



## Case Study: Estate Agent

**Project Type** – Commercial redevelopment

**Location** - Southeast

**Value** - £150K

**Programme** – Commenced July 2017 – completed June 2018

**Scope** – Rear extension and fit-out to Estate Agent's high street premises.

## Design

The first appointment was the architect found via the Royal Institute of British Architects [RIBA - find an architect](#).

(I had firstly tried asking some other local business owners for recommendations, but did not receive any suggestions).

Other than minor works to my house in previous years, this was a new experience for me. The architect I appointed talked me through what was required of me, in my role as a 'client' and specified the information both he and the contractor would need from me. (See links lower down to two HSE docs which outline what this information is).

The fee quoted was circa 10% of the build cost for all services RIBA stages 1-7 design and delivery, being an Estate Agent familiar with the industry I did an internet search and found this information in the Architects Journal regarding fee levels. Given I was busy and did not have the time to give the project the attention required, I agreed the fee and appointed the architect under a RIBA service agreement: [RIBA contracts and agreements](#) There was also an addendum on CDM 2015 covering the Principal Designer role with the client.

During my internet search I also found these very useful links in understanding my role as client and what to expect from both the designer and contractor:

[HSE guidance on frequently asked questions](#)  
[HSE need building work done](#)

Reading the above and the following the links to other areas really helped me with my relationships with the designer and later with my local builder.

### **Building Control/Planning consent**

Building Control was carried out through my local building control authority. Planning permission went smoothly as my architect had a good grasp of what would be permitted. I was clear on my business needs and in fairness to my architect did challenge me in a number of areas where he thought I could reduce costs without detriment to my business needs. None interfered with my planning application and have taken them, they did give me a contingency allowance should unforeseen problems arise during the construction phase.

### **Insurance**

I was aware that I needed to inform my insurer that I intended to carry out building work to my premises and I subsequently ensured I had adequate cover during the construction work.

### **Finding a builder**

Finding a builder was relatively easy for me as I frequently gave local builder contacts to enquiring purchasers. Some retailers within the town had recent knowledge of using builders and following conversations with the retailers to gain their feedback and having discussed with my architect, we came up with a short list of three.

I asked my designer if he could recommend a builder. He was uncomfortable doing this, but suggested that I ask the friend about the builder they used and also undertook to talk to two of his previous clients to see if they would be happy to talk to me about their builders.

From this exercise I asked three builders to quote for the work based on the drawings, specification and timeframe we thought was reasonable given the nature of what was required.

All three builders had different strengths and weaknesses found when talking to their previous clients and the prices quoted varied considerably. Although tempting to take the lowest price, I was more comfortable with the middle one and having talked it through with designer, we decided that was the better one to run with. This was slightly over my budget.

My designer advised me that for work lasting longer than 30 days with more than 20 workers working at the same time, or involving 500 person days of work), you need to notify HSE of the project as soon as possible before construction work starts. My 11 month programme would make my project notifiable to the HSE if there was on average more than two workers on site, which the designer considered more likely

than not. In practice, the client may request someone else to do this on their behalf, but the responsibility remains with the client to ensure this is done. Follow this link: [HSE guidance on frequently asked questions to find electronic Notification Form F10](#)

### The build phase

I agreed with the designer that we would construct the extension first as it was relatively self contained and would be less disruptive to my business. The foundations proved to be more costly than the allowance within my budget. I asked my designer and builder to come up with some options to reduce costs. We found some savings by changing the flooring specified, but as this did not get the cost within budget, I decided to defer some of the work to the existing building until funds were available.

### Lessons learnt

What went well and would recommend	Not recommend – or could do better
Taking the time to find a good designer and builder that can work well together.	Commencing work without money and time to deal with unexpected problems.
Having the designer support me through the building phase.	Understanding risks to business and people. Also my role in identifying and managing those within my control.
Going to see previous clients of the builders pricing to understand how they worked and completed the jobs.	Attempting to get fixed prices on all elements rather than having a more flexible approach. Foundations being a good example.
Not being driven by engaging on lowest cost. Behaviour encouraged by my designer.	Controlling dust and noise. Disrupted my business and not good for the health and safety of my staff or the workmen.
Having a detailed estimate to understand where the costs lie. Generally understanding what things cost to aid decision making.	Allowing construction workers to share Rest Room, toilets and kitchen facilities. Should have been identified in the estimate and clearly costed by the builder, rather than being told no allowance made and assumed shared facilities.
Having a simple contracts in place, making it clear who was responsible for what, when.	Allowing builder to progress additional work without understanding what it costs and agreeing in advance.

<p>Paying promptly as work progressed on the understanding that defects would be put right immediately.</p>	<p>Understanding my role as a client, which would have prompted more in depth discussions with both the designer and the builder i.e. visit and read the website links recommended by the designer.</p>
<p>Talking to your insurer. My existing policy did cover my business premises whilst construction work was in progress.</p>	<p>Ask the builder for a copy of the notification to the HSE which he agreed to do on your behalf, so you know it has been done.</p>