

7 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE PLANNING YOUR RENOVATION, EXTENSION OR NEW HOME

Understand drawings, engineering, approvals and how to get your project ready to build.



START WITH THE RIGHT BRIEF.

You do not need to know every technical answer. Start by making your goals clear, then find the right person to develop your plans.

01 Get clear on what you want to build.

Write a short brief: what does your home need to do better, what would you like to keep, and what needs to change? Separate your must-haves from your nice-to-haves. Share your property address, photos, inspiration, approximate construction budget and preferred timing.

02 Choose a designer and agree on the scope.

A building designer, architect or draftsman can help develop your drawings. Choose someone suited to the scale and complexity of your project. Ask what is included: concept design, detailed plans, consultant coordination, and preparing or lodging approval applications.

Before you engage them, ask:

Who will check the property constraints? Who arranges engineering and other reports? What drawings will I receive at each stage? Which fees are included, and which costs are separate? How will the design stay aligned with my budget?



CHECK THE PROPERTY. UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURE.

The design needs to work with the site and the existing home, as well as the way you want to live.

03 Find out what affects your property.

Ask your designer to check the planning controls and site constraints before the design progresses too far. Depending on the property, these can include setbacks, height limits, easements, flooding, bushfire or heritage. A survey and other specialist reports may be needed; ask which are relevant to your proposal.

04 Confirm whether engineering is needed.

Work that changes the structure - such as removing a supporting wall, adding another storey or altering foundations - may need structural engineering. Ask your designer and certifier to confirm the requirements for your proposed work. You do not need to diagnose the structure yourself.

An engineer can assess the structure and prepare calculations, drawings and specifications for the structural work. Confirm whether their scope includes a site inspection, soil testing, inspections during construction or other specialist input.

A useful question for your designer

"What engineering or other consultant work does my project need, when should we involve them, and who will coordinate it?"



KNOW YOUR APPROVAL PATHWAY.

Your property and proposed work determine the pathway. Confirm it with council or a registered certifier, with help from your designer.

05 Understand approvals before planning the build.

Not every project follows the same process. Ask which pathway applies and what documents are required.

EXEMPT DEVELOPMENT

Some minor work needs no planning or construction approval, provided it meets the relevant standards.

COMPLYING DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE (CDC)

Combines planning and construction approval for eligible work that meets specific development standards. Council or a registered certifier assesses the application.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION (DA)

Council assesses the proposal. For building work, a construction certificate is then required before construction starts. A DA approval alone is not permission to begin building.

Ask for a project-specific document checklist

It may include a survey, site and design plans, engineering, specifications, energy-efficiency documentation such as BASIX, and specialist reports. Confirm who prepares and lodges each item, plus consultant and application fees.

Applications are generally lodged through the NSW Planning Portal. Your designer may offer lodgement support; confirm this in their scope. Keep copies of the approved drawings, conditions and supporting reports.

Official guidance

NSW Government: building approvals

NSW Planning Portal: complying development

BRING YOUR PLANS TO LIFE.

Plans underway? That is a good time to discuss the next stage with Garland.

06 Prepare for a useful building conversation.

Send your current drawings, project address, scope, approximate budget, preferred timing and approval status. Include engineering and approval documents you already have. We are best suited to major renovations, extensions, additions and custom new homes on the Central Coast.

Why do we ask for plans?

Plans help us understand your layout, dimensions and how new work connects with your existing home. That makes our conversation about construction and budget more useful. More complete drawings and specifications allow a more detailed quote with fewer assumptions. Plans ready or being prepared are a good starting point; you don't need every approval finalised before speaking with us.

Concept drawings can start a conversation; a detailed quote may need more complete drawings, specifications and selections. Ask what the quote includes and how exclusions or allowances will be handled.

07 Understand what is needed before work starts.

For work requiring approval, the construction approval must be in place and a principal certifier appointed before construction begins. A CDC combines planning and construction approval; building work following a DA requires a construction certificate. Your certifier confirms the inspection and completion requirements.

Choosing and appointing the certifier is your responsibility. They carry out the required inspections and assess the occupation certificate at completion. Confirm the building contract, agreed scope and required insurance documentation before work starts.

Your next step with Garland

Have plans ready or being prepared? Share where you are up to and we will discuss the information needed to review the build.

garlandconstructions@gmail.com

garlandconstructions.com.au

YOUR NEXT-STEP CHECKLIST.

Use this to prepare for your design conversation and keep track of the information you need.

- ☐ Project address, site photos and any existing drawings
- ☐ A clear brief, must-haves and inspiration images
- ☐ Approximate construction budget and preferred timing
- ☐ Designer scope, fees and consultant responsibilities
- ☐ Property constraints and survey requirements checked
- ☐ Engineering and specialist report requirements confirmed
- ☐ Approval pathway and required documents confirmed
- ☐ Current plans and approval status ready to share with Garland

Design & engineering contacts

Contacts Lucas has shared with homeowners taking their next step. Discuss suitability, scope, fees and availability directly.

Ken Jones - Building designer
0411 434 269

Sherry Denton - Draftsperson
0408 296 283

Colin Fisher - Structural engineer, if needed
0409 035 089

Further help
Central Coast Council: development applications
NSW Government: what certifiers do

Prepared October 2026. This guide explains the general sequence; your designer, council and certifier should confirm the requirements for your property and proposed work. Consultant contacts are independent of Garland.