



Guide
How to Build Your
Dream Home



SHELDON PEEVER STUDIO

This guide has been prepared to help you unpack the process of building your dream home and answer some of the questions that come up time and time again.

An Introduction



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Director and Architect

I studied Architecture in the days when we were taught on drawings boards. The advent of CAD/computer drawings was on the horizon, but I made the decision for the period I was studying to master the traditional skills of drawings and the fluency of putting pen to paper. This has proved invaluable in communicating ideas.

I opened the office back in 2010 first based in North London, and then relocating with my young family to the city of St Albans in the county of Hertfordshire.

We choose to include the word *Studio* in our name as it signalled that design is at the core of what we do.

We have maintained a small personalised practice in order to deliver the best possible service to each and every client. We listen to our client and build everything around their dreams and aspirations.

We are learning all the time with emerging technologies, materials and construction techniques. The world is constantly evolving and we are too.

I hope this guide helps you along your journey to creating a home to fit your dreams. Follow us on social media for ideas, examples of projects we are working on and useful tips.



Extension in a conservation area, St Albans.

Refurbishment and extension to a listed house, Knightsbridge.



6 CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE CONTACTING AN ARCHITECT

1 What is your brief?

It's important that you are able to communicate this clearly with your Architect. We always recommend living in a property for a year to experience all the seasons and work out what works and what does not. Think about how you live and use the house. Also determine how long you plan to live in the house. Is this until your retirement? Will you have elderly relatives/young children living with you?

2 Will planning permission be required?

Depending on the works you are planning to undertake there are myriad routes you can follow in order to get permission (if required) to build. Whether this be permitted development, full planning, conservation area consent, listed building consent. Your Architect will be able to advise you at an initial meeting what your options are. We have worked on several projects where houses have been extensively extended but badly and it's simply a case of remodelling those existing spaces to work better for you.

3 What is your budget?

Where you live, what you build and what you build it out of is determined by how much you can afford to spend on the project. Very few houses are a no-compromise construction, so setting out a firm, realistic budget will allow you to figure out what features are most important to you. Costs can also change throughout the project, so make sure you have enough to cover every stage. A competent Architect will be able to advise you on this.

