

Home > How to Develop a New Home > / Developing a New Home

Introduction



Selecting the right team will ensure you have a good working relationship with the designers for the duration of the project

Design Toolkit

Assess potential designers and their response to the Design Brief

[Designer_Assessment_Checklist.pdf](#)

In this stage the aim is to identify and engage the right design team for the rest of the project. You may have engaged a professional designer to help develop the Design Brief. Now you need to assess the ability of various design teams to deliver against the objectives set in that brief, and engage the right one. To do this, you will need to research the options and understand the limitations and skills of each team.

How the right design team can help achieve your project objectives

Selecting the right team will ensure you have a good working relationship with the designers of your house for the duration of the project, and that they fully understand your goals. This will translate into a successful house design. This team is crucial to achieving your desired outcomes and ensuring a smooth process from this stage onwards. It is

therefore important to invest some time in the selection process to ensure you get the most for your money, and limit your risk to an acceptable level.

The design teams you consider for the job should correspond to the procurement decisions made in the Plan stage.

Key Activities

Understand the impact of procurement decisions

Decisions made about procurement during the Plan stage affect the way designers and builders are engaged. The implications are highlighted below:

Custom Design

With a custom design contract you will be engaging a lead designer to design a house specifically for the **site** and brief. A builder will be engaged once the design process has been finalised.

The activities below are especially relevant if you are following this route as choosing the right designer is the key to achieving your objectives.

Design & Build

If you choose this option are buying a package that includes design, build and administration, so should read this stage and the Engage Build Team stage together.

You may have less flexibility in selecting the design team but should still understand the principles described below and ask questions of the company where it is relevant to your project.

You may start a project as a custom design, and then at a certain point (e.g. after obtaining resource consent) change to a design and build option to finalise the design and construct the house.

Group Housing

In this option you are buying a package that includes design, build and administration, so should read this stage and the Engage Build Team stage together.

You will not be involved in selecting the design team but should still understand the principles described below and ask questions of the company where it is relevant to your project.

Revise the Design Brief

After purchasing land it is important to revisit the Design Brief and include relevant information about the **site's** features. This can include:

- ◆ orientation and views
- ◆ landscaping and environment (e.g. prevailing winds, vegetation, watercourses)
- ◆ layout (specially on sloping sites)
- ◆ vehicle access.

Learn about types of designers

In New Zealand there are three main types of designers. The differences between them lie in their skills, level of education and expertise, and the tasks they are able to undertake:

- **Registered architects:** Only professionals registered in the New Zealand Registered Architects Board (<https://www.nzrab.org.nz/>) (NZRAB) can call themselves architects. They must have a recognised architectural degree, have several years of practical experience. Their competence is regularly tested and monitored by the NZRAB. Their skill-set allows them to undertake a design process from its initial idea to practical completion. They are trained to solve design challenges, understand technical issues and local authority requirements, and can act as contract administrators during construction. For more information on Architects and the services they provide click here.
- **Architectural designers:** With special focus on the technical aspects of design, architectural designers predominantly work in the residential design sector and undertake projects from the early stages. They can produce drawings that respond to your needs, as well as consent applications, and can be engaged to administer the construction process. ADNZ is the professional body of architectural designers in New Zealand. Consider choosing an architectural designer who is registered as a member of this organisation.
- **Architectural draughtsmen:** Usually trained in technical institutes, they will generally produce basic working drawings and consent applications but will not be able to offer the skill or expertise of a professional designer. Their focus is on the production of quality drawings instead of design.

Regardless of the type of designer used, it is important to ensure they are a Licensed Building Practitioner (LBP) as this licence is required when designing new homes. A designer's licence can be verified on the **LBP website** (<http://www.business.govt.nz/lbp>).

In addition, designers that belong to a professional body such as the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) or Architectural Designers New Zealand (ADNZ) are held to strict ethical and professional standards, so choosing a member of one of these organisations will help to ensure a higher standard is achieved. Members of these organisations are not able to accept any inducements for using a certain product, so you will get independent advice based on the best option for you.

Understand the value each option can provide

Understanding the value of design and assigning a priority level to it is essential when choosing who will design the house. Options need to be assessed against objectives set earlier in the process regarding the balance between quality, time and cost in order to make the most appropriate decision for the project.

For example, an architect or architectural designer can produce quality design solutions that are tailored to your needs, increasing the likelihood of the end result being a perfect match with the house you've dreamed of. However, if aesthetics and design originality are not priorities for you there may be other options that fit better with your vision and budget.

Understand what you are getting

The scope of works can vary greatly from one designer or company to another. Based on their experience, each designer has refined a list of services and a specific way of doing them that may or may not fit your expectations. During the tendering process request a full description of the prices, services and products offered by shortlisted practices.

Also enquire about the designer's preferred procurement options for construction. Some architects will not engage in a project where they are not in charge of contract administration.

