

Private homes: DIARY OF A PROJECT

What to expect when working with Pedder & Scampton

Appointing an Architect gives you access to creative ideas and solutions you probably couldn't have envisaged yourself; project management from a specialist who knows how to deal with any potential problems that occur; and professionals who will keep the project on track.

Client testimonial:

"Thank you for doing such an **amazing** job for the West London School of Dance, I personally think you have handled the most challenging client combination incredibly. Thank god you are on full service for the project management - otherwise we would be drowning in the burst water main - literally."

Karen Feroze, West London School of Dance

Building work can be very stressful and there are many stages involved. Pedder & Scampton aims to take care of the detail and day to day problems on your behalf. To help you understand what's involved, and so you know what to expect when working with us, we've outlined below how we can help you realise your ambitions and the likely stages your project will go through.

RIBA work plan

As a member of the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects), we follow their plan of work to structure the various design and construction stages of our projects and also our fees.

Using the RIBA plan of work (organises the design and build of your project into a series of key) stages A-L are(as shown):

Preparation – A & B

Design – C, D, E

Pre-Construction F, G, H

Construction J, K

Use L

Please note that for large projects each work stage can be quite extended, while for smaller and domestic projects these may overlap.

1 – 5 below reflect stages A and B of the RIBA plan of work

1) Your needs and desires

Whether you want to change an existing home, or build a new one from scratch, you'll need someone to design the changes, someone else to build them, and, of course, the means to pay for them. It's our job as Architects to come up with imaginative proposals that, as far as possible, meet your needs and exceed your expectations. The benefit of our training is that we frequently come up with solutions to spatial problems that people without design training may not see, and realise them in a way that makes the most of your property and budget.

2) Choosing to work with us

Bear in mind that working with an Architect to improve your home is very personal and it's essential you have a good rapport. You need to like our work, feel we understand and are sympathetic to your needs, and be confident we have the skills and experience to deliver your project. However this doesn't mean we need to have completed a project just like yours in the past. To help you get to know us, and to discuss your project before you make a decision, we would normally arrange an initial consultation of about an hour free of charge.

3) Discussing your needs

We would visit your property with you to talk through your requirements and aspirations and to discuss what you want to achieve. This could be anything from a small alteration or extension to converting a house into flats, a new build - and anything in between. We would want to get a feel for the kinds of spaces and appearance you are looking for, as well as your initial thoughts on budget and timescale. At this point it would be very useful if you could show us illustrations of spaces and materials you like, and highlight any key ambitions or concerns regarding your project. For example, who will be living there, whether you want open plan spaces or separate rooms, whether the garden is an important factor, and so on. Also let us know if there are deadlines that must be met and if you have a fixed budget. To help you consider all the information we will need to discuss with you as the project is developed, we have written a checklist of items that you can download [here](#).

4) Getting started

After the meeting we'll send you our initial fee proposal. This will often be for a quick feasibility study that looks at several possible alternative solutions for your project. In order to prepare feasibility drawings we will need some sort of drawings of the property. At a pinch, estate agents plans will do, though a measured survey, or drawings from previous projects would be better. If there are no drawings of the property at all we could prepare some if the project is small, and would quote a separate fee for this. For bigger buildings a specialist measured survey would be needed and we can get you quotes.

5) Feasibility study

The feasibility study usually consists of freehand sketches that show two or three different possible approaches and solutions to meet your needs. We would prepare plans and, if appropriate, additional drawings such as sections or 3D sketches. We would meet to explain these to you, and discuss the pros and cons of each option. Many clients choose to 'mix and match' elements from two or more options. In this case we would prepare a revised set of the sketch drawings to show how the chosen elements come together.

Client testimonial:

"I remember sitting with Helen on the floor of this dark, dilapidated and depressing Victorian house I had just bought, as I tried to explain the exciting property I saw in my mind's eye. 'Open up the back of the house....extend the kitchen.....make the living-room go all the way through....direct access from the kitchen and dining area into a transformed garden visible through lots of glass....in the master bedroom a large window open to the trees and sky....and en-suite bathrooms everywhere. I want to transform this house into something that is filled with light, with a strong contemporary feel while retaining the best of its Victorian charm.' Helen listened, nodded, took notes in her big black book and started working on it. The result is a hugely exciting, bright, contemporary and immensely practical house. Helen understood the brief I gave her and with her expertise we got the results we wanted."

