

RESIDENTIAL CLIENT GUIDE

OFFICE OF REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

Architects at Large



HI, FROM BROOKTON, WA

Hi and welcome to our Client Guide. We're glad that you've contacted us and we're here to help. We know that starting a new project is an exciting time. We also know that you've probably got lots of questions. How long will it take to design my project, how much will my new project cost, how do I hire everyone I need? Well, we've helped lots of people in your situation to guide them through the process of designing and building a new project. Although each project is unique, we've boiled down all the big-ticket items into this guide. Whether you're planning a kitchen renovation, a more sizable extension, or a brand new home, we think that you'll find some useful information in here.

There's a lot to read here, but you don't need to study it all in one go. Familiarise yourself with the process and the key players in your project, but think of it as a bit of a reference guide that will help you as you progress through the stages of your project. We think it's quite comprehensive, but when you're ready to talk some more, you'll find our contact info right over there.

So, grab a coffee (and maybe a notepad), and dive in. We'll be waiting for you at the other end.

Rosalie, and the team at Office of Regional Architecture

WANT TO CHAT SOME MORE?

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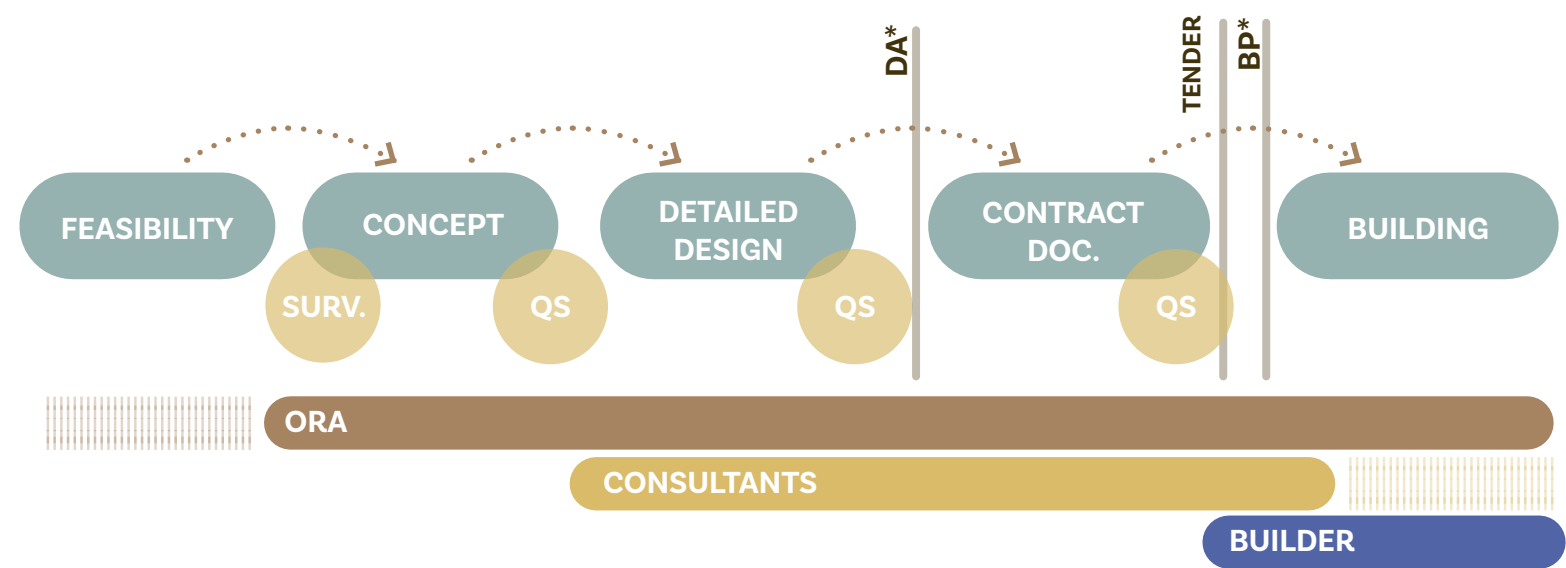
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ORA
Office of Regional
Architecture

THE TYPICAL DESIGN AND BUILD PROCESS WITH ORA



ORA
SURV.
QS.
CONS.
BUILD.
DA*
BP*
|||||||

Engage Office of Regional Architecture
Commission Land Surveyor
Engage Quantity Surveyor
Engage broader consultant team
Engage Builder to construct works
Development Approval
Building Permit
Additional Services

**For very small renovations a DA or BP may not be required. For some advice on the matter, feel free to contact us to discuss.*
*** See “Your Project Team” for more information on consultants*

THE DESIGN AND BUILD PROCESS

A big part of why we love to do the work we do is because each project is unique. Each client has different needs, each site offers different possibilities and each budget allows for different options. However, the type or scale of project you’re planning doesn’t matter, broadly speaking the process is the same each time. We’ve broken down each of the stages and highlighted what you can expect and when. Read on for more.