4 What ideas do you have for the design?

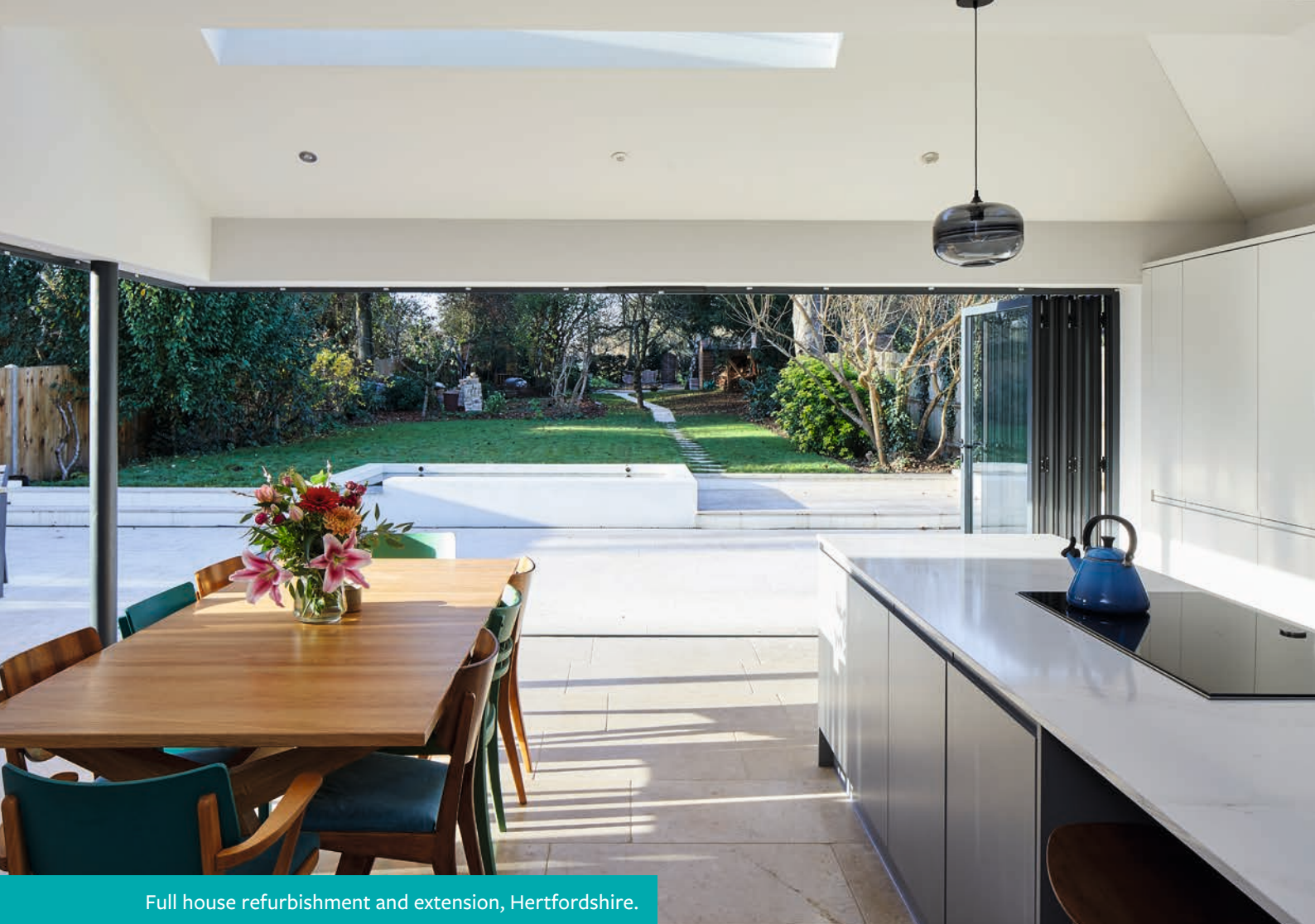
Such as gadgets (smart lighting), type of flooring. Style/vision of architecture. If it's an existing house what works and what doesn't, e.g. views, lack of sunlight, too much sunlight, underused space.

5 Who is required for the job?

Some architects will be involved in the entirety of the build to find contractors and suppliers, while others will provide only the design. You may also not need the architect to be involved entirely, either because you can oversee aspects of the project yourself or you have separate professionals helping at different stages. Make sure you've found the right people for every stage.

6 How long will the project take?

You will need to know in order to prepare yourself mentally for the journey. You may decide to oversee the process to save money. An experienced project manager will deliver a project on time, saving you a great deal of stress in the process. If you're building a new home make an allowance in your budget for renting elsewhere.



Full house refurbishment and extension, Hertfordshire.



Rear extension in a conservation area, St Albans.

HOW TO CHOOSE AN ARCHITECT

1 **Ensure your architect is *actually* an architect**

All professionals wanting to call themselves Architects have to be registered with the Architects Registration Board (ARB), which is there to protect your interests as a member of the public.

2 **Are they registered with RIBA?**

It is not essential for an architect to be registered with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), but if they are, it means they are a Chartered Architect and follow the RIBA's Code of Practice.

3 **Look at their previous work**

Is their design style something that appeals to you? If you want something that is traditional in appearance then don't consider an architect whose work is of a contemporary style.

4 **Do they have experience with projects like yours as well as local planning policy?**

If you want to build a basement make sure your list includes professionals who have plenty of experience of this type of work. Check that they have experience of working with the local planning authority and are conscious of planning policies that are specific to your area. They will be able to deliver the design you want within the parameters of what planning officers will allow. They will also know skilled builders and other consultants who work in that area. This doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be based locally but that they have worked locally.

5 **Are they Insured?**

Check they have adequate insurance in place for the job you want to do. All ARB registered Architects have a legal obligation to have personal indemnity insurance in place.

6 **Speak to their previous clients**

Is their approach right for you? To get an impression of the practice, how they work and deliver their projects, talk to previous clients where possible.