Michele Krieps, private house, Islington

6 – 8 below reflect stages C & D of the RIBA plan of work

6) The concept design

The final feasibility sketches and drawings form the basis of your concept design. These have a number of uses. For example they can be shown at initial consultations with planners; used to prepare cost plans; to highlight any special elements in the project which may require particular attention, and to identify what consultants might need to be involved. For a domestic project in London, these consultants are most likely to be Structural Engineers and Party Wall Surveyors. However, you might also need the services of a quantity surveyor, a mechanical and electrical engineer, garden designer, lighting designer and so on. At this stage you might like to commission a cost plan to ensure that the proposals are affordable, before expending any further fees. We would certainly recommend this if your budget is critical, or if the project is anticipated to have a construction cost that's greater than £200K. Once the overall scope of the project and the services you require have been established, we would finalise our fee proposal and prepare the formal Architect's Appointment for agreement with you.

7) Developing the design

If we've been using estate agents or other basic plans for the feasibility study, we'll now need a measured survey. We can then prepare CAD (Computer Aided Design) drawings. The CAD drawings will show the overall arrangements and how the proposal may look. At this stage we'll meet to discuss the proposals, including any alternative options, and show you illustrations and samples of materials we are proposing. We'll then develop the CAD drawings to show the project in more detail, supplemented by free hand sketches to further illustrate what we have in mind. If it is useful we can also make simple models to explain the proposals or alternative options to you. At this time we'll also discuss any structural issues with a structural engineer and consider the planning implications of the project.

8) Gaining planning permission

Once the design is sufficiently advanced, and the external appearance and materials are fully decided, it's time to apply for planning permission and listed building/conservation consent if required. (Note that if your project doesn't alter the exterior of the building, planning consent is **not** required unless you are changing the use of a building eg from a warehouse to a flat.) At this stage, while the external appearance will be defined, the exact internal arrangements of kitchens and bathrooms may not yet be finalised, nor will the internal fittings and finishes. These drawings demonstrate design intent but would not be suitable for construction.

We'll submit detailed drawings of your building as existing, as well as the new design proposal, together with a report describing the design intent behind the project. Some projects also demand additional reports (for example on trees). If you are in a conservation area, a justification will be required of the design as a response to its context. If your project involves work to a listed building, we will also need to apply for listed building consent. This requires detailed information, including large scale drawings, to describe the impact of the proposed works on the existing building - for example if we need to replace the windows. The local authority will charge a fee to determine the planning application.

We strongly advise you show your neighbours the plans for anything that might affect them in advance of submitting any application. If they would be prepared to write in support of a planning application that is always a big plus.

The government currently sets a target of eight weeks for Local Authorities to determine planning applications. Our current experience with London Boroughs is that they will normally meet this target if the project is straightforward, but are unlikely to deal with it any more quickly. If the project is contentious, for example if there are a lot of objections, it might take longer. We will discuss the most appropriate tactics for your project with you at the time.

If you are a leaseholder this is a good time to apply for freeholder's consent as required by your lease and we will need to formally notify freeholders that the planning application is being made.

Certain works are categorised as 'permitted development' and therefore don't require planning consent. These include small extensions at ground level, some loft conversions and some external alterations. If your property is in a conservation area then your permitted development rights are more limited. We usually recommend that you apply for a Certificate of Lawful Development if we think your works are permitted development. This is a formal confirmation from the Local Authority that planning permission is not required.

Once the planning application has been submitted, most clients do not want to proceed with the detailed construction drawings until a planning decision has been made. Otherwise there is a risk of abortive fees if the planning application is refused or we need to make amendments to the design to achieve the planning consent. However, if time is short, and the design is straightforward and uncontroversial, it is possible for us to move straight on to the next stage.

9 - 11 below complete stages E & F of the RIBA plan of work

9) Planning consent granted – technical design

Once planning consent has been granted we will prepare detailed technical designs and specifications – a different set of drawings to those prepared for the planning application. These will include construction drawings of the various elements of your scheme, co-ordinated with information from the structural engineer and any other specialist consultants.

