

# Sunday Independent

## ARCHITECT'S CLINIC

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# How to calculate the cost of a refurbishment job

**Q** MY husband and I have just bought a 1960s semi-detached house in Cork, and want to do work to it. It's in need of refurbishment and we want to extend the kitchen/living space to the rear.

We have a certain amount of money for the project — but we don't know where to begin in working out how much the work will cost. Where do we start?

*Sinead, Bishopstown, Cork*

**A** THERE is no doubt that the need to ensure your project stays within budget is more important these days than ever before. Banks are looking for assurance from your architect that the project can be delivered within the agreed loan amount. Getting to this level of certainty requires a substantial amount of design work, so that the project can be tendered competitively, and a price agreed. But you need to know from the outset where the cost is heading and what to budget for.

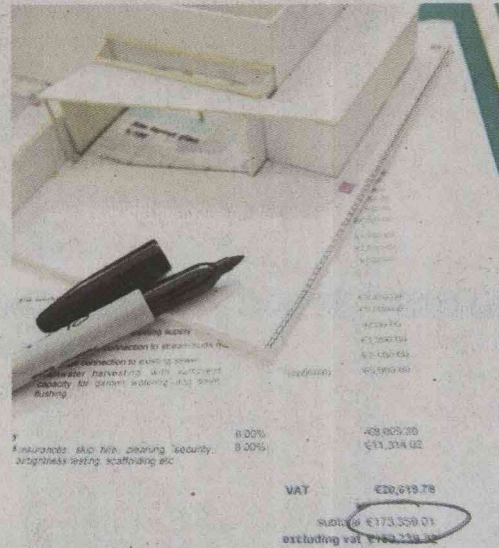
The process starts with appointing a registered architect, agreeing a scope of work and budget. Architects have different ways of approaching this.

Some structure their service, so that you have a fixed fee for an initial design stage, which is dependent on the scale of the job, as described by you in your list of requirements (ie, the brief) to them. So your architect will agree to do a sketch design based on your brief, and then produce a budget analysis based on this scheme.

Once everyone is happy with the sketch plan, the scope of work and the projected cost, a fee for the project is then agreed.

Another costing model (and one used by our studio) is carrying out a feasibility study without design for a smaller fixed fee, regardless of the size of the job.

We then create a project specific schedule of works, and use past experience and recent tenders to apply appropriate rates to each element to generate a contract cost, and add on all the overheads such as VAT, fees, VAT on fees, development contributions, surveys, expenses



### Work out the costs before you start building!

and grants to give an all-inclusive budget cost. I quote for design services based on this, or agree a reduced scope of works if needed.

At this point, you will have a clear picture if you can afford to do the work you need, and you can use the feasibility study to shop around for any of the third-party services estimated in the report.

Always make sure to appoint a registered architect. The **RIAI** is the registration body for architects in Ireland and you can find a registered architect on [riai.ie](http://riai.ie).

If the project is broadly viable, I recommend that you also employ a quantity surveyor on all but the most simple projects (that is, up to €100,000 in value).

**Do you have an architectural dilemma we can help you with? Email your problem to [designclinic@independent.ie](mailto:designclinic@independent.ie). Advice provided is for guidance only and readers are advised to seek professional assistance for any proposed project.**