

If Brexit hits the economy, the architecture profession is in real trouble

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Even if the government gives architects everything the RIBA has demanded, if [Brexit](#) adversely affects clients then the profession will suffer, says *David Green* of Belsize Architects

Over 18 months have passed since the referendum. And we are just a year away from the date the government chose for the UK to leave the EU. Yet we have no real information as to what will actually happen or when; nor do we seem likely to for some time. So what does this mean for architects? And the construction industry more widely?

After a slow start, the RIBA has developed [a detailed set of demands](#) it expects the government to deliver in the negotiations. Architects need the ability to sell their services into the EU; the mutual recognition of qualifications needs to be preserved; relevant standards need to be kept the same; and, most of all, there needs to be access to talent, with the right immigration rules.

So far, there is no certainty that the government will even ask for these things, still less achieve them. Some of the things it has said about leaving the single market and preserving the option to diverge standards in the field of services appear not very supportive of the aims architects have expressed. And that is before the EU27 have said what their counter conditions are going to be.

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But the conditions applying specifically to architects are not the main issue affecting the profession. The ability to supply architectural services is a necessary condition for the profession to flourish, but it is not sufficient. The really critical factor will be what Brexit does to the demand for architectural services from its clients. Will domestic clients continue to have resources to commission architects on the same scale as in the past? Reports, including from the CBI, suggest that very many sectors of the economy have no idea what impact Brexit will have on them, what it will do to costs, whether their business models will remain viable, what the impact will be on their finances or how they will respond to such impact. Such forecasts as there are point to hits both to the economy and to public sector finances.

So, as well as seeking the right outcomes for their own narrower professional requirements, architects have an even more powerful interest, irrespective of their own direct involvement with the EU27, in the fate of their customers, actual and potential. Will their customers' financial circumstances and prospects be such that they will continue to invest in buildings?

What should architects do? The single most important thing is to [let their own MP know](#) that the wisdom of their decisions in Parliament in the coming months as they affect the economic prospects of architects' potential clients is a critical concern, and how architects judge those decisions will help determine their re-election prospects.

David Green is director of Belsize Architects

Readers' comments (1)

- [Robert Wakeham](#) 22 February, 2018 12:16 pm

Just listening to the director of Europoort Rotterdam - on BBC R4 'Today' this morning - spelling out the extra costs to trade with Britain post-Brexit was very sobering, and the chickens seem to be flying home to roost in increasing number, all over the place.
