

Finding an architect

A building project, large or small, can be a daunting experience and using an architect could save you time and money. This leaflet explains the range of services available to assist with your selection of the right RIBA Chartered Practice



Selfridges, Birmingham, Future Systems. © Michael Betts/View

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Why do I need an architect?

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It is a good question. You want to build something; why not just tell a builder what you have in mind and leave them to get on with it?

Hopefully, your builder will be excellent at building. But only an architect will interpret your ideas creatively and manage the project professionally, providing you with value for money, peace of mind and, most importantly, an exceptional end result.

Value for money

Architects are professional problem-solvers. Their experience and insights can help stretch your budget and add value to your property. They might suggest new ways of utilising space and light, widen the palette of materials, finishes or fittings, find a builder at the right price, and propose design solutions that will reduce your bills when the building is up and running. At a fraction of the total cost of your project, an architect's fees will prove a sound investment.

Peace of mind

You think the builders will be doing all the hard work? A mountain of paperwork awaits anyone undertaking a building project. But an architect can help make a molehill of it. When you hire an architect, you have someone on your side who knows the construction industry's working methods and standards and can guide you through all the relevant legislation, regulations and contractual arrangements. They will have the recognised educational qualifications and have reached the level of experience necessary to be registered with the Architects' Registration Board* and thereby legally qualify for the title of 'architect'. The earlier they are brought in, the more they can help get the project moving, too, with site studies, securing planning approvals and working out financing.

Imagination

An architect can lift your project out of the ordinary, and turn a functional structure into one that can give pleasure for decades. Whether it's a modern extension, a period restoration or a new HQ, there will be architects whose inspiration and ideas will help to realise and even exceed your own ambitions.

*

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) is the independent registration body for architects in the UK. For more information, visit www.arb.org.uk.

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Chiswick Park, London W4, Richard Rogers Partnership. © Grant Smith/View



La Concha, Guernsey, mooarc. © Karl Taylor

How do I find the right architect?

All building projects are one-offs. Every site, every client, every brief is different. There is no single solution to your project, and there is a galaxy of gifted architects able to offer their own approach to the project.

So how do you find the right one? The first step is to narrow your focus and assemble a shortlist from the RIBA register of Chartered Practices.

Why use an RIBA Chartered Practice?

The RIBA Register of Chartered Practices was set up to clarify the status of each architectural practice, its expertise and the services it offers. To register, a practice must meet the following criteria:

- At least one partner or director must be a Chartered Architect (a member of the RIBA)
- A proportion of its registered architects must be Chartered Architects
- A Professional Indemnity Insurance appropriate to the scale and type of work undertaken is in place
- The practice operates an appropriate quality management system and health and safety policy
- Management procedures are in place to ensure architects working in the practice comply with the RIBA's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) obligations and adhere to the RIBA Code of Conduct.

What should I look for?

Before you start putting together your shortlist, consider the demands of the project you are undertaking and ask yourself a few questions. Think about the size of firm you would like to work with and any specific experience or specialisation you would like it to have. Should the practice be based locally or within a certain range of your project? Is there a specific approach or philosophy of design (eg. modernist, neo-classical, green) it should follow?

Once you have a firm idea about the kind of practice you would like to work with, you are ready to find the right architect for your job.

The RIBA offers four different services aimed at helping you find the architect you need. Choose the route that you feel is most appropriate to the scale of your project.

- Free nomination service
- Online directory of RIBA Chartered Practices
- Paper-based directories of RIBA Chartered Practices
- Architectural competitions service

Free nomination service

Provide the RIBA with details of your project – whatever the scope and scale – and we will come back with a ready-made shortlist of registered architectural practices equipped to help, drawn from our national database of over 4000 firms. Your list will give details of a number of firms, all with the skills and experience to meet your needs, and is sent with a free RIBA guide with advice about how to select, appoint and work with your architect.

A list of regional RIBA offices to email or call about the service is included at the back of this leaflet.

Online directory of RIBA Chartered Practices

Our directory of over 4000 RIBA practices can also be searched, online, as often as you like. Go to www.architecture.com/useanarchitect and enter one or more search terms: project size, practice location, service required and sectors of expertise. Or use the advanced search and a wider range of criteria to hone your options still further.

While you are online, you might like to submit details of your project to our free referral service and receive a tailored shortlist of nominated practices that fit the bill.



City Inn Hotel, Westminster, London SW1, Bennetts Associates. © Peter Cook/View

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Newhailes House, Musselburgh, LDN Architects. © National Trust for Scotland

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Paper-based directories of RIBA Chartered Practices

We publish a number of annual directories and reviews featuring details and selected projects of RIBA Chartered Practices. The national directory of practices catalogues firms by town and area; new sector-specific reviews, published in association with national client organisations, list practices according to their experience, as follows:

- *Houses & Housing* (in association with The Housing Corporation)
- *Education* (in association with the Department of Education & Skills)
- *Industrial & Commercial* (in association with the CBI)
- *Sport & Leisure* (in association with Sport England)
- *Conservation* (in association with English Heritage)
- *Health* (in association with the Department of Health)
- *Government & Public* (in association with CABE)
- *Interiors* (in association with Grand Designs)
- *Retail*

RIBA directories are available from public libraries nationwide. Call RIBA Client Services on 020 7307 3700 for more information on availability.

Architectural competitions service

You may wish to select your architect, design or design team by competition. The RIBA Competitions Office can help you devise a competitive process tailored to your project and, if required, manage the process for you, right through to a final decision.

Either call the RIBA Competitions Office on 0113 234 1335 or email them at riba.competitions@inst.riba.org. You can also find out more about competitions and view successful projects by visiting www.architecture.com/competitions

Further information

Free nomination service

To use the RIBA's free nomination service, either visit www.architecture.com/useanarchitect, or contact one of the RIBA Regional Offices:

RIBA Headquarters and London cs@inst.riba.org 020 7307 3700

RIBA East riba.east@inst.riba.org 01223 566 285

RIBA East Midlands riba.eastmidlands@inst.riba.org 01522 837 480

RIBA North East riba.north@inst.riba.org 0113 237 8480

RIBA North West riba.northwest@inst.riba.org 0151 703 0107

RIBA South riba.south@inst.riba.org 0118 969 8051

RIBA South East riba.southeast@inst.riba.org 01892 515878

RIBA South West riba.southwest@inst.riba.org 0844 800 2767

RIBA Wessex riba.wessex@inst.riba.org 01225 874700

RIBA West Midlands riba.westmidlands@inst.riba.org 0121 233 2321

RIBA Yorkshire riba.yorkshire@inst.riba.org 0113 237 8480

Scotland (RIAS) info@rias.org.uk 0131 229 7545

Northern Ireland (RSUA) info@rsua.org.uk 028 9032 3760

Wales (RSAW) rsaw@inst.riba.org 029 2087 4753

RIBA Bookshop

All the latest books, guides and documentation on architecture and construction - everything to help you select an architect and run a successful project - are available for order at www.ribabookshops.com