7 **Go see completed projects**

Although this can be more reflective of the contractor it does show if what's drawn on paper and shown in 3D visualisations has been translated well into a built form and if there has been attention to detail at build stage. It is very easy to produce computer generated images of a building but if that can not be translated into an actual building there's something amiss.

8 **Are they able to provide you with the level of service you want?**

Some Architects only work up to gaining planning approval and won't then produce detailed design drawings or engage with builders or other consultants. Whilst others can and will provide a full service from start to finish and have consultants and builders they have worked with before. Take the time to consider if you have the expertise and time to project manage a job before discounting having someone provide a full service.

9 **Do you think you could get along with this person?**

Working on your dream home is an emotive, personal process and you have got to click with them. You should feel relaxed and able to communicate frankly and clearly with your Architect at all times. Make sure that when you've commissioned your Architect that you don't get palmed off to some other person in the office that you may not have a connection with.



Full house refurbishment and extension, Hertfordshire.



Kitchen extension in a conservation area, St Albans.

7 COMMON MISTAKES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

1 Trying to get precise prices from planning drawings

Planning drawings only provide an outline of the project. They will show the size and exterior materials required but only give a basic sense of the interiors. These drawings should not be used in order to get accurate costs from, rather a price guide, as they are incomplete in terms of detailed design. The builder will have made lots of assumptions on finishes you want and more often than not we get feedback that costs have gone up once works have commenced on site and the true costs emerges. You want to avoid being caught in this situation with mounting costs for which you haven't budgeted for.

2 Future proofing

You must always consider the future use of your home rather than just satisfying your immediate needs. You may find yourself living in your dream house but not the dream life as the house isn't fit for purpose. Is the house able to take on an expanding family? Would you be able to accommodate any elderly relatives or friends staying? If you plan to stay in your home for the duration of your retirement does the layout allow this to happen?

3 Not having a 'masterplan'

You may want to achieve more than your budget allows for. What we do with all projects is have an overriding finished scheme which can then be broken down into phases. It's invaluable to have this overview of where you want to be so as to avoid timely delays, abortive work and unnecessary costs.

4 Cutting corners on design fees

You may consider design fees an extortionate cost and feel happy to deal directly with builders to save money. This is commonplace with those operating on a tight budget. However, the best advice is more valuable when you have less to spend. You want to achieve exactly what you want the first time and to the highest level possible within your budget. It means you can plan the whole project upfront to minimise unknown costs at a later date. Using an expert to design and source the myriad of options available will ultimately save you time and money.

5 Impatience

Clients are keen to have their project completed, but patience is essential in making your home exactly what you want it to be. By taking the time in the pre construction stages, the end result will be a home you will love forever. Changes are far easier and more economical to execute before the concrete hardens.

6 Not hiring suitable specialists

Specialists will cost more, if you are looking for a specific look or product don't skimp on a specialist to do the work. An architect who specialises in homes will also know the relevant specialists for all aspects of the project, so hiring the right person from the start is the first step in ensuring you have the best people in place.

7 Not being on top of your actual budget

If you are not transparent with your budget then there will be problems for you and your Architect. It is important to communicate this information clearly to your Architect. An Architect designs to the budget you've given them. It's just one of the design constraints.

“If you think it's expensive to hire a professional, try hiring an amateur!”

Red Adair



Full house refurbishment and extension, Hertfordshire.

WHAT SERVICES DO WE PROVIDE?

Embarking on a building project can be an emotive experience and feel overwhelming at times. Our role is one of a professional authoritative guide, able to help and support you from initial discussions, through all stages of design and construction, to the handing over of the completed project.

Whether you are rethinking an existing space or creating a new one, we are here to craft an extraordinary design that will turn your aspirations into possibilities.

Our services are broken down into stages.

Stage 1

- Measured survey of the site which includes accurate drawings of buildings and the surrounding land and any outbuildings.

Stage 2

- Initial design development of the scheme.
- We work with you to produce a design.

Stage 3

- Preparing the planning drawings and any relevant information required as part of the planning submission.
- Planning application submission and approval.

