



Stage 5. Obtaining Planning/Development Approval

To protect neighbourhood amenity, states and local councils introduce planning guidelines. Not every building project requires planning consent, but many do, especially in the inner city. Even as early as Stage 2 (Getting a Design Concept), the architect will have been very aware of local planning regulations and will have established a balance between the client's needs, the budget, the existing conditions and the requirements of the local planning department.

Four states and one territory call it planning approval (Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory) while two states and one territory call it development approval (NSW, South Australia, ACT). All have the same objective, which is to control our built environment and protect the interests of local residents. In assembling a planning submission, the architect will arrange meetings with planning authorities and if necessary, specialist consultants. To lodge a planning application streetscape surveys, shadow diagrams, landscape plans and profiles of neighbouring properties are often necessary, together with a full description of the proposed building work.

The skill and knowledge that the architect brings to this phase can mean the difference between a relatively quick, painless process and a long delay. Approval for a well-documented, professional planning submission can take anywhere from 3-6 months but many more if the submission lacks material or raises legitimate objections.

Councils often go to great lengths to notify members of the community about a proposed development. In most cases, a letter is sent to the immediate neighbours and a 'notice of intent' is displayed on the site. Interested members of the community are invited to visit council offices and view the plans. If there are any objections, the council may schedule a meeting and attempt to resolve the issue. Upon reviewing the submissions of all concerned, a recommendation is made to approve or reject the proposal.

Stage 5 can be one of the most complex and challenging stages of the design and construction process. A neighbourhood-sensitive design, plus a thorough understanding of planning guidelines and process is paramount to its success.