



# Why use a Chartered Architect?

A GUIDE TO COMMISSIONING AN ARCHITECT IN SCOTLAND





“Imagination, value for money and freedom from worry are just some of the reasons why using a chartered architect makes sense.”

Willie Watt, President The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland







## Why use a chartered architect?

### A client-centred service

Architects provide a service that extends well beyond producing a set of drawings. Adept at identifying the aspirations and needs of their clients, architects will bring their special skills, knowledge and experience to a project.

### Value for money

Not only can architects provide value for money, but professional attention to detail will achieve value through the most efficient use of space and careful selection of materials and finishes. Environmental sensitivity, energy efficiency and low running and maintenance costs can bring extra benefits to your project and long term savings!

### Freedom from worry

Architects can guide you through the complex procedures of planning permission and building regulations and monitor the builder's programme of works through to completion. RIAS members are obliged to carry professional indemnity insurance – giving you peace of mind.

### Imagination

Whether you are looking for tradition or innovation, boldness or understatement, an architect can lift your project out of the ordinary. Many people will offer to alter your building. It takes an architect to maximise its potential and to do it with flair, imagination and style.

A building project, whatever its scale, can be daunting, but the same basic criteria apply, be it a simple house extension or a large office development. When you use a chartered architect you are employing someone who has undertaken seven years of professional training, the longest in the building industry. Anyone styling themselves 'building consultant', 'architectural designer', 'plan drawer' and so on is unlikely to be an architect and does not have comparable skills or knowledge.

### About this guide

This guide is designed to help potential clients understand the design process and to explain the different stages and costs involved.



# Working with your architect

## Definition of an architect

Before a person can be called an architect he or she will have completed a seven-year course in the design, specification and erection of buildings and passed the professional practice examination which is the final stage of an architect training.

This permits entry to the list of UK Architects held by the Architects' Registration Board (ARB) and use of the title 'architect'. Thereafter, application can be made to one or both of the chartered professional bodies listed below which entitle members to use the term 'chartered architect' and the following initials: RIAS / FRIAS (Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland), RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects). An architect may also use the initials RSUA (Royal Society of Ulster Architects) or RSAW (Royal Society of Architects in Wales).

A chartered architect is obliged to uphold the reputation of the architectural profession and fellow professionals; to carry out work on behalf of clients honourably, independently and efficiently; and to declare any interest which might conflict with their status as an independent consultant architect. Please

note that the use of the title 'architect' is protected actively under the Architects' Act 1997 by ARB. If you are in any doubt whether your advisor is a chartered architect member of the RIAS or RIBA please contact the RIAS membership department on 0131 229 7545.

## Finding an architect

The RIAS Client Advisory Service will help you find the right architect for your project. Search our online directory of architects ([www.rias.org.uk](http://www.rias.org.uk)) to find a practice with the skills you require and use the links to practices' websites to see the sort of work they undertake.

You should select your chartered architect with care, perhaps interviewing more than one, to discuss the project in relation to their experience and capacity to take it on. This will provide you with the opportunity to look at their work. Try to match the scale of the project with the resources of the practice. You should establish that you and your chartered architect are compatible and share a common approach to your project. Time spent at this stage is never wasted.





### Communication

It is important that you and your chartered architect communicate with one another throughout the project. You should keep them informed about any matters affecting the brief, the budget and site acquisition. Similarly, your chartered architect should keep you informed on progress and costs by means of regular reports throughout the design and construction stages.

Both you and your chartered architect should be careful to commit yourselves to do only what lies within your skill, power and authority. For example, a chartered architect cannot guarantee to obtain planning permission, but can, and normally does, make the appropriate application.

### Architect/client relationship

Successful projects are those which proceed in an atmosphere of understanding and mutual trust. You and your chartered architect must understand one another's roles and responsibilities. The foundations for that understanding are the RIAS and RIBA appointment documents, available from the RIAS

Bookshop with the guidance and related documents ([bookshop@rias.org.uk](mailto:bookshop@rias.org.uk)). We recommend that a single person should be appointed by the client with authority to make decisions.

At the outset all chartered architects must agree in writing the terms of their appointment, services and their fees. The standard conditions are designed to assist in recording agreement.

