



ONCE
CONSTRUCTION

A-Z GUIDE TO ARCHITECTURAL NEW BUILDS

A detailed guide for homeowners

www.onceconstruction.co.nz



YOUR DREAM HOME STARTS WITH THE RIGHT FOUNDATION

Designing and building a new home is one of life's biggest milestones, a chance to create a space that reflects your lifestyle, supports your future, and brings your vision to life. But while building a home is exciting, it also comes with major decisions, financial commitments, and technical processes that can quickly feel overwhelming without the right guidance. From understanding your land and setting a realistic budget to selecting trusted professionals and navigating council requirements, every stage plays a crucial role in the success of your project.

At **ONCE Construction**, we believe building your home should feel inspiring, informed, and rewarding, not confusing or stressful. That's why we've created this guide, a practical, professional resource designed to educate and empower homeowners through every phase of the architectural new build journey.

This guide is here to help you make confident decisions, avoid common pitfalls, and better understand the process from concept to completion.

In this guide, you'll discover:

- Essential planning tools to help define your vision
- Lifestyle and functionality checklists to align design with your needs
- Guidance on selecting the right architect and builder
- Budgeting frameworks and realistic cost considerations
- Contract structures and construction agreement options
- Insurance and guarantee protections
- Smart home planning and future-proof technology
- Professional insights to help protect your investment

Defining Your Dream Home Vision



Before plans are drawn or budgets are finalised, one of the most important steps is understanding what you truly want from your future home. Architectural design should always begin with your lifestyle, priorities, and long-term plans. This means considering not only what looks visually appealing, but also how your home will function for you and your family on a daily basis for years to come.

Key considerations:

1. Family size and future growth
2. Work-from-home requirements
3. Indoor-outdoor living preferences
4. Privacy needs
5. Sustainability goals
6. Entertaining spaces
7. Accessibility over time

Vision Planning Checklist:

- ☐ Define must-have features
- ☐ Separate needs from wants
- ☐ Set realistic priorities
- ☐ Gather design inspiration
- ☐ Consider future family changes
- ☐ Align ideas with budget expectations

Choosing the Right Architect For Your Vision



Selecting the right architect is one of the most critical decisions in your building journey. A skilled architect does more than create attractive plans, they translate your vision into a functional, compliant, and buildable design that balances creativity with practical execution.

Your architect should be someone who understands your goals, communicates clearly, and has proven experience in designing homes similar to your project scope. Ideally, your architect and builder should collaborate early to ensure the design is both inspiring and realistic within your budget.

What to look for in an Architect:

- Proven experience with similar residential projects
- Strong understanding of New Zealand building regulations
- Excellent communication skills
- Detailed construction documentation capabilities
- Willingness to collaborate with builders
- Availability throughout design and build phases
- Transparent fee structures
- Positive client references

Builder Selection Checklist

How do I choose the right builder?



Your builder is the professional responsible for transforming plans into reality, making builder selection equally as important as design itself. The right builder provides not only construction expertise but also transparency, project management, problem-solving, and peace of mind.

At ONCE Construction, we believe the best outcomes are achieved when builders are involved early in the process, helping align design ambition with construction practicality and realistic costings.

Builder Selection Criteria:

- Licensed Building Practitioner credentials
- Experience in architectural or custom homes
- Strong communication and professionalism
- Transparent pricing systems
- Insurance coverage
- Health and safety compliance
- Reliable subcontractor network
- Positive testimonials and completed project examples
- Guarantee or warranty offerings

Builder Selection Checklist

How do I choose the right builder?



Builder Checklist:

- ☐ Are they experienced in complex new builds?
- ☐ Can they provide recent client references?
- ☐ Are they financially stable?
- ☐ Do they offer realistic timelines?
- ☐ Are pricing estimates detailed and transparent?
- ☐ Do they hold proper insurance?
- ☐ Do they provide security and site safety measures?
- ☐ Are they collaborative with architects and consultants?

Red Flags to Avoid:

- Vague pricing
- Poor communication
- Limited portfolio
- Lack of licensing
- Unrealistically cheap estimates
- Minimal contract detail



ONCE Construction is a Licensed Building Practitioner and a member of Registered Master Builders.



Understanding Your Budget

How much will my new home cost?



Budget is one of the most important elements of a successful new build. Establishing realistic expectations early allows you to make informed decisions while avoiding overcapitalisation or financial stress later in the project.

A comprehensive budget should include far more than construction costs alone. Land preparation, council fees, design services, engineering, landscaping, utility connections, interior finishes, and contingency allowances must all be factored in.

Cost Planning Tips:

- Obtain preliminary estimates early
- Use professional quantity surveyors where possible
- Be realistic about premium upgrades
- Prioritise must-have features
- Keep contingency reserves
- Review specifications carefully

Budget Checklist:

- ☐ Have all approvals been included?
- ☐ Have utility connections been costed?
- ☐ Have interior selections been budgeted realistically?
- ☐ Is landscaping included?
- ☐ Is contingency funding allocated?

At **ONCE Construction**, accurate planning and transparent pricing are essential to reducing surprises and ensuring confidence throughout the process.

Building Contracts

What building contract suits your need?



Early-stage estimates can provide helpful guidance, but homeowners should understand that initial ballpark pricing is only the starting point. Concept plans may offer broad feasibility, but true construction costs become far more accurate once detailed architectural drawings, engineering documentation, and quantity surveying are complete.

Detailed costing provides clarity around labour, materials, subcontractors, and site-specific requirements, helping homeowners make informed decisions before committing to construction. This stage is crucial because it reveals whether your desired design can realistically be delivered within your available budget.

At ONCE Construction, we believe accurate pricing is a cornerstone of successful project planning. Comprehensive cost analysis minimises surprises, protects investment decisions, and creates stronger confidence throughout the building process.

Common Contract Types:

- Fixed Price Contracts
- Cost Plus / Charge-Up Contracts
- Labour Only Contracts
- Turnkey Contracts

Contract Checklist:

- ☐ Review payment structure
- ☐ Confirm variation terms
- ☐ Understand warranties
- ☐ Verify guarantees
- ☐ Confirm insurance obligations

Insurance & Risk Protection



Insurance is a critical yet often underestimated component of the building process. Proper coverage protects your investment against unexpected events such as theft, vandalism, fire, weather damage, or construction defects.

Important protections may include contract works insurance, public liability insurance, builder's risk policies, and structural guarantees such as Master Build Guarantees. These protections help safeguard both your project and your financial position throughout the construction process.

Before work begins, homeowners should confirm all relevant insurance policies are in place and understand exactly what is covered. Peace of mind during construction is invaluable.

Insurance Checklist:

- ☐ Confirm builder coverage
- ☐ Secure homeowner protection
- ☐ Review policy details
- ☐ Understand exclusions
- ☐ Verify guarantees



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