

How to Work with an Architect to Best Effect

Hints & Help for Self-Builders



How to Work with an Architect to Best Effect – Hints & Help for Self-Builders

A MASTERCLASS

Prepared and presented by

Peregrine Mears RIBA
Chartered Architect

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Peregrine Mears Architects Ltd.

www.mearsarchitects.com

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“Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness”

- Frank Gehry

How to get from this....,



.... to this!



Why Use An Architect?

- Building or renovating your new home will have a huge impact on your life and can be a very challenging but fulfilling experience
- The point of employing professionals should be to make the process of building your new home as stressless and enjoyable as possible
- Architects are highly skilled professionals – qualifying takes 7 years of study to achieve the RIBA accreditation (www.architecture.com)
- The title “Architect” has legal protection – anyone describing themselves as such must be registered with the Architects Registration Board (www.arb.org.uk)
- Architects are not “plan drawers” – they are trained in design, construction, history, construction law and contracts as well as project procurement & management





Building a new home is akin to building a new car...., from raw materials, in a field, so don't try DIY, employ professionals to design and build for the best result

Why Use An Architect?

- The first thing an Architect should do is ask questions and be a good listener – they'll want to learn about you to understand what you want to achieve
- An experienced Architect who knows the planning system will be able to give you a good indication of the likelihood of gaining planning permission for your project at the outset. That is essential before you get too carried away with a particular location
- An Architect will help you define your brief clearly at the outset, in terms of size, space, style, features and cost. That then informs the design process
- Time spent in that early stage will help avoid costly mistakes and changes further down the line
- Having an Architect act on your behalf gives you the protection of their professional expertise and experience – someone looking out for your interests



Why Use An Architect?

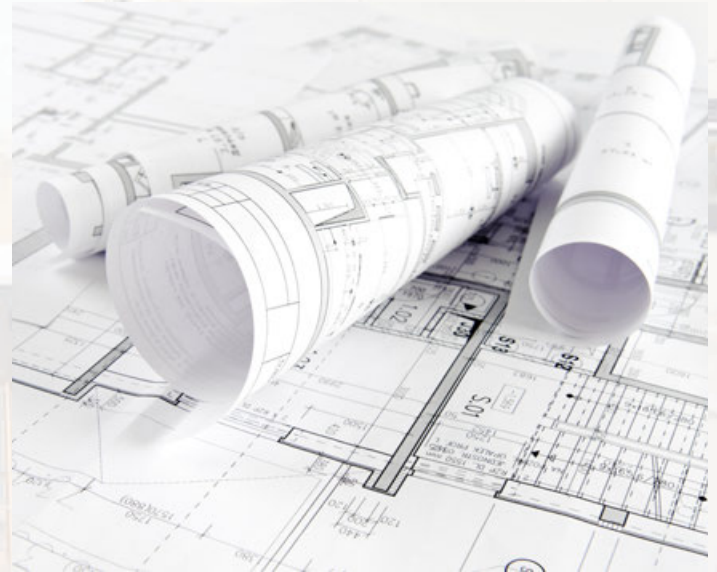
- An Architect can guide you every step of the way, leading the design team and managing the construction phase of the project
- You may only do this once, an Architect will find out what's important to you, act as a filter / sounding board and provide inspiration and creativity that will ensure your new home delights you for years to come
- An Architect should have experience of different methods of construction and materials so can advise you on what is best for your project
- Paying for a comprehensive set of design information will save money and stress and allow the project to be built to a fixed price, time and quality
- Architects use different ways of illustrating and communicating design ideas – from quick hand sketches to technical drawings and also 3D CAD models and physical card models





Developing a Design Brief

- A Design Brief is your wish list of your requirements for your project
- Start with what is most important to you?
- Be realistic about your budget and timescale
- Separate the “essentials” from the “nice to haves”
- Avoid the temptation to determine / draw a layout yourself
- Give the problem to your Architect to solve!



