

FAQs

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.

Our #1 FAQ: How have costs + timeframes changed during COVID?

The price of materials + building is volatile at the moment due to COVID impacts, and there is a delay and shortage of some materials. 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.

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

Where do I start?

As a first step we suggest getting assistance with **determining 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.

Once you know that building, extending or 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 *Where Do I Start?* services and packages are designed to be that important first step to get you moving in the right direction.

How do I determine my budget?

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 our very first stage of any project is a brief and 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.

How much will it cost to build a new home or extension?

We get asked this question **a lot!** But it's not the right question to ask if you are at the very beginning! 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 and function. The best way to understand how much money you need is to **understand what you need and want first.**

Once you know what you want the best way to get indicative cost ballpark 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 create a design budget. Currently m2 rates are \$4500 - \$5000 per m2 for a custom designed and built home or extension.

No one can tell you exactly how much your construction costs will be until you have a full design in place, this requires an initial investment of time and money. At Designful we only want to 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.

How much will my design + approval fees be?

Your design, consultant and 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. If you skimp on design + management when setting the foundations you are at risk of things coming undone + costs blowing out during construction.

The design + approval process is like the 'setting of the table' for a good meal. If you don't set the table, things can get messy! As a guideline your design fees will be 8 - 14% of the construction value of your project, but this is very subject to the size + complexity + the level of service you require. As well as design fees you also need to allow for consultants + approvals - these are subject to your location, scope + project plan.

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.

What is the process + how long will it take?

This also depends on your project, and this is where a feasibility study can provide you with information in order to gain more understanding of what your project will entail. 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. As a standard, the design and approval process for a new home will be approx 9-12 months. Projects on difficult sites, in sensitive or heritage areas will take longer and smaller projects can take less time. Taking the time to engage a feasibility study of your project will provide you with this information. 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 favors.

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

How do I find the right designer/Architect?

Someone else's designer or Architect may not be the right one for you!

The right person or firm 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. 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.**

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 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 40% 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.

How do I find the right builder?

There is much more to consider than how much a builder is going to charge you when choosing a builder. 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 good team!

What value will a custom designed home bring to my life?

This is a very good question and we love asking it! A custom designed home will support you to live our 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 and 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 and built home is a valuable investment for you, your family and generations to come.