



10 Essential Things You Must Know Before Building Your Dream Home...

*Building your dream home can be an overwhelming experience,
so at Swan & Sons Homes we guide you through the whole process
to ensure your experience is as stress free as possible.*

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1. CHECK THE REPUTATION OF YOUR BUILDER

Sometimes your budget doesn't afford you the luxury of including everything you want first up. Your builder should encourage you to think of everything you may want or plan to have in the future, so when you are ready to include the next part of your dream home it looks like it was always a part of your home and not a poor add on.

It is important to research your builder and to find the right building company to work with your land. You need to take into consideration whether or not the builder has a good reputation, and if they are respected for their quality of work.

The best referrals are those from previous clients, so you should ask to see testimonials and houses that they have completed.

Make sure that the builder has all of the necessary licenses and insurances in place.

- Google builders and check for online reviews
- Building Awards are always a good measure if the builder is proud of their work
- Do a licence check

2. DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

Make sure you trust your builder and understand what is involved in your building process. No question is ever too silly to ask.

The biggest mistake made by home owners is that they assume so much as they have no knowledge of the building process and many builders use this to their advantage with variations at exorbitant rates for things thought to be included and often the owner can feel misled and trapped and this is a major contributor to breakdowns between the builder and the client.

***Open communication is the key to success in building your dream home!
The more open and honest we are with one another, the better the result will be.***

3. DESIGN

If you're building a custom home and you want to make it special, this is where it starts. Design and planning are a critical part of any home.

Spending the time and effort at the planning and design stage will ensure that you achieve the 'look' and 'feel' that you are after in your dream home.

It is a great idea to run your plans and ideas past a specialist builder before finalising your working drawings, as they have a wealth of knowledge and experience and will be able to work with you to help with your design. The builder may suggest small changes to your design that may improve the building process and save you money in the long run.

4. DESIGN - YOUR HOME TO SUIT YOUR BLOCK

It is important that your home is designed to work with your block, e.g. split level rather than a big site cut surround by retaining walls. Most clients aren't aware if your home is not designed to suit your block, they are going to end up with large expensive retaining walls, steep driveways, drainage issues and an asset that is difficult to sell.

What was a fairly quick exercise for the builder can become a lost opportunity for a family that lasts a life-time.

Benefits of building with a sloping block building specialist include:

- Maximise the value of your home on any block
- More choice of affordable land at better locations
- Better designs; unique inside and out
- Abundant natural light and airflow
- Separate living areas on different levels
- Natural drainage preserved
- Better outlooks and views
- Ample under house storage
- Less excavations and flatter driveway
- Designed to follow slope of land



5. DESIGN - THINKING OF KNOCKING YOUR OLD HOUSE DOWN AND BUILDING A NEW ONE?

Knock-down rebuilds require more attention to detail, due to the impact your home may have on neighbouring properties.

It is important to use a specialist builder for your rebuild, as extreme planning is required. Quite often you have to start from the back of the block and build your way out, due to tight access. The builder must have exceptional project management skills in order to make your building process an enjoyable experience.

Benefits of knock down rebuild over renovation or building in a new area are:

- Stay in your current location where you are familiar with your area and neighbours
- Your kids can stay at the same school close to their friends
- Knock down rebuild generally costs half the amount per square metre than renovation does
- No real estate or stamp duty fees
- The opportunity to build the home you have always wanted with all new finishes and fresh modern interiors
- Increase the value of your land

6. QUALITY OVER PRICE

Determining a budget for your project is essential. It is in your best interest to let the builder know what budget you are hoping to achieve on your dream home. When builders are pricing your home, they should give you a detailed quote listing all of the inclusions and exclusions. The fixtures and fittings should all be listed or a prime cost allowed for. It is important when comparing prices between builders that you are comparing apples with apples.

Be wary when shopping for price and not for product, a large percent of all home owners chasing the lowest price end up spending more than what they would have spent elsewhere.

Find out what happens if you change your mind on items during the build. A professional builder will give you a quote on the price increase or reduction for the variation and then document this for you to sign. There is a margin on all variations, which should be explained to you at the time of contract.

Building your new home is one of the most important and emotional investments you will do in your lifetime. You need to make sure that the quality and finish of your new home exceeds your expectations.

