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A GUIDE TO THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN & BUILDING PROCESS



Guide I: FROM FEASIBILITY TO PLANNING



Green
REGISTER
OF CONSTRUCTION
PROFESSIONALS

ARCHITECT ACCREDITED IN BUILDING CONSERVATION

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AABC

RIBA 
Chartered Practice

An Introduction to Our Practice

Kay Pilsbury Thomas Architects is a family firm of Chartered RIBA Architects, Designers and BILD Interior Designers.

The practice specialises in repair, renovation and extensions to historic buildings and our staff all have building conservation experience/qualifications, coupled with endless passion for carrying out projects on old and historic buildings.

We are proud to incorporate green and sustainable materials, traditional details and craftsmanship with new technologies into each of our projects. We also enjoy working with local, skilled Building Contractors, specialist Craftsmen, and a chosen network of historic building Recorders, Archaeologists, Quantity Surveyors, Structural Engineers and Building Services Engineers with whom we have worked for many years.

We work enthusiastically with Owners to both reveal the historic layers of their buildings and create a design everyone can be proud of.



Your Own Grand Design

This Part I Guide has been produced to take owners through the design process, from initial visit to planning consent.

It provides some honest views on the progression of a typical design project, allowing owners the chance to understand some of the things to expect along the way.

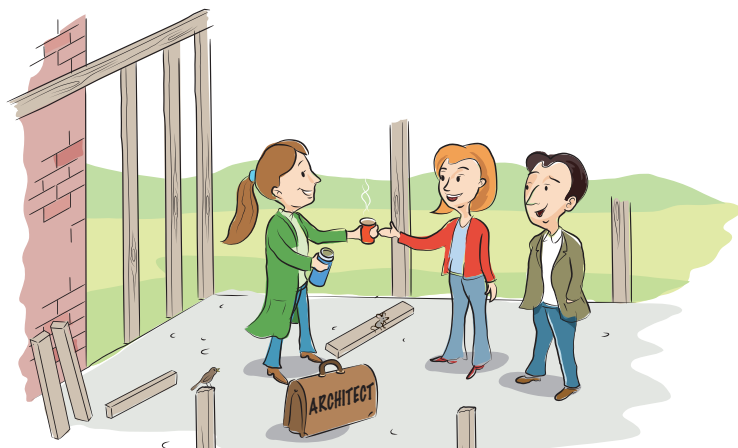
Teamwork

The most important aspect of any building project is the mutual respect, support and encouragement between Owner, design team, Authorities and specialist consultants. Projects can undoubtedly be trying at times, but we find that if the team is enthusiastic, everyone will work extremely hard to create a beautiful and collaborative design.

Cost, Quality, Time

Each of these three aspects is important to all design projects.

Most old buildings are listed, or considered “heritage assets” if historic but not listed. As such, either the Council Conservation Officer and/or Historic England will be involved in the design from the outset. Some buildings are also Scheduled Ancient Monuments, which will also involve the Inspector of Monuments at Historic England. As additional applications are required for old buildings, and at least one or two other Authority Officers/Advisors will be involved in the design, the process from Feasibility to Consent usually takes longer; and, due to the historic context, the quality of design and materials are more expensive at design stage than for an average design project.





Architectural Work Stage 0 - Feasibility

Initial Visit

We will visit your property to meet you, walk around and discuss your ideas, hopes and aspirations.

Discuss and agree with you a budget construction cost. It is important that you advise us of your budget at this stage, so that we may design/advise with this in mind.

We shall then write to you with our fees and a description of the building and design services required.

Appointment:

Following receipt of our services proposal letter and your instruction for us to proceed, we shall then send you, now or after pre-application, a Royal Institute of British Architect (RIBA) standard appointment document, which will include the same services proposal letter combined with the RIBA standard appointment contract, which protects both the Architect and the Client in their partnership throughout the project. It is compulsory for professional Architects to have this appointment document signed by the Client, and is a part of their professional duty of care.

As part of the appointment, the Client has some Health and Safety duties, known as Construction Design Management 2015 (CDM 2015) duties, and is required to supply the Architect with pre-construction information.





Work Stage 0.5 - Pre-application

Before we get too far down the process, we usually recommend sending in a pre-application to your Local Authority and Historic England, to ascertain if they would be supportive of the proposals in principle. Your Local Authority may charge a fee for this service.

We will usually just submit a pre-app form with a brief description of the works at this early stage. We often request a site visit, when everything will be discussed and agreed with the Officer during a walk around. Some projects will just require written advice without a visit.

We usually submit a site plan @ 1:1250, showing the ordnance survey plot and boundary of your property; and a block plan @ 1:500, showing an outline footprint of the extension position only, with a pre-application form, so we can agree the design in principal with the Local Authority, rather than submitting full drawings, which come at a later stage.

