



Melbourne Residential Planning Guide



Introduction

Beginning a residential project

Planning a renovation, extension or new home is an exciting step, but it can also feel complex.

Many homeowners begin the process unsure where to start or what factors may influence the project ahead. Planning overlays, site constraints, budget expectations and design priorities can all shape what is possible.

Over the past decade, Hatch Projects has worked with homeowners across Melbourne to navigate these early stages and develop thoughtful residential architecture suited to the way people genuinely live.

Drawing on more than forty years of architectural design experience, this guide outlines several key considerations that can help bring clarity to the early stages of a residential project.

We hope it provides useful insight as you begin thinking about your own home.

— Hatch Projects





Understanding Planning Overlays

Many residential properties across Melbourne sit within planning overlays. These planning controls guide how buildings can be altered, extended or replaced.

Heritage overlays are among the most common. They aim to protect the character and significance of historic neighbourhoods and buildings.

While this can introduce additional considerations for homeowners, it does not necessarily prevent meaningful architectural change.

In many cases, thoughtful contemporary design can work successfully alongside heritage structures, allowing homes to evolve while respecting their context.

Understanding the planning environment early in the process helps identify opportunities and constraints before significant time or cost is invested in design work.

Renovate or Rebuild?

One of the most common questions

Homeowners often face the decision of whether to renovate an existing house or begin again with a new build.

The right answer depends on several factors, including:

- the structural condition of the existing building
- planning overlays or heritage controls
- the size and configuration of the site
- the long-term needs of the household
- the available project budget

In many situations, a well-considered extension can transform an existing home while retaining its character and connection to place.

In other cases, starting again with a new home may provide greater flexibility in layout, sustainability and long-term performance. And in some cases it may provide considerations to look for another property that is better suited.

Early architectural advice can help assess these options and determine the most appropriate pathway for the property.



Setting a Realistic Budget

Establishing a realistic construction budget is an important early step in any residential project.

Construction costs can vary significantly depending on the complexity of the design, site conditions, materials and level of detailing.

Beyond construction itself, projects also involve additional costs such as:

- planning approvals
- consultant fees
- documentation and engineering
- landscaping and external works
- contingency allowances

Discussing budget expectations early allows the architectural design to develop in a way that aligns with both the project vision and financial framework.

This alignment helps avoid costly redesign or unexpected constraints later in the process.



Why Early Architectural Advice Helps

Clarity before design begins

Many homeowners approach designers once they have already formed a clear picture of what they would like to build.

While this enthusiasm is valuable, beginning with a feasibility discussion can provide important context before design decisions are made.

Early architectural design advice can help identify:

- planning overlays and site constraints
- opportunities within the property
- appropriate project scale
- potential risks or limitations
- realistic pathways forward

This clarity allows the design process to move forward with a strong foundation.



The Architectural Design Process

From initial idea to completed home



While every project is unique, most residential architectural projects follow a similar progression.

1. Feasibility consultation

An initial design consultation to review site conditions, planning overlays and project objectives.

2. Concept design

Early design ideas and spatial arrangements are developed and explored.

3. Planning approvals

Where required, the project is submitted for council review and approval.

4. Detailed documentation

Construction drawings and consultant coordination are completed.

5. Construction

The home is built, bringing the design vision into reality.

Understanding these stages helps homeowners approach the process with greater confidence.

About Hatch Projects



Residential design in Melbourne

Hatch Projects is a Melbourne-based residential design studio specialising in heritage overlays, contemporary extensions and new homes.

Led by over 40 years of architectural experience, the practice focuses on thoughtful residential design shaped by context, practicality and the way people genuinely live.

Projects range from carefully considered alterations to heritage homes through to contemporary residential architecture and multi-dwelling developments across Melbourne.

The studio works closely with clients to create homes that respond to their site, their lifestyle and their long-term aspirations.

Considering a Residential Project?



Are you thinking about renovating or building?

Many homeowners begin exploring a residential project months – sometimes years – before construction begins.

If you are considering a project in the near future, it can be helpful to start thinking about a few early questions:

- Have you identified the property you intend to renovate or build on?
- Do you have a rough sense of your project budget?
- Are you aware of any planning overlays affecting the site?
- Are you exploring ideas for how the home might evolve?

If the answer to several of these questions is yes, it may be the right time to begin discussing the possibilities for your project.

Many clients begin with a feasibility consultation to explore the opportunities and constraints of their site before design work begins.



Photography
Michelle Broadhurst: Cover, 2-3,6
Mint Lighting: 7
Lisbeth Grossman: 4-5, 11-12

Next Steps

Every residential project begins with a series of important early decisions.

For many clients, the process starts with a feasibility consultation — a structured architectural session that reviews the site, planning context and project objectives before design work begins.

This initial discussion helps establish a clear pathway for the project ahead.

If you are considering renovating, extending or building a home, we invite you to learn more about our approach.

Hatch Projects
Residential Design | Melbourne

www.hatchprojects.com.au

Limited residential project openings available each year.

HATCH
PROJECTS