

Building, Extending or Renovating your Property

You have decided to build, extend or renovate your property - you are making an important decision which will influence your daily life for many years. Such an important investment needs the help of a specialist to avoid mistakes at the design stage and to ensure that your needs are properly realised. This publication is intended to help you as a client to work more effectively with your RIAI architect - together you can achieve the project you want.

The RIAI architect's role

Architects have the most appropriate training and experience to design, co-ordinate and manage your building project. Your architect will advise on the design of your extension or the refurbishment of your property so that it is laid out economically and efficiently and will add to the value of your property and to your lifestyle.

The professionally qualified RIAI architect's training is the second longest professional training in Ireland, comprising five years academic education and two years practical training, together with an examination in professional practice. This education is of a depth not equalled in the building industry. The architect's work begins with an analysis of your requirements. The architect will relate your needs and quality aspirations to your

budget for the project. The ultimate success of your project depends on the quality of your brief - your description to your architect of what you need from your building. This information will enable your architect to develop a design solution related to your needs.

You need to give as much information as possible to your architect on your requirements for the project - see "20 Questions Before You Build"

Your plans for the future

The architect will present proposals in the form of sketch designs. Drawings can be difficult to understand and it is important that you work with your architect to understand the proposal. If you have any doubts, discuss these with your architect so that both of you can understand exactly what is proposed. Once your project goes on site, changes can be very expensive - some alterations may even require an additional planning application and can have implications in terms of compliance with Building Regulations.

As the client, you are part of the team and you need to maintain effective communication with your architect throughout the project so that he or she can act in your best interest at all times.

The RIAI

The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland, founded in 1839, is the representative body for professionally qualified architects in Ireland.

- The RIAI's membership qualifications, MRIAI and FRIAI, are accepted by the Government, the courts and the EU as the required standard. The RIAI also has Architectural Technician members, who work in support of Architects and use the affix RIAI (Arch.Tech).
- A high standard of professional competence among members is maintained by means of examination prior to entry, continuing professional development and information programmes.
- The affix MRIAI and FRIAI is recognised under Article 11 of the EU Directive (85/384EEC) on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications in architecture.
- The RIAI has been designated by the State as a Competent Authority in relation to the EU Architects Directive.
- In Europe the RIAI represents the profession through membership of the Architects Council of Europe.

- Worldwide, the RIAI represents the profession through membership of the International Union of Architects.

The objectives of the RIAI are the advancement of Architecture and the associated Arts and Sciences, the promotion of high standards of professional conduct and practice and the protection of the interests of architectural training and education.

The RIAI would be pleased to assist with the selection of an RIAI member or any other queries arising from this leaflet.



Please contact the RIAI at:
8 Merrion Square, Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 676 1703
Fax: (01) 661 0948

E-mail: info@riai.ie
Web: www.riai.ie

■ Planning Permission

Domestic extensions under a particular size may be exempt from the requirement to obtain Planning Permission and your architect will advise. Above this defined size, planning permission is necessary. Your architect will apply on your behalf for the necessary permission. There can be difficulties with neighbours and you should not rule out the possibility of a planning appeal which will delay your project. Your architect will advise you on the correct procedures if an appeal is lodged against your project, if planning permission is refused or if you need to appeal against a condition in your permission.

■ Building Regulations

In 1992 National Building Regulations were introduced covering all aspects of construction. You as a client, your architect and your contractor are legally obliged to comply with these Building Regulations. Your architect will know which materials and construction systems will meet the requirements for each part of the building and will advise you on a cost effective solution. You will need the expert advice of an architect to comply with these regulations in your building.

■ Benefits of using an RIAI Architect

For most people, their home is the most important investment they will make - your architect will work with you to enhance the value of your property and achieve a cost effective solution.

By investing in the services of an architect you will have a product specifically designed for your needs; you explore with the architect the various options for the design of your project and through good design the architect can maximise your investment.

The architect can also work with you on improving the long-term usability and efficiency of your house by examining the implications of two issues which are becoming increasingly important.

- Barrier - Free Design
- Sustainable Development

■ Barrier-free Design

Barrier-free design aims to remove or minimise the factors that might make it difficult for you to enjoy your house if disabled or as you grow older.

■ Sustainable Development - Energy Performance Building Directive

Sustainable development - defined as that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs - raises complex issues for society but your architect can advise you on basic techniques such as use of materials and increased insulation. The Irish Government, in compliance with EU Regulations, published the Energy Performance Building Directive (EPBD) which sets improved thermal performance standards for new building projects. The EPBD will affect your new project.

