

THE BASICS



IN PLAIN SIGHT HOUSE

One of the easiest things to check off your brief to-do list is all the basic information. It gives your designer a snapshot of your family and your general requirements for the project.

When you are describing your existing house include the general size, condition, and construction type. For example, is it made of bricks or weatherboard, how many bedrooms and bathrooms does it have, has it been renovated in the past, is it generally in good, fair or poor condition?

This is also a chance to make note of any details about your family that may impact the design. Include every family member's name, age, hobbies, occupation, personal requirements.

Personal requirements are, well, personal. They could include requirements particular to your family such as shift work hours or working from home, extended family. They may include physical considerations such as mobility requirements, sensory stimulation sensitivities or even indoor pets.

Your project needs are unique so we would like to accommodate them.

Name

Project address

Email address

Phone number

Who will be living in your home?

(don't forget to include pets)

Who will be the key decision makers for the project?

Is the property part of a Body Corporate or Owners Corporation?

Yes

No

Describe the existing house.

(See suggestions on page 1, but don't confine yourself to these alone)

What you enjoy about your current house?

What do you dislike about your current house?

How long you intend to live in your new house?

What design magazines or blogs have you looked at, which ones do you particularly enjoy?

Do you have a Pinterest account or collection of ideas and images you like?

How soon you would like to start the process?

How involved would you like to be in the design process?

I'm busy, just keep me up to date with the important stuff

I'd like to make the main choices but not all

I want to be as involved as possible with all choices

Great work! That's the first step done... not so bad was it? Now you can relax for the rest of the week and we'll see you soon with the next step of your dream-home brief.

Don't forget that we always love hearing about projects, no matter what stage you are at. You can book in for a free phone or video chat with Mairead.

[Click here to get in touch.](#)

THE UNIQUE DETAILS

Think in detail about the way you live. What are your rituals and habits? These are all the things that make your family life unique and wonderful. They are also things that will elevate your house into a home that will give you daily delight. They could be how you currently live or how you hope your new house will allow you to live. Remember, don't just think about the inside spaces of your home – the outside is lived in too.

The what not the how:

A brief is not a list of numbers – 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 200 square meters, 1 carpark. One of the best pieces of advice I can give you about putting together a brief is to think about WHAT you want from your home, not HOW you want it done. The HOW is only arrived at by a thoughtful and wholistic conceptual overview of the project. Each requirement has to be unpacked and balanced against all the other brief requests, existing house, site conditions, planning restraints, design language and budget...that is why it's important to have a professional design your home.

NEXT DOOR HOUSE 1



For example:

What do you enjoy doing as a family?

- You like cooking together and your kitchen will need to accommodate 6 people at once.
- You all ride bikes and need a space that can comfortably accommodate multiple bikes, helmets and smelly shoes but does not clutter the front entry.

These define your aspirations and functional requirements without locking you into a layout or design that hasn't gone through a rigorous and thorough design process as part of the whole house.

What are your weekends like?

What is the first thing you do when you
get up in the morning?

What is the first thing you do when you
get home after work and school?

What are the last things you do as you
get ready to leave the house?

Continues over page...

What makes you feel recharged when you are at home?

When or where are the best conversations had between different members of your family?

Where do the people in your family go to think or be alone?

What do you enjoy doing together as a family?

We hope that this has you thinking about all the ways your family and home life are special. There are so many things we all do unconsciously to operate as a family unit, it can be nice to reflect on them once in a while. Keep thinking nice thoughts about your family and we'll see you next week.

Don't forget that we always love hearing about projects, no matter what stage you are at. You can book in for a free phone or video chat with Mairead.

[Click here to get in touch.](#)

THE BIG QUESTIONS



It is important that everyone in your family who will be involved in making decisions on the project agrees on the brief. Before you discuss your project with a designer, discuss it together and make sure everyone has the same overall goals for your home. Differing opinions on finish selections or room layouts are inevitable and can be easily addressed through the design process, but misaligned budget expectations or overall motivations will create issues throughout the project. As we've mentioned it is important that all decision makers for the project are involved in putting this brief together but this week it is particularly important to involve all decision makers equally.

Answers for big questions:

Answers to the Big Questions can be difficult to arrive at. It is often not the first response that really nails how you feel. The best approach is to un-pack each question by writing as many sentences as you possibly can.

There aren't that many different things you can write. Your answers will start off with the obvious ...looking nice, having a bigger kitchen, being comfortable, etc... and when you get to about 15 or 20 you might run out.

