

12 TOP TIPS FOR YOUR PROJECT

1- THE BASICS

Collate all the information you can on your house as it stands, and think about what you want to improve, a bigger kitchen? An extra bedroom? More open plan living? An architect can help here and may make suggestions you hadn't thought of!

2- KEEP A RECORD

Keep a record of every decision you make, whether it's between you and the builders or tradesmen, or just between you and your partner. You will be amazed at how much you can forget when there is so much going on around you and as time passes.

3- INSURANCE

Ask all your builders and tradesmen for their insurance numbers at the start, if they're reluctant then that tells you something about them. If they are reluctant now, it'll be even harder to get from them if a dispute does arise!

4- KEEP YOUR DRAWINGS SAFE

Give your builder a bound set of printed drawings, preferably in a water-proof folder AND keep a set yourself. Sometimes these drawings can get damaged or lost during the construction since they are often left out on site and in all weather. Make sure your builder always has a complete set, even if you have to provide new copies (it's worth the small printing cost!). When ever there are any changes, make sure to issue new plans for the builders folder and make sure any old sets are removed.

5- DON'T RUSH DESIGN DECISIONS

Once it's built, it's very difficult and expensive to go back and change it (BUT usually not impossible if you do realise that a mistake has been made).

6- TAKE PHOTOS!

Photograph as much and as often as you can. This record is interesting for when you look back over the process. But you also may find yourself wondering where pipes and cables are, or where a pad stone or steel column is after it's been concealed with plasterboard.

7- KEEP IT FORMAL

No matter how good the relationship or how small a job it seems, sign a contract with your builder, get advise if required

8- CONTINGENCY

You will more than likely go over budget. Make sure you have a contingency fund in place. Even if nothing unexpected happens, there are usually unexpected costs, if nothing unexpected does happen, you will have more money left at the end!

9- FINAL PAYMENT

It is good practise to leave a substantial portion of the total cost to be paid on completion. Without this, towards the end of the build some builders attention moves on to the next project and yours may become low priority if the outstanding payment is too small. A large payment due when everything is complete helps to keep their attention on your building.

10- TIME

It will take longer than expected as builders tend to be optimistic when quoting for the work. Whatever timescale you are given, double it in your mind. Unexpected things can happen which delay the process. It's better to finish ahead of your generous time scale, than well behind their optimistic one.

11- DEADLINES

Give your builders deadlines for various stages. If they have a specific deadline to work to it tends to focus their efforts.

12- RESPITE

A building project can be very time consuming and emotionally draining. Plan to get away from it every now and then.