

Stage 3. Getting a Sketch Design

Here the design concept crystallises. What began in Stage 2 as a loose series of ideas, now becomes a tighter scheme. Issues such as orientation, siting and the general form of the building have been resolved, but the layout and spatial design will require more effort to fine tune. Many homeowners find it hard to decide what they want until they see what they don't want — the sketch design refines the ideas that the concept design generated. The architect, working in collaboration with the homeowner, assembles these ideas into a custom-made plan based on individual, lifestyle requirements, and of course, budget.

A few examples:

- Creating an open-plan kitchen and living area that uses the home theatre as its focal point
- Giving en suite dual access to eliminate an underused and costly powder room
- Opting for the small carport instead of a big, two-car garage, thus freeing up either ground space or finances that can be better spent elsewhere
- Re-zoning by shifting bedrooms from a public area to a private one to better suit your evolving family lifestyle

Upon completion, the drawings can be useful for preliminary discussions with Council, but they are not yet ready for formal application and they are definitely not ready for construction, or even a builder's quote. However the drawings should be suitable for preliminary discussion with an engineer and perhaps a preliminary costing from a builder.

If the "grand plan" overwhelms the budget, the homeowner may opt to handle the renovation one step at a time. The MasterPlan approach takes the 'big picture' renovation and breaks it down into smaller, logically and practically sequenced works.

Tackle the most urgent needs first and save the remainder for some point down the track as funds permit.

The essence of Sketch Design is to make some decisions about the earlier concept ideas and to finalise the approach in terms of planning and construction staging. The value the architect brings to this phase is significant. Attention to detail is the architect's hallmark. No other design alternative offers a more thorough approach. This fact alone helps minimise worry and ensures that the project turns out just the way the homeowner pictured it. At its conclusion, the owner is left with a clear picture of their future home.

Up next in Step 4: Developing the Design, the architect prepares developed design drawings and consults in more detail with relevant authorities.