

Customer information sheet

Where do I start with my building project ?

Employing someone to alter or extend your most valuable asset can be a nerve racking prospect. Unless your project is very simple it makes sense to at least talk to a professional for advice before you start.

It is important to be clear in your own mind exactly what you want to achieve from the build, so initially.

- Draw up a brief with a 'wish list' for the project and if possible include a few sketches or cut out illustrations and ideas from a magazine.
- Imagine how you will live in and use the new space. Picture yourself moving around or sitting in it and where your furniture or appliances will be positioned.
- Note down all your requirements and highlight any problems that you think need solving or something you have always thought needed changing. Now is the time to do it !
- This will help your designer to understand your wishes and ultimately create a space individually suited to your needs.

Talk to friends or relatives who have had works recently carried out and ask them about their experiences. There are many different professionals who offer a variety of different services with varying costs. Choose one which meets your needs.

Choosing the right builder

Having had your plans drawn and obtained the necessary permissions you may need to choose a builder to carry out the work. Bear in mind that the builders will be spending several weeks or even months, in your home. You need to be confident both in their ability to do the job, and that you will have a good working relationship with them.

The council is not allowed to recommend contractors but the following advice maybe useful:

- Ask family and friends to recommend firms who have done work for them.
- Talk to builder's previous customers. Go and see the jobs and ask if all went well.
- Ask at least three builders to provide quotes. The cheapest price may not always be the best price.
- Produce a detailed written specification of the work you want done. If you have them include detailed drawings and send a full set to each builder you are asking for a quote.
- Make sure the quotes cover everything you would like done, including supply of materials, removal of rubbish and 'making good' after the work is finished.

Once you have selected your builder, if the costs of works are substantial, you may wish to agree a formal written contract covering payment of work, including stage and final payments, timescales and responsibility for satisfactory work and 'snagging'. This can prevent disputes and disappointing delays.

Generally, if problems arise tell your builder immediately, do not pay the entire cost in advance, confirm the costs of any additional work in writing and obtain a receipt for all payments.