

# THE DESIGN & APPROVAL ROADMAP

From first ideas to an approved, buildable design

A practical guide to the design process, consultant coordination and residential approval pathways.

## RESIDENTIAL STUDIO

Healthy • sustainable • considered homes

# How to use this roadmap

This guide explains what happens after your initial project planning: how your architect develops the design, which consultants may be needed, and how a residential project moves towards approval.

## STAGE 2: DESIGN

Use this roadmap to understand the sequence. Every site and approval authority is different, so your architect will tailor the process to your project.

## 1. Confirm the project foundations

Before design begins, confirm:

- Your project brief and priorities
- Your comfortable total project budget and upper limit
- A current registered survey
- Available information about the existing home and site
- Known planning, bushfire, flood, heritage, biodiversity or coastal constraints
- Your preferred timeframe
- Who will make project decisions

### Your foundation checklist

- ☐ Project brief agreed
- ☐ Budget range discussed openly
- ☐ Survey commissioned or received
- ☐ Existing documents collected
- ☐ Site constraints identified
- ☐ Decision-makers confirmed

## 2. Site analysis and feasibility

Your architect investigates how the site, planning controls and your brief interact. This may include:

- Orientation, sunlight and prevailing breezes
- Slope, access and existing levels
- Views, privacy and neighbouring development
- Trees, vegetation and landscape opportunities

- Setbacks, height, floor-space and site-coverage controls
- Easements, services and stormwater
- Likely DA or CDC pathway
- Early construction and budget risks

#### **WHY THIS MATTERS**

A strong site response can create better light, comfort and privacy while reducing avoidable redesign and construction complexity.

## **3. Concept design**

Concept design establishes the big decisions before detailed documentation begins. Typical outputs may include:

- Site and floor-plan options
- Building form and massing
- Key elevations and sections
- Indoor–outdoor relationships
- Preliminary material direction
- Basic 3D views or visualisations
- Initial sustainability and passive-design thinking
- An early review against budget and planning controls

### **Questions to ask during concept design**

- Does the layout support everyday family life?
- Are the best areas receiving useful natural light?
- Is circulation efficient?
- Are privacy and outlook balanced?
- Does the design suit the site rather than fight it?
- Are we prioritising the right spaces?
- Is the concept still aligned with budget?

## **4. Design development**

Once the preferred concept is selected, it is tested and refined. The team may develop:

- Room dimensions and furniture planning
- Window and door locations

- Roof, structure and level relationships
- Kitchen, bathroom and joinery concepts
- External materials and finishes
- Shading and energy-performance measures
- Preliminary services coordination
- Landscape and external works
- Updated cost advice

#### **DECISION POINT**

Resolve major spatial, material and budget decisions before approval or construction documentation. Late changes usually take more time and can affect consultant work.

## **5. Understand DA and CDC**

The approval pathway depends on the property, the proposal and the applicable controls.

### **Development Application — DA**

A DA is assessed by the local council against the relevant planning controls and site circumstances. Further information or design changes may be requested during assessment.

### **Complying Development Certificate — CDC**

A CDC is a code-based pathway available only when the site and the complete proposal meet all applicable requirements. It is assessed by council or an accredited certifier.

### **Other approvals and certificates**

Your project may also require separate approvals or supporting documentation for stormwater, drainage, driveways, trees, bushfire, flooding, heritage, coastal conditions or other site matters.

#### **IMPORTANT**

Approval requirements vary by property and can change. Confirm the current pathway with your architect, planner, certifier and relevant authority before relying on general guidance.

## **6. Assemble the consultant team**

Depending on the project, you may need:

- Registered surveyor
- Town planner
- Structural engineer
- Civil or stormwater engineer

- Geotechnical engineer
- Bushfire consultant
- Energy assessor
- Landscape architect or designer
- Arborist, ecologist or heritage consultant
- Quantity surveyor
- Certifier

## Consultant tracker

| Consultant          | Required? | Engaged? | Report due |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Surveyor            |           |          |            |
| Planner             |           |          |            |
| Structural engineer |           |          |            |
| Stormwater engineer |           |          |            |
| Energy assessor     |           |          |            |
| Other               |           |          |            |

## 7. Prepare and lodge the application

Before lodgement, check that the architectural set and consultant information tell one coordinated story.

- ☐ Final client review completed
- ☐ Planning controls checked
- ☐ Consultant reports coordinated
- ☐ Material schedule completed
- ☐ Required forms and owner consent ready
- ☐ Fees and lodgement requirements confirmed
- ☐ Application lodged
- ☐ Submission reference recorded

## 8. Navigate assessment

During assessment:

- Keep requests and responses in one place
- Record submission dates and deadlines
- Ask your architect to review requested changes before agreeing
- Confirm whether amendments affect consultant reports
- Track approval conditions for the next stage

### Approval tracker

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Application type              |  |
| Lodgement date                |  |
| Reference number              |  |
| Assessing authority           |  |
| Contact                       |  |
| Further information requested |  |
| Response due                  |  |
| Determination date            |  |
| Key conditions                |  |

## Design-stage completion checklist

- ☐ Preferred design resolved
- ☐ Budget reviewed
- ☐ Relevant consultants coordinated
- ☐ Approval obtained
- ☐ Conditions reviewed
- ☐ Next documentation scope confirmed

☐ Builder engagement strategy discussed

☐ Stage 3 commenced

## Ready for the next stage

Once the design is resolved and the approval pathway is complete, the project can move into detailed construction preparation.

### YOUR NEXT GUIDE

Continue to 03 — The Construction Preparation Guide for documentation, builder engagement and pre-construction planning.

## Keep the project moving clearly

Residential Studio can help you understand the site, coordinate the right consultants, develop a considered design and navigate the appropriate approval pathway.

### RESIDENTIAL STUDIO

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