THE PROCESS AS DESCRIBED HERE

The guide that you’ll read over the next few pages is what we would usually call a “full scope of services”. That is because it’s a process in which your architect is with you each step of the way, guiding you through the process. Depending on your budget and project needs, this can be chopped and changed as needed. You can add this extra service in here, remove that service over there. However, in our years of experience, we’ve seen first-hand how investing in the design process up-front leads to better designs, better builds, and a more seamless overall process. Building can be an exciting process. But it’s rarely a short process, and can at times be a stressful and difficult experience. Having a trusted partner in your corner can go a long way to making it an enjoyable one. We get it. We’re architects so maybe we’re a little biased. But we love what we do because we think it provides a valuable service to people in the regions that want a nice, well designed project with advice and work that they can rely on.

FEASIBILITY / OPTION PLANNING

Consider this the ‘toe-dipping’ phase of the project. You’ve just bought a new block and you’ve got a few ideas, but you haven’t really investigated the possibilities. Maybe you know you need a bit more room – a few new bedrooms and living room, but you’re not sure exactly where they’d go. In this phase you’re really just getting a sense of what options are available to you. You might have a budget in mind, but don’t know what you can get for your money. Maybe you’ve got an idea, but no idea how much it will cost. This phase is in addition to the “full scope of services” and can happen as a standalone service, ORA can help you with developing your brief, considering options for your site and providing costing advice.

At this stage, you might:

- think about some options for your project
- get advice on your budget
- chat with some trusted and informed friends about the project
- start following some architects on instagram
- make some initial inquiries with architects, builders, council

Your architect might

- provide a Site Analysis Report
- provide an Options Report
- provide some specialist advice on costing the project
- help explain the constraints and opportunities of your site
- take a site measure and produce existing drawings of your house that you can use as a basis for your design
- put together a ‘look book’ of architectural ideas to consider during your project.



While we love getting out on the road, as a regional practice we’ve been working remotely from Brookton and Perth for years. Jumping on Zoom for a project consult is a quick and cost effective way of getting some professional advice on your project, without the upfront travel costs

CONCEPT DESIGN

This phase is when your ideas first start to take shape on the page. It won't be fully resolved for a while yet, but your architect will take a comprehensive briefing from you to begin the process. This will include your budget, what types of spaces you'll need and some of the qualities you'd like in your project. Your architect will take this brief, along with detailed site analysis, including planning considerations and restrictions and develop some initial sketches. A good architect will communicate with you clearly and often through this phase. They'll likely meet with you several times through this phase, provide regular updates, and seek your feedback and input. By the end of this phase you'll have an idea of the construction methodology (what it's going to be built out of) and some of the material selections (what it will look like). Some of the bigger design requirements will be resolved, such as the orientation and form of the building and the general layout, but it won't have all of the details solved yet (that's still a little while off). This is good news, as it means you'll plenty of opportunities through the rest of the project to review the design and provide your input. At the end of this stage ORA would strongly recommend you get some independent costing advice to check the design against your budget to help minimise the unfortunate risk of cost overruns.

At this stage, you might:

- meet with your architect and provide input on their progress
- consider your style and how want you want this project to look, feel and behave
- do some research online about types of construction
- sign your Client-Architect Agreement to formally engage your architect*

Your architect might*:

- take a brief from you (this will include your budget, what needs to be included, how you'd like the project to look and feel)
- your architect will develop your brief, analyse the site and explore options for your project
- provide advice on a BAL assessment, land survey and planning considerations
- communicate with you and provide updates on their progress

