

WHERE TO START

WHAT TO CONSIDER

ANSWER THE WHYS

WHO WHAT WHEN HOW

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR

DESIGN PROJECT



WHERE TO START

How to create a design brief before engaging an architect

Renovating a house can and should be really exciting. However too often we hear stories of clients not having their needs heard, misunderstandings between the contractors, the client and the architect on what was the agreed scope, and how much was allowed for in the contract.

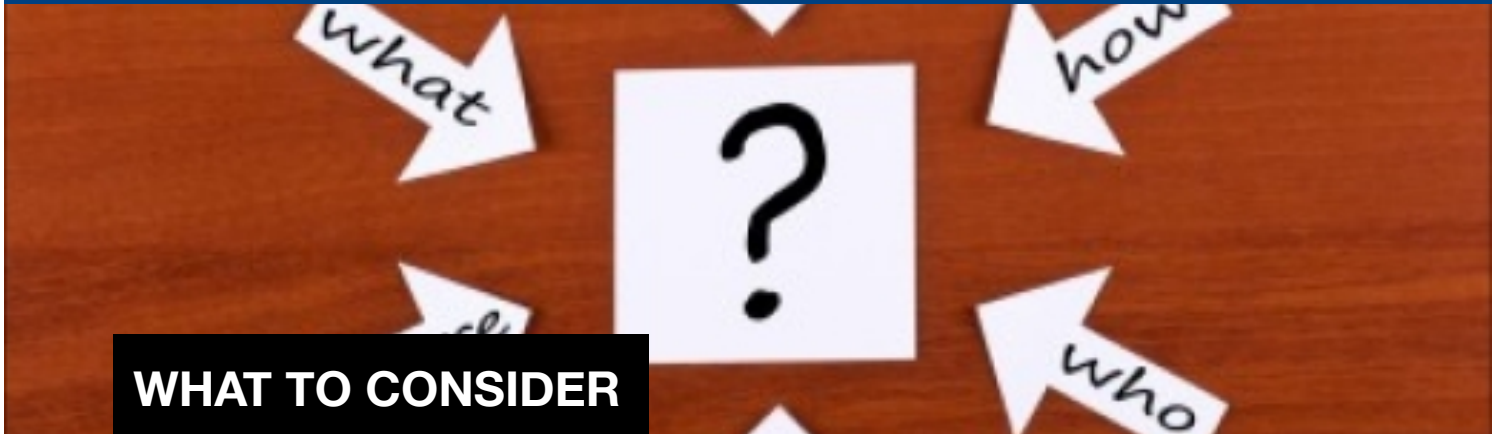
It all comes down to the design brief

A good working relationship with your architect is based on open, honest communication. This starts with a good brief that helps architects understand your expectations, preferences, wants, needs, aspirations and lifestyle. If the brief is not clear, the architect and the follow on through to the contractor and all his associated trades people will be compromised. They will struggle to understand what it is they need to allow for in the pricing of your project.

Really think about your brief and consider all aspects of it.

This document will help you cover critical aspects of a design brief. Towards the end of this document, you will find two worksheets that will help you outline your design brief.

Right then, lets get started...



WHAT TO CONSIDER

Your Site

Put in a file to share with your architect all the information you have about the site (legal paperwork/covenants, existing plans or previous site information). Items to consider may include the following:

- Where are the views that you want to enjoy everyday? Those that you want to exclude?
- Where are the surrounding houses, other buildings, and trees that you may or may not want to see?
- Which parts of the site are most/least noisy?

Spaces

Indoor

A good design can transform the way that we live. Think hard about your current and future needs. Map out your daily routine. How many people live in the house? How old are they? Who does what, where? Don't forget your children's rapidly changing needs! Items to consider:

- Do you want 'zone' spaces to separate family members, functions, and/or pets? Or open plan?
- Inventory of spaces and their use.
- Is your lifestyle formal, casual, relaxed or active?
- Do you need spaces to entertain at home - indoor and outdoor?
- Special requirements - accessibility, extra storage, garage loft space, built in furniture/shelving, home office.



