

How to Find the Right

# Builder.

10 Must-Ask Questions for Your Home  
Transformation Partner



# Getting your renovation off on the right foot.

Everyone has a dodgy builder story, and we've heard plenty. While a major renovation can be stressful enough, choosing the *wrong* builder can turn it into a nightmare; mentally, emotionally and financially.

We've put together the **10 essential questions to ask** when hiring a builder for a renovation, extension, conversion or in fact any home refurbishment you are working on.

They questions may feel thorough, but we promise, having these answers upfront gives you the confidence to make sure you have the right partner for you.

Start smart, and you'll reap the benefits later.





## TOP TIP

Social media can be a great place to source recommendations. But, when it comes to builders you might want to tread a little more carefully. Platforms like Facebook often include opinions from friends and family, which can lack impartiality.

## Step 1: Narrow your search

Before asking these questions, you'll need to narrow your search. Besides personal recommendations, there are a few other ways to find a partner that is a good fit for you and your home.

A great place to start is the Federation of Master Builders ([www.fmb.org.uk](http://www.fmb.org.uk)) where all builders are vetted and held to high professional standards.

Another old school way is to walk around your street or surrounding streets and check out signage from ongoing projects and if neighbours are happy, ask about their experience. Sometimes seeing a builder in action will show you who you want to avoid as much as who you want to hire!

Architects are also a great resource, they sometimes know which builders can deliver your vision beautifully and on time.

Whichever route you choose, doing the groundwork early gives you confidence and protects your investment, time, and sanity.



## Step 2: Ask your questions

Here are 10 questions to help you feel confident when meeting your shortlisted teams. They'll give you a real sense of what working together might be like.



# Previous experience

## 1. Can you show evidence of similar projects you've completed in size, complexity, and quality to mine?

Builders have different specialisms. If you live in a period property (as many London homes are), you will want to make sure they've worked on similar.

Experience in new builds doesn't translate to older houses. Retrofitting heating, plumbing, or structural changes in a 200-year-old property is very different from a modern build. So, while this is not a knock on the builder if they haven't worked on similar, it may be a sign that they might not be the right fit for this job.

Ask for photos, drawings, and if possible a site visit or a past client you can speak to. If visiting a live job, look at site management, communication and professionalism. Ask former clients about budget, handling unexpected issues, and snagging follow-ups.

**Note:** Speaking to previous clients isn't always possible and can be a hassle for homeowners who have been asked multiple times, so only pursue this for builders you're seriously considering.



## 2. How do you price work, and what are your labour rates and overheads based on?

You are not looking for the cheapest number, but clarity on how the price is built. Don't accept a top-line estimate.

A fixed-price quote shows commitment. And it should be **detailed**. It should break down all stages of work (foundations, structure, roof, electrics, plumbing, plastering) and clarify what materials are included. It should also identify what **you** need to supply, for the avoidance of doubt further down the line.

## 3. Can you confirm financial stability and official payment methods?

No one wants a builder with a shaky financial record.

Do a quick Companies House search for stable trading history (ideally 5+ years) and check directors' backgrounds. Watch out for *phoenixing*; a name given to companies that close and restart repeatedly.

## 4. How do you handle money, deposits, stage payments and variations?

A good builder can explain this clearly. Payments should be staged, tied to completed work, with a deposit no larger than 10 – 15%. Never pay upfront for work not yet done or materials not delivered. And never accept cash-only payments to “avoid VAT” - it leaves you unprotected and suggests legal issues.

**5. Can I see your standard terms of business before we proceed?**

This shows how disputes, variations, delays and payment are handled, not just how the job starts. Ask how they manage variations, whether from changes you request or unexpected site issues.

**Extra tip:** *Keep this one in mind for later.* Check that their contract includes a Defects Liability Period, usually 3–6 months after completion, when the builder must return to fix any minor snags or defects

**6. What accreditations, insurances, and certifications do you currently hold?**

Ask for details of the contractor’s current Contract Works Insurance and a valid certificate showing the types of work covered. You should also check they hold Public Liability and Employers’ Liability insurance, along with any relevant certifications such as FMB, Gas Safe, or NICEIC/ELECSA. This helps protect you, your property, and everyone working on site.



# Problem solving

## **7. How do you approach problems when something unexpected comes up on site?**

If something unexpected comes up on site (as it often can) you'll want to know how the builder assesses and handles it. How do they explore practical solutions, and how do they communicate with you? Asking for a real-life example helps reveal problem-solving skills, accountability, and professionalism. It also signals confidence and experience in handling issues calmly, without panic or blame.

## **8. How do you ensure clients feel confident and satisfied throughout a project?**

This question helps you assess whether a builder takes a sense of pride in their work. The answer can reveal how they maintain high standards, handle challenges, and communicate throughout. Those who are proactive, transparent, and attentive show they care about how their work is perceived and its long-term impact so you can identify builders invested in delivering a thorough, reliable, and professional job. This question and its answer speaks volumes to their reputation.

## 9. Who will be responsible for my project day to day, and how will we communicate?

Find out exactly who your single point of contact will be (the Project Manager) and how often you will get updates. Lack of communication is a *top complaint* from London homeowners when it comes to building work so find out how they'll communicate and decide if that's how you would like to work.

Know whether they use employees or subcontractors. Subcontractors are normal for specific skills (electricians/ plumbers/ heating technicians), but they must be insured and vetted.

You want to ensure that you agree on working hours that respect your neighbours (especially in densely packed London terraces) and these should include procedures for noise management.

Discuss how they would manage access, where materials will be stored, and how they will manage waste (e.g., daily clean-up, location of the skip).

This reflects their professionalism and attention to detail.



**TIP**

Find out about their values and motivations for taking on your project to make sure your views are aligned.

**10. Why do you want to work on this project specifically?**

This question helps you understand a builder's motivations and whether they see you as a partner or just another job. A good answer will show genuine interest in your home, the type of work involved and how they can add value beyond simply building what's on the plans.

They should be asking thoughtful questions and showing signs they've taken time to understand your brief, budget and priorities. Builders who are motivated by the right projects *tend to price more carefully, communicate more openly and stay engaged when challenges come up.*

If the answer feels rushed, vague or focused only on filling a gap in their schedule, it can be a sign they're not fully invested in your project.

Working with a builder who wants to work with you rather than just *for* you can set the tone for a more collaborative and successful project from day one.

The goal of these questions isn't to catch a prospective builder out.

It's to help you choose based on *evidence*, not promises by someone telling you what you want to hear.

By looking for insurances, accreditations, transparent pricing, relevant experience, good money handling, a real reputation to protect, and values that align with yours; you dramatically reduce risk from the start.

Once you've shortlisted one or two builders who meet these standards, asking them to price in detail becomes far more effective. You've filtered out the cowboys, protected your project, and given good builders the confidence and motivation to engage properly, price carefully, and work with you as true partners in your project.

Good luck bringing your home project to life!





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