■ Safety and Health in the Work Place (SHW)

As clients, for most projects, you have a legal obligation to appoint a competent designer for the Project Supervisor Design Stage (PSDS) and a competent contractor for the (PSCS) construction stage of the project. Your Architect can fulfil the role of the PSDS.

■ Protected Structures

Your property may be listed as a protected structure. Alterations or additions are strictly controlled by planning law. Planning permission will be necessary in all instances for internal and external work. Your RIAI Architect will advise.

■ The Building Process

Having translated your brief into a final agreed design and having obtained the necessary planning permission your architect will then produce documentation for pricing by builders. The architect will also select a list of builders and will help you to evaluate the tenders received.

The builder should be selected not only on the basis of the tender price, but also on quality. A good builder represents real value in reliability and quality of work and may ultimately cost less than one with lesser ability who has tendered a lower price. Builders selected for tendering should have a good "track record" for your type of project. For this reason architects often prefer to work with builders known to them.

The architect will advise you on the appropriate form of building contract, which is published by the RIAI, and will act as your independent advisor/agent and administer the contract fairly between both parties, the client and the builder, during the contract, liaising on your behalf with the builder and ensuring compliance with the contract documentation. Your architect will advise you on stage payments during the project.

Building even the smallest project is a complex process and requires good management and co-ordination by the builder. Even with the best builder, problems can occur and it is important that you maintain good communication with your architect so that such

problems can be dealt with effectively.

During building it is important that you do not give direct instructions to the builder, because what may seem to you to be a simple matter, can be expensive.

You should also make sure that any variations to the contract which you request are agreed in advance. The cost of a number of small variations can add up to an alarming total. If you think you do need to make changes, discuss these carefully with the architect to establish whether they are really necessary and make sure that the costs are agreed. Good communication between you, the architect and the builder can avoid unpleasant surprises and will make the contract run more smoothly.

■ Problems

Building is a complex process and problems can occur - your architect is there to help resolve these problems. If you are dissatisfied with an aspect of the architect's service you should discuss the problem with the architect - this will usually be sufficient to resolve the matter. If problems persist, the RIAI has a range of services available to clients on application, aimed at resolving difficulties. Use the RIAI website (www.riai.ie) and select the "Problems with Architect: How can the RIAI help?". Your architect's work does not end when the building work is finished - part of the contract sum is retained for up to twelve months and only paid on the architect's instructions, at the end of this period, when defects have been rectified by the contractor.

■ The Professionally Qualified RIAI Architect

There is no legal protection of the title "architect" in Ireland and many people think that the title "architect" means that a person has academic and professional qualifications. In fact 77% of persons in a recent

independent public opinion survey were not aware that the title "architect" is not protected or registered. RIAI members have recognised academic qualifications; have a minimum period of post qualification professional experience; and must pass an examination in professional practice. RIAI members are qualified to the highest national, EU and international standards.

■ Ethics

RIAI members are required to observe the RIAI Code of Professional Conduct and to provide objective advice to their clients. The RIAI Code of Professional Conduct requires RIAI members to carry an appropriate level of Professional Indemnity Insurance.

■ Selecting and Appointing your RIAI Architect

Architects are generally willing to discuss an appointment with you without obligation. You should be satisfied that you can work together and you should also look at examples of work. The RIAI can help you by providing a copy of the current practice directory or by visiting the RIAI website (www.riai.ie) and select "Arch Search", which gives information on RIAI practices throughout Ireland. The RIAI can also nominate practices for your project with appropriate skills and experience.

■ How Much Will an RIAI Architect's Services Cost

Architects' fees are charged on a percentage of the final project cost, on an hourly rate or a lump sum, and depend on the extent and complexity of the work and the services required. Your architect will negotiate

and agree with you the services and fee appropriate to your project. You should ensure that you have a copy of the RIAI Agreement between Client and Architect, which covers all aspects of the services provided by RIAI architects.

The appointment of your RIAI architect should be confirmed by the architect in writing to avoid any misunderstanding as to the nature and scope of the services required from your architect and as to the fee to be paid for the agreed service.

■ Financing your Building Project or Selling your Property

On completion of the work the architect can supply you with Opinions on Compliance with Building Regulations and Planning Permission. These are important legal documents and will be needed when you come to sell your property. If you are borrowing to finance your project most lending agencies will insist that a properly qualified architect is involved with design, inspection and provision of Opinions on Compliance for your project - employing an RIAI architect will meet this requirement.

■ Important RIAI Documents:

- Working with Your Architect (free)
- RIAI Cost Guidelines (free)
- Agreement between Client and Architect
- RIAI Building Contracts

■ RIAI Register

In the absence of Registration the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland holds the only register of professionally qualified architects with national and EU recognised qualifications.