Your Local Authority will respond with written advice, and will sometimes require a site visit.

Works to Listed Buildings

All external and internal alterations to Listed Buildings will require Listed Building Consent. This could include works ranging from putting in a new door to building an extension.

Minor repairs should not require consent, but it is always worth checking with your Local Authority first.

Most extensions, changes of use, new outbuildings require Planning Permission additionally to Listed Building Consent, unless they fall within permitted development.

The Conservation Officer at your Local Authority deals with applications, and the Inspector of Historic Buildings from Historic England will additionally become involved/advise when the building is Listed Building Grade II* or Grade I.

Some moated properties/historic sites are also Scheduled Ancient Monuments, and these require Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent, this will involve the advice of the Inspector of Ancient Monuments from English Heritage.

The Planning Officer at your Local Authority will deal with the Planning Application, but they will take advice from the Conservation Officer and Historic England.

Ensuring that all parties reach agreement can be a lengthy process, and usually amendments will be required to the design along the way.

These Officers will ensure that conditions are met to safeguard the building; and in order to comply with their requests, it is important that specialist designers and consultants are employed who have a sound knowledge of historic buildings, their construction and requirements.



Architectural Work Stage I - Measured, Drawn Survey

Survey

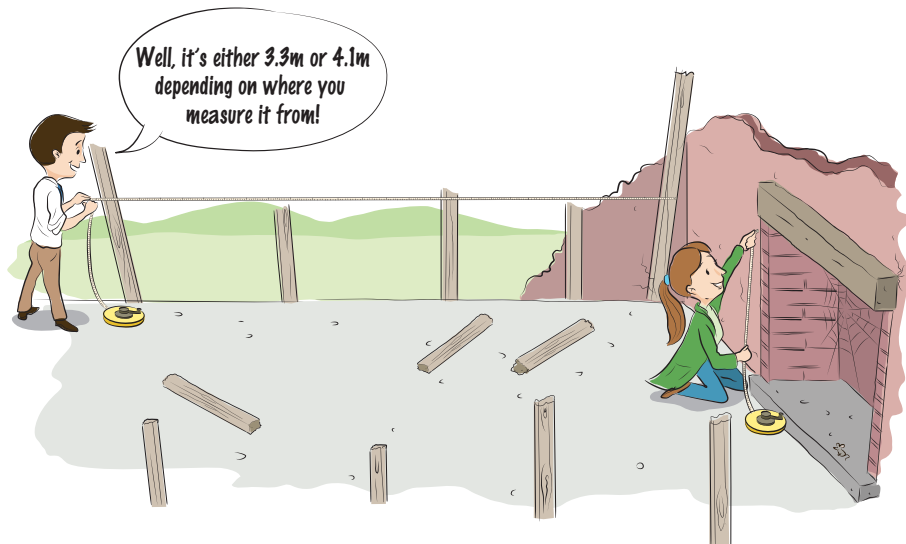
The survey drawings are 2D line drawings at 1:100 scale, showing the plan layout and 2D elevation views of the four main facades which will be used for the basis of the planning drawings.

The survey does not include any measurements or drawings of the grounds or garden. If works take place within the curtilage that require this, then a separate topographical survey will be undertaken.

This is an important stage, as it allows us to gain a knowledge of the building, its construction and historic phasing. It can reveal previously blocked openings, and can identify more modern additions which it may be possible to remove. This knowledge will influence the concept design.

Two surveyors will visit your building to conduct a full measured survey of the footprint, elevations and internal rooms as required.

We shall produce survey plans and elevations of the existing building(s), and a site location plan.



Architectural Work Stage 2 - Concept Design



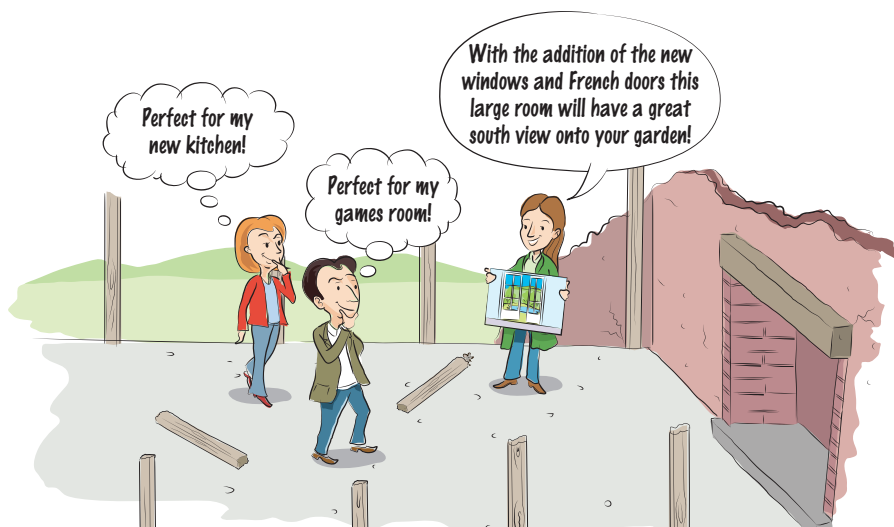
Having completed the drawings of the house as existing, the next stage is to produce a proposed concept design.