WHAT TO CONSIDER

Outdoor

What do you want to do outdoors? Entertain? Relax? Play? Swim? Supervise children? Grow enough vegetables to be self-sufficient? Do you want a high or low maintenance scheme? What features are important to you? Additional items to consider:

- Indoor/outdoor flow of spaces
- Solar orientation and wind exposure or shelter
- Hardscaping, outdoor kitchen, outdoor fireplace
- Connection to outdoors and priorities

Design Mood and Feeling

This is important. This is your home, where your children and other loved ones are, where they're going to grow up and you're going to have all your family memories. Think about the 'feel' of your project, do you want it to be bold, low-key, industrial, traditional, minimalist, contemporary or organic? Think about your feelings - yes really! For example, what is your favorite time of day? Do you worry about shutting the curtains to protect the furniture from the sun, or do you like to enjoy coffee on the terrace? Is curling up with a good book your favorite hobby, or is it taking the dog for a walk no matter what the weather? Describe spaces, design features and styles that appeal to you and those that don't. Create a 'mood board' or scrapbook of fabric swatches, photographs, magazine clippings and anything else that can help your architect understand who you are, how you live and what you want from your project. Use web-based photo sites to assemble and share your ideas.



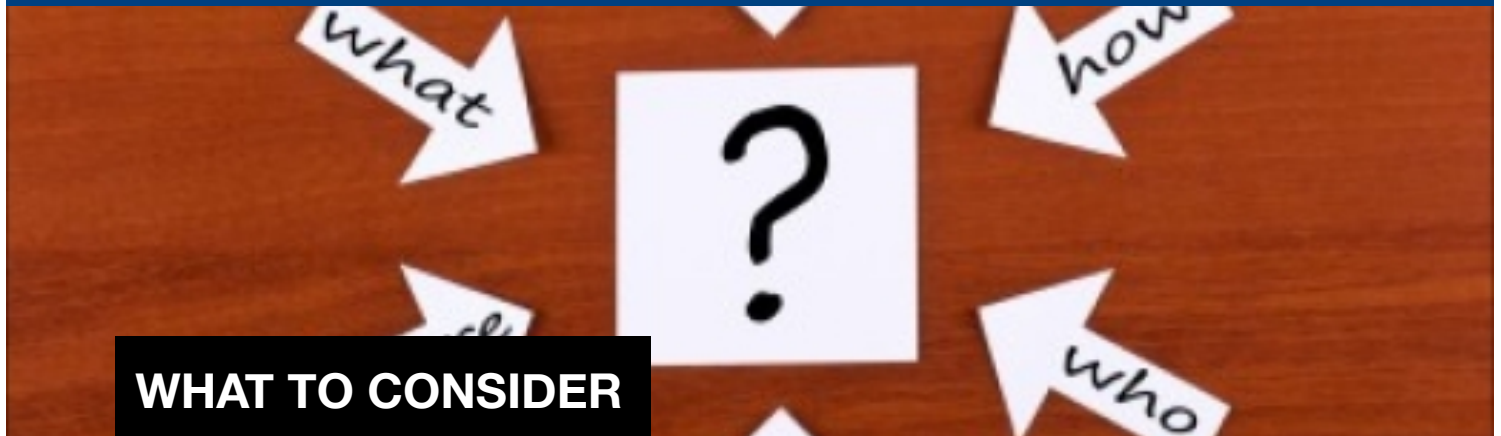
WHAT TO CONSIDER

The Details

Do you have major appliances you already own or are considering buying Do you have lots of gadgets that need sockets in your island unit? Is your washing machine on 24/7 and do you want your drying and ironing space right next to it? These details can make a big difference to the way your kitchen and utility space is planned. Note major pieces of furniture or artwork you want to showcase so your architect can provide spaces and sockets for them in the new plans. Better to include it in your planning from day one, than to move in and wonder where you are going to hang your Picasso.

