

Chronology of a typical project and details of the engagement

For the Design Phase:

1. First, we meet on site for a preliminary review to discuss ideas and get to know each other. Based on those discussions, and our understanding of your general requirements, we will send you a formal proposal for the design phase.
2. If you choose to engage us, the next step is to take your brief. We've produced a questionnaire for each space of a typical home, including the exterior and grounds; to understand the sorts of requirements, features, functions and aesthetics that you are looking for, and what existing items (such as your furniture) need to be accommodated in the new design.
3. The questionnaires aim to encourage discussion between you and other users of the home; to identify what you want to achieve, and record any specific requirements for regular visitors such as older relatives, children and pets. This will help you to distil your actual requirements without trying too hard to come up with the solutions just yet – that comes next. You won't need to answer all the questions. In some cases, you may prefer to wait and see what our initial designs look like. But your essential requirements should be identified (such as an open-plan kitchen-diner, a dedicated home office or a separate utility space), which then help to shape the design.
4. In parallel, we carry out a measured survey of the property and take photos. Together with the brief, we turn your requirement into initial concepts and designs, which evolve as we review options with you.
5. Our first main objective is to agree the basic layout of each space along with any exterior considerations; we use 3D visuals to help you decide what works best, focusing on the practical implications of the new floorplan and exterior view. We can then move walls, doors, furniture, change window sizes and so on, producing views from any angle to give you a good feel for the space before you commit to a specific layout. We produce several options to help you select your preferred design.
6. Whilst finalising the floorplan, we create the electrical and lighting overlay, and agree supply items – specific flooring, bathroom suite, kitchen units, appliances, carpets, blinds, bespoke storage and so on. We bring samples to you, provide catalogue references or accompany you on showroom visits to help with your choices.
7. As an early check on the budget, our local contractors and suppliers are happy to suggest cost figures, without obligation, covering: building and structural, plumbing and heating, joinery and carpentry, electrics and decoration aspects of the project (our 5 annexes) plus any other work such as garden landscaping, patios, fences, roof maintenance etc. We then produce a first draft of the pricing spreadsheet using these budgetary figures along with our estimated prices for supply items, professional fees and any risk provision. The spreadsheet evolves as products are finalised and formal quotations received.
8. For construction projects, once the basic layout is agreed, we engage a structural engineer initially to validate the proposed structural *principles* and other features.

9. If required (for an extension, say), we prepare the necessary documentation and submit a “pre-app” to the Council on your behalf. This is a worthwhile step, first to see whether the proposed works fall within your permitted development rights; if so, you shouldn’t need to go through a full planning application. Importantly, it also flushes out any obvious objections that the Council might raise. Preparing and submitting a pre-app carries a separate fee (see further below).
10. If pre-app advice leads to a formal planning application, we submit that too. This also carries a separate fee (see further below).
11. Once planning consent has been received, we send our drawings to a structural engineer and architectural designer to produce construction drawings for building control; this saves our clients money because they use our drawings as the basis for their work. Construction drawings, together with the technical specification (the 5 annexes), form the technical pack against which contractors bid in any tendering process. Along with the price for supply items (fixtures and fittings), professional fees and risk provision, our clients gain a budgetary estimate for the total project cost. Clients may choose to phase some of this, but it is always helpful to understand the projected total cost from the start.
12. If the project warrants a competitive tender, we coordinate this if requested. For more significant renovations, if we are to oversee the works, we arrange for a JCT Minor Works Contract to be signed by Client and contractor (see further below). We require a fixed price from the contractor before any work starts, recognising that a few prime cost and provisional sums may remain for aspects not completely defined at that stage.
13. We also coordinate other main suppliers (such as for aluminium bifold doors, glass roofs and so on) to ensure that their prices are known early and the technical interface with the main building is well managed.
14. Because of our intimate knowledge of the design detail, and our vested interest in seeing this implemented successfully, our clients usually engage us to oversee the full renovation; in these cases, with the contract let, we prepare to oversee the work.

For the Implementation Phase:

15. We offer a number of options for coordinating contractors, trades and suppliers (see also para 22) in as far as we carry through our detailed knowledge of the design, our vision of the completed renovation, and the interface between any building works and the fittings being supplied by us or others. We attend site regularly, answer questions, give advice, facilitate progress against the schedule, manage delivery and installation of supplied items, and identify any obvious quality issues to resolve.
16. We keep the pricing spreadsheet up to date, with any variations to the baseline price which materialise from time to time.
17. Regarding supply items, we specify, order and fit hard floors, kitchen cabinets, appliances, curtains, blinds, carpets, bathroom suites, TV and HiFi, furniture (including bespoke items) and other fixtures and fittings. In some cases, we pass on to our clients part of any trade discount, whilst also making a mark-up on these discounted prices.

