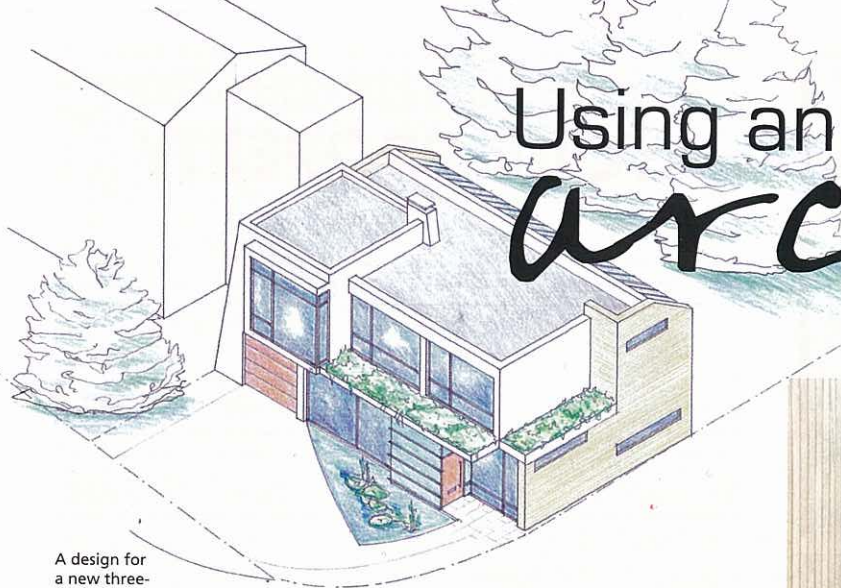


# Using an architect



A design for a new three-bedroom house by AAC Studio

**People often assume that using an architect is something you do only if you're undertaking major building or renovation work. But, in fact, there are good reasons why an architect can be invaluable even if the project you have in mind is relatively minor – a kitchen extension or a reconfiguring of rooms, for instance.**

You may already think you know what needs to be done in order to reach your end goal, but a good architect will listen to what you want to achieve and may be able to come up with other – potentially cheaper – options for you to consider in order to achieve your end goal. And if planning permission is necessary, they will not only be able to draw up the plans and submit the application for you but, because they are very familiar with the process and how it works, they will help you avoid the kind of small but significant planning application errors that can prove expensive and extremely time-consuming.

"When a client, an architect and a builder are involved in a project," says Denis Olette of KanerOlette Architects

Even if you're only planning a simple extension, employing an architect may save you money in the long run – and it could open up exciting new design possibilities, says Sarah Giles

in Tunbridge Wells, "the architect is there to represent the interests of the client, and this can be helpful both in terms of ensuring a fair price and in making sure the client's requirements are fulfilled in the best way possible. But, just as importantly, the architect is able to bring a creative vision to the project that could turn it into something much more exciting than originally anticipated."

Using an architect may not be as expensive as you think, either. Some offer a free initial consultation; others charge, but only a modest amount – usually around £50. After that, in the early stages an hourly rate for the work is usually set. But a cap can be put on this and once



A cutting-edge design from KanerOlette for a house in Belgium

that is reached, you can decide whether to keep your architect on board for the next stages or go it alone from then on.

Terms of appointment are regulated by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), and the process is divided into stages. Each stage is clearly set out so you know exactly what you can expect at each point in the process, and this will help you decide how much involvement you need your architect to have.

So how do you find a good architect in the first place? RIBA's website offers plenty of practical advice on this, but Denis Olette suggests an intuitive approach, too. "Consult at least two architects," he says, "and choose the one who you have the best chemistry with. A good architect isn't just someone who can create beautiful buildings – he must be able to interpret the client's wishes and inspire them with new ideas too."

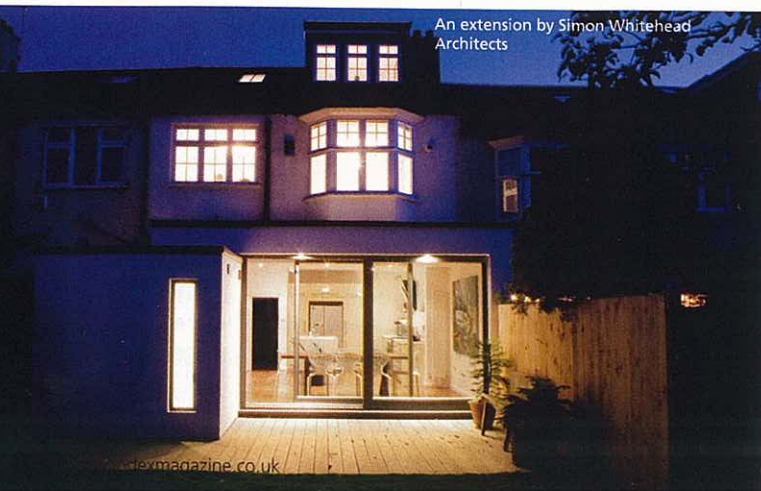
Simon Whitehead, who's just moved a branch of his thriving practice to Tunbridge Wells, agrees: "It's vital that we listen to and understand the requirements of our clients. That, combined with reliability and attention to detail, is what drives our business, and sees us win many of our new clients through personal referral from previous ones."

And what about those

who're thinking of using an architect to make their properties more saleable? Says Carlos Elsesser of AAC Studio architects in Tunbridge Wells, which specialises in the design of one-off houses and extensions, "Work with a good architect to extend or develop your home and, typically, you can expect to double your investment when you sell. The trick is to come up with a design that will have broad appeal and that ticks all the boxes with the Planning Authority, so they can't object to the development. Some good news in these times of austerity is that builders are hungry for work, which means there are competitive deals to be found".

## More info

- \* Look out for Architect in the House, usually held in May, a scheme that allows you to consult an architect in return for a donation to charity. See [www.architectinthehouse.org.uk](http://www.architectinthehouse.org.uk)
- \* AAC Studio 01892 524182
- \* Kaner Olette Architects 07821 462249, [www.kanerolette.co.uk](http://www.kanerolette.co.uk)
- \* RIBA, [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)
- \* Simon Whitehead Architects, 01892 800456, [www.simonwhitehead.com](http://www.simonwhitehead.com)



An extension by Simon Whitehead Architects