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Geoff Crowther Architects

GUIDE TO BUILDING YOUR PROJECT

If you're thinking about building, an architect is the best investment you can make.



Whether you are planning to build a new house, to alter or extend your present home, to employ a builder or just do it yourself, it makes sense to consult an architect. This guide highlights the benefits we can bring to your project.

First things first

Before contacting us, 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.

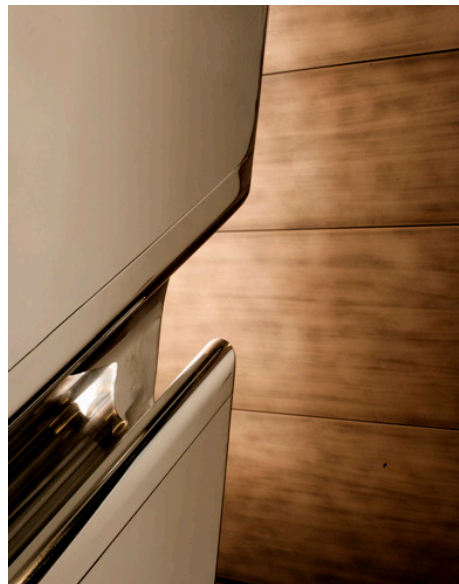
You should also try to establish your overall budget. This will help you discuss costs upfront and avoid disappointment at a later stage.

Do you really need an architect?

Once you've thought about your initial project brief and budget, it's a good time to get in touch. We 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 we offer our services for projects with a budget of £50,000 or more, but on projects with a smaller budget we can help you figure out how to get the best out of your project, regardless of size and whether an architect is needed later on.

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



RIBA

We are an RIBA Chartered Practice - a mark of quality. RIBA Chartered Practice accreditation exists to raise the standards of the architectural profession. Through this accreditation initiative we offer not only the highest levels of design capability, but also better working practices and improved customer services for the benefit of our clients and architecture.

When you are commissioning an RIBA Chartered Practice, you can be assured that you will receive the quality, design excellence and service you are looking for.

What an architect can bring to your project

We can help you realise your ambitions and guide you through the design and construction process. We provide a service that extends well beyond producing a set of drawings – we can handle the paperwork, bring value for money, imagination and peace of mind to your project, whilst keeping it on track and on budget. We can lift your project out of the ordinary and help you achieve your aspirations and vision.

What an architect can do for you

Our aim is to help you bring great ideas to life. This is not about us imposing our own tastes and ideas onto your project, it is about following your brief closely, reflecting your aspirations and helping you make them a reality.

The first thing we will do is ask questions, listen and understand what you are trying to achieve. We will work with you to develop your project brief and finalise the budget. Then we will develop solutions and propose ways to reduce costs whilst coming up with a design that will increase the building's value.

1. Preparation

Consulting us at the earliest stage will allow us to get a real feel for your needs so that together we can establish a clear brief and a realistic budget. This will help reduce the overall design costs and help ensure the project comes in on time and on budget whilst identifying and reducing any potential problems early on.

2. Developing the design

Architects are professional problem-solvers. With our experience and insight we can help stretch what can be achieved within your budget and



add value to your project. We can suggest new ways of utilising space and light, enrich the palette of materials, finishes or fittings, find a builder at the right price, and propose design solutions that will reduce your overall running costs whilst maximising the energy efficiency of your home. Specialists are often called on – these include structural engineers and sometimes mechanical and electrical engineers, acoustic and party wall surveyors and lighting designers.

3. The Approvals Process

We can help with the approvals required before your project can go ahead, including preparation of applications to the local authority for planning consent (where needed) and for Building Regulations plans approval (which covers the functional requirements of buildings to safeguard the health and safety of the people using them, energy conservation and access and convenience for people with disabilities). Sometimes, during the planning process, revisions to the design are needed for the application to be successful and in these situations we'll work closely with you, the planners and other stakeholders to find the best fit.

4. Construction Phase

Guiding you through the construction phase we can help you select suitable builders, obtain appropriate prices for construction, monitor progress and standards, supervise safety on site, liaise with other specialists and oversee the construction through to successful completion.

We know what it costs to build and we will always keep a close eye on the budget, especially if aspirations are high. When it comes to agreeing a cost with the contractor and if savings need to be made, we know how to fine tune the design to reduce costs with the least impact on the design.

Setting the design brief

We believe that every good project is born out of a good relationship and collaboration and we know that great communication with our clients is essential.

Developing the brief is an essential part of getting the design right and we work with you to pull this together using sketch designs, analysis of the site and planning constraints, assessment of opportunities to maximise the potential of the project and of course budget planning.

3D Modelling

We don't believe that you should be limited to making crucial decisions on the basis of plans and elevations alone, which for some can be difficult to interpret. That is why every project begins with a computer generated 3d model, from which we can instantly take any number of plans, elevations and views.



Legislation

It is important before you start your project that you are aware of the approvals that will be needed from the local authority for Planning and Building Regulations, as well as legislation that might affect your plans, such as party wall regulations.

We will guide you through matters as we develop the design. We can also make the necessary submissions for approvals and handle negotiations with the statutory bodies.



The building contract

This is a vital document - the legally binding commitment between your builder and you as the client to deliver your project. We can administer this contract on your behalf.

It is not uncommon for building projects to contain hidden surprises - structural difficulties such as unexpected ground conditions, for example - that can have an impact on the design and the building cost. The best way of preparing yourself is to use an adequate written contract, designed to manage such events fairly from each party's point of view.

Fees

Fees will vary depending on the location and complexity of the project and level of the service expected. The fee will reflect the degree of personal service and bespoke design that your project involves. For instance, projects involving house extensions and refurbishment can be significantly more resource intensive than new builds - and the repair and conservation of historic buildings even more complex, leading to fees being proportionately higher.

We can quote our fee as a percentage of the building cost or as a lump sum. In cases where the scope of the work is harder to predict, or for services such as feasibility studies or those not relating to construction work, the quote can consist of an hourly or daily rate together with an estimate of the time required.

How much or how little your commission 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 we can provide. Full details of our architectural services along with the terms and conditions will be specific to your project. They will be itemised and agreed with you before we begin work.

You can commission us 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



Stage 0 / 1

Preparation and Brief

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

We 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.

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

Stage 2

Concept Design

Using the initial project brief we will develop outline proposals. We will present a number of initial concepts for you to choose from. We 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

We 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 us, the design proposals will then be submitted for planning approval, if required.

Stage 4

Technical Design

We 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.

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

Stage 5

Construction

Throughout the construction phase we 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 hand-over we will inspect and value the works and issue a certificate. We will be available after hand-over and during any defects period to arrange for certifying the final payment.