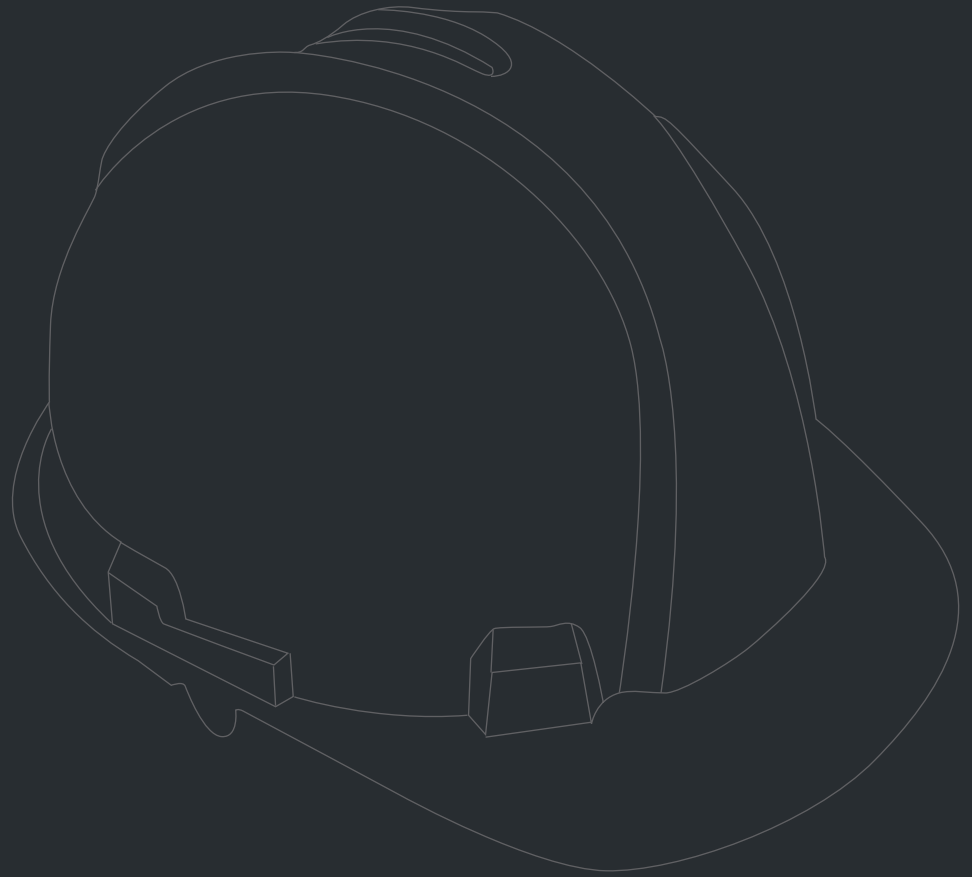




CHOOSING A CONTRACTOR

9 TOP TIPS TO CONSIDER.





Which contractor to use for your construction project can be the most important decision you'll make. If you aren't particularly experienced - this may be your first project - you'll benefit from hearing from industry experts on what to look out for, some vital points to consider, and the right questions to ask.

Here's what the team at BPAS Architects advises you do, to ensure you choose the best man or woman for the job.

Do extremely thorough research

Imagine you're recruiting someone into your company for an extremely crucial role. You would never do this without reviewing the CVs of suitable candidates, interviewing them and then checking their references. The same applies to choosing a contractor for your important construction project.

Start to gather recommendations from people you trust - finding out what experience each contractor has, where they've built, and the quality and scale of the buildings. Once you've narrowed it down to a handful of options, approach each one and ask them for a portfolio of work so you can get a feel for their style.

It's also vital to gather some references for each contractor. You should call each reference and ask them for their feedback on whether the project was completed on time and to budget, and if they experienced any particular problems with that contractor.

It's also worth actually visiting some of the building projects they've been involved in, to ascertain the quality. While the contractor might only show you his or her best work, it will still give you an indication of their capability, plus provide a reference for quality.



Get a basic bill of quantities or schedule of rates

You need to understand exactly what is included in each quote or cost estimate provided. What is a bill of quantities? It's a measure of the amount of materials that the building will need in order to be constructed and it includes a detailed statement of work, prices, dimensions, and other details. Once priced by all the contractors, these "priced bills" are what you use to compare the tender submissions by various contractors.

Where a bill of quantities isn't available, you should ask a contractor for a schedule of rates that will form part of the contract agreement. This protects you if any changes happen during the construction process, as the prices for certain items were already agreed upfront and cannot be argued.



03

What is a contractor's offered programme (timeline)?

Different contractors have different staff compliments which might increase or decrease the overall timeframe in which the building can be built. It's important to consider the timeframe as this might have a financial implication for you, as well as be important for other planning purposes.

04

Compare

Now's the time to compare pricing and what each quote includes. Be wary of the cheapest tender though - analyse each one and find a balance between cost versus quality.



