

Choosing a builder

Before you choose a builder, write down your objectives for the forthcoming project. What do you wish to achieve? How long do you want it to take? What sort of budget do you have in mind?

When choosing a building contractor, you should consider a number of factors very carefully. If you employ the right contractor in terms of price, workmanship and reliability then the potential for problems during the build will be greatly reduced.

As most projects will involve the Local Authority Building Control, it may be worth calling them to establish that the building contractor is reliable and competent.

The following factors should be considered:

- How long has the contractor been in business?
- Do they have premises you can visit?
- Are they a member of a trade association? Check that they have the membership and that the association is reputable.
- Membership of the TrustMark scheme is a good indication of a firm's reliability, as they have to have passed checks for membership.
- Will the contractor agree to work under contract and will they agree to independent conciliation in the event of any dispute?
- Ask to see copies of their insurance certificates, including employer's liability, public liability and contracts works cover (which is a 'must have'), in order to ensure that they are up-to-date.
- Is the contractor competent in the area of Health & Safety?
- Do they have a long list of testimonials from happy clients?
- Do they have the capacity to handle your project?

Ask for three references and check to ensure that they are genuine. It would be ideal to be able to visit a recently completed project and talk to the owners.

Arrange to visit the contractor's premises. This will reveal a great deal about them.

Once you have chosen a contractor, it is advisable to get as much in writing as possible, such as:

- Exactly what is included in the initial estimate and subsequent written quotation?
- An itemised estimate for the specification.
- When will the works start?
- What will be the duration of the project?
- What are the terms of payment during the project?
- How will any changes to the specification be dealt with and how will any variation to costs be agreed?

When you meet prospective builders, don't be afraid of asking questions. In fact, it's a good idea to have a prepared list of questions to ask them.

If you have any questions, by all means email mail@farr-roberts.com or call us on 01628 623097.