We'll also meet with you to discuss details such as the kitchen and bathroom layouts and fixtures and fittings including ironmongery, lights and built in cupboards. We'll show you sample boards or catalogue illustrations, or go with you to visit showrooms to look at finishes and fittings etc. In many ways this is the 'fun' part of the design - making the decisions that will affect how the spaces look in everyday life.

Now is the time when specialists such as garden designers, interior designers and home entertainment specialists would get involved. If you particularly want to involve interior and garden designers it's important to define clearly who designs what. For example we design and specify kitchens, bathrooms and fitted furniture such as cupboards, floor and wall finishes, light fittings and colour schemes - but tend not to get involved with furniture or soft furnishings. Similarly we often design garden layouts and detail hard landscaping such as paving and walls - but we don't deal with planting.

10) Building regulations approval and other consents

The building regulations cover key construction issues such as fire protection, the adequacy of the structural design, energy conservation and so on. We will prepare and submit the buildings regulations application, which normally consists of drawings and a short report on compliance. The statutory period for determining a full plans application is five weeks. If the works are very straightforward we can submit a building notice that means works can start within 48 hours. In this case the building control officer will consider all issues on site rather than looking at drawings in advance. This is fine if the project is very simple, but runs the risk of alterations to work already completed if the building control officer interprets some of the more complex regulations differently to us. There is no difference in the local authority fee for the two options. We would also consider making the application to an approved inspector who may be cheaper than the local authority.

If the works affect party walls with your neighbours, then party wall notices will need to be served in good time. Be aware that this process can take about three months before works can start on site.

11) Pre tender

While the technical design is being completed, we will also prepare the production information for the contractors to price. This will include detailed drawings, layouts and schedules for things like lighting and ironmongery. For all but the smallest projects we will prepare a schedule of works which itemises all works to be carried out, so the contractor can price them individually. This allows us to compare the different tenders and to value the works accurately throughout the construction period. An itemised schedule of works is invaluable if items need to be omitted from the project in order to achieve the budget.

In an ideal world all the decisions about the project including details, finishes and fittings will be made before we issue the drawings for tender as changes during construction can be costly. However, this doesn't always happen in practice, leaving some items in the tender information as provisional. This is fairly straightforward with easily priced items such as ironmongery or bathroom fittings, but more difficult with larger items that have an unquantified amount of work associated with them, or those that may have a knock on effect on other works. So it's important to note here that the less defined the work is at tender stage, the less accurate the tenders are likely to be when it comes to the final contract sum.

12 – 13 below reflect stages G & H of the RIBA plan of work

12) Selecting contractors

Now's the time to discuss who will carry out the building works. We commonly tender the works to four or more contractors. Some may be suggested by us, others recommended by you. If you prefer, you can negotiate a cost for the works with a contractor you have worked with in the past, or even have the works carried out by several different people. For example one for the shell works and one for the interior fit out. We will also suggest the appropriate binding contract form for your project and include its terms in the tender documents.

13) Going out to tender

We'll now pull together all the tender information and send it to the final list. Once the tenders are returned, we'll analyse them and recommend which contractor should be appointed for the works. You may like to show the contractors around the property so you can get a feel as to who you like – particularly if you will be living in the property whilst works are carried out. You may also want to visit a completed project by the preferred contractor. Allow at least six weeks from the issue of tender documents to appointment of a contractor - and then another two weeks for the contractor to start on site. It's sometimes possible to get going more quickly if time is an issue, but this will usually carry an associated cost. Before a contractor is finally selected, it is very common to undergo a degree of negotiation, with additions or omissions to the works, in order to achieve the budget and end result you want.

Client testimonial:

".. Pedder and Scampton is a totally professional firm of architects - do not be put off by their small size. I am confident your client will get the highest quality design... not 'pie in the sky' but originating in the client's needs and aspirations. In addition to excellent design service they provide excellent documentation (drawings, spec) and are excellent contract administrators - providing able support and guidance to the contractor.

On our project we were on a very limited budget and although initially costs came in higher than expected (I do not blame P&S for this, as we had a cost consultant on the project) the architects were able to value engineer the scheme so it came within range of our budget. And although their fees were higher than we as a housing association would usually pay, their service was worth every penny.

Having said the above, you would want to be sure that you buy into their design approach based on samples of their previous work, as they are sticklers for quality and design integrity."