### Health and safety

The Construction Design & Management (CDM) regulations 2015 came into force on 6th April 2015. As a client it is very likely you will have to appoint a Principal Designer to plan, manage and coordinate the planning and design work of the project and to ensure that you are provided with a health and safety file at its conclusion. Your chartered architect can advise you on your duties and may take on the role of Principal Designer, which should be subject to a distinct agreement.



# Budgets and fees

## Budget for the project

Construction cost and overall budget for the project are not the same. The overall budget will include all professional and legal fees and expenses, the statutory charges for applications for planning consent and building warrants, a contingent sum for unforeseen events and other costs such as furniture, equipment, land acquisition, finance charges and VAT, in addition to the construction costs.

## Fee options available

Architects' fees can be calculated in three ways: a percentage basis; a lump sum basis; or time charged by agreement. Expenses may be included within the agreed fee or charged separately.

## Percentage basis

In this method, an architect's fees are expressed as a percentage of the total construction cost, i.e., the cost as certified by the architect of the works, including site works, executed under a building contract. Before fees can be estimated, client and architect need to establish the services to be provided, the approximate construction budget and the nature of the work.

## Lump sum basis

Lump sums are best used where the scope of the work can be clearly defined from the outset. It is important to define the parameters of services – i.e. time, project size and cost – where applicable, so that





if these are varied more than an agreed amount, the lump sum itself may be varied.

### Time-charged basis

This basis is best used where the scope of work cannot be reasonably foreseen or where services cannot be related to the amount of construction. It may be wise to set an upper limit on fees to be incurred, perhaps on a staged basis. Records of time spent on services will be made available to clients on reasonable request.

### Competitive fee tendering

The Incorporation strongly recommends clients to select their architect on quality issues such as demonstrable design skills, management expertise and track record. If fee cost is an important factor, this must be weighed carefully against these qualitative aspects to ensure that best value overall will not be sacrificed.

The following notes refer to instances where the architect is the design team leader, working directly for the client, and where works are carried out by a third party contractor. For other forms of procurement, seek specialist advice.



# The design process

## The brief

At the beginning of each project, its purpose and intentions, together with its schedule of accommodation, site and budget are formed into what is known as a brief. If you do not have a pre-formed brief, your chartered architect will develop it with you. It should be as thorough as possible to avoid problems later.

Initial decisions in the design stage will include formalising which rooms need to be adjacent, where stairs and fire escapes are needed, which floors need carpets, what the outlook will be from different rooms, how deliveries are to arrive ... the list can seem endless!

During the design process your chartered architect will keep you updated with plans for discussion, revision and approval. Use may be made of drawings, perspectives, models, written descriptions, computer drawings or simulations to explain the scheme.

Care and working closely with your chartered architect in the early stages will pay dividends. Alterations later on become progressively more expensive. Once building work has begun, changes can be problematic and costly.

## The design team

For complex projects the design team will include a number of professional disciplines – the architect, quantity surveyor, structural, electrical and mechanical engineers are the most usual contributors.

All design team fees are normally paid for separately in addition to the architect's fee. If your architect is appointed as lead consultant, he/she will coordinate all the information provided by the rest of the team and incorporate that into the design and production drawings.

## Finding a contractor

At the end of the design process, a number of contractors usually receive a *Bill of Quantities*, together with a set of drawings with which to produce a cost for the project. The *Bill* lists all the items and activities required to build the project as shown on the drawings (e.g., lay 100 bricks here, build in 20 windows there) and the number of items listed depends on the scale of project.

Each contractor puts his price against each item on the *Bill*, which is based upon an estimate of how long it



will take to carry out each item and the cost of materials required, together with added sums for overheads and a percentage for profit. The level of profit will be influenced by how each contractor expects their competitors to price and thus there is no 'proper price' for a building, only what a given contractor decides at one particular time.

To estimate how much a building will cost at an early stage in the design requires skill, experience and knowledge of the market. Absolute precision is impossible – the less information on which a cost is based, the less precise the costing will be.

### Small projects

For small domestic projects and alterations, a *Bill of Quantities* may not be necessary and tender pricing can be based on drawings and specification only. Your chartered architect will advise on the level of additional professional advice (if any) that may be appropriate. Structural alterations, however minor, may require a consulting engineer's certificate to be submitted with the building warrant and you will be advised accordingly.