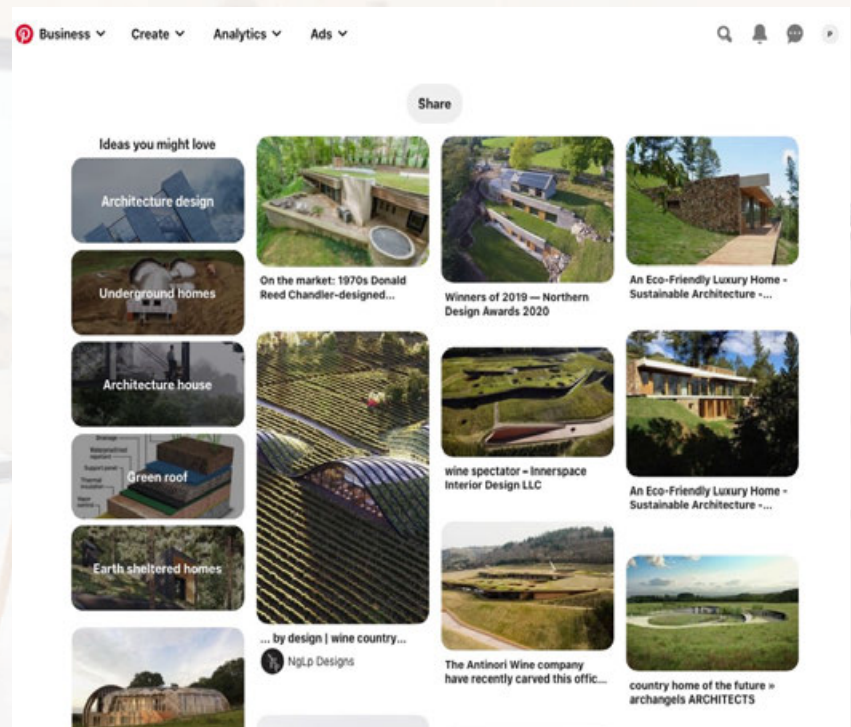
Developing a Design Brief

- How do you like to live?
- What activities will the building need to accommodate?
- How many people will live there?
- How many different rooms / spaces will you need?
- What size spaces will each activity / use need?
- Think about how you will use the space now and in future – how adaptable will the building need to be?



Developing a Design Brief

- What style / feel do you prefer?
- Traditional or Contemporary?
- Decorative or minimalist?
- Big open plan spaces or smaller cellular spaces?
- A Pinterest board can help convey your tastes (www.pinterest.co.uk) – a digital scrapbook
- Have different board for each area e.g. living room, bedroom, garden
- Note what it is you specially like about each image you save – Materials? Detail? Light?



Developing a Design Brief

- What performance do you want from the building
e.g.
- Low energy / low running costs?
- Low maintenance?
- Are you prepared to invest upfront in technology / materials to reduce those ongoing costs?
- How important is sustainable design / construction to you?
- What about a “healthy” internal environment?

