

Taking the stress out of project management

October 2016

The road to a new building project can be an exciting one and is often the result of a long-term dream. But if things go wrong, there is always the chance it could turn into a nightmare. This can be avoided, so long as you approach the project carefully and employ well-qualified design and cost consultants to help you.

Here's a quick ExpertQS guide on how to avoid the most common pitfalls at each stage of the project management process.

Before you begin

Be very clear about exactly what you want to build. This may take some research at first, but clarity now will save a lot of potential problems and disappointments later on.

Cost planning

When your plans are clearly formed, you should obtain a detailed cost estimate from a qualified quantity surveyor. This will ensure that your project is affordable, especially if you need to borrow money. In addition, the cost estimate can be used as a cost control document throughout the project to help you monitor cost variations.

Tendering

Once you are ready to put your project out to tender, it helps to be very specific in terms of your brief to potential contractors. Make sure the tender documents are accurate and of good quality. Specifications and drawings should accurately reflect your vision and be practical in terms of your budget. Importantly, you'll get the best deal if you invite competitive tenders from a number of different contractors.

Contracts

Many potential disputes can be avoided if care is taken to draw up your contracts correctly. To stay in full control of your costs, always ensure prices for each service and all materials are stated clearly. Arrange payments in stages – no provision for upfront payments needs to be made but the contractor should not have to bear all costs until the end of the project.

Agree reasonable time frames with the contractor and terms for compensation if they are not met or if work is not completed. Also, try to avoid last minute changes if possible, as these can lead to unexpected costs or disrupt the smooth flow of the project.

Building

You'll want peace of mind that your building project is being completed to the highest standards. That's why you should arrange for regular independent inspections by either a project manager, architect, or NHBC, together with those responsible for building regulation approval.

During this process, additional services or materials may be required, so always agree the price for these beforehand and don't wait until the job is finished to negotiate costs.

Project completion

Arrange for a final inspection once the project is finished. Make sure everything is completed to your satisfaction and that any defects are rectified by the contractor responsible. When the project is signed off, do not withhold any due payments without good reason.

If things go wrong...

Even with the best will in the world, things can go wrong and serious disagreements may arise. In this event, always enlist the services of a construction expert as early as possible. That way, disputes can be resolved quickly, often without the need go to court.

Providing care is taken at every stage of the process, major disputes can be avoided and the result should be a successful project.

Should require project management or quantity surveying assistance on your building project then contact Gary Bushell on 07989 503707, or email him on gbushell@expertqs.co.uk.