Typical Fees:

18. Our standard Design Phase fees are £750 + VAT per reception room / bedroom / attic room / similar in an existing space, and £1150 + VAT for each kitchen and bathroom within an existing space with minimal remodelling. If we are commissioned to renovate a whole house (or a large part of it) we offer a significant discount on these figures; as a guide, the fee to design all rooms in a typical 3-4 bedroom UK family home would be around £3850 + VAT. Most of our recent ground floor remodelling designs with small extensions have been around £2850 + VAT. The final price would depend on the complexity and location of the project.
19. As mentioned earlier, whilst progressing the interior and exterior design, our 3D model automatically produces plans, elevations and schematics, sufficient for planning applications. Drawings for the pre-app, meetings with the case officer and others, and associated administration would be £450 + VAT. Subsequent additional work for any planning application, developing the drawings further, purchasing mandatory block and location plans, along with design and access statements and other papers would be £350 + VAT, assuming (within reason) a successful first submission with no objections.
20. Regarding the structural engineer's and architectural designer's fees: typically, our regular structural engineer charges from £450 for very simple structural work, to £3000 for more significant structural work above ground; fees for structural basement changes would be considerably more. The architectural designer charges between £900 + VAT (simple) and £3000 + VAT (complex) to produce related building control drawings; for a basic extension his fees are around £1400 (see the orangery example attached). Depending on proximity of works to public sewers and other services, the Water Board may need to be involved; they have their own fee structure. A Party Wall Surveyor may charge around £1500 (double this in the case of a dispute, where you would also have to pay for your neighbour's surveyor). Whilst we actively coordinate all this for you within our fees, you would pay these others directly (we make no mark-up here).
21. Statutory fees are also payable to the Council (and/or other Building Control organisation) - typically £150-£200 for pre-app advice, £180-£300 for planning and, for Building Control, there is a sliding scale dependent on either project cost or extended floor area (so budget for £400 - £800). Our fees for co-ordinating submissions to Building Control along with any follow-up discharge of conditions is typically £200 + VAT.
22. For the implementation phase, we offer three levels of project oversight with different fee arrangements, and would be subject to a separate proposal nearer the time:
 - a. Our full project management fee for co-ordinating all related activities is typically 10-15% of the total implementation cost; a lower percentage for projects in excess of £150k.
 - b. For clients looking to manage the project themselves, or to use their contractor as project manager, our consultancy fee works out at around £600 per month based on a weekly site meeting to review progress, consult on the following week's work, answer any design-related queries and offer advice. Any additional consultancy would attract an hourly fee of £75+VAT.

- c. Similar to b, above, we also offer an “on-going support” arrangement, whereby we would be retained on a weekly basis for a minimum £75+VAT. This standing fee would cover up to one hour’s email response / phone call / travel and site visit / product checking request / arranging deliveries / providing advice and so on. Any time over and above 1 hour would then attract an hourly fee of £75+VAT.

Timescales:

- 23. Here is an indicative timescale in weeks for projects undergoing the full service up to the point of contract award (not all stages are required in all cases, but this gives a measure of possible duration):

- a. Initial contact – call this T0
- b. Clients consider engagement – 2 weeks (total T0 + 2)
- c. To produce initial designs – 4 weeks (total T0 + 6)
- d. Review and update initial designs – 2 weeks (total T0 + 8)
- e. Production of documentation for pre-application – 2 weeks (total T0 + 10)
- f. Council target to respond to pre-applications - 4 weeks (total T0 + 14)
- g. Updates to documentation and preparation for full planning application – 1 week (total T0 + 15)
- h. Council target to respond to planning applications - 8 weeks (total T0 + 23)
- i. Production of building control / construction drawings – 4 weeks (total T0+27)
- j. Council target to respond to building control submission / time for bidders to tender (can proceed in parallel so longer of the two drives schedule) – 5 weeks (total T0 + 32)
- k. Time for winning bidder to confirm availability (this varies between contractors, but some are quoting 4 months+; others may have made space in their diaries)

So the minimum for the **full** process is around 32 weeks (8 months), before you enter the contractor’s lead time.