

# 4 Tell the story

You can now start to set out the fundamentals of your new space. Inside, how will your family move about it, how will it change during time and seasons, what parts do you want to sit in, look out of, where does the light come from, what does it feel like? Outside, how does it react to its site and respond to its setting. Slowly the answer will evolve. And then you need to ask permission to build it...

## PLANNING PERMISSION

Speak to the local planning department as early as possible, this can be done through an architect or directly. Be aware that different authorities do things differently, for example Sheffield City Council has a pre-application process before full planning application. This does have a fee attached, but this is good as you generally get a timely and detailed response that will help ease the way to a successful planning approval. Other local authorities either offer free pre-application advice (but you may have to wait a long time) or will not offer pre-application advice for small projects.

The planning application requires a number of forms and drawings to be submitted which is dictated by the planning department. But you should always do more. Tell your story, how and why has your house been designed as it has? Why are you excited by it? How beautiful will it be and how it will actually improve the site it is on? Make sure the planner is as excited as you by the end of it!

## TIPS AND LINKS:

- Sometimes it can be about asking the right questions and building a case. For example a straw bale house project Thread have worked on, the clients had initially submitted a pre-application enquiry which came back unsuccessful. Through listening to the planner's concerns and helping the planners understand the straw bale construction method planning permission has now been granted.
- Sometimes it is about compromise. A client of Thread recalled that she had to compromise on the colour of brickwork for a porch addition in order to achieve a successful application and a happy compromise. She stressed you need to express why you want to do what you want to do and achieve a happy compromise.
- Gaining planning permission in a Conservation Area is possible. In a conservation area, the conservation officer will also be involved. This can be tricky and frustrating for some. However, the Cohousing group of Shirle Hill have been granted permission for five new build houses in a conservation area. They went through the local pre-application process and found the process really helpful. They had to make a case for gardens and parking, but told their story and successfully achieved planning permission.

