

# 10-Point Due Diligence Checklist

**BetterLivingSpace  
Architectural Design &  
Structural Engineering**

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# So, You're Ready to Build... But Have You Done Your Due Diligence?

During almost every building project, unexpected issues can arise.

Carrying out the basics of due diligence from the outset can, at the very least, bring to light the most common issues.

Knowledge is power and being aware of issues from the outset can save you a substantial amount of both time and money over the full project lifecycle.

Action these 10 essential points of due diligence, as a bare minimum, before you start to outlay any money on design or construction work.



# 1. Consult the Planning History

Before anything else, contact your Local Planning Authority and request the planning history records for your plot of land.

These records will detail the original footprint of the property and any previous development work. The original property footprint forms the cornerstone of any future development.

Taking this and any previous development work into consideration will enable your architectural designer or builder to assess if your plans are feasible.

There are no hard and fast rules but if your property is already twice as large as the original footprint then, generally speaking, careful consideration needs to be given.



## 2. Research All Past Development

Contact your local Building Control and ask for any documentation relating to your property's structural plans and past planning applications.

This will detail any previous structural changes and will need to be carefully considered by your architectural designer and builder for both design and construction purposes.



# 3. Check Your Permitted Development Rights

If you are hoping to develop under Permitted Development then contact your local Council before you start to check there is no reason your property would not be eligible for Permitted Development Rights.

A quick check could save you the cost of submitting a Permitted Development Application only to have it refused.

This point is most relevant for new build properties, as their Permitted Development Rights are sometimes removed within the Planning Application for the original new build scheme.



# 4. Take Heed of Special Mentions

- Is your property within a restricted area such as Green Belt, Outstanding Natural Beauty or Conservation?

- Is your property listed or specifically mentioned?



These issues, amongst others, could affect your planning application or impact what you are able to achieve. They will certainly impact your design approach and development application.

As a general rule of thumb, volumes and sizes are of most importance in Green Belt areas, while the aesthetics are of greater consideration in Conservation and Outstanding Natural Beauty areas.

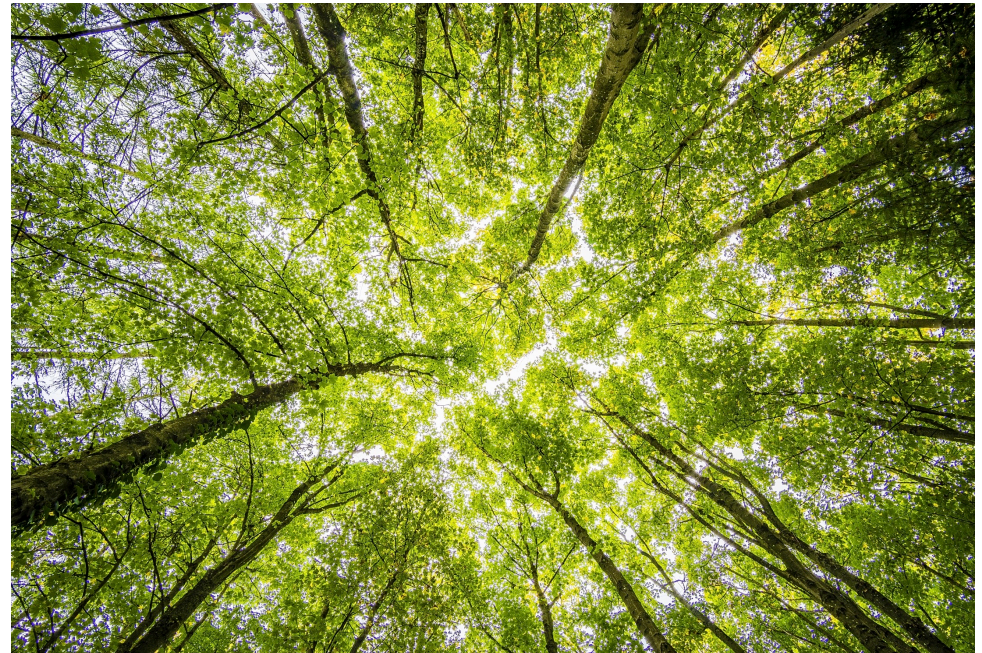


# 5. Research Restrictions

Check with your conveyancing solicitor whether you have any covenants or restrictions on your plot.

If there are any in place, then you will need to investigate carefully with your solicitor and architectural designer to determine if any development will be possible.

Issues such as these must be resolved before you pay for any design work.



# 6. Start Digging!

Speak to a local builder or handyman to dig a 'trial hole' next to your existing foundations.

