

What exactly does an architect do?

We have found that many of our potential clients, particularly our domestic clients, may not have used an architect before and therefore would like a summary of some basic information about the stages that a project goes through and what employing an architect entails.

1. Keys to a successful Project

- plan ahead
- describe clearly and carefully what you want
- choose a professional team capable of delivering these requirements
- work with the construction team to deliver a successful project
- expect problems and put in place a method of dealing with (and paying for) them.

Cost, time, quality are three issues, which at some stage in the building process will conflict. It is worth setting out your priorities at the start of a project. We sometimes ask clients to allocate points to each issue as a way of focusing on their relative priorities. Mark each out of ten, with a maximum score of twenty.

You also need to think about what you want from the project, who is going to use it, how sustainable and future-proof you want it to be, and what you want the building to say about you.

2. What are the stages of a building project?

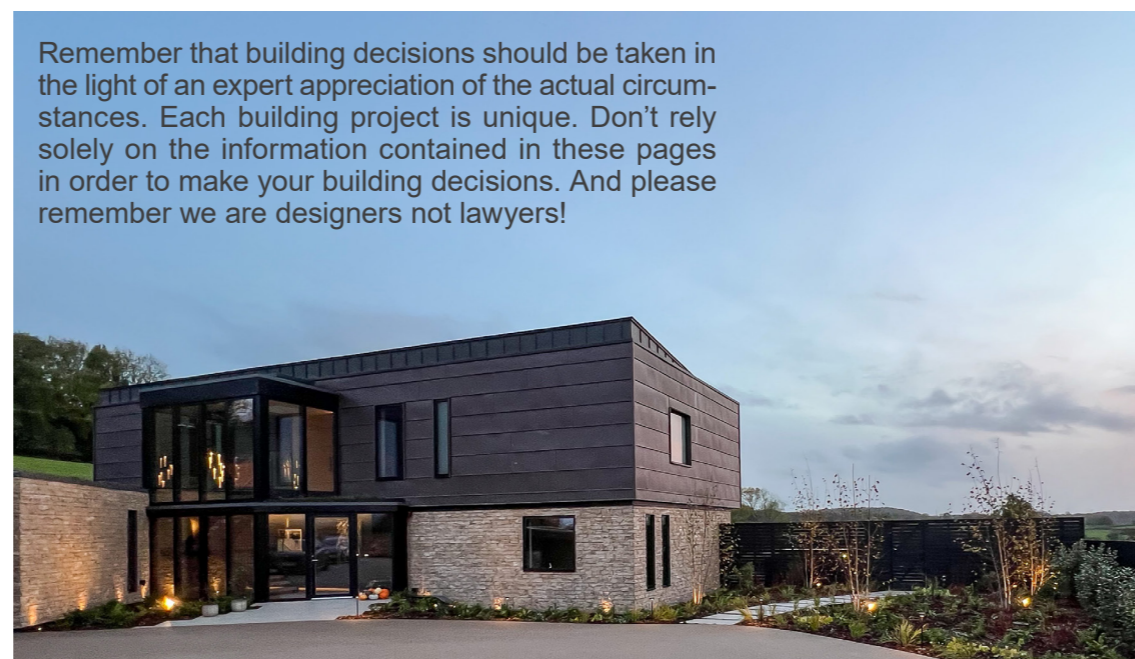
- an initial brief: write down what you want.
- select architect who will then help to develop your brief.
- get information about the building or site
- initial ideas leading to agreed Concept Design
- Planning permission
- develop the design and technical design information to build from
- Building Regulations approval
- select contractor, pre-contract meeting, sign contract.
- Construction on site up to completion
- Defects inspection and final certificate.
- Feedback

Are you looking to build (or transform) a home which will be a pleasure to live in, energy efficient and sustainable now and in the future?

Employing an architect to create your dream home



At Downs Merrifield we specialise in designing sustainable, energy efficient homes that combine cutting edge design with environmental responsibility. Our small partnership has a proven track record of creating beautiful, functional and environmentally friendly homes that exceed our client's expectations



Remember that building decisions should be taken in the light of an expert appreciation of the actual circumstances. Each building project is unique. Don't rely solely on the information contained in these pages in order to make your building decisions. And please remember we are designers not lawyers!

3. Do I need an architect?

If you want the project to be beautifully designed and exceed your expectations, then yes. An architect can add value and design ideas which you may not have thought of. However if you want a small extension and know exactly what you want, and need someone simply produce the technical drawings for the contractor to use then possibly not.

The term 'architect' is a 'protected title' which means anyone who calls themselves an architect has undergone a minimum of 7 years of training and is regulated by a professional body. However anyone can use the terms 'architectural technician' or 'architectural designer' without training. A building surveyor or technologist also has had professional training and accreditation in their respective fields as well, although the courses are shorter and not design related.

