

Choosing your Builder

Homeowner Guide 11

This leaflet has been produced by Building Control Solutions to give you some useful tips on avoiding the cowboy builder.

Our Twelve Step Guide to Choosing the right builder

If you are considering any work to your property and you require a builder, you should consider this choice very carefully. The vast majority of builders are respectable and trustworthy. We cannot recommend builders or designers for both legal and financial reasons.

However, we hope that this leaflet will be one way to help you to make the important decision as to which builder to use. As this could be one of the biggest investments you are likely to make, you should thoroughly check any builder out before employing their services.

Here are some of the points you should consider and the basic precautions that you should take whenever you are choosing a builder:

1. For larger projects, consider employing a professional to advise you.
Addresses and contact numbers of professional organisations are provided within this leaflet.
2. Discuss and agree the extent of any professional's responsibility.
3. If your job is so small that you do not think you need the services of a professional, seek advice from someone in the industry who you know and trust.
4. Always obtain quotations (at least three) in writing and have them checked. Also ask whether there is any need for Planning Permission and Building Regulation approval.
5. Do not automatically go for the cheapest quote, as this may not necessarily be the best one to choose.
6. Ask questions of the builder:
 - Where has he worked before?
 - Is he happy for you to see his work?
 - What is his expertise in the particular project you intend to carry out?
 - How does he want to be paid - on completion or in stages?
 - Can he supply references from satisfied customers?
 - Is he happy to give you a retention clause?
 - Will he give you a final completion date?
 - Will he accept a penalty clause on failure to complete on time?
 - Will he agree to independent arbitration should you have any dispute?
 - Does he have membership of a trade association?
 - Does he have insurance?
 - Have they signed up for the Considerate Contractor scheme?



7. Try and visit three or four of the builder's recently completed jobs and if possible speak to the owners about the builders work.
8. Builders often claim that they are members of trade associations. You should check the validity of any such claim. A respected trade organization will have membership standards and requirements of its members.
9. Good quality builders will be happy to answer any queries as the work progresses, as they have got nothing to hide.
10. Ask to see the builders' Public Liability insurance certificate. The building work may also affect your home and contents insurance policy, check this with your insurance company.
11. Having selected a builder, ensure that the scope of the work for the agreed sum, is clearly specified in writing or on detailed plans.
12. Do get the full name, address and phone number of your builder and check that these are correct. Be suspicious of any builder who cannot supply business paperwork, only has a mobile phone number and only deals in cash.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that you use a formal contract, for example the JCT Building Contract for home owners / occupiers. This will give you invaluable protection should a problem occur when the work starts. Details may be found from: www.buildingcontract.org

BE SAFE..... BE SURE..... NOT SORRY.

Handy Hints and Tips

- Don't deal in cash, if you must, get a signed receipt.
- Don't pay out a lot of money before work starts, Pay only for stages of the work – for example, up to the foundations or for the brickwork up to first floor level.
- Don't alter the approved plans without checking with Building Control and Planning first. Go through the details of the alterations with your builder and agree any extra time and cost involved.
- Don't take it for granted if your builder says that certain work does not need Council approval, always check with the Council first.

You Must Remember

Party Wall Act issues must be resolved before agreeing a commencement date with the builder.

Guidance on this issue can be sought from our Customer Guide 13 which can be downloaded from www.buildingcontrolsolutions.co.uk

Notice of Commencement and Completion of certain stages of works

It is the responsibility of the owner of the property to ensure that the Local Authority is informed at the various stages of the work. If you are employing a builder, make sure that you are both aware as to whom will be making the contact with the Building Control Surveyor to arrange the visits. Our Site Inspections Customer Guide will give you advice on these stages.

We will supply you with your own Inspection Plan when submitting your application. This will help ensure you know when to contact us.

A completion certificate is issued at the end of the job if the Building Control Surveyor is satisfied that the works are in compliance with the Building Regulations.



Please ensure this is carried out before the builder leaves site, and the final payment is made.

It is important that you retain a copy for future use in any sale of the property. Your solicitor will require a copy to be supplied.

The following Organisations may be able to provide assistance and advice if you are considering employing a professional to help you:-

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

Tel: 0207 580 5533

Web: www.architecture.com

Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

Tel: 0870 333 1600

Web: www.rics.org

Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)

Tel: 01344 630700

Web: www.ciob.org

The Institute of Structural Engineers (ISE)

Tel: 0207 235 4535

Web: www.istructe.org

Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologist (CIAT)

Tel: 0207 278 2206

Web: www.ciat.org.uk

Federation of Master Builders (FMB)

Tel: 0207 242 7583

Web: www.fmb.org.uk

Visit our website

For a wealth of information including application forms, guidance on charges and latest news in the world of Building Control, why not visit our website at: www.buildingcontrolsolutions.co.uk

Other Approvals

In addition to Building Regulation approval, you may also require Planning Permission in certain circumstances. Please contact the relevant Development Control Team for further advice.

Building Control Solutions

Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WW

Tel: (0118) 974 6239 Email: building.control@wokingham.gov.uk

