



Our Process

Unagru Architecture Urbanism, London

We are a thriving architecture and urbanism practice based in Dalston. We provide ecologically sustainable building solutions and innovative collaborative projects across London and the surrounding areas. Our experienced team provides architectural services that are made to measure for your needs and budget. Unagru has a team of fully-qualified and knowledgeable experts who are passionate about delivering architectural services with bespoke details from preliminary design to construction.

Our services range from sustainable home solutions to urban design plans. We promise to provide inspiring design projects with social and environmental responsibility at the forefront. We are dedicated to executing high-quality and creative urban design projects across London that are tailored to your requirements.

Customer satisfaction is our number one priority and we are committed to exceeding expectations by delivering exceptional residential and commercial design solutions of the highest standard.

As a ARB and RIBA Chartered practice, our scope of work is guided by RIBA Plan of Work 2020.

Stage 0/1: First Contact and Meeting

Good architecture comes from building trust and knowledge between you and us. Before you decide to appoint us, we focus on knowing you and your aspirations. It would be helpful if you could provide us the details about the property address and plan drawings (a link to Zoopla, Rightmove or the likes would be sufficient), along with your brief, budget and desired timeframes. These will allow us to check the planning, design and cost constraints around your project.

During our first meeting, we focus mostly on two things. Firstly, we will get to know each other: we will ask you about your personal and professional interests, habits and ideals, the house and your aspirations for the future. Secondly, we will review your brief through sketches and photos of the house to establish a clearer understanding of the brief.

We will advise on all aspects of the process and ensure you have all the information to make an informed decision. We might not be the perfect fit for every potential client, so we like to see this first meeting as a chance to meet someone and provide professional advice.

Stage 0/1: Fee and Scope of Works

If you think you might like working with us, we prepare an initial report on the project, including preliminary cost, planning and design considerations. We will also discuss our degrees of service and the related fees. We will review the design and construction process more in detail to clarify what we will do at each stage.

In some cases, we may suggest that further investigations are required to understand the project's full potential or the best way for you to achieve what you need. In other cases, we will be ready to agree on a fee.

Fees are usually calculated as a percentage of the net construction cost, excluding all professional fees. Our fees usually range between 10 and 15% of the net construction cost, depending on the budget and degree of service. Contact us for a free quotation of our fee.

Stage 0/1: Appointment

Once the fee, budget and brief are agreed upon, we will prepare a standard RIBA Appointment contract. We can appoint a professional surveyor (if you haven't done one before) on your behalf to survey the house and prepare drawings, which we will develop into a 3D model. Together with the client, we will make the best possible financial and pragmatic case through sketches, cost analysis and layout options. We will invite other consultants' (such as structural engineers) preliminary inputs if necessary. We can arrange technical investigations where required for a better site understanding while sketching out a programme.

Stage 2: Preliminary Design

The preliminary design stages are among the most exciting moments of the full project. We will work together on finding the right balance between your aspirations and all the constraints by clarifying your ambitions in terms of design, space, and sustainability.

We always provide at least three layout options for every project: this encourages the clients and us to explore alternative ideas and deliver precious insights. Slowly but surely, the design theme and narrative for the project will emerge from the collaborative conversations with the clients on the sketches and models, and references to other projects or to clients' past experiences.

The chosen concept will navigate all the future choices and provide a more solid ground for the project's development. The final design brief should reflect your aspirations and provide you (and your family) with a home that adds value and improves your quality of life.

In some cases - especially for the most ambitious projects - we will approach the Local Planning Department to initiate a conversation.

Stage 3: Final Design

The final design stage is when we develop the concept and brief into a complete building, with a character, materials, and precisely defined spaces. We will look more closely at your everyday life (current and future) to design around your needs and habits. We will carefully unpack the complex choice of materials, with all their ecological, aesthetic, and atmospheric implications. The bones and muscles of the house will also need definition: the structural strategy, sustainability, heating and hot water, water management, and perhaps energy generation solutions will all need to fit a coherent and efficient design.