An architect must be registered with the ARB and may also be part of the RIBA (RSAW in Wales) and the practice may be a chartered RIBA Practice which provides you with extra certainty about their ethics, codes of conduct and levels of training and Insurance.

Downs Merrifield architects is a Chartered Practice ref 20012164 and all partners are members of the RIBA

4. Employing an architect

Typical steps in the selection and appointment of an architect are as follows:

- Contact an architect to discuss requirements, location, approximate budget, and to arrange an initial interview. This initial meeting will have no charge.
- Initial meeting on site, to meet each other, to assess the building and its opportunities. If you wish to proceed, the architect set down the terms of appointment and fees in writing, and the client needs to formally confirm acceptance of these. From here on in fees are chargeable for the time the architect devotes to your project.

Architects Appointment

Our preferred form of appointment is that produced by the RIBA called RIBA Domestic Project Agreement 2010. It is intended for the benefit of both client and architect, and consists of a Conditions of Appointment and a Schedule of Services. This is accompanied by our Fee Proposal which clearly identifies our charges for each stage of the project.

What does an Architect Do?

Apart from our basic services, we can also do preliminary and feasibility work and further or additional services. These are set out in the RIBA Plan of Work as set out below:-

Work Stage 1: Preparation

- Discuss the client's requirements; assess these and give general advice on how to proceed
- Agree a Project Brief
- Advise on any need for other consultants, specialist contractors, sub-contractors or suppliers.
- Carry out such preparatory work as may be necessary to determine the feasibility of the client's requirements

Work Stage 2: Concept Design

- Prepare initial design ideas and develop a concept design
- Prepare a very basic cost estimate for new build projects
- Where applicable, give an indication of possible programme of the building process
- Where required, make an application for Planning Permission. (NB The permission itself is beyond the architect's control and no guarantee that it will be granted can be given)

Work Stage 3: Developed Design

- Develop the scheme design; co-ordinate any work of other consultants, specialist contractors, sub-contractors or suppliers
- Consider in more depth sustainability options
- Advise on the budget including obtaining additional advice if necessary
- Cost checks as necessary; advise on the consequences of any subsequent changes on the cost and programme
- Make and negotiate where required applications for approvals under building acts, regulations or other statutory requirements

Work Stage 4: Developed Design

- Prepare technical design information including drawings, schedules and specification of materials and workmanship in sufficient detail to enable a contractor to prepare a tender.
- Invite tenders from approved contractors; advise on tenders submitted. Alternatively arrange for a price to be negotiated with a contractor.
- Advise on the appointment of the contractor; where required prepare the building contract and arrange for it to be signed by the client and the contractor

Work Stage 5: Construction

- Visit the site as appropriate (depending on appointment) to inspect generally the progress and quality of the work; General attendance on site to assist the contractor with problems that arise.
- Administer formally the terms of the building contract if required;
- Instruct the contractor in any changes to the building works if required;
- Administer (if required) the terms of the building contract relating to the completion of the works; give general guidance on maintenance; provide a set of drawings showing the building and the main lines of drainage.

