

Designful's **frequently asked questions.**

At Designful, we listen and genuinely care about our clients, their values + lifestyle aspirations, and we strive to design accordingly. We are passionate about sharing our knowledge + expertise, to the benefit of you - our clients - and the planet. We have aimed to answer our most frequently asked questions below, please let us know if you have any other questions we can help you with - we're always happy to help.

Covered in this document:

- What should I do first if I am planning to build or extend my home? Where do I start?
- How much will it cost to build a new home / extend my current home?
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- How have COVID + other world events affected construction costs + timeframes?

What should I do first if I am planning to build or extend my home? Where do I start?

1. Be clear on your 'why?' Why are you going to build or renovate? Ensure you understand your values + make decisions in alignment with these.
2. Be prepared to compromise (this could be on size, materials, finishes, timeframes, cost, any number of things). Compromise is always required - particularly at the moment, so take the time to work out what you're willing to compromise on, and what is a non-negotiable. Separate your Wants from your Needs. Consider: what is enough for you? Do you need that, or do you want it? Can you live without it? A great place to start is by completing our activities + questionnaires in the back of our [Where Do I Start? Resource Collection](#).
3. Determine your budget + financial capacity from your preferred financial institution or mortgage broker. People often misjudge what they can afford to build and this is most likely due to lack of reliable information. We suggest seeking professional assistance with this before you start the design process.
4. Once you know that building / extending / renovating is within your financial capacity, this is a good time to seek out a helpful design professional to start the feasibility process of understanding what is possible

for you within your financial capacity. Our initial consultation + feasibility services are designed to be that important first step to get you moving in the right direction + understanding what is possible.

How much will it cost to build a new home / extend my current home?

We get asked this question a lot! Your build cost depends on where you want to build it, how big it is, what it is built from and how you want it to look + function. The best way to understand how much money you need is to understand what you need + want first.

Once you know what you want the best way to get indicative cost ballparks for your project is to engage a professional to do a feasibility study based on your brief and situation. This way, all contributing factors will be taken into account. Through this initial small investment you will gain great insight into potential costs and process, thus arming yourself with the information to make informed decisions on moving forward with your dreams. As a general rule a m2 rate can be applied to a potential design to attain a rough design budget. Currently the type of projects we work on attract m2 rates of \$5000 - \$7500 per m2 for a custom designed and built home or extension. (So for example, a 100m2 house could cost in the realm of \$500,000 - \$750,000 to build, plus site works).

Site works attract significant costs as well. It is often the things you don't see such as services and ground works that cost the most. Your unique site will attract additional construction costs and this will depend on the amount of work required and the complexity. Generally steeper, off grid or larger sites that require long driveways, retaining or on site services will have higher site works costs.

No one can tell you exactly how much your construction will cost until you've invested in the design. At Designful we aim to only design what you can afford to build, and we see an initial feasibility + analysis of your brief and budget as a fundamental first step to empower you to move forward with your project. However, during your design phase, construction prices will fluctuate - we always advise to aim lower than your budget will allow, as it is highly likely that by the time you get to construction, prices will have increased even further. Consider starting small + basic, and give yourself room + time for your home to evolve with you.

How do I determine my budget?

Firstly: speak to your bank or mortgage broker to gauge your borrowing capacity. Your budget is not a figure that you pluck out of the air, that you think it should be. You may have a figure in your head that is what you would like your project to cost, but the actual overall cost of your project is determined by many factors, so some professional and reliable help early on in the process is a great idea. Your budget is determined by your brief, your land or existing building conditions, your approval process + your design fees, along with your financial capacity.

At Designful one of our very first stages of any project is a brief + budget analysis to provide an understanding of how your brief fits within your budget. 9 times out of 10 the brief is too big for the budget and compromise is

required. We work with you to look at the options, priorities + compromises to bring the brief within the budget before we start designing.

Any budget should cover construction costs, expenses such as design, consultants and approvals + contingency.

And an extra tip: have a contingency amount built into your budget - hoping it will come in on budget isn't enough (or wise)! Save yourself the stress and have an amount tucked away for when you inevitably need it.

How much are Designful's fees?

Our fees are determined by the time and expertise it takes us to complete your project, and this is highly dependent on your unique project. As a rough guideline, your design fees will be approx 10 -15% of the construction value of your project, however this varies subject to the size + complexity + level of service you require. This % may be lower if your budget is large, or higher if your budget is small - we charge for our time required, unique to your project.

How much are consultant + council fees?

As well as design fees you also need to allow for consultant + approvals fees - these vary depending on your location, scope + project plan, so unfortunately we can't give you an estimate of these fees until we know more about your project. On all projects, we give you an indication of what your consultant + approval fees are likely to be in the initial stages of your project, once we have the info required.

Your design, consultant + approval fees, or expenses, should be considered as part of your overall project budget. If you are looking for a good outcome then these are essential parts of the process. Considered design, the right consultants + well managed approvals are your insurance for a smooth + successful build.

How do I find the right Architect/building designer?

This is a really personal decision - someone else's designer or Architect may not be the right fit for you. The right person or business to assist you with your project should be someone you share values with + who you can communicate clearly with. It's important that you feel listened to and that they are taking onboard your priorities. It's also important their previous projects are ones you like, of course! Budget control is very important for most

people and the right designer will take your budget seriously, have systems in place to control it, and work with you through compromises to make the most of your financial capacity.

If you are in the position to build a new home or renovate, then you have the opportunity to consider the environmental impact and contribute a well designed, energy efficient, sturdy and well functioning building to our built environment. A designer that appreciates this will take a balanced approach to the environmental impact of your project, your vision, and your budget constraints and have systems and concepts to arrive at a solution that is fit for purpose. Good rapport, clear communication, shared values and common aesthetic appreciation can make for a great project team.