# The construction process

## Work stages

Chartered architects usually consider projects in terms of work stages based on the *RIBA Plan of Work 2013*. The investment of effort is often assessed as a percentage of the whole, typically as follows:

Stage 0 – Time basis

Stage 1 – 5%

Stage 2 – 10%

Stage 3 – 25%

Stage 4 – 35%

Stage 5 – 20%

Stage 6 – 5%

Stage 7 – Time basis

The percentages of both the total fee and the staged work should be reviewed and set by the architect for each individual project and be based on his/her experience. The RIAS cannot take responsibility for the appropriateness of percentages adopted nor should the above be taken as applicable in all projects.

## Stage 0 – Strategic Definition

The nature of this stage is primarily exploratory, in order to see if there is a business case for the project being proposed. As such, it is open ended and can only be charged on a time basis.

## Stage 1 – Preparation and Brief

The aim of this stage is to ascertain whether the scheme is feasible and to identify any fundamental objections to the scheme. The amount of work for the architect may vary considerably. Also, it may be impossible to identify a reasonably realistic contract cost at this stage. Some architects may consider it appropriate to charge this work on a time basis.

## Stage 2 – Concept Design

Sketch drawings will seek to interpret the brief and to identify a possible architectural solution. The intention is to settle on outline drawings, sometimes called final sketch plans. These will be produced after initial consultations with statutory authorities have taken place and the brief has been fully clarified.



### Stage 3 – Developed Design

The concept design is developed to show the appearance of a building, how fixtures and fittings are incorporated and how important details of construction are intended to work. The agreed budget will be taken into account when developing the design information in harmony with previously identified objectives, for instance quality, long-term maintenance and energy performance.

This stage normally culminates in the architect providing the information for design and layout to accompany the client's application to the local authority for planning permission.

### Stage 4 – Technical Design

This stage is where the architect prepares, based on what has already been agreed, detailed technical information, suitable for the contractor to use in construction of the project and will include obtaining the necessary statutory consents. A common milestone that architects use in apportioning fees is that of 'tender for the main construction contract'. In most, though by no means all, cases this will occur at the end of Stage 4.

### Stage 5 – Construction

At this stage, the architect's role will normally be limited to administering the Construction Contract and making site inspections as appropriate so as to ensure that the contractor is following the drawings and specification, work completed is of an appropriate standard and staged payments to the contractor are correctly certified.

In traditional procurement, the chartered architect's role as contract administrator is to make periodic site visits to inspect the general progress of the work, to issue instructions to the contractor and, if necessary, to reject obviously unsatisfactory work. If you wish closer inspection of the contractor's work you can employ a clerk of works, or come to an agreement whereby the chartered architect makes more frequent visits to the site. Your chartered architect will report to you on matters of progress, on any unforeseen circumstances on site, any variations in budget or programme, and will issue periodic certificates for stage payments due to the contractor.



# The construction process

## Stage 6 – Handover and Close Out

The architect acting as contract administrator will be concluding all aspects of the building contract including the inspection of defects, as they are rectified, or the production of certification required under the building contract.

## Stage 7 – In Use

This refers to services that are usually considered supplementary to the main project (e.g. post project evaluations) and will therefore probably be charged at a separately negotiated rate.

## Care of the building

Buildings need proper maintenance. If they are to remain in good condition, they require regular inspection, especially of all external elements. Your chartered architect can help you to plan a sequence of inspection and maintenance procedures especially for those parts of a building exposed to the rigours of our climate. If you so wish, such help can include the provision of a maintenance manual. Remember that minor problems can become major problems if not attended to (a stitch in time...!).

## Resolving disputes

When you use a chartered architect you are protected; skills have to be exercised to the standards established by the professional body, in professional conduct and in the procedures by which your appointment is executed.

A chartered architect is obliged to uphold the reputation of the profession and fellow professionals; to carry out work on behalf of clients honourably, independently and efficiently; and to declare any interest which might conflict with the status of an independent consultant architect.

The RIAS is willing to assist with any difficulties that may arise concerning an architect's appointment. However, serious complaints regarding conduct should be addressed to:

The Architects' Registration Board (ARB)  
8 Weymouth Street  
London W1W 5BU  
020 7580 5861  
[info@arb.org.uk](mailto:info@arb.org.uk)  
[www.arb.org.uk](http://www.arb.org.uk)







**The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland**

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0131 229 7545 [info@rias.org.uk](mailto:info@rias.org.uk) [www.rias.org.uk](http://www.rias.org.uk)