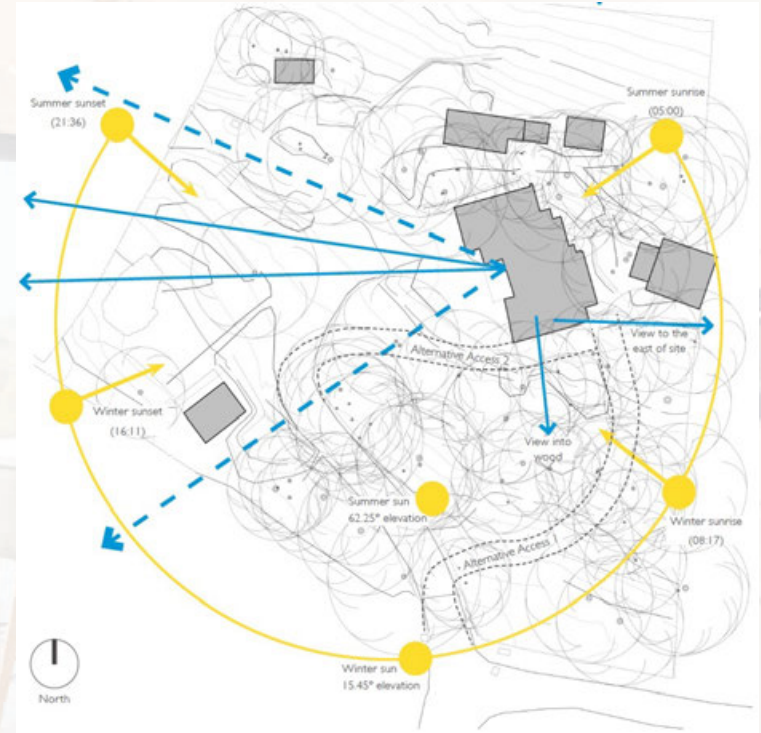


“A well thought out design brief is critical to the success of a building project”



Finding the USP of Your Site

- Get to know the site –
- See it in different weather conditions
- Where does the sun rise and set?
- Where does the weather come from?
- Is it sheltered or exposed?
- What direction is the main aspect?
- What views out are there?
- Is overlooking an issue?
- What about overshadowing?



“A successful design is one that looks like it belongs to the place”

Finding the USP of Your Site

- What are the levels like – flat or sloping?
- How about road access? How easy will it be to get materials onto site?
- What are the characteristics of the surrounding landscape?
- Are there any noteworthy trees?
- Is it near water?
- Is the site in a designated protected area e.g. AONB,SSSI or Conservation Area?
- Is it in an urban location or an isolated rural one?
- What is it you really love about the site and setting?



“A successful design is one that responds to the constraints and opportunities of the site and the brief”



Making the Most of the Design Process

- Be open to new ideas, new ways of seeing, don't settle for something you could buy on a housing estate; your new home should be as individual as you are
- Allow enough time to properly explore and develop the design; you need to feel confident everything has been carefully considered before starting to build.
- Be realistic about your budget and always include a 10% contingency sum for unforeseen eventualities – there will be some for sure!
- You may only experience building your own home once so enjoy the journey!



Making the Most of the Design Process

- The “RIBA PLAN OF WORK” is an industry standard template summarising the stages a construction project typically goes through and what an Architect will do at each stage:
- STAGE 1 – PREPARATION & BRIEF – Learning about the site and your needs
- STAGE 2 – CONCEPT DESIGN – Sketch proposals and feasibility studies
- STAGE 3 – DEVELOPED DESIGN – More detailed proposals / detail planning
- STAGE 4 – TECHNICAL DESIGN – Technical drawings / specification / tenders
- STAGE 5 - CONSTRUCTION – Site inspections / manage time, cost & quality
- STAGE 6 – HANDOVER – The building becomes yours!
- See - <https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources>



The Cost of Using an Architect

- Using a professional will cost money! Architects' charges are typically based on either:
- A percentage of the total build cost – the traditional approach
- A lump sum for each work stage – based on agreed outputs and time resources needed
- Time charged based on agreed hourly rates – where services cannot be accurately defined or time input is small
- Be clear about what services you want and ask questions if you don't understand what you're getting and what you're being charged!



How Architects Add Value

- An Architect will listen to your aspirations and translate them into a finished building that is better than you could have expected
- They will help you prioritize, finding out what is most important to you
- Architects can make optimal use of space and light no matter your budget – things that will give you pleasure for years to come
- Architects will find ways to make the most of the opportunities your site or building offers
- A sensible layout that is attractive and adaptable will appeal to buyers if you decide to sell
- IMAGINATION! Coming up with ideas that would not have occurred to you!







Thank you for listening....., any questions?

*“So I rang a local builder, I said ‘I want a skip outside my house’.
He said, ‘go on then, I’m not stopping you!’ ”*

- Tim Vine

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