These drawings are for the planning and listed building application, and include only information that requires permission. They are 2D line drawings showing the layout plans with notes picking up changes or extensions that require permission. They also include 2D elevations of the four main facades at 1:100 scale showing any changes to window/doors and new extensions. Concept Design drawings are not detailed constructional drawings, as this level of technical design comes later in RIBA Work Stage 4; Therefore Concept/Planning drawings do not show construction sections or specification, kitchen /bathroom & furniture designs, services etc, as this level of design all comes after Planning.

By this stage, we will have established our formal RIBA Appointment, which includes a list of all the building works you wish to undertake, together with a list of our services.

These will be sent to you with a cover letter explaining the design ideas. We will then discuss with you any changes required.

For interior projects, many clients give us magazine cuttings or pictures of schemes/styles they like. Our interior designers will produce Concept Boards for each room, to include a sketch and key images, giving design ideas for each space.



Further negotiations with Local Authority and Historic England

Once the concept design is completed, we may submit the drawings to the Local Authority and Historic England for final pre-application advice during Architectural Work Stage 2, before formal submission.

It is likely that there may be further negotiations and alterations requested by the Local Authority and Historic England.

This is where our knowledge of historic buildings, and our working relationship with the Local Authority and Historic England will really benefit your project.

This is an important stage which can often be time-consuming, but it is key to realising the design.



Additional Reports required for some applications

Additional reports which may be required at Architectural Work Stage 2 during Concept Design could include:-

Historic Recording

On important buildings, it is often necessary to have an Historic Recording produced. This is a report which documents the history of the building, and when each part was built. It includes historic maps and build-phase drawings.

Ecological Report

If you have a barn, old attic, a moat or the site is a Scheduled Monument, then it may be necessary to produce an Ecological Report (showing the impact any building works would have on resident Bats, Newts and their habitat).

Archaeological Brief

An Archaeological Brief is written by the Local Authority, and will be needed for the Scheduled Monument Consent applications.

Arboriculturist Report

This is a recording of trees on the site of your project, and a detailed report on the condition of each tree. It ensures the safety of protected trees from proposed work, and is required if an extension is near any protected trees.

Other Reports

Depending on the project, the Council may request other reports, such as structural, flood, acoustic etc.





Architectural Work Stage 3 - Final proposal design and application for:- Planning Permission / Listed Building Consent / Scheduled Monument Consent / Design and Access Statement / Heritage Statement

Having reached the point where you, the Local Authority and Historic England are happy with the proposals, we shall produce the final, coloured up planning drawings; the application forms for Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent and Scheduled Monument Consent (as required); a Design and Access Statement, which explains the proposal; a Heritage Statement which includes a history of the house, impact assessment and plans of significance.

If your site is an Ancient Monument, a ground works/drainage plan and footing sectional drawing will also be required.

The Local Authority sometimes ask for additional construction detailed drawings at this stage, which may include window and door drawings; otherwise it is likely they will attach conditions to your consent.

Council validation usually takes two weeks, and the application then takes around eight weeks to a decision date. We will keep in contact with the Local Authority, advising you of any comments they make.



It must be remembered that Planning Drawings are NOT Construction Drawings. The builder will usually require further Construction / Detailed drawings to work from.

After the decision is given, all the documents are sent to you.

Most applications will require work to have started within three years of approval being granted. If a substantial part of that application is undertaken within the 3 years, approval will be considered to have “started”, and the 3 years no longer applies. This means work can be phased if you wish to undertake a section at a later date. Nearly all applications have conditions attached, which require further construction drawings and details to be submitted and discharged by the Council before any work commences.



Architectural Work Stage 3.5 - Estimate of Cost and Discussion of Procurement Route

At this stage, we will start to discuss the procurement route and how you wish to obtain a fixed price for the building works, once the detailed design is complete:

There are two options available for this:-

1. Negotiated Tender

For internal and domestic works projects, it is common for Owners to negotiate with a single Building Contractor:

The negotiated route has the following benefits:-

- a) You establish a relationship with the Contractor early on.
- b) The Contractor can provide you with an estimate of the cost at an early stage (if a Quantity Surveyor has not been employed).
- c) Only those drawings discussed/absolutely necessary need to be produced for detailed drawings, saving costs at Work Stage 4.
- d) The works can start on site much sooner.

