



# THE IRISH TIMES

## Sort it

### Denise O'Connor



## Turn your dream into a workable design

A home renovation or extension project is a big investment so you want to ensure the planned alterations are going to improve and enhance what you already have. You should be confident that each and every option has been considered and you are proceeding with the best possible solution for your brief and budget.

Choosing the right person to design your home is critical. Make sure you are selecting them for the right reasons. A good relationship with the planning office should not be a deciding factor!

What you want is someone who can take your brief and turn it into a real and workable design that not only brings your vision to life but that also offers things you would not have contemplated yourself. Your design professional should be leading the process, offering solutions and never simply drawing what you are telling them to.

Don't simply focus on the practical services such as providing technical drawings, preparing planning applications, supervising your builder and managing the building contract.

The person you select should be able to enhance your project and help guide you through the process, tackle challenges and remove unnecessary stress. So it's important that you spend some time researching before you commit to working with them.

There are great online resources like Houzz and the **RIA** website, which will allow you to compare different practices. Have a look at previous projects to get a feel for the

style of each of the practices.

It's important that the firm you select understands – and likes – your style. Architects' styles vary a lot from very contemporary to traditional. So it's important that you choose someone whose design preferences align with your own. There's no point engaging a specialist in traditional design if you want a contemporary house.

Once you've made a list of firms that you like you should arrange to meet them. The design of your home is a really personal project so you need to be working with someone who is used to this kind of work and most importantly someone with whom you get on. The entire process of designing your home, from appointing the architect to moving back in, can take a couple of years during which you will be interacting with each other on a regular basis – so it's vital that the relationship is one that will work.

When it comes to making your final decision don't let the fee be the deciding factor. Price is an important part of choosing who to work with, but it shouldn't be the only factor in your decision. When comparing prices, try to understand exactly what you're getting and make sure you're comparing like for like.

Architectural services can vary enormously. Some designers produce very detailed documentation and project specific packages specifying and designing each and every detail such as internal joinery items, window selection and bathroom fittings etc. while others provide more basic information and generic specifications.

The fee quote should be very clear on what the deliverables

are for each stage of the project and this way you will have a clear picture of what the service is and be able to compare costs accurately.

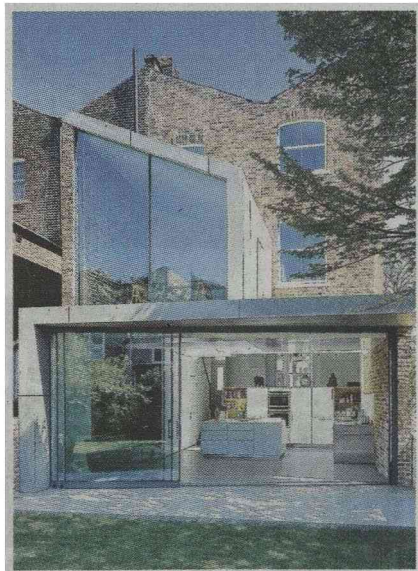
*Denise O'Connor is an architect and design consultant*

**“When it comes to choosing, don't let the fee be the deciding factor**



# THE IRISH TIMES

---



■ Your architect may be more comfortable with contemporary design than traditional styles. So make your choice with that in mind.