

## Why you should use a reputable builder

### 6 steps to peace of mind

*By JR Slee Building and Joinery Contractors*

**“Every year in the UK an estimated 89,000 householders are fleeced by rogue door-to-door traders masquerading as professionals” - By the Federation of Master Builders**

Choosing a reputable builder can be a difficult decision, however there are plenty of steps you can take to avoid being taken advantage off and ensure that you choose the right contractor.

#### **Step 1 - Reputation:**

A builder with a good reputation that is highly recommended has to be the best form of advertisement, especially if it comes from a family member or from a friend that you can trust in the area. JR Slee Building and Joinery Contractors in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, have been in business for over 25 years and is a family run business. Over the years we have prided ourselves in building a first-class reputation that consistently produces high quality workmanship, value for money and employs professional and friendly staff. Many locals will instantly recognize our vans and/or work that we have completed nearby to them. This is very reassuring for potential clients. A good reputation is not something money can buy and is worth its weight in gold when choosing a builder in Shrewsbury, Telford or Powys.

#### **Step 2 - Architect**

For larger contracts choosing the right builder is sometimes just half of the battle, also having the right architect on board can also be very challenging, but essential. Attributes of a good architect are the following:

- 1) RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) - Fully qualified will ensure best design features etc.
- 2) Has an in-depth understanding of what the client's requirements are.
- 3) Considers the budget available for the project at the design stage.
- 4) Good communication and listening skills.
- 5) Shows strong drawing/sketching skills.
- 6) Has a good sense of design.
- 7) Has a solid technical ability.
- 8) Able to problem solve effectively.
- 9) Good business sense.

- 10) Believes in collaboration.
- 11) The ability to visualize the finished project.
- 12) A passion for their work.

An under qualified designer may not have the same design skills and knowledge as a RIBA. However, the more thought and detail put into the design work means that the job can be more accurately priced. If not enough thought has gone into this stage then problems are likely to be encountered during the construction phase. We advise clients to contact us as the first port of call (JR Slee Building and Joinery Contractors) we can recommend a number of architects who have a good reputation and are registered with the Royal Institute of British Architects. Alternatively, we can employ the designer and work with them throughout the design process to ensure the project is kept within the client's budget and are able to offer advice on most practical cost effective methods.

### **Step 3 - Evidence**

Ask your builder to show you evidence of good workmanship/references/health and safety documentation. On JR Slee Building and Joinery Contractors website, there are many examples of previous projects, testimonials and health and safety information, including our health and safety policies and an up to date CHAS certificate (Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme). This means that we have gone through a very lengthy process and provided evidence to this nationwide organization demonstrating that we comply with all legislation relating to health and safety in construction. Health and safety is also partly the client's responsibility and is a huge consideration when choosing a builder, ignorance is no excuse when it comes to the HSE (Health and Safety Executive).

We also have evidence of awards that we have won over the years, again proving our consistency in using highly skilled craftsmen that has been recognized by the LABC (Local Authority Building Control).

It is also important to check that your builder is adequately insured for the job. This **is not** a legal requirement and therefore can put the client at enormous risk, especially for high value projects. JR Slee Building and Joinery Contractors have contractors all risk insurance and employer's liability. This is peace of mind that most people would welcome!

JR Slee Building and Joinery Contractors are also members of the FMB (Federation of Master builders). All members have to meet certain criteria to acquire membership status.

1. Trading for a minimum of 12 months.
2. Passed an inspection of a job in progress.
3. Provide details of their public liability insurance.

4. Undergone a number of background checks.
5. Agrees to follow their code of practice.

Other advantages of choosing a builder whom is a member of the FMB is that they have a dispute resolution service in the unfortunate event of a disagreement and they offer warranty protection.

#### **Step 4 - Estimates**

There are two ways to approach this:

- 1) To decide who you wish to work with, do your research on the company and negotiate a contract sum.
- 2) Send out to tender.

We recommend that you obtain no more than three estimates from contractors. You need to make sure your documentation is detailed and make sure everyone prices for the same items otherwise tenders will not be comparable.

Check that their estimate has covered everything that you would like doing, including removal of rubbish and all the finishing touches.

The cost of a project is not the only factor when choosing a builder; although it may be very tempting to go with the lowest, this is not necessarily the smart thing to do. Consider all the previous steps especially, reputation and supporting evidence as well as cost. It is rare but has been known for builders who have gone in far too keenly to have walked off the job because they could not deliver on such a tight budget. Look also at the quality of work and the finish you require and who will deliver this.

#### **Step 5 - Budget**

It is important to have a budget and a contingency fund for any unforeseen costs. Be honest with your builder on what this is. Clear communication is always the best policy and ensures that there are no surprises for either the client or the builder. Be realistic on what your budget will afford.

Agree a payment plan and never pay the full cost of the project up front. Ensure good communication at all times to avoid misunderstandings. The FMB Plain, English Domestic Contract suggests payments every 14 days.

#### **Step 6 - Contract**

Always ensure you have a written contract with your builder, you can download templates for free from the FMB web site, [www.fmb.org.uk](http://www.fmb.org.uk) we always use the FMB Plain English Domestic Building Contract for our domestic clients.

## Blog - JR Slee Building and Joinery Contractors (1) - 13/10/14

To be “forewarned is to be forearmed” unfortunately bad publicity that builders have received in recent years has also ruined things for good builders (like us) as well as those who are unsuspecting or vulnerable. It is no exaggeration to say that choosing the right builder and architect can mean the difference in having your dream home or facing financial ruin! Our intention of writing this blog is to help you (the client) to avoid the stress of dealing with incompetence and unprofessionalism! If you follow these six steps you should minimize the risks both financially and in terms of health and safety and achieve your desired goals.

### Summary

To summarize, cost is obviously important but should not be the only factor when choosing a contractor. Trust, professionalism, competence and personality should also be at the forefront of your mind. Having a good working relationship between the Contractor, Architect and Client is essential when embarking on a venture of this nature, so therefore ensure that you choose the right team for you!

