project from conception to completion.

www.ribaplanofwork.com



RIBA
Plan of
Work
2013

Stage 0 / 1

Preparation and Brief

This is the most important part of the project and where the architect can add the most value.

The architect will undertake some preliminary appraisals to assess the options and feasibility of the project. This can range from a sketch design solution to a full feasibility study and will enable you to decide on the best way forward.

They will identify the need for any approvals and other consultants, most commonly a structural engineer.

Stage 2

Concept Design

Using the initial project brief the architect will develop outline proposals. An architect will present a number of initial concepts for you to choose from. They will also liaise with local planners as a priority.

The final design brief should reflect your aspirations and provide you with a home that adds value and improves your quality of life.

Stage 3

Developed Design

The architect will spend more time at this stage transforming ideas into something that can be built. This includes coordinating the work of other consultants into the designs.

Once agreed, between you, the design proposals will then be submitted for planning approval, if required.

Stage 4

Technical Design

The architect will now prepare the technical drawings and a specification and/or a schedule of works that will be used to price the tender and construct the building.

The architect can then invite and appraise tenders from builders and administer the building contract on your behalf.

Stage 5

Construction

Throughout the construction phase the architect will administer your contract with the builder, carry out regular inspections, deal with queries, instruct any additional work required, monitor progress on site, keep track of cost, value the works and certify payments due to the builder.

Stage 6

Handover and Close Out

When the project is ready to handover the architect will inspect and value the works and issue a certificate.

The architect will be available after handover and during any defects period to arrange for certifying the final payment.



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