

When it comes to extending your home or renovating, many homeowners in Solihull—and across the UK—are drawn to the cheapest quote. It promises savings upfront, but all too often, that bargain turns into a budget blowout as the project unfolds. Why does this happen? Are you really getting a “cheap” deal, or just deferring costs that creep up later?

After 12 years managing and estimating residential projects in the UK, I’ve seen this story too many times. Today, I’ll spell out where these hidden costs come from, why the Solihull price gap is pushing more people to extend rather than move, and what you need to budget carefully for to avoid nasty surprises.

The Solihull Price Gap: Driving Extend, Not Move Decisions

According to the **Office for National Statistics (ONS)**, Solihull housing prices have been climbing steadily. The latest data from the ONS May 2026 local house price breakdown shows average house prices in Solihull significantly outpace the national average. This price gap means many homeowners find moving up the property ladder prohibitively expensive. Instead, they decide to “stay put and improve” by building extensions.

Extending can be a savvy way to add space and value without the upheaval, but it comes with its own financial puzzles. Comparing extension costs versus moving costs clearly reveals why the cheapest quote can be misleading:

Moving Costs That Add No Extra Space

- **Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT):** Depending on the property price, this can add thousands of pounds.
- **Legal and Survey Fees:** You’re looking at £1,000 to £3,000 typically.
- **Estate Agent Fees:** Often 1–3% of the sale price.
- **Moving Costs and Time:** Costly removals, potential temporary accommodation, and disruption.

All these costs contribute to why many Solihull homeowners prefer investing in substantial *extensions* over moving. But that brings us back to the question:

What Drives the Initial ‘Cheap’ Extension Quote Higher Later?

There are several interconnected reasons why the cheapest initial quote ends up looking expensive, often weeks or months into the project.

1. Missing Items in Scope

Cheapest quotes frequently come with a narrow scope: essentials-only, minimal specs, or excluding key elements like:

- Structural work assumptions (e.g., underpinning, foundation depth)
- Quality finishes and fittings
- Services (heating, electrics, plumbing)
- External works — landscaping, drainage, access paths
- Compliance costs — Building Regulation approvals

When these omitted items arise, the contractor returns with variation costs that quickly inflate the price.

2. Variation Costs and "As-You-Go" Changes

Even well-planned projects can see changes during build—but the cheapest quotes typically don't include robust contingencies or allowances for variation costs. As homeowners see the space taking shape, they may want upgraded finishes, extra rooms, or unexpected problems uncovered in digging foundations push budgets higher.

A rule of thumb: reputable builders and quality home extension estimators always build at least a **10–15% contingency** into budgets.

3. Assumed Lowest Specification

It's common for the cheapest quotes to reflect the barest materials and fittings. The lowest spec windows, doors, insulation, and kitchens might look OK on paper but often underdeliver on quality and durability.

Many homeowners must upgrade later, or spend more fixing issues that arise, adding up to a more expensive outcome than originally budgeted.

Extension Costs by Size and Type: Single-Storey vs Two-Storey

Understanding realistic costs per square metre is key to sanity-checking any quote. Here's a quick overview valid for Solihull and wider West Midlands:



Type of Extension	Approximate Cost per m ² (excl. VAT)	Typical Size Range	Common Additional Costs
Single-Storey Rear Extension	£1,500 - £2,200	15 - 40 m ²	New bi-fold doors, foundations, drainage
Two-Storey Side/Rear Extension	£1,800 - £2,800	30 - 50 m ²	Structural steel beams, staircases, new soil stacks

Quotes falling significantly below these thresholds should be treated with caution and thoroughly checked for “missing items in scope”.

One often overlooked but crucial step before gathering quotes is to engage with local planning and building control via tools like the Solihull Council pre-application enquiry. This service lets you verify whether your planned extension needs full planning permission, or falls under permitted development rights. Understanding this up front can help dodge costly redesigns or delays.

The Role of Trusted Quote Platforms

Many homeowners turn to platforms like **Checkatrade** and **MyJobQuote** to source builders and quotes. These services offer vetted tradespeople and customer reviews, helping avoid unscrupulous contractors. Yet even with these platforms, the cheapest price is no guarantee of value.

Use these platforms to gather several detailed quotes, comparing itemized costs and clarifying [homeowners alliance moving cost](#) scope and specifications before committing. Ask explicitly whether VAT is included—as omission or misunderstanding here causes major headaches down the line.



What People Forget to Budget For

Some commonly overlooked costs that can bust your budget:

- **VAT:** Many homeowners forget to check if the prices quoted include VAT (20%). Always confirm this upfront.
- **Planning and Building Regulation Fees:** Application fees for planning permission or Building Control inspections.
- **Professional Fees:** Architect, structural engineer, and surveyor fees for plans and certifications.
- **Temporary Accommodation or Storage:** If the build disrupts your living space.
- **Landscaping and Exterior Finishing:** Driveways, patios, fencing—commonly excluded.

Final Thoughts: How to Avoid the Cheapest Quote Trap

1. **Sanity-check Costs per Square Metre:** Use local benchmarks to ensure quotes align with market reality.
2. **Check Scope and Assumptions:** Demand a detailed specification and identify any missing items upfront.
3. **Build in Contingency:** Allow at least 10-15% extra for variation costs and surprises.
4. **Use Solihull Council Planning Tools:** Confirm permitted development rights before you start planning.
5. **Confirm VAT Inclusion:** Avoid dead-on-arrival cost shocks by verifying VAT status.
6. **Compare Multiple Quotes:** Don't be tempted by one extremely cheap quote; benchmark across builders.

Extending your home is one of the best ways to increase space and value without the upfront costs tied to moving—especially important in Solihull's current housing market as highlighted by the **ONS price breakdowns**. But

don't let a tempting *cheap quote* fool you: missing items in scope, assumed lowest spec, and variation costs will usually mean you'll pay more in the end.

Do your homework, interrogate your quotes, and remember: the cheapest price often carries the highest risk and eventual expense. As with all sizeable renovation projects, knowledge is power—and prevention beats cure.