

3rd Case study

This is based on a detached freehold house with five bedrooms undertaking a large extension and complete refurbishment.

Meeting the client

First step is setting up a meeting with the client where we get the brief in outline and understand the requirements and style the client desire.

It is very important at this stage to establish how much the client wants to spend on the project. This gives us a good indication of what is achievable and also what our fees would be as we work on a percentage of the build cost. The percentage varies based on build cost and intricacy of the project.

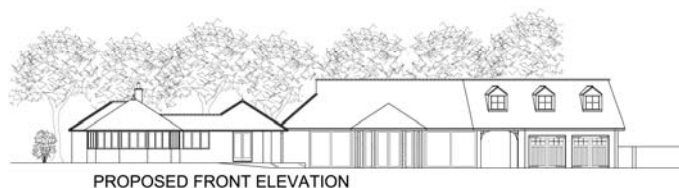
Survey of the house



When an agreement has been made we come out and measure up the house in detail. This will be the foundation of all future plans we will carry out. On a project of this scale it will take 2 days on site to measure up all details and another 2 days in the office to digitalize all the data.

Design

The design stage now starts and we will come up with different conceptual designs for the house. In most cases this will take less than 2 weeks. The plans will be presented to our client and any amendments or changes are discussed where after we make the necessary changes and update our plans. The second presentation is made and we agree



on the outline layout and scheme of the changes. This also takes less than 2 weeks.

From this point we are working on the drawings to bring them up to a very high level of detail. The construction details shall in principal be determined at this stage; every little joinery details to the grand roof construction. It all interlinks with each other. The period of which we work on the construction drawings and researching materials is commonly 6 weeks.

Planning

The plans are now being prepared for submission to the planning department to obtain planning permission. Upon submitting the plans, the planning department has 8 weeks to process the application.

Choosing a contractor

The process of choosing a contractor can be relatively simple. We have very good relationships with a dozen of different contractors who we trust and know can provide the right service for the right job. Every project we work on is sent out to tender. This means that we send out drawings and specifications to at least three different contractors and get individual quotations from each of them. Most commonly the cheapest contractor gets the job. However, there may be reasons why a different contractor is chosen such as availability or predicted duration of the project.

Building Control

On a bigger scale project we prefer to submit a full plan application to the building control department. This means that detailed drawings covering all aspects of the construction work shall be submitted accompanied with structural drawings and calculation, mechanical and electrical drawings. It takes 8 weeks to process your application. The benefit using full plan application is that you get the approval before you start the work and know it complies with the current building regulations. The submission fee will be in the region of £2,000.

Structural Engineer and consultants

On a project of this magnitude it is paramount to have a good working relationship with the structural engineer. It is a team effort between structural engineer, planning and building control consultant and us. Every slight change in plans can have a knock-on effect and with different areas of expertise the above combination was found ideal for this project.

The structural engineer shall in the early stage create a scheme of the structural work which shall suit the plans drawn by us. There might be alterations which can mean a more cost efficient way of creating the same space but with different materials and/or constructions. The fee for a project like this will be in the region of £5,000.

The planning and building control consultant is involved at the same stage to make sure all proposals comply with the current regulations and avoid delays when the plans are submitted to the council. A £2,500 fee should be expected.

Contract administration

Once a contractor has been chosen we will draw up a contract between our client and the contractor. We will also take care of the contract administration which means that everything is carried out as per the contract and also hold the fortnightly valuations. The contractor will only get paid when we provide him with a certificate for interim payment. The client shall then pay the contractor the agreed amount based on the current valuation for the work carried out to date.

Project management

When all permissions have been obtained and a contractor has been chosen we can start the actual build work. We will inspect the work on a regular basis to insure all is going as planned and no delays occurring. Depending of the nature of the project we tend to visit site at least twice a week. Quality control is a big part of the work we do at this stage. Even though the building inspector will inspect the work we also have the obligation to make sure the contractor build to our standards and according to the drawings.

Potential obstacles

Things you may take for granted dealing with a smaller build project can be a significant problem when applied on a bigger scale. Some of the problems can be the condition of the soil when the new foundation are being built, the current gas supply isn't sufficient to feed the upgraded central heating system and the water table is higher than wanted.

There is always a solution to a problem. The un-stable soil can be eradicated with a piling system which is a costly exercise. Piling means that long steel tubes are drilled 4–12 meter deep into the ground and concrete is poured into them. On top of the steel tubes a reinforced concrete deck is installed. This way the load from the building is spread over the whole concrete deck and not just a relatively thin foundation.



Our fee structure

On bigger projects which involves months of preparatory work we ask for 20% of our fees to be paid when we get formally instructed by our client. Once the build work commences we invoice the client on a fortnightly or monthly based on the valuation held with the contractor. This will be calculated at the same percentage as the contractor is paid after each valuation. The physical scale of a project doesn't necessarily correspond to the size of our fees.