

Common Terminology

In the design and construction process there are terms and stages that might be unfamiliar to Clients who have not engaged an Architect or building professional before. Outlined below are descriptions of these terms regularly used:

Design Process stages

Initial Consultation

This is the first time you and your prospective Architect meet face to face to discuss your project. The initial consultation is an opportunity for both parties to see if the potential relationship between Client and Architect is a 'good fit'. Items for discussion include your brief, timeframe and budget. At this stage it is important your prospective Architect inspects your site to understand the existing conditions.

Some Architects charge a fee for the Initial Consultation. Anthrosite do not charge a fee. We would only request travel costs should your property be more than 50km from our Newcastle CBD office.

Brief

A brief usually contains all the physical things you want: how many rooms, if your kitchen is to be strictly a food preparation area or an extension of the living space, is there an outdoor living space, a garage etc. A brief includes more than a list of rooms. How do you want your new spaces to feel: open, generous, nurturing, welcoming and so on. Some people assemble a folder of clippings from magazines showing designs that appeal or feel right. Others feel more comfortable writing down ideas in a descriptive form. There is no right or wrong process. The easiest form of communication is often the best if you feel uncertain.

For Anthrosite understanding our client's brief is the most important item. At the initial consultation, we are primarily understanding the complexities and constraints of the project in order to assemble a fee proposal. Should our fee proposal be accepted, our next meeting is the stage where the brief is discussed and refined.

Fee Proposal

This is a letter of offer from your prospective Architect to you. In it the Architect outlines his or her understanding of your brief and project requirements, what steps they will take, the process they will use to complete your project, as well as their proposed remuneration.

Anthrosite will include a range of service options with fees proportioned accordingly. Our terms and conditions also form part of this fee proposal. If you are happy with our Fee Proposal signing this document engages our service.

Client and Architect Agreement

This is a legal contract between you and your Architect. This contract protects both parties by outlining obligations with respect to services, payments, revisions, timing, copyright and other critical issues. Commonly an Architect will use the Australian Institute of Architects Client and Architect Agreement.

Site Visit

After the Initial Consultation your Architect will revisit your site. To produce the best outcome, Architects need to study and understand how your existing site works. Your Architect will analyse the site, looking at its orientation, views in and out, topography, slope, drainage, access and movement, existing features, structures or vegetation, noise sources and many other things. A good site survey can also be of benefit to identify features not apparent visually such as utility lines and easements.

Schematic Design

The Schematic Design is your Architect's initial response to your brief and site conditions. These drawings establish the broad brush planning diagram/s. It is an opportunity to check all functional spaces have been accommodated, and the relationships between each space are arranged properly. Your Architect may present a series of options to illustrate different ways the project could take shape. Typical output for this stage are basic scaled drawings, coloured and/ or accompanied by a model and other reference material to communicate the design intent. Approval is required before proceeding to the next stage.

Design Development

During Design Development your Architect will develop the approved Schematic Design, adding more technical detail and resolving; with assistance from professional consultants, the outstanding design issues.

Some Architects vary in the amount of work they include at Design Development. Anthrosite advise it is important to resolve all design issues at this phase, allowing the next phase to focus purely on the production of the Construction Documentation. Approval is required before proceeding to the next stage.

Construction Documentation

The purpose of this stage is to prepare the Construction Documentation required to tender the project to Building Contractor/s, enable not only a project cost, but to also construct the project. Typically this would include detailed technical drawings for the design, plus schedules and specifications of items.

Anthrosite provide a range of service options. The extent of deliverables will vary according to the level of service for which we are engaged.

Contract Administration

This stage occurs whilst your project is under construction. In a full services option your Architect will administer the Construction Contract. Carrying out periodic inspections, responding to requests for information from the Contractor, to assessing and approving claims for payment.

Applications and Approvals

Development Application

The application for development approval (DA) process requires documentation of how the proposed development will impact on surrounding environment. The DA is assessed for compliance with state and local planning regulations by either a private or local government certifier, according to the specifics of your project. Things that trigger a DA may include extending new work into the site boundary setbacks, extending a house, building in a character residential area, flood or bushfire prone area. DA requirements vary from place to place.

Other Approvals prior to DA (required in some locations)

Within the Hunter region your building design may well be in an area previously mined. Should your site be within a Mine Subsidence district approval will be required from the Mines Subsidence Board. Another submission required prior to DA approval will be to Hunter Water. This review is to approve the additional load your project may place on existing infrastructure.

Construction Certificate

An approved DA is the first step. For on-site construction to be permitted, a Construction Certificate (CC) is required. The CC ensures the proposed development has paid state levys and complies with building laws, including the Building Code of Australia, Australian standards and in some cases State Environmental Planning Policy. A private or local government certifier will assess the CC drawings and issue certification.

Construction prices and contracts

Budget Estimate

Because the cost of a building is variable and can be unpredictable it is a good approach to engage a Quantity Surveyor (QS) to provide Budget Estimates. To assist you and your Architect, a Budget Estimate can be prepared at different stages of the design and documentation process. This will ensure the project can be tendered with an anticipated median price range. The Budget Estimate is intended as a guide, not a final price.

Tendering

Tendering is the stage at which the complete Contract Documentation package is issued to two or more Building Contractors to obtain competitive quotes for the project build. Tendering is a considerable amount of work for the Building Contractor. It is important to choose up to three and no more than four builders you'd be happy to work with so those investing time and energy obtaining competitive quotes for your project stand a realistic chance of winning the work. All tenderers received the same information, ensuring all quotes can be compared like for like.

Construction Contract

This is the legal contract agreement between you and the Building Contractor who you have chosen to construct your project. This contract protects both parties by clearly defining the extent and scope of works, plus your agreed terms regarding payments, timing, unforeseen circumstances and many other issues. Construction Contracts typically have a Superintendent role for administration of the contract. Whilst the contract is strictly between you and your Building Contractor you can name your Architect as the Superintendent.

General Terms

Architect - Is someone who has completed an Architecture degree and a set of examinations administered by the Architects Registration Board. An Architect is held to a government standard and may be stripped of the title if they fail to meet the required standards and ongoing commitments. The Architects Registration Board is committed to consumer protection.

Building Contractor - Also known as Head Contractor. Is the Company/person you sign a contract with to build your project. The Building Contractor takes possession and responsibility of the project site for the duration of the agreed construction period. The Building Contractor is responsible for safety and insurance of the site for this period, the management of all building trades, obtaining of all materials required to fulfil the design intent as outlined in the Construction Documentation documents.

Building Designer – A generic term that can be used by anyone who designs a building. Building designers can come from a number of design-related backgrounds. This includes people with degrees in architecture who have not completed the examinations or experience required to become a registered architect.

Site - The property where the proposed design/building work is to be located. In discussing the site Architects regularly include the immediate context of the streetscape and surroundings.