Stage 4

- Technical design and specification of the planning approved scheme.
- Bringing in other relevant consultants in order to produce building regulations approved drawings.
- The final package is submitted for approval by building control.

Stage 5

- Diving deeper into the design and providing detailed design of specific building elements
- Option for additional joinery interior design.
- Tendering / appointing a contractor

Stage 6

- Site works
- Can include contract administration works.
- Working with the builder, client and any other relevant trades to deliver the project successfully.



Extension in a conservation area, St Albans.

WE PROVIDE THREE TIERS OF SERVICES

Core

This includes stages 1 – 4 and are suitable for budget-focused projects. This does involve more work for you, the client, including managing the project after stage 4. This is generally a quicker route to building. We would not recommend this route if you want a “high-end” designed building.

Enhanced

This includes stages 1 – 6 and is suitable for design-led projects where we are involved at all stages. We are the lead design consultant and guide for the client from start to completion. This stage does take longer to deliver due to the high level of detailed design work we carry out before starting on-site.

Premium

Our premium package includes site works, contract administrator role and/or an interior design package which can include drawings for packages of works such as bespoke joinery, individual room designs.

Glossary

Project Terms

Consultation Period

This is the statutory time period that the Local planning authority has to process your planning application.

Defects Period

The Defects period is a period of time after project completion and handover. Once this period is completed a defects list is written up, and the contractor is then liable for making good.

Interim Certificate

This certificate is issued by the contract administrator to the contractor at the end of every month. Once the certificate is issued, the contractor's monthly invoice can be settled.

Joinery

This means any woodwork in the project. This could be bespoke furniture of some description, whether it be built in or freestanding.

Measured Survey

A measured survey is the process of producing accurate dimensioned drawings of your house. This is produced by a qualified Surveyor taking a series of physical measurements on site. Having up to date and accurate survey drawings is absolutely essential for any built project.

Outbuildings

These are buildings within the boundary of your property that are separate to the main house. This can include sheds, garden rooms and garages.

Party Wall

A party wall is a shared wall that divides the homes of two separate owners or garden walls built over a boundary.

Planning Approval

This is the official decision from the local planning authority on your right to proceed. Approval must be gained before any building work can begin onsite. Once granted, planning approval is valid for 3 years, and work on site must commence within that time.

Planning Drawings / Planning Package

The planning drawings / planning package is a set of drawings that show the existing situation, proposed scheme, and any potentially any other documents required by the local planning authority in order to gain planning approval.

Planning Fee

Fee payable to the planning department to process your application.

Project Programme

The Project Programme gives an indication of the projected length of each project stage, and will allow you to check when you can expect each stage of the project to be completed.

Site Works

Site works are any physical activity performed on site by a contractor.

Snagging

Snagging is the process of checking a newly completed building for defects that need to be rectified by the contractor. This is carried out by us at the end of the build.

Structural Design Drawings

Drawings that are produced by the structural engineer containing detailed structural design.

Technical Design Drawings

The technical design drawings are produced at Stage 4 and incorporate information from the Structural Engineer and other consultants. They are used by the contractor during construction.

Tendering

Tendering is the process by which we contact multiple contractors for quotes for the proposed works. The more detailed the tender documentation, the more likely we are to receive accurate quotes for the work. A rigorous and strict tendering process is essential to ensure project costs can be forecast correctly.

Consultants

Contract Administrator

The contract administrator is responsible for administering the contract between the Client and the main contractor.

Contractor

Any person contracted to carry out building works on site.

Planning Officer

The representative from the Local Planning Authority who is dealing with your planning application.

Quantity Surveyor

A Quantity Surveyor provides detailed cost plans for the building work.

Surveyor (measured survey)

A surveyor will survey your property and produce accurate scaled drawings to be used during the building process.

Surveyor (party wall)

A party wall surveyor is responsible for preparing any party wall awards that may be required.

Structural Engineer

A structural engineer is a consultant who will produce the structural design of the building, including steel work and foundations.



Get in Touch

Office Hours

Monday – Friday

9 am – 5:30 pm

i Please note that staff work core hours of 9:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday, so may not always be available. We aim to respond to all communications within 48 hours (apart from when we're on holiday).

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