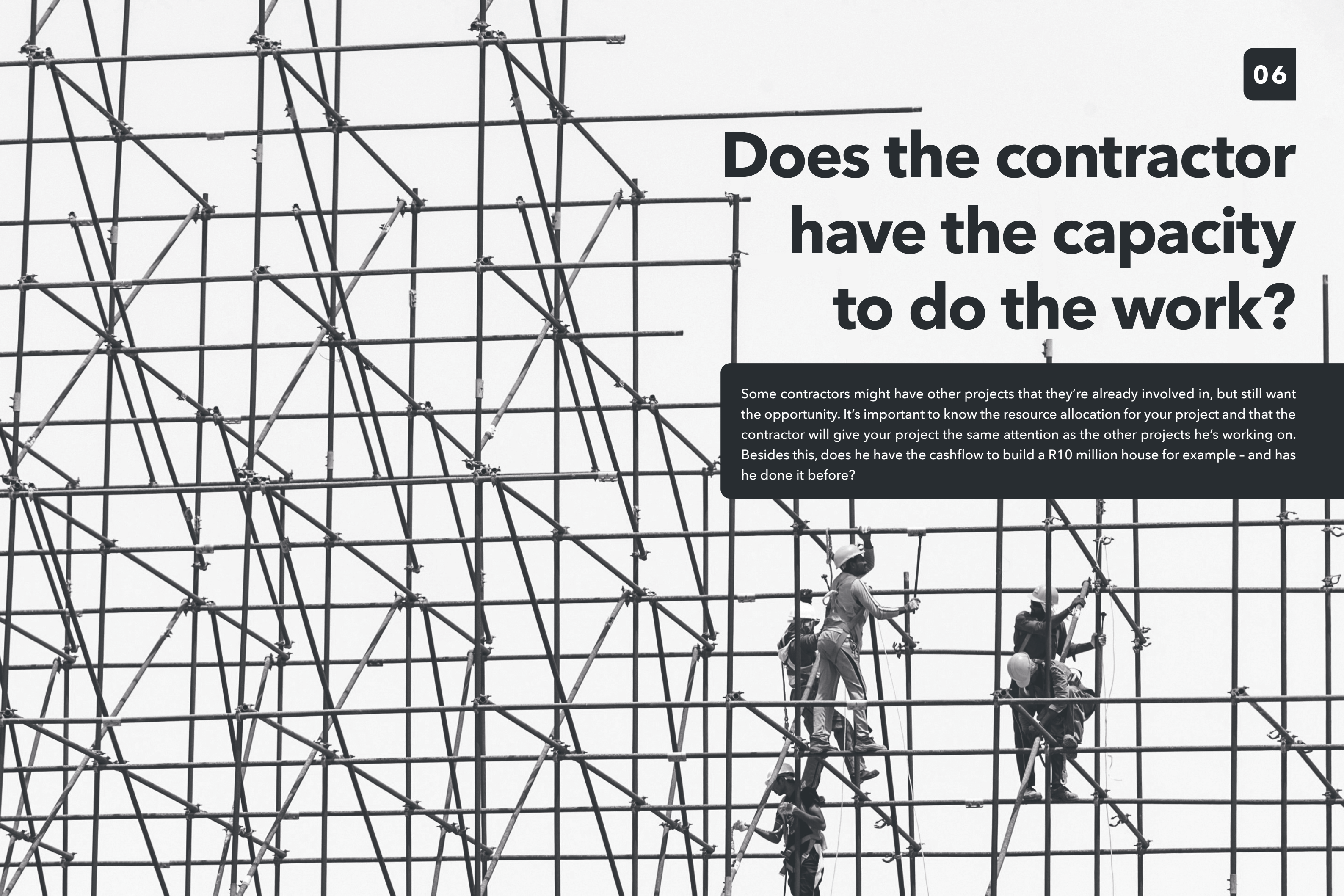
Ask site-specific questions, & then cross-reference

Besides interrogating any costs you're unsure of (or don't understand), ask each of the contractors if they can point out any potential problems, like if you're building against a mountain or near a river, where there may be lots of moisture, or the ground is unstable. If one contractor brings up an issue, ask the other one for their thoughts on that particular issue. Are they trying to increase costs unnecessarily or is this a real issue that requires additional costs? A construction site is the easiest place for money to go missing, so you need to be proactive about checking up on these sorts of items.



Does the contractor have the capacity to do the work?

Some contractors might have other projects that they're already involved in, but still want the opportunity. It's important to know the resource allocation for your project and that the contractor will give your project the same attention as the other projects he's working on. Besides this, does he have the cashflow to build a R10 million house for example - and has he done it before?



07

Is a site agent appointed?

Where contractors have multiple sites, it's important to know who will supervise site activities and lead your specific site. You also need to check up on that particular person and get references for past work.

08

Involve the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC)

It's important to establish if the contractor is registered with the NHBRC and Master Builders Association for example - so ask them for their registration numbers for these. This will help you establish the credibility of each contractor.

09

What building contract is used and signed by both parties?

Once you've made a decision, you need to get a contract drawn up. Different kinds of building contracts exist to cater for the scale and nature of that specific project. Contracts define terms for the building process and are essential in order to address project risk during the construction phase, so you mustn't take shortcuts on these.

Choosing a contractor?

As experienced, innovative architects,
we can help convert your vision
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