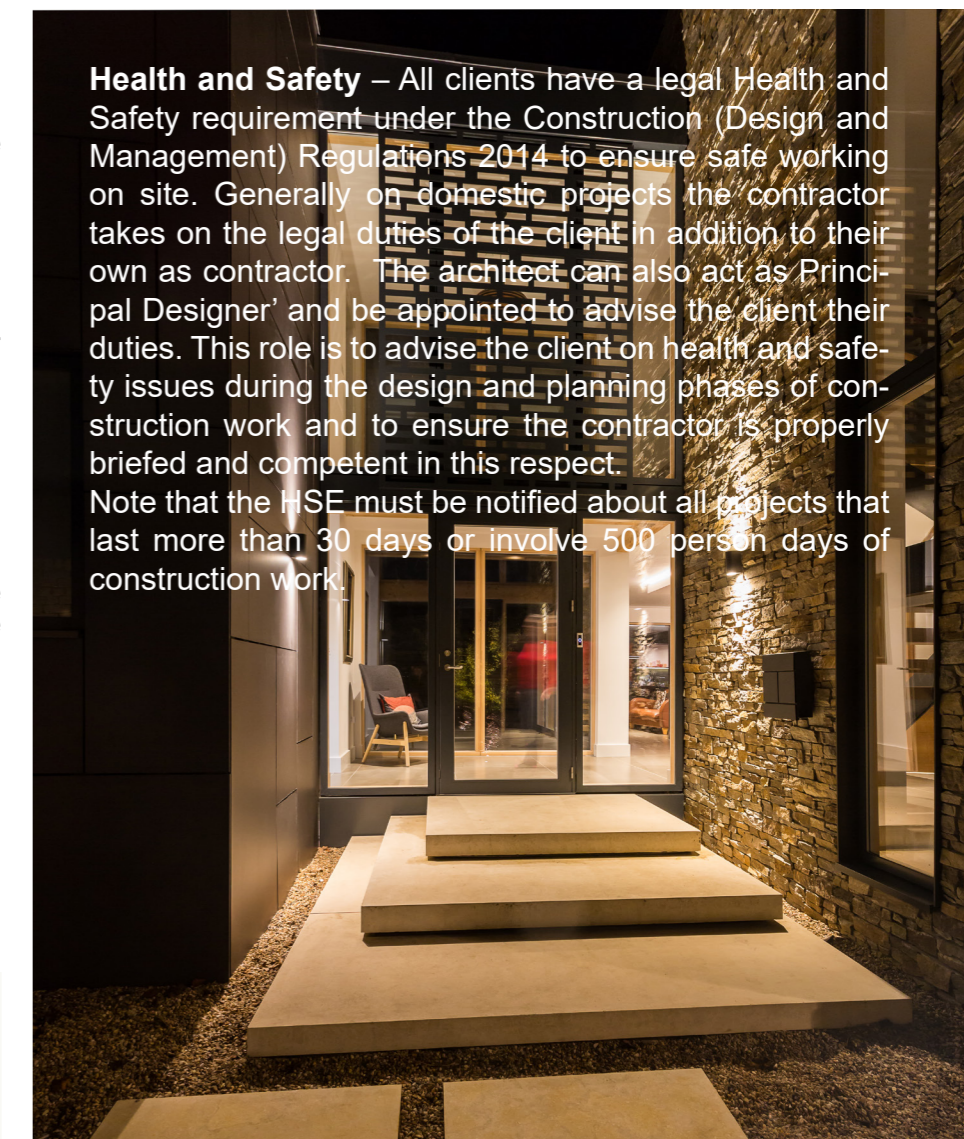
Work Stage 6: Handover and Close Out

- Handover of building and conclusion of the building Contract
- Handover a set of 'as constructed' drawings for the clients records
- Feedback interview;

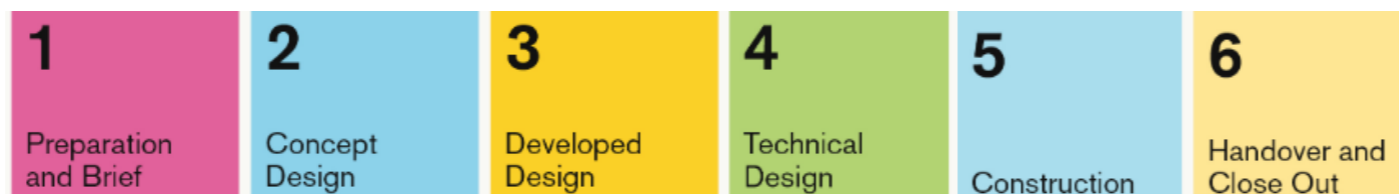
Additional Services we can Provide:-

These services which are not part of the architect's basic services, but which may also be provided if required.

- Make initial measured surveys, take levels and prepare plans of sites and buildings. (for simple projects)
- Make inspections, prepare reports or give general advice on the condition of premises.
- Take particulars on site; prepare specification and/or schedules for repairs or restoration work and inspect their execution.
- Landscape Design of hard landscaping
- Interior design
- Principal Designer (to help with Health & Safety issues in conjunction with the contractor).



Health and Safety – All clients have a legal Health and Safety requirement under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2014 to ensure safe working on site. Generally on domestic projects the contractor takes on the legal duties of the client in addition to their own as contractor. The architect can also act as Principal Designer' and be appointed to advise the client their duties. This role is to advise the client on health and safety issues during the design and planning phases of construction work and to ensure the contractor is properly briefed and competent in this respect. Note that the HSE must be notified about all projects that last more than 30 days or involve 500 person days of construction work.