This is literally just a hole in the ground, used to determine the depth of the foundations. A builder or handyman will charge a nominal amount (up to around £300) to carry this out although, if you have the time and equipment, you could even do this yourself.

Ascertaining the depth of the foundations is critical information that will drive the cost and possibilities for the entirety of the development infrastructure and determine how financially viable your options are.





# 7. Discover What Lies Beneath

Complete a drainage survey. This costs around £200, depending on the number of drains you have.

In a similar manner to the foundations, it is of fundamental importance to understand what exactly is going on beneath your plot. You do not want to discover halfway through your build that there are drainage chambers or deep sewers hidden underneath your garden!



# 8. Consider the Environment

Research the immediate area in which your property is located.

- Is there anything relating to ecology, bats, protected trees or flood risk zones?
- Is your property in an area of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or a Special Protection Area (SPA)?

These issues all need to be discussed and mitigated with your architectural designer before you submit for Planning Approval.

You may need to pay for a report from a specialist in the relevant area, such as an arboriculturalist, to determine the level of impact your development plans will have on the surrounding area. You should factor in anything from £1000-£5000 for obtaining this specialist advice.

Again, it will be money well spent as it will greatly influence the success of your planning application and shield against additional architectural redesign costs.



# 9. Assess if Your Plans will Need a Party Wall Agreement

If your development encroaches within 3m of a neighbouring property then the Party Wall Act may apply.

In a perfect world, your neighbours would be completely amenable to your development works and happily sign a Party Wall Agreement.

In reality, you may need to engage surveyors to produce a Party Wall Award, which will cost circa £1000.

The best approach is to engage in open communication with your neighbours as early as possible to help foster an understanding and support of your development project.

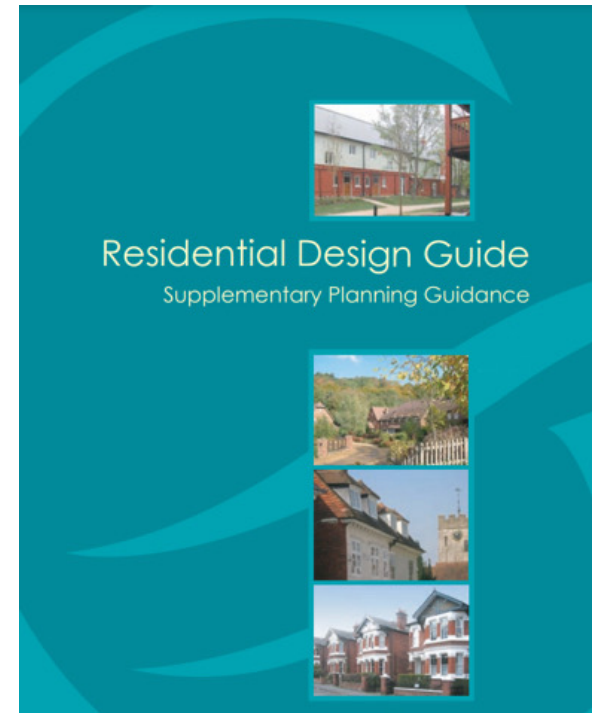


# 10. Take Account of Local Authority Design Guidance

Request a copy of the Local Plan Documentation and Design Guidance from your Local Authority to understand the recommended styles of new residential development and extension work.

Does the guidance correspond with your ideas? If so, then you are at least starting on the right track to gain Planning Approval.

If not, you will need to discuss your ideas with your architectural designer and think creatively about how you can make adjustments and where you would be prepared to compromise in order to breach the gap.



# Now... Design!

Once you've actioned everything on this list then you should be at a good place to start working seriously on your ideas with your architectural designer.

Each project will require careful individual consideration, so these action points are certainly not exhaustive.

At BetterLivingSpace we are always careful to thoroughly research and advise on client ideas before we start the design process. We encourage anyone thinking of embarking on a development project to contact us as soon as possible.



# BetterLivingSpace Architectural Design & Structural Engineering

**BetterLivingSpace** is a full service architectural design and structural engineering firm operating throughout London and the south.

We provide designs, plans, 3D models, Virtual Reality immersion, structural calculations, planning & building control services for residential and commercial property extensions, conversions, redesigns and new builds.

Contact us for a no-obligation chat about your property project.

**Tel: 03301 757601**

[enquiries@betterlivingspace.com](mailto:enquiries@betterlivingspace.com)

[www.betterlivingspace.com](http://www.betterlivingspace.com)

