

HOME SW
PLANNING

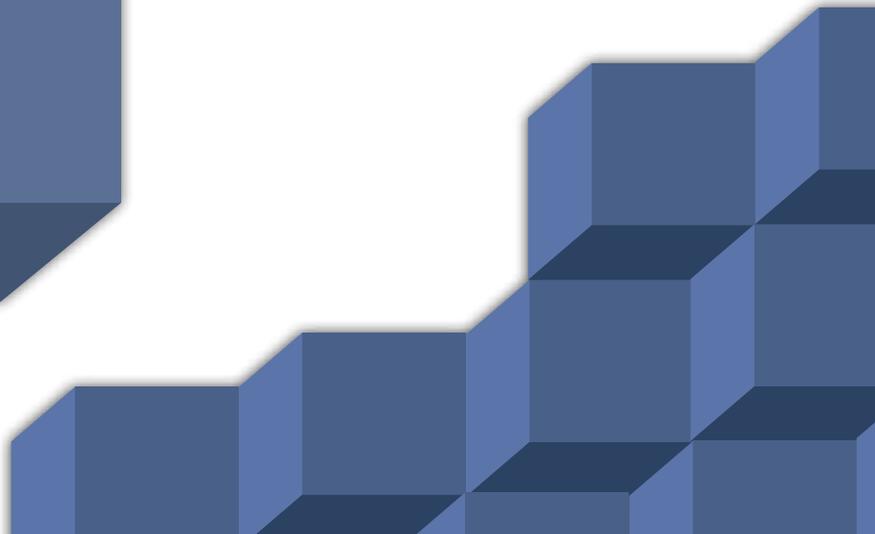
EXTENDING YOUR HOME A PRACTICAL GUIDE

FOR ANYONE
CONSIDERING
EXTENDING,
REMODELLING OR
CONVERTING THEIR
HOME



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Introduction

Many people are now choosing to extend their homes rather than move house. Depending on the scope of your vision, it's often less expensive and less stressful – and you end up with a home that has been designed around your family's needs.

But where do you start? This eBook explains the process, from taking your initial idea and research through every stage of the process. We hope it answers your questions, but if you would like to understand more about your next move, why not get in touch today? Give us a call on 0117 2446 384 or email us at info@homeplanningsw.co.uk



About Us

Home Planning SW is an architectural design firm specialising in design and planning consultancy for all stages of property development, from single storey extensions to completely new builds. We combine cutting edge technology with our combined 50+ years' experience in planning applications and construction projects within the Bristol and the South West area.



Talk To An Estate Agent

But you're not planning to sell your house now? That's why you're extending! We get that, but who do you think sees the insides of most houses like yours? That's right – an estate agent. Not only will they be able to tell you what most prospective buyers will be looking for when the time does come to move on, but they could also be a great source of inspiration for extensions or remodelling they've seen elsewhere that improved another property no end.

Unless you're planning on spending the rest of your natural days in this house, possibly the single most important factor to consider is that you don't detract from the value of your property. The wrong decision now could cost you thousands of pounds in the future by having a negative impact on the value of your house. And estate agents know most about the value of property, so why not take the time of a cup of tea and talk it over with someone who knows the market? It won't cost you a penny!

Research Previous Planning Applications

The easiest, fastest and cheapest way to find out if your plans are likely to be approved is to see if similar work has been done – or rejected – in your neighbourhood before. Doing a little leg-work or desk research at this stage could avoid a rejected planning application, incurring unnecessary fees for an architect and your application.

If you've lived in the area a while then great – you have a headstart with your first-hand knowledge of how local properties have developed. Talk to your neighbours or people in the community – you might be surprised how many people have already converted their attic or garage into living space!

Whether you know the area or not, you can research previous applications at www.planningportal.gov.uk If your property has previously been refused numerous times for a variety of applications made by others, then it's safe to assume that the same will happen to you too. This point applies not just to your property specifically, but those that are nearby as well. Not only will this serve to inform you if your area has been 'flagged' to minimise development, but at the same time, it could be an indicator for what kind of development has been typically permitted with surrounding buildings and may even give you new ideas.

Check The Land Registry

You can't build on what you don't own! You'd be surprised how bitterly neighbours can fight over a previously unused patch of dirt and there's no point causing ill feeling by initiating a lost cause. If the land you propose doesn't belong to you, your application will be refused, so it pays - both now and in the future - to find out for sure where your boundaries lie. You can easily do this online by visiting www.landregistry.gov.uk

Know The Stages

Planning is not the end. Once your plans have been approved, building regulation drawings must be produced to ensure that the project is constructed to a standard that is consistent with law. Then, there are drainage approvals and party wall agreements, architectural certificates and sign-offs (for those who are borrowing from the banks) and naturally, sourcing a contractor that you can trust to oversee the job properly. Don't be caught unawares by these necessary processes and the costs they incur. Which leads us nicely onto...