Like any profession, the quality of a designer can vary considerably and even a professional qualification is no guarantee of quality service. However, in general, the more qualified the designer the more **protection** you have should something go wrong. Architects in particular may offer the greatest **protection** as they require registration to use the title and need to regularly prove their professional competence to maintain registration. The **Registered Architects Board website** (<https://www.nzrab.org.nz/>) maintains the registration details of all architects in New Zealand.

Selecting an architect or architectural designer who is a member of a professional body such as the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) or Architectural Designers New Zealand (ADNZ) will also help to ensure a higher quality result. Members of such organisations are required to meet high ethical and competency standards in addition to holding a professional qualification.

Learn about other professionals that may be needed

In addition to the lead designer, experts from different fields need to be engaged to help deliver the project. They will be in charge of designing the house's systems and structure and may vary depending on the project's complexity and objectives.

The responsibility of appointing other professionals (also referred to as sub-consultants) will depend on what procurement method you choose:

- **Custom Design:** Who appoints the other professionals will depend on the contract you have with your lead designer. You may decide to appoint some or all of the sub-consultants to have more control over the project, or you may get your lead designer to do it. It is extremely important to record in the contract exactly which party is responsible.
- **Design and Build:** Typically the builder or developer who leads the project will be responsible for choosing and appointing the other professionals. What often happens is the client (you) carries out a certain amount of work before committing to a design and build contract. If this is the case, review the project with the builder to ensure nothing has been missed, and record this in the contract.
- **Group Housing:** This procurement method involves the design and construction (and sometimes the land) being sold as a package. You will have no involvement in selecting or appointing other professionals.

According to the aims and budget, discuss with the design team who these people are and the right time to involve them. The following are some suggestions:

- land surveyors
- quantity surveyors
- services engineers
- structural engineers
- geotechnical engineers
- sustainability consultants
- urban planners
- landscape architects
- interior designers.

Consider appointing the full design team early

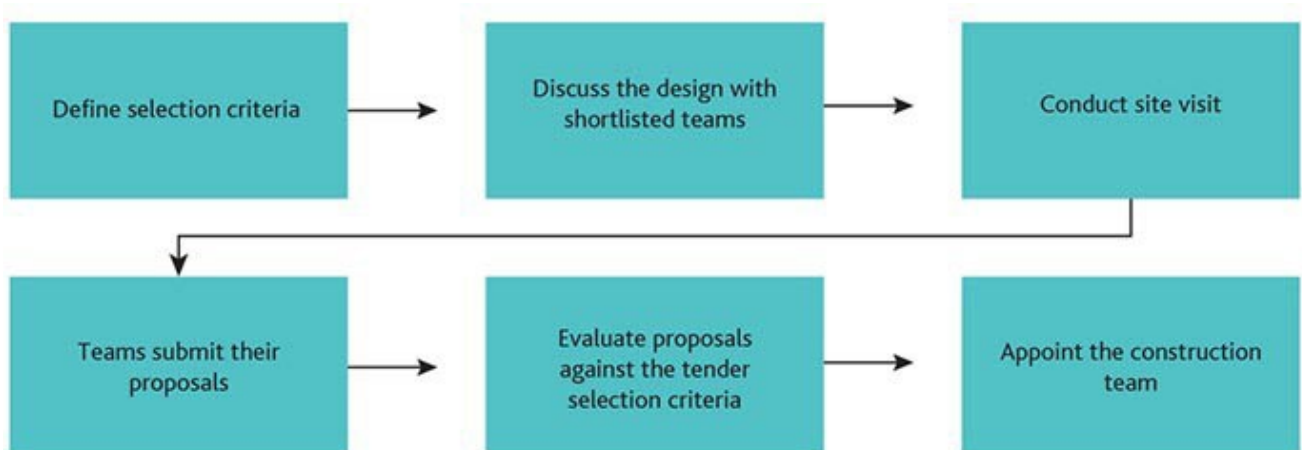
This approach to design engages builders and engineering teams from early stages of the design process to integrate their knowledge into the design and involve them in decisions. This increases the chance of achieving a more comprehensive solution and reduces the possibility of having to make adjustments later in the process when it is more expensive and time consuming.

Engaging a builder at the start of the process means they will better understand the design of the building, and the lead designer can use their expertise with materials and construction methodologies to lower the cost of building.

If integrated design is an option you are considering it is wise to discuss it with prospective designers beforehand. They might have experience on the subject and can suggest options or, on the other hand, may be unwilling to follow this path. It will also depend on what procurement method you choose.

More information on integrated design can be found on the [Ministry for the Environment website \(http://www.mfe.govt.nz/\)](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/).

Evaluate the options and choose a designer



The designer selection process

After assessing the different types of designers, their skills and scope of work, and the procurement process that suits you and the project; you can begin the final selection process. This is summarised in the figure below.

