

► Services offered by architects

Architects offer a range of services to their clients, from the early stages through to checking for defects after the building has been lived with for several months. Clients choose those which are most appropriate to their project.

Brief and Site Appraisal

Before starting work on a design, it is essential for the architect to learn as much about the constraints and features of the site and property, and the needs and aspirations of the clients. A hard look at the budget is also important.

Measured Survey

This is essential for work to an existing building, and should be carried out at the beginning of the project. If planning permission is required, a full set of elevations and plans of the existing building and proposals may be needed. For a larger property with landscaping around that may be effected, it is often more efficient to get a specialist surveyor with computer aided equipment to measure up than an architect.

Sketch Design

Using your brief, your architect, in close consultation with you and your family, will prepare sketch designs for the alterations to your house, showing plan arrangements, layouts and external appearance. From these sketches, with your architects' advice, you will develop the design.

Planning Application

Whilst working on your design, your architect may consult with the planning department at the local council to assess whether your developing house design is likely to gain planning permission (if it is required). Your architect will then produce detailed drawings of your proposals, suitable for a planning application. Some local authorities charge for this preliminary advice.

Building Regulations

A 'Full Plans' Building Regulations application is a set of drawings, calculations and specifications describing the basic construction of the work. Your proposals must to comply with the Building Regulations in order to be allowed to be built. Your architect can prepare and submit your building regulation applications to the local authority.

Tender Package

Drawings and Specifications for tender are used to obtain accurate prices from contractors. The drawings show the precise design and arrangement of the building components and usually include details such as the stairs, fireplaces and internal fittings. The specification document shows the quality of both the materials and construction. The fixtures and fittings are described in detail, stating the manufacturer and precise component required. If a specification is not produced in such detail, extra costs may occur after the work is underway.

Contractors

Your architect can help you to find suitable contractors for your tender list, and see that the process of inviting tenders is carried out correctly. Your architect can also prepare building contract documents which are essential to protect your investment once work commences. They state, amongst other things, the responsibilities of both parties, the extent of works included in the price, start and completion dates, and some give you the power to have inadequate work rebuilt before you pay for it.

On Site

Your architect can monitor the construction of the work. Regular visits will be made to the site in order to check that the works are being carried out in accordance with the contract drawings and in a professional, workmanlike manner. Your architect will check and record amendments to the original contract drawings and any delays in the programme. Your architect will also liaise with your contractor on a regular basis to help your project run smoothly.

Certificates

Your architect can issue certificates for you, certifying payment to the contractor in stages, based on regular inspections. All architects must carry professional indemnity insurance to back up their certificates.