By then, we will be ready to submit a planning application to the council and proceed to the detailed design. We will approach Building Control and coordinate all the inputs from the structural engineer, resolve the party wall matters together and much more.

Stage 4: Technical Design

During this stage, we will prepare details and specifications for the entire project. Roofs, walls, floors, ceilings, doors, and all finishes will be assembled on our drawings to show what you want to achieve clearly. We will pre-select suppliers that we think will be crucial to the success of the building, especially the materials that require a longer lead time.

When all the information is orderly coordinated, a list of potential, recommended contractors will receive our invitation to provide their interest and quotation. We will review and compare their tender returns, advise on strategies to save money and time if possible. A construction contract will be signed between yourself and the appointed builder to kick-start the construction process. Don't worry about the clauses and regulations, we will assist you to keep you informed about all you should know as an employer.

Stage 5: Construction

During this stage, we will prepare details and specifications for the entire project. Roofs, walls, floors, ceilings, doors, and all finishes will be assembled on our drawings to show what you want to achieve clearly. We will pre-select suppliers that we think will be crucial to the success of the building, especially the materials that require a longer lead time.

When all the information is orderly coordinated, a list of potential, recommended contractors will receive our invitation to provide their interest and quotation. We will review and compare their tender returns, advise on strategies to save money and time if possible. A construction contract will be signed between yourself and the appointed builder to kick-start the construction process. Don't worry about the clauses and regulations, we will assist you to keep you informed about all you should know as an employer.

Stage 6: Handover

After completion, there will be a time when you adapt to the new house, and the house adapts to the works. There might be some snagging, which we will follow up and to be rectified by the builder. You will receive a set of information (eg. as built drawings, operational manual) on how things work, along with the certificate of completion and final certificate approved by Building Control. We will usually arrange for professional photos session of the finished work. We will decide together whether to submit the project for awards and publications!



Our Fee

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Most of the projects that we complete are supported by a Full Architectural Service as defined by the RIBA Plan of Work. We will sometimes undertake limited design tasks, site assessment or technical assistance for a lump sum or hourly rate fee.

Three Levels of Service

Not all clients or projects require the same level of effort. Therefore, we offer three degrees of service.

[1] Basic level is ideal for experienced clients, usually property developers. We provide drawings up to a reasonable level of detail, allowing approval from Building Control. We will also attend site visits to check and advise on the project's progress.

[2] Standard Level is supported by a Full Architectural Service Contract defined by the RIBA Plan of Work. It includes general architectural services and will provide the ideal support during all stages of the design and construction processes. Compared to the Outstanding Design Service described below, the clients will be more involved in the detailed process of choosing and ordering finishes and some aspects of the relationship with the builder.

[3] Outstanding Design Service is dedicated to working on projects with a wider spectrum of ambition and more invested time with our clients. The outcomes aimed to be exceptionally unique by working closely with our consultants and clients, placing more effort into the design and project management process. We commit to delivering more than functional requirements but also strive for excellence that will add value to the property. Examples such as The Sponge and House for A Cellist are great successes as award-winning projects that are inspiring and unconventional.

Percentage Benchmark

Fees are always calculated in terms of the amount of work required, and our most popular way of calculating the final fee is as a percentage of construction cost. This method allows adapting the fees to the dynamics of the projects, subject to the volatility in the construction industry. Having a percentage reference avoids the need to review the fees at every stage. The following scale helps us calculate Standard Service fees in relation to the net construction cost.

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|-----|----|------------|
| 18% | at | £50,000 |
| 15% | at | £100,000 |
| 13% | at | £250,000 |
| 11% | at | £500,000 |
| 10% | at | £1,000,000 |
| 9% | at | £2,000,000 |

An additional 1-2% should be added for works to Listed Buildings, depending on the complexity of the services required.

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