That's where it starts to get interesting, because the first 20 are just your initial responses so keep going. It doesn't matter if you start to repeat yourself because each time it will go a little deeper and become little more specific. The sweeping statements you made early on are being unpacked and examined more closely. When you think you've exhausted your answers take a step back and see if you can find any common threads among the answers that really resonate with you.



UPSIDE DOWN HOUSE

Our new house will make our lives better by...

When I picture myself in my dream home, I feel...

Continues over page...

During this process I am looking forward to...

During this process I am concerned about...

To make this project a success I am looking for an Architect or Designer who...

Phew, that was a tough one! But you did well. Go and have a lie down or a glass or wine and we'll see you next week with the final stage of your brief.

Once you've recovered, if you would like to chat about any aspect of your brief or project in more detail why not book in for a free phone or video chat.

[Click here to get in touch.](#)

THE BUDGET

Your budget and your design aspirations are two different things. The budget is arrived at by considering your current and future financial situation, your views on property value or capital investment. It is important to figure these things out before you speak to your designer and be clear on your financial situation. It is also important to realise that your design aspirations are distinct from these considerations. They are what, ideally, you hope to gain. However the financial and the design aspects of the project must be made compatible.

Your Architect or Designer will guide you in finding a scope of work and project size that will suit your budget and maximise the value of the investment you are making. Working through a concept design or feasibility stage forms a clear project scope to obtain a preliminary costing from a qualified Quantity Surveyor. This will allow you to see how the budget and the design brief align. Armed with this data, informed decisions about scope and budget can be made to ensure that both are realistically balanced, and the foundation is set for a successful project.



Exploring design options and working in detail with your Architect or Designer can save you money. It is best to have things decided while you're working on paper, rather than making costly changes during construction. To avoid changes late in the project it is important to be open with your Designer or Architect about your budget so they can advise you properly.



NEXT DOOR HOUSE 2

A. How much cash do you have access to?

This could include savings, shares or any other funds you will put towards the build.

B. How much bank finance do you have access to?

If you are financing the build with a bank loan, have a chat to your bank to find out what your position is before starting your project. If you are using a construction loan, ask them if they will be making payments only at fixed milestones of the build or will work with Architect certified monthly staged payments. This will have an impact on the terms of your construction contract.

C. Are there any foreseeable changes to your financial circumstances?

A project could run for a year or more and your financial position could change during that time. Are you expecting increased income (for example: a salary raise or change in job position), or increased expenses (for example: private school fees or additional dependant family members)?

D. 10% design contingency

We recommend having a 10% design contingency in place through the design process. From the initial costing, you may be tempted to add in little bits here and there as the design develops. Having some room to move below the cap of your construction budget will allow for this.

E. 10% construction contingency

Once the project has started construction a 10% construction contingency should be held on top of the construction price to cover any unforeseen circumstances. These could be things like rock below ground or hidden asbestos

Is the amount you have specified for your budget the total amount you have for the project or the construction cost?

During your project there will be fees for permits, certificates and multiple consultants involved to ensure your building complies with all technical requirements. As well as the Architect or Designer these could include a Geotechnical Engineer, Structural Engineer, Building Surveyor or Quantity Surveyor. During the design stages there will be design and consultant fees to pay, but over the extended length of the design process you may be able to cover these smaller costs outside of the construction budget.

How will this project give you value?

Finally, moving away from cold hard numbers – a change in financial circumstances will change your lifestyle, as will living in a beautiful new house. You may feel that your long-term aspirations for your home are worth some short-term financial discomfort, or you may value your financial comfort and need to reduce the scope and expectations of your project. Going back to review your answers to your Big Questions from last week may help. Ask yourself, at what point are the positive contributions of your new home outweighed by any additional financial burden?

While everyone's circumstances are different you can use this simple equation as a general way to work out your construction budget, excluding consultant fees:

A. Available cash:

B. Available finance:

C. Additional future fund:

Total available funds (A + B + C)

D. 10% design contingency:

E. 10% construction contingency:

Construction budget (A + B + C - D - E)

...And that's it, you're done! Congratulations.

We hope that this has been an informative and enjoyable few weeks and you're feeling confident in your project's direction. This is the first step in an exciting journey and armed with this brief you are off to a great start.

Once you've recovered, if you would like to chat about any aspect of your brief or project in more detail why not book in for a free phone or video chat.

[Click here to get in touch.](#)