

“I REALLY LIKE HELPING PEOPLE
TO GET WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN
LOOKING FOR.”



Interview with Arthur Cutler



Arthur Cutler

Arthur Cutler tells us about why he set up French Plans, his most interesting project and gives his tips for home buyers in France.

Arthur Cutler has been Director of French Plans since its foundation in 2003. During the past 18 years French Plans has managed over 5,000 planning applications and project dossiers across France, for all different types of property. This story takes us from the origins of the company to the current day.

The beginning of French Plans

Like many Britons, Arthur and his family had a dream of living in France, looking to move from England, improve their quality of life and take on a new challenge. So, in December 1991 the Cutlers and their young family moved from Dorset to make the short ferry crossing from the south coast across to Normandy, settling in a small town called Le Bény-Bocage close to Vire in the Manche department.

In those early years, Arthur worked on construction projects, undertaking building work and project management. Then clients started asking him to help them with their planning applications. After a short while demand increased, demonstrating that there clearly was a market for this type of service. In 2001 the Cutlers moved to Brittany and two years later Arthur set up French Plans, initially focusing on his local region. French Plans was born.

Today, the company has a team of architects and planning representatives handling all manner of projects from the North to the South of France: bijou cottages, grand châteaux, cosy city apartments, major renovation projects as well as new build homes.

What has been Arthur's most interesting project?

A few years ago a well-known celebrity contacted French Plans and were keen to spend time in France away from the public eye. Planning permission was required, and also project managing to make improvements to the property. Initially the project was relatively simple and came with a modest budget of around €80,000.

Over the next 5 years, the project developed and grew to be a completely different proposition: a comprehensive renovation, converting a barn into new living accommodation; a cinema; sauna and pool; all carried out with a high level of interior design. The final project cost eventually totalled over a million euros.

What was the most challenging aspect?

Managing the different personalities involved was certainly challenging, Arthur responded, bringing together a team of artisans and dealing with specific planning restrictions and structural issues.

Advice to French home buyers

France continues to be a hugely popular destination for Britons and other nationalities seeking to buy a slice of their French dream. We asked Arthur to give one simple piece of advice to anyone before they bought a property. Arthur said,

“Make sure that you can get planning permission before you sign the contract. If you would not buy the property without planning consent, ensure that you sign nothing without a suspensive condition in the purchase contract.”

What is your view of the French planning system compared to the UK?

In Arthur's view, in France the planning system is more transparent in comparison to the UK. For example, 99% of the time you can find out from the regulations as to whether you will obtain planning consent or not. In general, it is quite prescriptive and there is no real appeal process. Interestingly, this aspect protects both the applicant and the planning authority; it is clear and understandable. Furthermore, there are specific time periods for considering all types of applications – and you do not pay a fee when you apply for permission. This is in comparison to the UK planning system which can take any length of time, allows for planning appeals and requires you to pay a fee at every juncture.

Final words....

Finally, we asked Arthur what he particularly enjoys about working at French Plans:

“When we set out on a project, most of us have a clear idea what we want to achieve. I really like helping people achieve what they are looking for. This includes ensuring that our clients avoid pitfalls, explaining the process in detail and dealing with everything from the outset. It is our job to tell them the facts, the truth if you prefer... and to overcome those challenges whenever we can, so that at the end of the project they can fulfil their dream of living in France.”

Thank you, Arthur.

If you are looking to realise your own plans in France, whether it is a renovation, a new build, an extension or another project, residential or commercial – please get in touch.

Contact:

+33 (0)2 96 36 56 16

enquiries@frenchplans.com

frenchplans.com