

Buyer's Guide - 12 Essential Tips

What to know before
building with oak
frame



nàdar
— oak —





Helping you build the framework for a successful project

It's important to do thorough research before embarking on any building or home-improvement project. Our Buyer's Guide offers insightful advice and important information about the top 12 things you should know (and ask) before committing to a building contractor or oak-frame specialist company. Call us today to receive a complimentary consultation.

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Be in the Know

Make sure you unearth the specifics with the company you're looking to hire. Gather all the facts and quiz them on these 12 key points:

1. The Offering & The Specifics
2. Reputation & Referrals
3. Technical Knowledge of Oak Frame
4. Standard of Finishes
5. Glazing, Doors & Windows
6. Integrity & Trust
7. Customer Service
8. Management of Change & Communication
9. Interior Design & Lighting Plans
10. Examine the Costs - What's Included?
11. Analyse the Added Property Value
12. Verify Insurances & Check the T&C's

1. The Offering & The Specifics

What does the company specifically provide?

The majority of oak-frame companies only provide the oak framework leaving you to manage the rest of the design & building work. If they say they can provide 'A, B & C', ask to see examples of this. Check exactly what is included / excluded in their services and to what level of specification - for example:

- architectural & structural fees • planning fees**
- building regulations fees • site clearance • groundwork**
- structural changes • doors & windows • internal & external finishes • heating & electrical requirements**
- fixtures & fittings • decoration & more...**

Don't be fooled by posh brochures and expensive advertising! It doesn't necessarily mean they have the knowledge, drive and level of care required to properly manage your build, provide an enjoyable experience and deliver results you can live with for years. Some larger companies promise nationwide service, however, this can sometimes mean they employ subcontractors they have never worked with before. This soon becomes apparent to the client during the build process and problems can quickly occur. Hiring a local company with local resources will ensure you know 'who & what' you're getting.



2. Reputation & Referrals

Ask for the company's list of client referrals and speak with them personally to get their honest opinion about how their projects went. Questions to ask: Did they deliver on time; were they on budget; were they a pleasure to work with; did they complete items on the snagging list?

3. Technical Knowledge of Oak Frame

If you are speaking to a general building contractor or even an architect - research if they have extensive, proven experience specifically working with oak frame. Employing someone without specialist knowledge of oak-frame craftsmanship can have ill effect. Oak frames are generally made using green oak which will naturally move and twist slightly as the timber dries and ages. This won't become an issue if the build is done in the correct way, by experts, allowing for this movement. You can imagine the results otherwise, so leave it to the specialists who live and breathe oak-frame construction.

4. Standard of Finishes

The phrase "you get what you pay for" is indeed true with oak-frame design & construction. Make sure your level of expectation aligns with the company you are considering to hire. If you want the best quality oak frame beams, gables and trusses with stunning design details - uniquely made for you - sometimes it means paying a little more to receive a higher level of aesthetic thinking & expertise. They should be truly enamoured and engaged with your project and the process of bespoke oak-frame craftsmanship...we love when our carpenters tell their story about out all the tricky bits they overcame and proudly showcase the result of their handywork!

5. Glazing, Doors & Windows

This is extremely important! As mentioned earlier, there are a lot of oak-frame companies existing that only provide the oak frame, and nothing else. This sometimes can mean they might not be as diligent with the frame fabrication as would an oak-frame company which also extends their services into the realm of glazing, doors & windows.

Why is this important? We have been called to fix a number of our competitor's oak-framed projects where the face of the glazed frame doesn't line up; oftentimes the glazing is not considered during the manufacturing process which causes massive problems to properly seal the glazing. Therefore, we would always highly recommend to engage with an oak-frame company which delivers *both* the oak frame *and* the glazing to avoid issues with misalignment. This ensures special care is taken hand-crafting your frames to perfectly fit with the glass. Same applies to doors and windows - it's best to find a company that also will supply the doors and windows & incorporate them in the initial design, instead of adding them as an afterthought.



6. Integrity & Trust

Do you instinctively trust the company and believe that they will work with integrity? Did you feel with you could work well with the person who you met with or spoke to initially? Do you think that it could be an enjoyable working relationship?

7. Customer Service

What level of customer service do you think you deserve? For instance, will they communicate and honour their promise to return a quote, and did they reply back to you within the time frame specified? If they underdeliver, it is usually a good indication of how they could behave once they start your project.

8. Management of Change & Communication

Effective management of change and client communication is the winning formula for building successful business relationships - something that is notoriously mishandled within the construction industry. You should aim to always know where you stand with your budget & build programme and kept apprised of any changes and implications accordingly. Transparent, honest communication is essential. Make sure you ask how your project schedule and payment structures will be organised and handled before committing.

9. Interior Design & Lighting Plans

Does the company involve themselves in the overall visual appeal & interior design details (and do they have the right knowledge and reputable resources to do so?)

Often we come across competitor's projects where the client has a nicely built oak frame, but the look and feel isn't quite right - the living space tends to lack light and is generally missing out on the benefits of having a cohesive interior design plan. This happens because either the oak-frame company, the builder, or potentially even the architect might not possess the depth of experience to truly know which materials properly, and effectively, complement the oak frame. You want a stunning space singing with light and richness of character - uniquely designed for you.

We like to tell our clients, "It's not **just** about the oak frame - it's about the fine details, too." We take great care in creating the right lighting and interior design plan for maximum aesthetic appeal. This is the key to great oak-frame design (often overlooked by other companies) and should be determined in the early stages of your project's design planning process.



10. Examine the Costs - What's Included?

If you've received a quotation, be sure to double-check the figures.

VAT: does your quotation include or exclude it? We advise not to engage with companies who don't charge VAT (when it's applicable or required) or are asking for payment in cash; this could possibly mean they are either operating illegally (in which case, any guarantees and insurances may be invalid) or they are turning over less than £90K per annum (in which case yours could be their first and only build of the year.)

PAYMENT SCHEDULES & TERMS: do they offer pre-agreed structured payment terms? Be sure to receive this information before-hand to ensure there are no nasty surprises when it comes time for payment.

11. Analyse the Added Property Value

Will the build increase the value of your property in excess of their cost? Also question the amount of oak specified. Subtle, restrained design is good design; avoiding being too heavy-handed with the quantity of oak means more mileage for your building budget (hurray!) and results in a much more eye-pleasing effect to complement light and airy living spaces.

12. Verify Insurances & Check the T&C's

Make sure the company you are considering hiring has the insurance policies to the correct financial level. And lastly, always read the fine print. If you are unsure of something you've read in the contract, be sure to call and ask for it to be explained. A great oak-frame design & construction company will always be happy to do so.



Ready to take the next step?

Speak to us about your project ideas (it's in our nature to offer free oak frame advice!)

You'll receive a complimentary initial consultation and free cost estimate when you contact us today:

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