DETAILED DESIGN

It is during this phase that the broad concept agreed to in concept design is refined into something much nearer the final project. Your architect will do more research and design to investigate the best building materials to use, how the internal spaces will link and fit together, the height of your building and how it will look from the outside. They will likely recommend engaging a structural engineer (and other engineers, depending on your project), to get specialist advice and documents produced. A good architect will communicate with you regularly throughout this phase, and they'll provide a number of project updates to get your input. All this work is progressing towards the first major project milestone - Development Approval (DA). You can read more about DA below, but it's the point at which you apply to council to meet their planning regulations. The size, height and form of your building, the number of rooms, the overall layout, the materials it is constructed from and even the location of your windows are some of the key design decisions that need to be made before you apply for DA. This is because any major changes to these elements might result in going back to council to amend your DA - something that can be time consuming and costly. And again, you should get another cost report to make sure the project hasn't crept beyond your means. When you're happy with the design at this stage, its time to apply for DA. This might take a while - up to 90 calendar days, but more often 60 calendar days.

At this stage, you might:

- with your architect's advice, broaden your project team
- provide feedback on your architect's progress
- provide approval to apply for DA

Your architect might*:

- develop your design, ahead of DA
- produce a Detailed Design document, including drawings, draft Finishes and supporting DA application documents
- meet with the project team (think, engineers, quantity surveyor) to work through design solutions and resolve the design
- coordinate the input from the project team. They'll offer feedback and closely instruct your engineers to ensure their work fits the agreed design
- liaise with council so that there are 'no surprises' when you go to lodge DA

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTATION

Your architect's main goal at this stage is to take the agreed, DA approved design scheme and refine it into a set of documents that clearly describe the design to a builder. You can think of these as 'working drawings' or 'blue prints'. These documents will serve two very important purposes. First, they'll allow you to get an 'apples with apples' price from a range of builders - commonly known as a competitive tender. Second, they'll form the drawings that your builder will keep on site and constantly refer to to help direct them as they build.

The more detail your architect can provide in these drawings, the better. You'll want your architect to produce a set of documents that are clear and concise, but packed full of the type of information builders need. This is in part so that all the builders tendering on your project are making as few assumptions as possible. It should also lead to fewer errors on site, which can save you thousands of dollars and months of time on site. In working towards completing these documents, your architect will really refine the detail of the design. With your input, they'll communicate all sorts of detail from the specific cladding for the builder to use and how they should install it, the exact dimension of the store cupboard, the final paint colour of the bedroom walls. They'll also coordinate the engineers so that your builder has a set of documents that specify what size timber beam to use, how hard to compact the sand under the concrete footings.

At this stage, you might:

- provide feedback on your architect's progress
- provide feedback on the material and fixtures selections your architect nominates
- provide approval to apply for costing/tender

Your architect might*:

- resolve your design, ahead of costing/tender
- produce a set of working drawings for builders to cost
- coordinate the input from the project team. They'll offer feedback and closely instruct your engineers to ensure their work fits the agreed design. This means resolving in great detail the engineer's drawings and input
- Liaise with your building certifier ahead of submission for Building Permit

**Exactly what your architect will do for you during each phase will be defined by the Client-Architect Agreement you enter with your architect. We will make it very clear which services are included in our fee before you sign anything. As we've said above, the process described here is a "traditional scope of services", but we can add and remove as required, depending on your project and budget".*

TENDER/COSTING/BUILDING PERMIT

There is a little sub-phase in here in which your architect releases your project for tender (or quoting, depending on your preferred method), helps you to negotiate with the preferred builder, assists in signing the contract between you and the builder, and prepares documents for your builder to receive a building permit. If you're just starting your project, there is plenty of time to discuss the particularities of this process with your architect.

At this stage, you might:

- consult with the architect on the tender options and select a builder
- formally engage your builder

Your architect might*:

- answer tender questions during tender period
- closely evaluate the tenders and provide advice
- assist in any negotiation with the builder prior to signing the building contract and assist all parties in signing the building contract
- prepare documents for the building permit



Architects at Large:
For images check out our [instagram](#) and [facebook](#)
pages and [website](#).

CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

Finally your project is on site. All the dreaming, designing and above all, waiting, is over. This is a truly exciting time in the project stage. First, you'll start to see your site transformed, then your new building's footprint will get traced on the ground. Soon, the walls will be up, and when the roof is on, you'll really see the form of your new building. But there's a lot of work that happens before moving day. There's checking and paying the builder's invoices, making some final selections, communicating with the builder regularly, inspecting their work at regular intervals and answering their questions. Even in the smoothest of builds there's a lot of work that happens off site. Although some people elect to go it alone with their builder during this phase, this can be an area where a good architect really shows their value. Even with the most resolved design and most immaculate set of drawings, things will pop up on site to give you a bit of a surprise - and your architect can use their knowledge of the building process and experience working with builders to help guide you through it. Typically, in contract administration, the architect will visit the construction site regularly to check in with the builder. This means they'll be able to answer their (often very technical) questions, inspect their work to make sure that it's consistent with the building contract and assess their progress claims (the technical document that comes before a builder's invoice). They'll know the building contract intimately and they have lots of experience in working collaboratively with builders to ensure good outcomes on site.

At this stage, you might

- make some small final selections (think tiles, paint colours)
- pay regular building invoices
- along with your architect, attend site visit to check on progress

Your architect might*:

- regularly attend site to visually inspect progress and the builder's work
- assess progress claims (the monthly claims your builder submits before their invoices)
- resolve details and construction issues on site
- be in your corner to help resolve any contractual or relational issues on site
- coordinate other consultants on site as needed
- help with closing out your contract and paving the way for you to move in
- follow up on the rectification of defective work

YOUR PROJECT TEAM

YOUR ARCHITECT

While the exact role your architect will play depends on the specifics of your Client-Architect agreement, your architect can guide you through the whole journey of your new project. Not only do they bring expert design skills, but they also lead your full team of specialist consultants (see Consultants), step you through the authority approvals process and help you find a builder for your project. Importantly, they are a great advocate for your design during the building process and will use their intimate knowledge of the building contract to ensure your builder follows through with the design you have agreed on. Depending on the level of service you would like, your architect can help with all aspects of your project from your initial options and feasibility study, right through to select the trim of your window and finish of your cupboards.

YOUR STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

A structural engineer is a key member of your consultant team. While your architect will have a good working knowledge of structural principles and the types of construction that will hold your building up, a structural engineer will undertake calculations to determine the size and type of structure required in your project. Good structural engineers will work with you and your architect to ensure that the structure of your building is well suited to your design. This might mean ‘expressing’ the structure of your project (so that is highly detailed and visible) or obscuring it (so that it is well hidden).

YOUR BUILDER

Your builder is a key partner in the delivery of your project. Typically, a builder will come on board your project at the end of the design process. We understand that you want to find a builder that offers good value for money, but also one who shows attention to detail, experience in similar projects and has a passion for building projects similar to yours. Most of the time, your architect will organise an invited competitive tender on your behalf. They will work with you to find a shortlist of suitable builders and will produce a clear, detailed, and comprehensive set of documents to ensure all the builders are perfectly clear on what they are quoting on. We often refer to this as ‘comparing apples with apples’. Your architect will then manage the tender process and provide a summary of the tender prices for your consideration. They will also help you in determining the best contract to engage your builder and help you in the final negotiation of the contract as required. Once the builder is engaged, you are not left to manage the build process by yourself. Your architect can bring their experience, expertise and time to manage the building contract on your behalf.

There are important decisions to make about the type of building contract you will enter into with your builder. Each have their own flavour and will impact on the contractual relationship between you and your builder and the role your architect plays in this. We’ll be sure to explain these to you as you proceed through the process.



Witham House Renovation

YOUR PROJECT TEAM CONTINUED



Witham House Renovation

YOUR QUANTITY SURVEYOR (QS)

A specialist architectural quantity surveyor (commonly known as a “QS”) can be a vital part of bringing your project in on budget. While a good architect will always have your budget at the front of their mind and will design accordingly, a QS will produce a series of reports throughout the process that can measure your design against your budget. Their itemised reports will give you information on all elements of your project – think the cost of the walls, floors, roof. This will help you and your architect drill down into cost of your project and identify ways of better allocating your budget across a project. They can help mitigate the unhappy risk of projects going over budget.

YOUR LAND SURVEYOR

A surveyor is typically commissioned early in the design process to undertake a full feature survey of your property. This gives you and the project team a comprehensive picture of your site. It identifies the exact location of existing buildings, general site services, key site features and site contours. This is critical information for your design team and will be a key reference document during the design process. Typically, this is a one off commission. You can commission this yourself, or it can be managed by your architect. Regardless, consult your architect before commissioning a survey to be sure you are clear on what you need from the surveyor.

