



lapd Architect's Graven Hill Self Build Checklist

We have sat down here at lapd Architects and pooled our knowledge about Graven Hill processes and self build journeys to create a checklist for all self builders (and specifically those who are thinking about purchasing a plot at Graven Hill). This list isn't exhaustive, but it will help you to think about some of the key decisions that you will encounter along your self build journey. We believe that the best way to self build your dream home is to work with a knowledgeable self build Architect that you trust. Our hope is that this checklist benefits all kinds of self builders.

Preparation before Concept Design

The longest period of any self build is the point from which you begin to think about the possibility of your dream self build to when you first meet an architect. This part of the journey can take anywhere from a year to a few decades. This checklist is a good starting point for making sure you are thinking about all aspects of your self build up until deciding to commit to a Graven Hill plot and work with an Architect you can trust to guide you along your self build journey. You only self build once. Make sure it is a home that works for you and your life.

Design: your life and your plot

- △ Be ambitious at the beginning, everything will be tempered and tested throughout the design stage and cost control stage
- △ Create a collage book
- △ Create a Pinterest board
- △ Read magazines for inspiration, such as **Build It Magazine**
- △ Read **design and self build blogs**
- △ Think about must-haves and would-likes
- △ Look for ideas about buildings you like and home styles you think would work for you
- △ Your ideas don't all have to be buildings: they could be crockery, paintings etc. – your architects will worry about specifics
- △ Visit the **Self-build Education House at Graven Hill**
- △ Think about how you will live in your home: what are your habits?
- △ What are the busiest times in your schedule?
- △ What gets in the way of you having that valuable family time/ me time?
- △ Do you normally relax in the kitchen or in the living room?



- △ Consider Indoor-outdoor flexible living space such as bi-folds, sliding panels and level thresholds
- △ Think about outdoor kitchens, outdoor lighting and seasonal design features
- △ Consider how to best use natural daylight and sun paths to your advantage
- △ Think about what you want from a plot when choosing which one to reserve
- △ Check the plot passports of the plot you are thinking of buying
- △ Visit Graven Hill and talk to their team at the Plot Shop
- △ Does your plot slope and will this affect your build?
- △ Where will the sun rise and where will it set in relation to your plot?
- △ Are you nestled between other plots or will you find windy days particularly affect you?
- △ Where is your plot's nicest focus points/ features for a view?
- △ Think about how you will build your home. Work with flexible Architects who are comfortable with all procurement routes and build technologies
- △ Remember: this stage is not an exact science, **working with an architect** who can design around your life will ensure that all these things and more are taken into account

Costs: financial and non-financial

- △ Think about how you will budget for your home
- △ Engage with mortgage advisors
- △ Use **Build Store** as a useful financial resource
- △ Remember that **lapd Architects offer a cost plan**
- △ Your realistic budget should include: build cost, golden brick cost, professional fees, other consultant fees, landscaping costs, contingency money, acknowledgement of future running costs
- △ Consider long term running costs, can you lump this in with your main mortgage?
- △ Running costs, after the initial hit of the front end expenditure, are especially important for people in the later years of life
- △ Future proofing: running costs, sustainability, having the option to create a downstairs bedroom in the future
- △ If you are at work all day maybe an electric heating system would suffice?
- △ Don't just think spec, think application.
- △ How sustainable will your home be? Passivhaus or a fabric first approach?
- △ Read our **simple guide to sustainability**





Architects: a guide you can trust

- △ Speak to an architect. lapd Architects **offer a free initial consultation**
- △ Are your architects listening to you?
- △ Are they affordable (relative to the expense of self building and the expertise they offer)?
- △ Remember architects are there to help you and guide you toward your finished dream home
- △ You should be confident that your architect can deliver great design, which is ultimately the whole point of self building your own home
- △ Your architect will also mediate between other professionals, such as Structural Engineers and Contractors
- △ lapd Architects offer cost control, are your architects thinking realistically?
- △ Architects should be skilled and knowledgeable in technical design, sustainability and procurement
- △ Do they have expertise and experience at Graven Hill specifically? Graven Hill is not the same as self building elsewhere. **lapd Architects have extensive knowledge concerning Graven Hill.**
- △ Graven Hill will give you a massive programme with loads of information – don't be overwhelmed, work with professionals who know the process
- △ lapd can guide you through Graven Hill processes without feeling rushed
- △ As soon as you commit to a plot your clock starts ticking, so make sure to commit to an architect at this point as well so that as much time as possible can be spent focussing on design and cost control.
- △ Remember that changing things further down the line will be costly in terms of time and money.