In addition to evaluating proposals, you should ensure the team you choose is one that:

- ◆ you can work with and feel comfortable talking to, expressing your doubts and ideas
- ◆ can meet the design brief and has sufficient experience and knowledge to provide solutions to your requirements. If sustainability considerations are key for your project, make sure your designer has experience in the area or is willing to learn and explore new ideas.
- ◆ has references available from previous clients, either someone you know or can get in touch with
- ◆ have samples of work in the form of completed projects with similar features, standards of quality and price for comparison (e.g. engaging a design team with prior experience in 8 Homestar rated homes, if that is a standard the project is aiming for).
- ◆ has appropriate professional indemnity insurance that will protect you in case something goes wrong. Members of professional bodies such as ADNZ or NZIA are required to have professional indemnity insurance in order to be eligible for membership.

Deliverables



A designer prepares sketches

Designer proposals

You should set a simple, clear and fair selection process to choose the project's designer. When searching for a designer, websites such as Architectural Designers New Zealand, or the New Zealand Institute of Architects provide an easy to use designer search tool for you to narrow down your selection. After researching several options, you should request a small group to submit a proposal that includes:

- scope of works and services
- statement of deliverables – the products they will submit at each stage and their level of detail
- sample of projects that show relevant experience
- programme
- fee schedule
- terms and conditions of engagement.

Design Service Agreement

This legally binding document seals a working partnership between you and the designer. In addition to refining the items that were included in the proposal the agreement should include:

- **a full scope of services.** This includes inputs, tasks and deliverables for each stage of the project
- **fees.** This includes conditions for payment, disbursements and sub-consultant fees
- **general conditions.** This covers liability, insurance, disputes, notice of defects, variations and termination, copyright and more.

Most professional institutions have a standard form of contract that clearly spells out all obligations and expectations. It is important to use a recognised and understood form of contract to ensure everyone's interests are protected. It is highly recommended that contracts are reviewed by a lawyer.

Who should you be talking to?

Legal

Engaging legal advice to outline and review contracts will ensure clarity and the inclusion of all the necessary information.

Professional boards and associations

Architects, designers and draughtsmen are grouped in New Zealand by different boards and associations. These can provide lists of people that are qualified to do the job and, most importantly, assurance they have the knowledge and experience to do it.

What to look out for

The screenshot shows the website for Context Architects. The header includes the company name '(context)', contact information for Auckland (09 358 8140) and Christchurch (03 550 1550), and a navigation menu with items like 'MEET US', 'WHAT WE DO', 'HOW WE DO IT', 'NEWS', 'WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY', 'SAYHELLO', and 'CLIENT LOGIN'. The main content area is divided into three sections:

- Our services:** Well-designed developments achieve excellent returns. Our medium density residential experts get this. We design good-looking, quality, affordable homes that people want to live in and that deliver great commercial returns. We can show you how. [Check out our e-book.](#) [Call us to discuss your medium density project.](#)
- Working with us you get:**
 - medium density & mixed use specialist
 - placemaking & urban design
 - interior design packages
 - successful developments
- Talk to the team:** Four team members are listed with their photos and roles: Scott O'Connell (Associate Director), Anton Fennick (Project Architect), Karen Manson (Associate Director), and Heather Bewell (Designer).

Below these sections is a 'Case studies' section with four featured projects:

- Ranges View:** Replicating the best characteristics of established neighbourhoods is the key to successful developments...
- Panmure:** This benchmark scheme for 12 houses, 14 apartments and four commercial units demonstrates what good design can achieve...
- Campus accommodation:** Context is working with a North Island tertiary institution on a masterplan for its extensive campus...
- The Block NZ Season II:** Context Architects is the official architects to TV3's highest rating reality TV show 'The Block'...

At the bottom of the case studies section, there are four more project images without text descriptions.

Spend time researching potential designers' previous work

Not researching the designer's past work

Choosing a designer based on an uninformed decision and without previous research could lead to hiring a team that can't deliver the time, cost or quality outcomes desired. Spending some time looking at the designer's previous work and talking to people who have worked with them can validate their skill level and ability to perform. Undertaking such research will help you get the most from your investment. It is also important that you like their work, that their vision is likely to match yours and that you feel comfortable talking to them. They will become very involved in what is likely to be a stressful part of your life and it is important that you have a good, productive relationship.

Using unclear contracts

Contracts that are vague or complicated can result in misunderstandings during the project, with you not knowing what to expect from designers and designers failing to deliver timely and sufficient information. Simple yet comprehensive contract documents are essential for a smooth design process. It is recommended you use a standard, recognised, industry backed contract.

Selecting a designer based solely on cost

It is important not to select any professional on the basis of lowest cost alone, unless it has already been established that they can perform to the required levels of quality and performance.