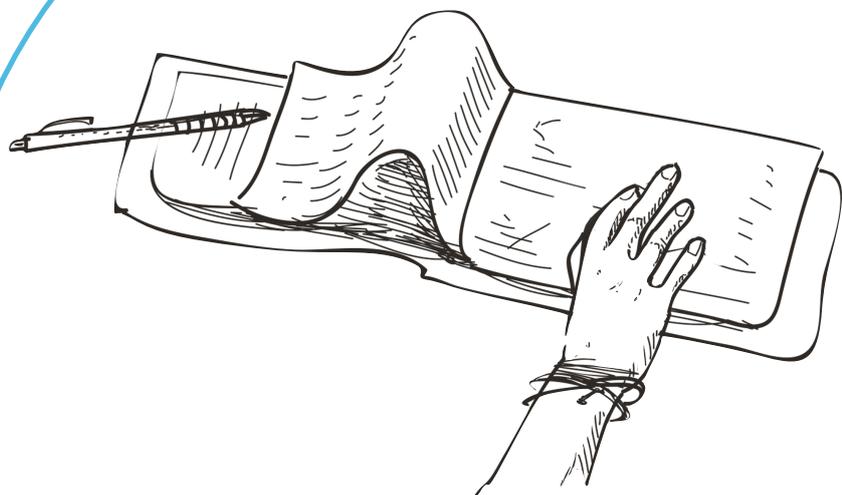


ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT IDEAS





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From FIRST IN ARCHITECTURE

To develop an architectural concept we must first gather a set of information before we can start any sort of design process. We can categorise these initial findings into three distinct areas:

- Site
- Building Requirements
- Building Type

Site:

Before we can start to design a scheme we must carry out a thorough site analysis in order to understand the location and surrounding context of where our project is situated. Every building must be designed to reflect and complement the site it is on and the area that surrounds it. I am not suggesting that it must blend into the site, but it must be aware of the context.

We can use our site analysis findings to develop architectural concepts and ideas. We list some of these ideas below. Read on.

Building Requirements:

The next stage of the process is to understand the requirements of our building. This is where we must communicate with the client to understand their needs and what the demands of the building will be. You cannot design a building if you don't know what it will be used for, or who will use it. You can read our article on Developing the Design Brief [here](#).

Once we have developed a solid understanding of the requirements of our building, we can use this data to help inform our architectural concept development. We list some ideas for this below.

Building Type:

This relates to the type of building that we are designing. It is a hospital, a museum, a home? This is where we collect information to better understand the type of building we are designing, look at precedent studies and gain a thorough and informed understanding of the project. What problems are we trying to solve for the client and the building users? What kind of structure is suited to this building type?

Developing the concept

All of this information that we have collected will help inspire and guide us towards developing an architectural concept or a seed idea that will bring our design forward. You are setting the foundations of the project by carrying out thorough research, only to build on your ideas and develop your concepts based on these early stages. The following ideas are intended to serve as thinking points, things for you to consider about your project and questions to ask in order to develop your concepts.

During your concept development stage, it is a good idea to keep sketching. Explore your ideas through concept sketches, concept models, and anything else that will help you be more

creative and expand your thinking. Don't come up with your first single idea and stick with it. Try out many other ideas before settling on one, even if you go back to the first! Keep experimenting!

I hope that this helps!

Developing the concept from the site

In this section we are turning to our site to inform us, and develop concept ideas. We are reacting to the constraints or the benefits of the site and using these to solve design problems.

Views

Does the site have views that should be maximised? Can the design make a play on those views and reveal them as the user moves through the building. Will some aspects of the building require a view, while others should be more shielded? If there are no views, can inward views be created instead?

Light

What is the light like on the site? Is it open and bright or overshadowed and dark? Could the light be something that is developed and interwoven into the design?

Topography

What is the site like in terms of levels and layout. Is there a strong topography that should be developed into the design. Does the topography dictate areas of the site that can and can't be built on? Are some parts of the site more exposed than others? Will this have an impact on the orientation of the building? Is the site steep or flat?

Vernacular of the location

Can your concept be developed based on the existing building vernacular in the area? Are you looking to reflect the style in your design or challenge the existing style? Perhaps you want to put a more modern twist on the existing context. Fully understanding the buildings in their context and developing your research can create exciting opportunities to create concepts based on the progression of the surrounding buildings.

History

If your site is in a historical area or perhaps has listed buildings nearby, this may be something you would like to consider and develop. Having a strong concept that is based around the past influences of your site can create interesting journeys not only through your design but the final project itself. Certainly worth considering.

Natural features

Some sites will have natural features such as trees, rivers, rocky landscapes, vegetation, cliffs, valleys, and much more. Think about how these natural features can inform your design or even become a part of it.

Existing Structures

Are there existing structures on the site or around the site that might influence your design decisions? What are the existing structures used for? Consider how the current use of the site and its area might be developed into your concept.