Set A Budget

It's easy to decide that you want to develop your home and given the right resources - including planning permission - your plans are feasible. But that knowledge is worthless if you don't have the financial means to see it through to completion. Starting a project only to run out of funds part way could see you either unable to complete the work you have started for a long time or worse, forced to sell. And selling a part-project will devalue your property.

People regularly underestimate the costs involved and hope that 'it'll be OK.' Our advice is that you should bear in mind that it might not be 'OK' for any number of reasons. You might hit delays for any number of reasons, from bad weather or poor health to obstacles when you break ground. Don't let that put you off; we just encourage you to build a safety margin into any plans.

Depending on the nature of your venture, some elements to consider are:

- Masonry supplies
- Mechanical parts (i.e. boilers, extractors etc.)
- Electrical fittings (wiring, lighting etc.)
- Plumbing (pipes, soakaways, drainage etc.)
- Labour costs
- Professional fees (architects, consultants, contractors, legal etc.)

Talk To A Professional

This means finding someone who is not only able to design the home of your dreams, but someone who also knows the system. There's paperwork to be filed and proceedings to follow, as well as finding a reliable contractor to undertake the building work. A good architect and planning consultant will be able to help with all this and more. Of course, they will draw your requirements, but they will also discuss the best approach while advising you on contacts to complete the work. There are good builders and bad. A good architect or planning consultant will be able to refer you to builders they trust; people they have worked with in the past, with a good reputation for completing works in a professional manner. No architect or planning consultant would risk their own reputation by referring their clients to someone who would let them down, so a professional recommendation is worth its weight in gold.

Getting A Quote

You've come a long way since you first had the idea to develop your house. You'll have firmed up those early ideas into a workable solution, had the plans drawn up, submitted them and they've been approved. That's the first stage successfully negotiated. Now you need to find the right contractor to turn those paper plans into a physical structure. Hopefully, you have a shortlist of developers who have been recommended to you, which is a great place to start. Don't just go for the guy who was lucky enough to have his name passed on to you, though. It's a good idea to get a fixed quotation from at least three different companies. Check what they include in their quotation to make sure you are comparing like-for-like – the cheapest price isn't always the best choice. If you know the materials you want and have sourced them yourself, make sure anyone quoting knows this and see if they can find better value or quality. Saving money on materials frees it up to spend on putting them together, enabling you to accept a more expensive quote from a more reliable contractor.



Mini-Tips

Know what you want. Before you seek someone to professionally draw it, think through what it is you want from the project. This will avoid wasting your time and theirs. However, at the same time...

Be open to ideas from professionals. No, they don't have to live there. Nor are they as personally attached to your project as you. But if you find the right consultant, they will know what they're doing. They can help refine your ideas, improve your chances of a successful planning application and the design should end up being better for you in the long run.

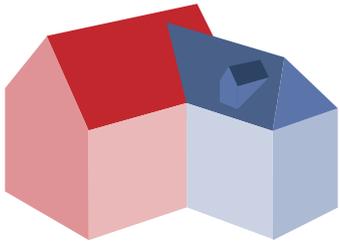
"Love thy neighbour". Familiar – and wise – words! Knowing how those nearby to your development might react to your project can be key. Try to see the work from their perspective, especially if they have to look at it without enjoying the benefits. It could make things smoother in the long run. Opposition can slow and even stop an application, so it's far better to get the support of the community.

Don't assume that you will get planning, even if you get an insider's tip, the bookie's odds or 'the nod'. Decision notices are served at the discretion of a single planning officer and if they decide against you after you've already laid the foundations, you will be made to tear it all up again, sending time, money and effort straight down the proverbial porcelain.

Keep your chin up if your application is turned down first time around; there's still hope! Not only do councils generally grant a free resubmission (through which you can make alterations that could potentially see your application approved), but following a disappointing verdict, you can also make an appeal to the planning inspectorate if you feel your application has not been considered fairly.

Are you in a radon affected area? For example, Cornwall is designated a radon affected area with readings frequently exceeding national accepted levels for safety. Protection from this gas will always incur extra costs to protect you from unnecessary exposure. For more information: <http://www.bre.co.uk/radon/index.html>

Most important tip of all; make sure you have a large box of decent teabags, because builders love a cuppa...



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