Plot Passport and Golden Brick

Some of the first major milestones along your Graven Hill self build journey will be getting planning approval, something that is called 'Plot Passport' in Graven Hill language, and sorting out your VAT exempt 'Golden Brick' price (basically receiving your plot from Graven Hill so that you can begin your self build). Here are some of the main points to keep in mind for this stage of the self build process. Remember, the technicalities here can only be properly navigated by a professional who understands the Graven Hill processes. Make sure you are comfortable with the architect you have chosen to guide you through the process so that they can shed light on the process and keep you in control.

Your Plot and Your Plot Passport

- △ Graven Hill will give you a programme, **but your designer will help you navigate it**
- △ Make sure you are spending enough time at the beginning to get your design locked in, it is not easy to change your design past this point
- △ Read through your Plot Passport before you buy a plot, but also remind yourself as you enter the design stage. Your architect will help you to pick up on the key parts of the plot passport, but here are the main things to keep an eye out for
- △ Remember each plot passport is unique so read it carefully
- △ Check the foundation types
- △ Check what materials you can use and what the design code is
- △ Check the rules on the height of the building (this can vary between different parts of the same plot, so watch out for that)
- △ Check the maximum area you're allowed to build (this also affects the maximum basement size you can have)
- △ Check what landscaping you might need
- △ Check the invert levels for the drains
- △ Remember about bin stores and bike stores as well
- △ Your architect will take the time to carefully check through your plot passport and relay back to you the most important points that might affect your particular self build
- △ Remember that a plot passport is designed to speed up planning, so instead of the usual 8 weeks it should be signed off in 4 weeks, if you can comply with it
- △ You can, in some cases, go beyond plot passport specifications by doing a reserved matters application (this is treated like a normal planning application). A good example might be widening the driveway.



Golden Brick

- △ The main reason behind Golden Brick is to allow Graven Hill to sell you a plot without incurring VAT. They do this by handing over your plot to you with part of your home built, up to 'Golden Brick' (or in technical jargon, DPC level which is two bricks up from ground level)
- △ Remember that Graven Hill are responsible for all these works up to this point and will use their own engineers, but your designer needs to coordinate with them
- △ Keep in mind that if you change your mind on certain factors after this point, there might be additional costs if you have to go back through the Golden Brick design process
- △ You will find out the Golden Brick price just before you exchange and after Graven Hill has completed all of their technical work
- △ Don't worry – your architect will help you to think about the right things at the right time
- △ lapd Architects set out your programme with clear deadlines for when various key events need to happen to keep in line with Graven Hill's expectations

Exchange and Building On-Site

The final stretch, and one of the most exciting parts of the self build journey, is seeing your design come to life on site. The procurement route you decide to go down will be one of the biggest factors in how you navigate this part of the self build. Make sure that your architect can filter the noise and is keeping you informed so that you can be involved with important decisions on site. With a good Architect you can be in control throughout the build rather than a passenger. Here are some key things to be thinking about as you start to consider the on-site build.

Exchanging with Graven Hill and choosing Build Methods

- △ Once the price has been confirmed, the Golden Brickworks will then be carried out on site within 12 weeks. After this the plot and site are handed over to you to start your above Golden Brick construction with your chosen contractors
- △ By this point you should have considered what build method you want to use. Your architect should be able to help you to pick what procurement route is best for you.





- △ Option 1, traditional procurement: making one payment to one company. You hold a retention sum as incentive for your contractor to complete the works to an appropriate standard
- △ Option 2, full self build: responsibility for the construction will lie with different trades who carried out the work. This can mean it's difficult to pin down who's responsible for what (for example, a settlement crack in the wall – decorator blames plasterer who blames wall builder who blames foundations). A main contractor route stops this happening as the blame stops with them. You are also responsible for health and safety and scheduling sub-contractors which is a large time commitment. If you do go this route then you will need someone to help you manage the site.
- △ Option 3, Design and Build: it's meant to be a fixed price from day one. Negatives are that you are limited on design options and all your eggs are in one basket, with little choice on how it's built. Architects can work with these systems to push them to their limits and get the best possible designs out of them.

Building on Site

- △ lapd Architects offer on-site services
- △ We can fully project manage your self build
- △ We can also offer site intervention, not offering the full administrative contract admin service but giving you and your builder reassurance that we are still involved
- △ Make sure that you allow yourself more time than you think you will need to allow yourself once your build goes on site. It is more time consuming than you think.

If you would like to find out more about our self build Architect services, or have any questions regarding self build, at Graven Hill or elsewhere, then do not hesitate to get in touch.

- △ **Call: 01865 407 722**
- △ **Email: enquiry@lapdarchitects.co.uk**
- △ **Visit: www.lapdarchitects.co.uk**