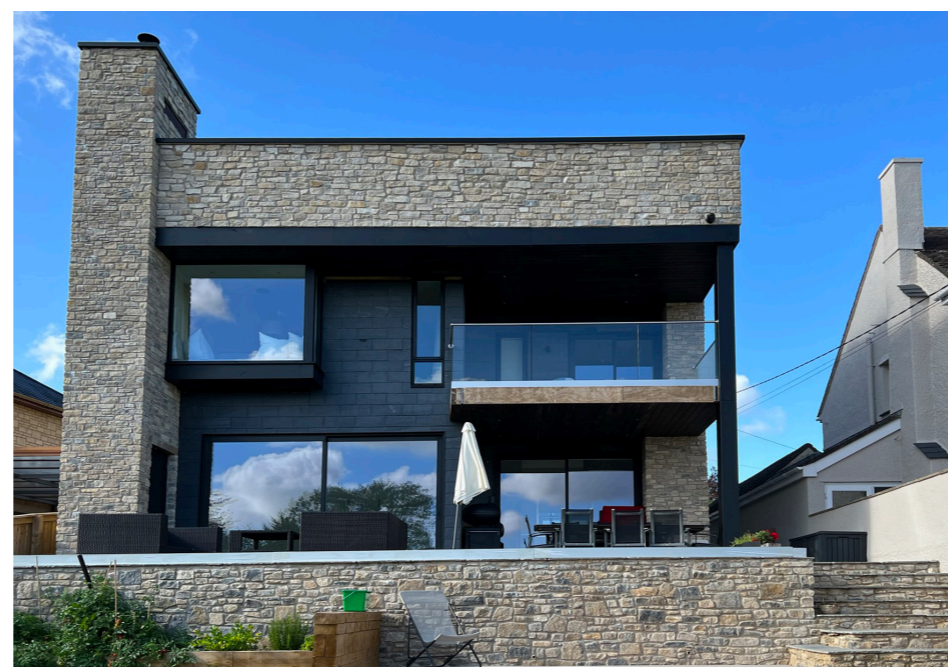


5. Other Consultants

Services to be provided by other consultants (depending on complexity of project):-

- **Structural Engineer** – provides advice on all structural matters including surveys, structural defects, any new beams and foundations etc. The structural engineer can make structural surveys to ascertain whether there are defects in the walls, roofs, floors, drains or other parts of a building which may materially affect its safety, life and value. Note the structural calculations will be required for the building regulations application
- **Quantity Surveyor** – provides advice on costs and prepares a cost plan and can manage the costs on site, providing monthly financial appraisals
- **Mechanical/ electrical engineer** – will provide advice on incoming services, the heating and energy systems within the building, The sustainable strategy and options, provide thermal modelling to back up these ideas, together with the necessary calculations to accompany the Building Regulations submission and which will indicate future energy bills
- **Party Wall Surveyor** – provides the necessary legal documentation and negotiations for any which will impact on your neighbours
- **Landscape architect** – prepares landscaping proposals which may also include a planting plan
- **Building or Land Surveyor** – will undertake a detailed survey at an early stage to allow an accurate design to be developed. We can arrange for these surveys to be done or occasionally we will do it ourselves
- **Ecologist** - who will undertake bate and other surveys and provide advice on any mitigation or licences required
- **Planning Consultant** - where there is a particularly complicated planning situation to be argued and resolved

We can provide suggestions and advice should any of these specialists be required



6. Fees

There are no standard fees for the appointment of an architect because of the huge variety of type and complexity of projects, with every project being unique and requiring a different type of service. However to give some guidance, our fees may be based on a percentage of the total construction cost or on time expended, or may be a lump sum.

As an initial idea, our fees can range from above 10% down to 5% for projects ranging from less than £150,00 to over £1million. Refurbishments tend to be more complex and therefore more expensive than new build projects. As do historic buildings and unique or highly innovative designs.

We will probably quote you a percentage, once we have had our initial meeting and understand what you require, based on an estimate of our costs. However we typically charge a lump sum which we will inform you of in our initial proposal. This figure is fixed until we have agreed on the likely construction cost and submitted for planning. It provides price certainty for you for the design and unless the scope of works changes significantly, or you instruct us to make significant variations or provide additional services, will remain fixed throughout the duration of the project, in which case we will let you know beforehand

We do not like to ask our client for additional fees once these have been agreed, however the total scope is often not understood until we have completed the design process. We will not be the cheapest architects you will find, but we offer a very high level of service which together with the way we present of designs means you will have a very thorough understanding of the building you will get by the time you progress to planning. Our fee also reflects in the quality of the information the contractor will have to build off, which in turn should mean a high quality home at the end of the project

Please note that the client is expected to pay other consultants and statutory fees (such as Planning Applications, Building Regulations etc) directly to the supplier. We are registered for VAT, which means that all of our fees are subject to VAT at a level of 20%.

Time charges are based on hourly rates for principals and other technical staff. Downs Merrifield architects time charge fees for small works are typically between £95 and £50 per hour.

Fees and expenses should be paid in instalments either at regular (generally monthly) intervals or on completion of work stages set out above. This will be set out in the letter of appointment. These fees can generally be split as follows:

Any sums remaining unpaid at the expiry of 14 days from the date of submission of the fee account shall incur interest thereafter, such interest to accrue from day to day at the rate of 8% per annum above the current base rate

Finally, although building a project is complex, it should also be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. We try to provide a high level of personal service which will make each project as close a match to your requirements as possible, hopefully exceeding your expectations.