

Guide to the Design & Approval Timeline

+ Introduction:

This guide has been prepared to explain the design & approval timeline associated with a new home or renovation project. It is designed to assist the home owner / renovator to better manage this process and give an idea of how long to expect this process should take. The chart and the following explanations cover what should be a reasonable timeframe – but be aware that many projects may take much longer than the estimate, just as some will be quicker.

1 Selecting & engaging an architect:

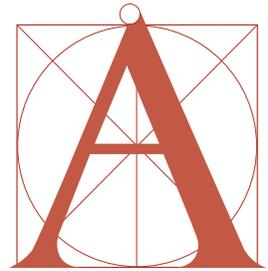
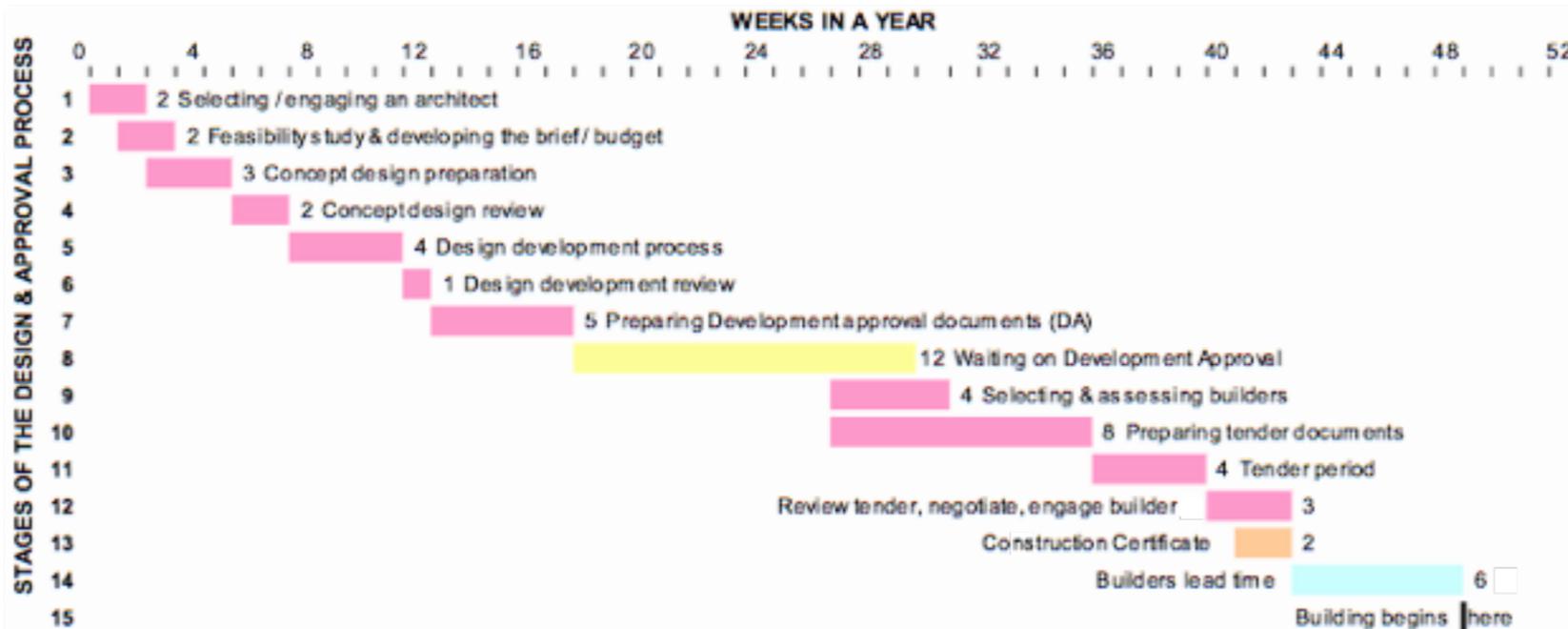
This involves approaching and meeting with an architect on site to discuss the brief / budget and timeframes and then selecting an architect appropriate for your project. See also our 'Guide to choosing an Architect'. A reasonable time to allow for this is 2-3 weeks.

2 Feasibility study & developing the brief / budget:

This is where the brief is tested against site suitability, council regulations, budget and other criteria. Many projects when they are initially conceived are simply unworkable for one reason or another & will need to be refined. Two common problems are an inadequate budget or issues to do with local building controls. This is also the stage in which your borrowing capacity or financial constraints need to be resolved. Time to allow: 1-3 weeks.

3 Concept design preparation:

This is where your architect begins the creative and skilled process of designing your home or home improvements. The key aim here is to create an overall concept of the building in terms of size & configuration, location on the site, views, sunlight & style or aesthetics. Other factors such as construction materials, finishes & colours are also often suggested. Time to allow: 2-4 weeks.



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4 Concept design review:

Following presentation of the architect's concept, it is important to consider it carefully with regard to your budget, brief, timeframe & other criteria. In some cases you may wish to discuss the design with a real estate agent for an assessment of resale potential vs building investment. Time to allow: 1-2 weeks.