YOUR BUILDING CERTIFIER

Engaging a Building Certifier can be the most straight forward way to get your building approved for construction (see Building Permit). A building certifier brings their specialist knowledge of the National Construction Code of Australia and Building Code of Australia to review the design and work with your architect to ensure that it complies. One major benefit of engaging a building certifier is that they can sign off on a “Certificate of Construction Compliance”. This means that you can apply for a Certified Building Assessment, which your LGA will approve within 10 working days, rather than five weeks for an Uncertified application. See “Building Permit” for more information.

YOUR MECHANICAL, HYDRAULIC & ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS

Although commonplace on larger commercial projects, most residential projects don’t require these services. However, if you are planning a particularly large house with a lot of electrical load, special ventilation requirements, or a lift, these engineers can provide specialist technical advice and produce drawings and specifications to direct your builder on site. Talk with your architect to get an idea of whether they might be required in your project team.

AUTHORITY APPROVALS

BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVEL

Areas that are prone to Bushfires, as determined by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) will need to be assessed to determine their Bushfire Attack Level (BAL). This considers site specific factors that impact on bushfires such as tree density and type & site slope. You can visit the DFES [website](#) to see if your site falls within a Bushfire Prone Area. If so, a BAL assessment determines the severity of the bushfire risk to your site. Expressed as a number, the Bushfire Attack Level of your site will have implications for the design and construction of your project. This might include tree clearing, the use of specific materials permitted in your project and special screening on your windows and vents to prevent ember attack.

DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL

Development Approval (DA) is a process by which your Local Government Authority (LGA) will review the project to ensure its compliance with the Town Planning Scheme. It is largely concerned with impacts on neighbours and visual impacts of the project. This might include the distance your building will have to be setback from the boundary, maximum building heights, maximum floor areas, the location of your windows and the number of car bays (more typically this is for apartments and public buildings).

A DA is considered a major project milestone and having your project approved for DA is a cause for celebration. Each Local Government Authority has slightly different requirements for a DA, however a typical submission will require plans, elevations, information on building finishes as well as a range of other relevant information. A checklist of requirements can usually be found on your LGA's website. Your architect can help you understand the design considerations for your project to receive a DA. Depending on the scale of the project, your LGA will have been 60 and 90 calendar days to assess your application. Major design elements should be resolved before submitting for DA. See "Detailed Design" above.

BUILDING PERMIT

A Building Permit (BP) is required for all construction projects over the value of \$20,000. It is to assess the project against the National Construction Code of Australia (NCC). In residential construction, it will typically focus on structural integrity and termite protection, waterproofing etc. When a Building Permit is required it is likely a structural engineer will need to be engaged to produce relevant drawings. Projects where a Building Permit is required will also need a Registered Builder to undertake the works. There are two options for applying for a Building Permit. A Certified Assessment requires an assessment by an independent Building Certifier and Structural Engineer (see "Your Project Team" above). As it has been signed off by a Building Certifier, the local government simply rubber stamp the project. They have 10 calendar days to complete this. An Uncertified assessment is not assessed by an independent assessor, but by your local council. It means you save money on fees, but council has more time to review your assessment (up to five weeks). As it has not been signed off by your project team, it also carries the risk that it may not pass the assessment. Talk with us to determine whether a Certified or Uncertified Assessment is suitable for your project.

More information can typically be found on your LGA website.

"Our kitchen is now the hub of our house with plenty of storage space and prep space while still looking amazing. Rosalie was able to listen to what we wanted and needed from the spaces. Her fresh perspective helped us create an area that suited our needs but stayed in keeping with our 1920's farm house."

Ellen Walker, Warranine, Brookton



On site at Anameka Farms, Tammin

OK, WHERE TO FROM HERE?

NEXT STEPS

Well, that was a lot! Well done making it through. Hopefully you're a little clearer on the design, approvals and building process and who some of the key players are, but we've no doubt you've got some questions. If you're ready to jump in we're always eager to make ourselves available. A quick chat (phone, zoom, visit) are great ways for us to connect and learn more about each other. We want to know more about your project and you'll probably want to know a bit more about who we are, how we work and the types of projects we've worked on.

"We are extremely happy with the finished result and our house is now a beautiful, functional family home."
Connie Witham, Tambellup



A full Site Consult is a great place to start. We'll do a site measure and photographic survey of the project area, talk through all the specifics of your project, discuss project fees and costs and produce a straight forward Site Consult Report for you to refer to as you progress through your project.



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