If you're considering building an extension or constructing a new home you need to consider hiring an architect. There are many advantages to using an architect for building ideas, building plans and seeking planning permission. A good architect can guide you through every stage of the building process including the actual construction and checking that the contractor correctly inrteprets the plans. Your architect should be flexible enough to meet your needs whether it is simply for building plans for a home extension or the project management of a new home.

**The Benefits Of An Architect**

• An Architect will work with you throughout the design process, to ensure the project contains only the features you have approved

• The architect will aim to keep the building works within the budget you establish, seeking and helping you choose materials and labour that will reflect your budget. This will mean advising on suppliers and subcontractors for construction and other contract work.

• Your Architect will watch out for your interests and ensure the project is built as it was designed and that you approve any necessary variations. An architect will design your home or office space to minimize energy use and incorporate contemporary "green building" principles.

• The architect will help you choose quality materials and finishes that are both durable and appropriate, providing a wide range of choices rather than limiting you to two or three choices.

**Steps To Finding A Good Architect**

1. Start by finding architects that you'd like to discuss your project with. Ask friends, family, or business associates for recommendations. Use the internet to assist in your search.

2. Contact a shortlist of architects and have an initial telephone interview. Remember that architects are highly paid professionals so try to have a list of questions to discuss. Any architect you approach should take the time to answer your questions about their experience, design principles, etc. but don't expect them to give away design work or sketches for free.

3. After contacting a shortlist by telephone choose say 3 architects to interview and agree a meeting on the site where the works are proposed. Supply information about the type of design preferences, your expected budget, & questions that you'd like to ask the architect.

4. Once you've interviewed all the shortlisted architects make a point of careful assessment and find someone that communicates well and you will be comfortable working with as some projects can last for over a year.

5. After you've made your selection suggest that a contract is provided (the RIBA have various online forms which are personalized for each project) and take the time to ensure you understand it and make sure you understand payment terms, the breakdown and timing of stage payments and what happens if you have to put your project on hold or even cancel your project.

6.The best place to start asking about architects is your family and friends. Also, determine if the architect specializes in residential or commercial work. Ask the architect for client references of similar projects and discuss the project with them, perhaps even visit the project if possible. Find out if there are any issues to be aware of. When checking references be sure to check what the architects involvement was ie whether a partial or full service as sometimes the clients take the project on after they achieve statutory approval and the level of detail achieved is not always so good.

I am a Chartered Architect in Lewes East Sussex and most of my work is in East & West Sussex, Hampshire & London. I started my practice in West Sussex in July 1987.

Need Planning Permission? Call local Chartered Architects for free initial consultation and advice.

Sussex Architects

Experienced Residential Practice Free Initial Consultation

www.dalbyarchitecture.co.uk