Materials

List materials you like and dislike (inside and out), but be aware that your budget will be a determining factor in your final choice. Do you have any specific wall, ceiling and floor finishes in mind? Do you like render, timber cladding and tile-hung elevations? Stone, slate, rubber, glass, steel, aluminum... the list is endless. Much will depend on the style of building, but there are choices to be made that will determine how much you spend up-front, and how much you spend on maintenance in the longer term.



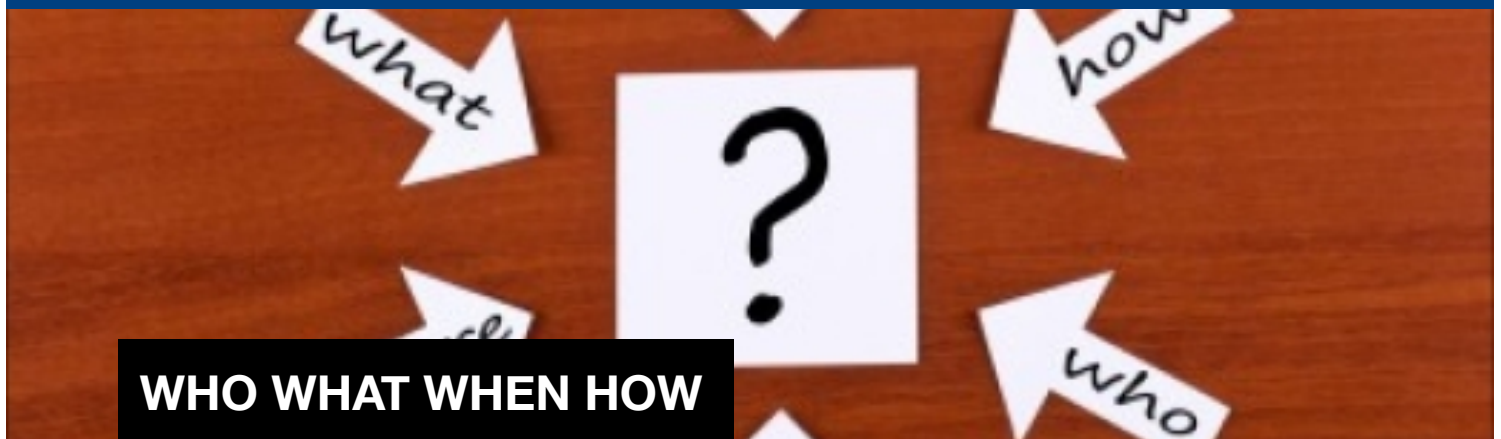
WHAT TO CONSIDER

Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

Regulation and rising energy costs are making sustainable 'green' design an essential consideration rather than a 'nice to have'. There are now minimum requirements laid down by national and local government. Your architect will know all about these and will discuss with you how 'green' you want to and can be. There are lots of renewable energy solutions - solar panels, ground source heat pumps, rainwater harvesting to name but a few. Although these add costs upfront, they can save you money in the longer-term. Much will depend on your budget and how long you plan to live in the building after the work has been done.

Timetable

Think about and share with your architect key target dates that are important to you. When do you want to start and finish the project? Bear in mind that, as a rule of thumb, it takes at least 4-6 months to agree the design, obtain planning permission and prepare construction drawings before building work can commence. You are less likely to be disappointed if you allow at least 6-12 months for work on existing buildings and about 18 months for new buildings.



The nuts and bolts

The following is a series of questions that will further elaborate on your emotional brief.

Who will live in your home now and in the future?

What different new activities will you need to accommodate?

How do you want your home to fit with the existing environment?

Are there any health and safety issues you need to take account of?

What would you really like to live in?

What do you want your home interior to look like?

What colors will it have?

What facilities for cooling and heating do you want?

Do you want to install or upgrade existing security and/or audio systems?

Do you want a total makeover or a staged process?

What is your budget?

What level of involvement do you want in the management of your renovation?