7. ENGINEERING

This is not often thought of, but nearly every home that is built needs engineering plans. If you're looking at this you're probably not interested in building a project home with a repeated design. You most likely want to build a custom home and possibly on a difficult site.

Using an expert engineer to design engineering is not only imperative to longevity and quality; it can also save you lots of money.

Your builder must have a complete understanding of intricate plans and be able to communicate freely to the engineer in his terms. The architect supplies plans on the look and dimensions but the engineer supplies plans you need in order to build it.

8. CONTRACT

Now this may seem like I'm jumping the gun but this will need some thought on your behalf. There are a few variations of contracts and you should take the time to think about all options. A few most common options are:

- **Fixed price contract:** This is a contract if you want a quotation from a builder and that's the price in the contract. You must make sure that everything has been included or at least a provisional sum provided for unknown items. Positives of this type of contract are finance companies prefer this type of contract if financed and you know what the price is. Drawbacks are if you think you want to change things as you go along, there will be variations to the price, which will cost more than some other types of contracts.
- **Cost plus contract:** This is a contract that is flexible and can be set up a variety of ways. This type of contract sometimes gets a bad name, as some dishonest builders supply an unrealistic budget and/or charge retail rates for supplied items. In good hands, this is a very flexible and workable way to build. Most finance companies will not finance on this type of contract.
 - a) **Cost plus a set margin on all expenses:** You will receive an invoice from the builder; generally every fortnight for the cost of all materials and labour, then a margin is added. The margin is generally between 10 to 20% depending on the size and what is included in the margin. The margin charged will be less than a fixed price contract. The reason for this is the builder has good cash flow being paid every fortnight and here is the big one, the builder is not responsible for the end price. I really have to stress for this type of contract to work well you will be in close contact with the builder constantly and he will need your feedback on many things. Some people love getting involved like this, some people don't. If you don't want to get involved, I would not recommend doing this type of contract.
 - b) **Project management:** This is when the builder has a fixed price, for his services, which should include all supervision, organising trades and materials, administration, and all of the builder's overheads attributable to the construction. Your builder will need to do an accurate estimation of costs and supply you with updated costs along the way so you can see if you are ahead or behind budget. I find many clients, when presented with options of upgrades and the difference between the options, inevitably upgrade and go over budget. This is fine as long as you are made aware that the expected costs for that item or trade have been exceeded. Your builder should provide all supporting invoices, so you should be paying trade prices (i.e. what the builder gets it for).



9. KNOWING WHAT YOUR BUILDER IS NOT INCLUDING

You must check to see what you are responsible for and know exactly what the impacts will be as this can be quite costly to the home owner and quickly eat away any budget contingency funds.

Some things you should look out for are:

- Removal of left over soil from excavations may be excluded from the contract which can be very costly to remove.
- Retaining walls are often left out of the builder's responsibilities and leave you stranded, underfunded and very little access to build the retaining wall.
- Inclusions like floor coverings, light fittings, bathroom accessories, paths, driveways etc. which you would consider mandatory are often excluded.
- Fencing and gates are generally a necessity for a new home with children and pets etc. but often left out of contracts but needs consideration.
- Site cleaning is a must for most diligent builders but can catch out the unwary which can leave you with a sizeable wastage and truck hire bill.
- Landscaping is sometimes assumed that it comes with a new home and you need to either make sure what is included or have a contingency sum for this.

10. PLAN WELL AND THINK OF EVERYTHING TO INCLUDE NOW FOR THE FUTURE

Sometimes your budget doesn't afford you the luxury of including everything you want first up, so your builder should encourage you to think of everything you may want or plan to have in the future, so when you are ready to include the next part of your dream home it looks like it was always a part of your home and not a poor add on.

It is better to run services and allowances for future inclusions so you don't get ugly pipes or conduits up walls or concrete cut out and replaced for some simple forward thinking, good examples of things to plan for are:

- **Home Automation** – TV points, data points, speaker wires, electricity
- **Swimming Pools** – sewer, storm-water, water, electricity, gas
- **Sheds** – sewer, storm-water, water, electricity
- **Water Features** – electricity, water
- **Sprinkler System** – water, electricity, conduits

The custom design home building process should never be rushed or minimalised as there are many things to consider and you don't want a new home with regrets.

**To learn more about the work we do call
Swan & Sons today on 0409 054 983.**