Alison McKenzie, Stadium Housing Association project manager

14 below reflects stages J & K of the RIBA plan of work

14) Construction

Once the Contractor has been selected, we will draft a letter of intent for you to give them. This confirms your intention to enter into the building contract. We'll also prepare the final contract documents for both parties to sign. The Contractor will then make preparations to start work – arrange staff, order materials, scaffolding etc. You will need to make some insurance provisions and we will discuss these with you at the appropriate time. You will also need to arrange for the site to be clear, ready for construction to start. If you are remaining in the property we will agree with the Contractor which bits of the property they have access to and when.

Please note that once the contractor is appointed, they are responsible for the site. So if you are not living there, you should only make site visits by arrangement as your contractor is responsible for site safety and security. Also, please make any changes via us rather than directly with the contractor, otherwise it is difficult to maintain cost control.

The construction phase of a project is really exciting as you see the new works take shape. However it can also be frustrating as the works sometimes seem to slow right down with a lot of work being done for little visible result. Living in a house while works are being done is invariably stressful, dusty and noisy - but it saves a lot on rental costs. You will need nice builders, tolerance and a sense of humour. The most stressful

thing of all is being under financial pressure if unexpected costs come up. We therefore recommend you include a contingency fund of around 10% of the construction cost in your budgets, especially when working on an existing building. Try not to build a scheme that is too close to your financial limit - and have a shopping list of things that can be omitted if necessary.

Pedder & Scampton will normally make weekly site visits to monitor the progress and quality of the works and answer the inevitable queries when unexpected things crop up on site. You are welcome to attend these visits but it's not necessary. We may omit a visit if not much is happening and we will make additional visits any time there are key things to be checked.

During the works, at agreed intervals, the contractor will make applications for payment. We will check these are reasonable in relation to the works actually carried out at the date of their application, and agree reasonable costs for any added or omitted works. We will then advise you of the amount due for payment. Many small contractors run on very tight cash flows and like frequent, smaller payments rather than fewer, larger ones. If this is difficult, or if you need to go through some sort of notice period in order to access your funds, then we should discuss this at the time of tender as it may mean we recommend different contractors. Similarly, many small contractors will want a deposit of, say, 15% before starting work (although this isn't provided for in most building contracts). Small contractors can be quite stressful to deal with but often do excellent work at a competitive cost. If any items are being carried out by separate specialists (for instance to install a security system, music/IT wiring or a special floor finish), it's essential their requirements are made clear at an early stage so that the contractor can be ready for them. If you are providing any materials or choosing fittings yourself, then similarly you need to check that the contractor has all the information needed to be ready for these.

When the works are nearly complete we will issue lists of things that are incomplete or need amending to meet the required quality of workmanship – for example touching up paintwork or adjusting ironmongery. Once the works are complete we will issue a practical completion certificate. This may come with a list of minor things that need to be finished off, but will not prevent you from using the property. After we have issued the practical completion certificate, responsibility for security, insurance and so on revert to you.

Client testimonial:

“Once construction began Pedder & Scampton Architects provided first-rate support to ensure that the project proceeded as planned, and when the contractor did encounter problems the firm quickly provided solutions.”

Jon Hastings, Environmental Management Team, London Borough of Haringey

15 below reflects stage L of the RIBA plan of works

15) Moving in and settling down

Pedder & Scampton will continue to inspect the works periodically until all the last bits of snagging have been completed, and to assist with any teething items that may come up when you move in. The first six or 12 months after you move in is called the rectification period. Any defects that come up during this time will be put right by the contractor. During this time we will negotiate the final cost of the works to reflect any items that have been added or omitted from the construction. At the end of this period, and after a final inspection and signing off by us, you will make a final payment of 2.5% of the contract sum.

Client testimonials:

“.. combined creativity with empathy and the ability to listen, understand and take on board my wishes. She also paid scrupulous attention to detail.”

Jill Mortimer, private flat, Queens Park

"Gill was great to work with. She is an excellent listener, really helpful and knowledgeable, as well as being a lovely person. She and Helen came up with lots of ideas for us to choose from. And more than 10 years on we are still delighted with the conservatory they created."

Joan Munro, private flat, West Hampstead

"Thanks so much for all your help. You were really brilliant and I am absolutely loving the flat. The bathroom in particular is absolutely gorgeous and I can't believe you managed to create it from what was there!"

Laura Rosefield, private flat, Hampstead