JNGORE
CONSULTANTS AND ARCHITECTS

Home Building Checklist for Kenya

From land to handover: what to check at every stage

A good house starts long before the first brick is laid. Use this checklist to plan your project in order, tick each item as you go, and take it with you to your first meeting with an architect.

1 Confirm the land

- [ ] Do an official search at the land registry to confirm who owns the plot, and that the title matches the seller's documents.
- [ ] Check for charges, caveats, disputes or restrictions registered against the title.
- [ ] Have a licensed surveyor confirm the boundaries and beacons on the ground.
- [ ] Ask the county planning office what the plot is zoned for and what you are allowed to build.
- [ ] Look at access, drainage, slope, soil and flood risk, and whether water and power are nearby.

2 Define your brief and budget

- [ ] List your must-haves: bedrooms, bathrooms, parking, home office, rental units, room to extend later.
- [ ] Decide who will live in the house today and in ten years.
- [ ] Set a total budget that covers design, approvals, construction, finishes, landscaping and furniture.
- [ ] Keep a contingency allowance for the unexpected. Many owners set aside around 10 percent.
- [ ] Collect photos of houses and finishes you like, so your architect can see your taste.

3 Design and drawings

- [ ] Appoint a registered architect and agree the scope and fees in writing.
- [ ] Review the concept design (plans, elevations, 3D images) and give feedback before it is fixed.
- [ ] Make sure you receive a full set: architectural, structural and services (water, electrical) drawings.
- [ ] Ask for a bill of quantities so contractors price the same work and quotes can be compared fairly.

4 Approvals

- [ ] Submit the building plans to your county for approval before any construction starts.
- [ ] Ask whether your project needs environmental approval (NEMA) or other permits for its size and location.
- [ ] Ask whether your project must be registered with the National Construction Authority (NCA).
- [ ] Keep copies of every approval and permit. You will need them at completion.

5 Choose your contractor

- [ ] Check that the contractor is registered with the NCA.
- [ ] Ask for references and visit at least one finished or ongoing project.
- [ ] Compare itemised quotes against the bill of quantities, not just the total price.
- [ ] Sign a written contract with a clear timeline, payment stages, defects period and who pays for delays.
- [ ] Confirm the contractor has insurance for workers and for the works.

6 During construction

- [ ] Have your architect or a site supervisor inspect each key stage before it is covered: foundation, slab, walls, roof.
- [ ] Pay against certified, completed work rather than paying large sums upfront.
- [ ] Put every change, and its cost, in writing before the work is done.
- [ ] Test critical materials such as concrete and steel, and keep the records.
- [ ] Take dated photos of the work as it progresses.

7 Handover and moving in

- [ ] Walk the house with your architect and write a snagging list of every defect to be fixed.
- [ ] Hold back the final payment until the snagging items are done.
- [ ] Obtain the completion or occupation certificate where your county requires one.
- [ ] Collect the as-built drawings, warranties and manuals for equipment and finishes.
- [ ] Arrange your water, electricity and internet connections in your name.

Five questions to ask your architect

- [ ] What is included in your fee, and what would cost extra?
- [ ] How many design revisions are included?
- [ ] Do you prepare and submit the county approval drawings?
- [ ] Can you supervise construction, and how often will you visit the site?
- [ ] Can I see a similar project you have designed or built?

Planning a project?

Jngore Consultants and Architects designs homes, apartments, commercial buildings and landscapes across Kenya. Tell us about your plot and your budget and we will advise on the best way forward. Call or WhatsApp +254 791 407 280, or visit www.jngorearchitects.com.

This checklist is general guidance. Requirements differ between counties and projects, so confirm the details with your architect and the relevant authorities before you build.