Often people are nervous about negotiating, as they are worried the Contractor will not provide them with a competitive price. If a Quantity Surveyor has been employed, this will remove any concern, as they can assess any quotes from the Contractor.

In fact, we find many clients prefer this option, as the builder will provide them with an actual cost, whereas, if the price is obtained through competitive tender with three or more Contractors, the builder may be more inclined to look for holes in the specification, in order to provide the lowest cost, and it is not uncommon for these costs to then be added back on once it is highlighted on site. So it is not unknown that you will pay exactly the same, whether you negotiate or go out to open tender:

Some also choose this route if they have been recommended, or know a builder through friends etc., and want to ensure the quality of the build.

2. Competitive Tender

This is when a detailed design package is sent out for competitive tender to three or more Contractors. This route is chosen most commonly when there is grant funding for the project, or the building works are public or commercial.

In order to obtain a competitive price, a full, detailed design package is required at Work Stage 4, to include details and specifications of all the building works needed.

The benefits of competitive tender are that:-

- a) You are able to compare the cost of breakdowns and the aim is that they are fairly close in price.
- b) The competitive process is fair and open, and is therefore essential where grant funding has been allocated.

The down-side of this method is that a Contractor may price low, in order to obtain the job, and will, therefore, try to claim back the work through extras whilst on site.

It is therefore important to have a Quantity Surveyor who can assess the tenders and report back.

Always remember, if something seems too good to be true, it probably is!

If you are negotiating with one Builder, he can provide an estimate free of charge at this stage.

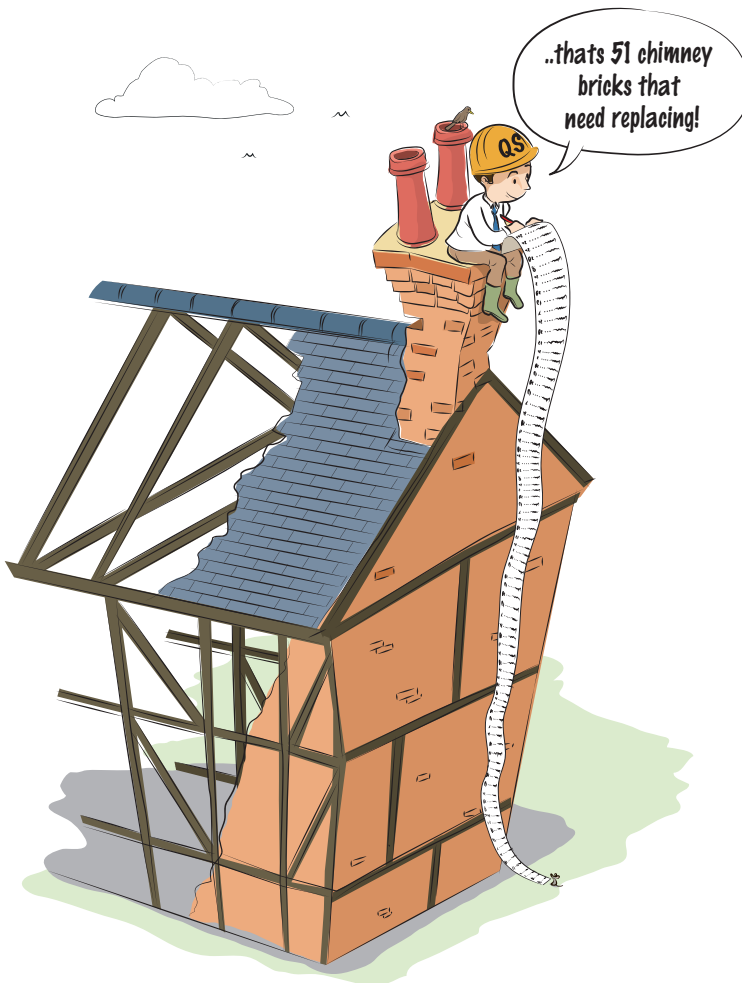
We usually meet on site with the drawings, to discuss the construction, and which drawings he may require to allow him to undertake the works.

Estimate of Construction Cost and the Quantity Surveyor

Once you have decided which procurement route to go down, you then need to obtain an estimate of construction cost.

A Quantity Surveyor will provide a complete breakdown of the building works and associated cost, which has the benefit of allowing you to see/omit/add elements of works as necessary.

If you are negotiating on a smaller project (say under £300,000), then the Contractor can do this, otherwise a Quantity Surveyor needs to be employed.



Meet the Builder

If you are negotiating, we will at this stage meet the Builder on site. We can then discuss what detailed drawings are needed, a suitable start date, programming and occupation of the building. This meeting starts to establish a good working relationship between all the team members.



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