5 Design Development process:

This is where the concept design is further developed and preliminary council approval documents are produced. These documents are called 'General Arrangement Drawings' and are usually prepared at 1:100 scale. These drawings show: the existing building and proposed work; accurate site levels (prepared by a surveyor) and the council's building envelope. They allow for the required floor areas and other measures to be calculated accurately for council and provide a basis for discussions with neighbours. This step also generally involves a more detailed costing (prepared by a quantity surveyor or a builder / building cost estimator) and a preliminary DA meeting with council. Time to allow: 3-5 weeks.

6 Design development review:

This review is almost the final review before submitting your application to council. At this point in the process, only small changes should be considered, if any. The focus should be on strategies for achieving development approval as quickly and easily as possible. Time to allow: 1-2 weeks.

7 Completing development approval documents:

Generally, councils require a lot of additional information to be submitted in addition to the drawings as part of the development application process, including reports and other work done by consultants. Assessments required may include that pertaining to bushfire, heritage & conservation, geotechnics, stormwater, waste & recycling, sediment & erosion control, flora & fauna, an arborist report (trees), energy ratings, BASIX reports & shadow and solar access diagrams. Time to allow: 4-6 weeks.

8 Waiting on Development Approval:

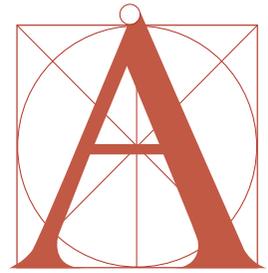
This is likely to be the longest stage of the process. Despite local councils being required to determine an application within 40 days – this rarely occurs. Without any issues or difficulties with your application you can hope an approval within 2-6 months. If there are objections, or other difficulties with an application, especially if the Land and Environment Court becomes involved, this process can sometimes be measured in years.

9 Selecting & assessing builders:

This process can essentially begin at any time, but few builders will take you seriously until you have development approval. It is important to consider a number of builders (say 8-10) initially with a view to offering at least 3 the opportunity to tender your project. Time to allow: 3-6 weeks, much of this work can be done while waiting on the DA process.

10 Preparing tender documents:

Builders like to tender off accurate and complete documents. It is important when tendering that appropriate documents & specifications are prepared to cover items such as: lighting & electrical plans, joinery, wet areas (ie. kitchen and bathroom layouts and details), materials, finishes, fixtures and fittings. The tender documents should also describe the basis on which the builder would be engaged, such as: the contract to be used, if there is an administrator, type of security etc.. Time to allow: 4-8 weeks, again, much of this work can be done while waiting on the DA process so long as there is only a minimal risk of refusal by council or if significant changes required to the plans.



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11 Tender period

When preparing tenders, builders need time to request prices from their trades & to review all the detailed tender documents and specifications. Builders who are very keen to win the job will usually take longer than builders who aren't. This is because they will likely spend more time tendering trades for the best price and generally price in more detail to make sure their bid is low – but not too low. Time to allow: 4 weeks min. but it could take as long as 6 weeks to get all the tenders in. (Note: tendering over holiday periods can often take even longer, most trades take their holidays in late December and in January).

12 Tender review & negotiation / engaging the builder:

The time involved in this process depends largely on your choice of tenderers and the contents of their tenders. It is a good idea not to be in a hurry to sign up a builder as it reduces your bargaining power. Time to allow: 2-4 weeks.

13 Construction Certificate:

This process can begin immediately upon receiving development approval, but cannot usually be finalised until the selected builder's insurances have been checked. Getting a construction certificate is essentially an administrative process, although it can be more difficult depending on the development application conditions of approval. Time to allow: 2-4 weeks.

14 Builders lead time to start:

Builders are rarely ready to go at exactly the same time you are. In many cases some of their trades will be tied up on other projects for some weeks. At the time of tendering a builder will usually give a date to start the project and estimated time to practical completion. Time to allow: 4-8 weeks, but if you are prepared to wait for your 'preferred' builder, this could be much longer.

15 Builder's program:

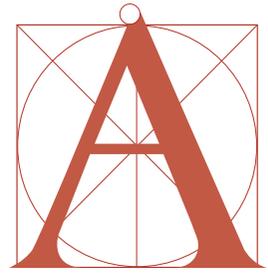
The building contract will specify a date when the selected builder is required to substantially begin the project and an end date for practical completion (when you can move in). The time you should allow to reach practical completion is about a month per \$100k of construction cost (as a rule of thumb), but can vary in practice. ie: \$300k will take 3 months, while a million dollar job might take 10 months to complete.

- Critical factors in the program

- Council DA process
- Lead time for the builder to start

- Other delays in the program

- Weather delays in the construction program
- Holidays including Christmas and Easter
- Having to re-tender the project because of a lack of tenders or unsuitable tenders
- Being an owner-builder may dramatically extend the construction process



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