Orientation

How important is the orientation of your building? Obviously we always think of our sun path and aim to orientate the building as best we can according to the sun path. However, is there anything else that might dictate a certain orientation to the building? If we are looking at a large site, is there a natural flow of visitors to the site? Is there a natural axis to the site? Or do we want to change that axis? Considering how the proposed building is positioned on the site creates an interesting concept.

Cultural context

Does the context of the surrounding society have an influence on our design? What are the cultural aspects of the locality? Will this information form part of your concept as you move your design forward?

Weather

How does the weather affect our site? Is the site exposed to the elements and need to be protected? How much shelter needs to be provided? Do we want to turn the building away from strong prevailing winds? What if the winds come from the same direction that has the best view? How can we develop a concept that serves all the solutions we look to create?

Developing the concept from the building requirements

In this section we look at requirements of the building to inform our concept. This is looking at what the client or end user wants and needs out of the building and how we will approach these design problems.

Function First

Is our priority to nail the function of the building over the form? Is our key goal and concept to deliver on the requirements of the building before considering the overall form? How important is the form vs the function of the building?

Use

What is the building going to be used for? How much space is required? Will the building always have one use or will it change over time? Can our concept reflect the end user of the building?

Who?

Who is going to use the building? How often? A home is very specific to and personal to a small group of people who are using the building on a daily basis. A museum is used by many people who may only visit for a couple of hours, once. These different building users may be key to how you develop your design and in turn your architectural concept.

Privacy - public spaces vs private

How will the building be used? Will it need private and public spaces? How will this be achieved? This is dependent on the building type and the site - but a concept can be developed based on how the different spaces differ in their privacy and how they are connected.

Space

This is more based around specifics of requirements. For example, if you are designing a new home for a client, they may be very specific in how many rooms they would like and what size those rooms need to be. It is your task to consider how those spaces will interact, connect, and feel. In a museum design, there may be specific requirements for displaying exhibits, how can you fulfil this criteria?

Movement

How will the building user move through the building? Will you create a journey in your design to pull the visitor through the building? How will you make the experiences differ as the user passes through the different spaces? How will you connect the spaces? How will the visitors flow? A home will have a very different journey to a hospital, or a museum or school - how can you draw from these differences?

Developing the concept from the building type

In this section we will think specifically about the type of building we are designing and how our concepts may develop from this information.

Precedent Study

When we are working on a design project we can draw from precedent studies to inform our designs. A precedent can communicate a meaning to your design, and be used as an idea or guide. The precedent study can be a starting point for your own concept or seed idea. (See Precedent Study article)

Materials

Perhaps we want to approach our design looking at the materials of the structure as a part of our early concept? Does this building type naturally lend itself to a type of material? What might you be trying to achieve by using a particular material? Local materials, comfort, familiarity? Consider how material choice will affect the aesthetics of your design and the experience for the building user.

Structural strategy

Does this building type have a particular structure that it is most suited to? Will this inform your concept? Perhaps it is a grid form, cantilever, natural organic shapes? Solid structures like concrete and masonry, or lightweight like glass?

Building form

How are you imagining the building form in 3D? Does the mass of the building reflect the purpose? How will your proposed form impact the building users, the feeling of space? How important is the form when developing your concept?

Traditional or different

Do you want your design to be traditional in the sense of the building type, or do you want it to break the mould and be different from what we normally expect of that type of building? If we want to be different and controversial, why? What is driving your decisions?

Building Type

Are you designing a hospital - consider the practical use for the staff but also the feel for the patients...How can you achieve a feeling of safety and comfort for patients while making sure the spaces are practical and useful for the staff.

Are you designing a school - consider what the building is for the students, teachers and parents... a place of learning, safety, community, development - how do all these elements weave into your concept?

Other architectural concept ideas!

Moving away from the three main areas, I want to take a look at some other ways you may develop your architecture concepts. We covered some of these ideas in a previous architectural concept post, but they are very relevant and worth considering in your design development.

Consider your design philosophy. This is a set of values you use to inform your design. The values could be of the designer, or perhaps a reflection of the design brief, or the context of the site - or indeed a combination of all three.

You could investigate and consider some of the following statements:

artistic vs scientific
rational vs irrational
personal vs private
visual vs non visual
wants vs needs
individual vs society

In terms of design, how to these values work with the design problems you face on this particular project?

ordered vs random
structured vs unstructured
objective vs subjective
one answer vs multiple solutions
creative vs conservative
specific vs general
man vs nature
complexity vs simplicity
design for now vs design for the future
pattered process vs random process

Do you need more help developing your concepts? We have put together a selection of our favourite books for concept development and design process. This list is a must for any architecture student to really start to develop their design thinking and understanding of architectural concepts and the design process.

[Best Books for Architectural Concepts and Design Process](#)

Other posts you might be interested in include:

[The Architectural Design Brief](#)

firstinarchitecture.co.uk

[Architecture Site Analysis Guide](#)

[Architecture Precedent Study and Analysis](#)

[Defining the Parameters of the Architecture Design Project](#)

[Presentation board tips](#)

[How to prepare for your architecture crit](#)

Read the original post "Architectural Concept Ideas" here:
<http://www.firstinarchitecture.co.uk/architectural-concept-ideas/>