

How to Choose an Architect

An architect will have one of the most significant impacts on your project, but how do you choose the right one for your project? We explain how to begin your search. An architect will be able to take your project ideas from imagination to the drawing board; they will be able to create a design which is tailored to you and consider all possible obstacles so that you sail through planning permission and move forward to build stage. Their knowledge and expertise can be the making of a project - after all, what they design will be the place you call home - so choosing the right architect for you is perhaps one of the most important decisions you'll make. Get a brief in place before you even begin approaching architects, an architect will want to know what you're after so they can determine whether they are interested in taking the project on. Number of bedrooms, number of bathrooms, architectural styles you like, materials you favour, are you after an open plan arrangement?

Where to find an architect?

When it comes to finding an architect for your project, one of the easiest ways to do this will be a simple Google search, targeting your local area. Check out social media too - Instagram is teeming with architects and designers showcasing their work. If you find any you like, they're likely to have their contact details on these platforms where you can get in touch.

Recommendations

As with anyone you hire to work on your project - be it designers, builders, carpenters, etc - it's always best if you can source someone who comes recommended by people you know and trust. Ask family and friends if they've worked with an architect they'd recommend. Alternatively, it would pay you to get out and about in the area you're building and spot any new homes you like the look of - there's no harm in asking the owner who carried out the work. The benefit of a local architect will also mean they're familiar with designing homes which suit the vernacular, might be friendly with the local planning authority, and might also be able to go on to recommend local builders who they've worked on projects with before. Once you have found a selection of architectural firms, invite them to come to the site and meet with you to discuss your project - ideally you'll want to interview at least four architects to see what design

proposals they can come up with, judge whether you'll get on and be able to work together, see whether they can produce the kind of home you're after, and also you'll be able to gauge a greater understanding of whether your dream home is realistic and affordable.

Do you get on?

Your architect is the person you're trusting to design your dream home. You'll be investing a lot of money not just in the project but in the design stage itself, and you need to be able to feel you can approach them about anything. When interviewing various architects for the job, one of the deciding factors should be whether you get on, and whether you feel confident enough that you'd be able to approach them about anything. A breakdown in communication can have a lasting affect on the whole project, so when choosing your architect make sure you can depend on them and that you're both comfortable.

Do you like their previous work?

These days, one of the easiest and quickest ways of viewing an architect's previous work will be via their website. A practice's website will be their main selling tool, and chances are there will be a handful of well-photographed projects for you to browse through. This will give you an indication as to the calibre of work they produce, the architectural style they might specialise in, materials they're familiar with and the construction methods they're used to working with. It is important you like their work and know they can deliver the style of home you're after.

Do they listen to you?

When interviewing different architects for the job, you'll discuss your brief and chances are they will present various ideas there and then about how to make your dreams a reality. Be careful though that when you're discussing your must-haves and like-to-haves that they don't steer you away from your plans. Their role as creatives is to develop your brief, but to also make sure they listen to what you want and don't try to change it. Many homeowners will express their delight that their architect was able to design a home better than they could have imagined; just be careful that things don't get carried away and you sacrifice certain elements you've longed for, all because an impulsive designer went rogue and wanted to try something new.