It is also important to listen to and respect your project team. Your project team has many years of experience in their particular area of expertise and will have our best interests at heart. Rushing or putting financial or time pressure on your design team will negatively affect your project and experience. Design is important and takes the time it takes. After all, do you want your project done well? Or fast?

How do I find the right builder?

When choosing a builder, there is much more to consider than how much they cost. The three main things to consider when choosing a builder are:

1. Do you have good rapport, and do you communicate well together?
2. Their quality and style of building, and how this matches your intention,
3. And thirdly their price.

It is very important to consider your builder as well as your designer as part of your team. If they are invested in your vision then you have a great team! You can read more in our *TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH BUILDERS* document.

How long will my design take? How soon can we break ground + get building?

As a standard, the design + approval process for a new home / renovation will be approx 12 months. This depends on your project.

For any given project there will be approvals needed in order for you to start building. The type and stages of approvals will be determined by the complexity and level of risk. Projects on difficult sites, in sensitive or heritage areas will take longer and smaller projects can take less time. Taking the time to engage in a feasibility study of your project will provide you with this information, to help you gain more understanding of what your project will entail + how long it will take.

Trust + be willing to work with the process + the time this takes. It is important to allow the time and focus your project needs in the design and approval stage, time pressures or rushing this process do not do you any favours.

A successful outcome also requires time for good decision making. Allow yourself time to make good decisions, and give those that are helping you time to do the thinking + work required. People often underestimate the time required for their own decision making - be prepared to dedicate a heap of your time to making decisions throughout your project to keep your timeframes on track.

You can read more about our standard process + timeframes in our *DESIGN PROCESS + STAGES* document.

How do I get an accurate quote for design fees + avoid this blowing out?

The main contributor to design fees + time blowing out is scope creep. The term 'scope creep' refers to additions or changes to the design during the design process that were not in the original brief. This means that your designer needs to do more revisions, more thinking and this takes more time. Projects can become stalled and go round in circles if scope creep comes into play. Scope creep also has the potential to blow out your construction budget, so it is very important to avoid this.

The best way to avoid scope creep is to engage in a detailed briefing process + undertake a feasibility study of your brief + your budget with your chosen designer. This means that before the design process begins and you commit to your project, you + your designer are on the same page and there is clarity around what is achievable. It is then important to understand that a bit more here or a bit bigger there will add to your design time + your construction budget so it is important to listen to your designer when they identify that scope creep is happening.

Get to know your site. Planning overlays, unapproved works, challenging soil conditions, heritage and or tricky sites can increase fees during the process. These are often unavoidable and this is what your contingency amount is for! It is a good idea to know and disclose to your design team any tricky site or planning issues, unapproved works, access or crown land requirements prior to your project getting underway. The best way to do this is to contact your local council and ask some questions about your property.

How do I mitigate blowing out my budget?

We understand this is a high concern for so many people and this is why we put budget control front of mind during any project. We do not want to design anything you cannot afford to build and we don't put pencil to paper until you are comfortable with general inclusions and the potential costs.

Keeping track of your budget throughout the design process is very important for controlling costs. Adding little bits to the design here and there add up quickly, this is why we form a detailed brief in conjunction with you and do budget reviews throughout the design process.

A great way to keep a budget under control is to engage with potential builders early in the process to gain their insight and thoughts on potential costs. Taking the time to consider the design, specifications and selections thoroughly during the design process will also mitigate budget blow out because a builder has all the information to provide you with a detailed and considered price with less unknowns. More consideration and detail during design equals better cost control during construction.

In the industry nominally 50% of projects that are designed do not get built due to them being too far over budget. At Designful we do not want to design anything you cannot afford to build and this results in 95% of the projects we design being built.

Budget control is partly your responsibility and it is very important to communicate with your design team how you are feeling about the direction the budget is going throughout your process.

What are the benefits of a custom design?

This is a very good question and we love answering it! A custom designed home will support you to live your ideal lifestyle. A home that functions with you and your busy (or relaxed!) life can facilitate more time with family and friends doing the things you love.

A custom designed home can reduce your ongoing maintenance + home running costs, be warmer in winter and cooler in summer, increase health, increase energy efficiency, decrease negative impact on the planet, contribute to your well being and be flexible in serving you now and into the future. Through considered custom design with the right team you can create a well oiled home system, from food production and preparation to heating and cooling, waste management and functional needs to support you and your family physically, financially and emotionally.

A considered custom designed + built home is a valuable investment for you, your family + generations to come.

How have COVID + other world events affected construction costs + timeframes?

Overall, construction is costing more and it's taking longer. The price of materials + building can be volatile due to COVID impacts and the economic climate (and other world events) This changes week to week and everyone in the industry (clients, designer, builders, contractors) are being challenged by this daily.

At Designful we only want to design what you can afford to build - this is becoming increasingly challenging, with prices + materials changing so rapidly. We provide an *estimate of probable costs* during your project. The *estimate of probable costs* is just that: an estimate based on information we have at hand to design to. This doesn't guarantee a construction price and it is likely that costs rise an unknown amount by the time you start building.

Consultants (such as engineers) are in high demand, this may mean your design + approvals stage takes a little longer. We do our best to engage consultants early on in the process to enable a smooth process, however we have no control over the turnaround times or availability of consultants.

Builders are also in high demand - coupled with materials shortages, this may mean your construction stage is longer than normal.

Everyone in the industry is under increased pressure at the moment - please be aware everyone is doing the best they can to keep your project on track during challenging times. Trust your design team + your builder - they are here to help you, not rip you off. Everyone on your team wants a successful project that ends with you in your new or improved home!