



colin roe
Building Designer.

QBCC Lic. No. 722420
ABN 85 386 909 230

2018

Introduction.

Thank you for your enquiry. Your project is important to you and well as what you want to tell me about your project, there is much you need to know. This brochure is about background, things that almost everyone needs to understand about building.

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We specialise in design and high quality documentation of alterations and additions to existing houses commonly for the owner/occupant. We will occasionally do a new house but only if the market can't provide an off the shelf solution. It is our nature to provide higher quality design and documentation than is generally available. This increases the certainty of positive outcome. Our designs are practical, buildable and our documents are comprehensive and easy to quote and build from. Our job is to help you get what you want and not to tell you what you are going to have.

A word of reassurance, we will not give out your personal information: for profit, to others for on selling, nor to the world in general. We also don't pay "free quote" websites extra to preferentially refer potential clients to us.

We offer:

- Queensland Building and Construction Commission licensed Building Designer.
- Our office uses extensive quality control documentation and procedures to ensure everything has been thought of. A detailed proposal and contract is part of this process.
- Our work is centered on the Redcliffe Peninsula and the Northern bayside suburbs of Sandgate, Shorncliffe, Brighton, Deception Bay and occasionally further afield.
- We use the best computer aided 3-D design software available. This enables you to move forward to construction with greater certainty and to know that what you are building is what you want.
- Consultants with whom we have a good working relationship. This includes Structural Engineer, Building Certifier, Town Planner and Land Surveyor.
- A commitment to continuing professional development which also includes networking with other building designers, staying in contact with industry and government through our involvement with the Building Designers Association of Queensland (life member), the Built Environment Design Institute, the National Association of Building Designers and Timber Queensland.
- Drawings which can be quoted and built from with greater certainty of outcome. Cheaper drawings cannot include the necessary level of custom detail or thought, the less you pay the greater the financial risk and cost overruns.

1st consultation.

The Reality Check.

The 1st consultation, normally at the address of your project, is a chance for both parties to understand each other and the proposed works. You receive valuable advice for a small fee which for most projects covers:

- the post meeting preliminary research,
- the writing of the project brief,
- the response to the brief
- a proposed contract and schedule of fees.

It can be a good idea to include your builder at this early stage as they can provide valuable practical advice and help keep within your budget.

The idea is to keep your project rooted firmly in reality from our first meeting to ensure there are no financial surprises later. You will receive ethical advice which may challenge some of your assumptions.

Your Budget.

Please be honest with us about your budget as this will affect the design options we can offer. You wouldn't want to miss out on something because we assumed it wasn't in your budget.

Very often the first thing you ask is how much?

Is understandable to ask this first, but we first need to nail down specifics. We have access to software which can produce a trial budget based on room sizes and quality of fit out. We have builders who can then take the trial budget and work it up into an estimate which eventually becomes a contract amount if you are serious about building. If your project is more complicated than allowed for in the software it will be passed on to a builder for his input.

That being said estimates are best left to the builder or a quantity surveyor who are expert at quotes.

Our building design fees. We have in our mind typical fees for typical projects but we will always need to carefully assess each project and talk to you before committing to a quote. The factors which influence the building design fees are:

- The level of service provided, the scope of work, the number of stories, design complexity et cetera.
 - A basic service may include:
 - Consultations, site visits, project design, preliminary consultation cost, design and documentation to our standard.
 - Additional services which may be required:
 - Electrical layout, fittings and fixtures schedule, minimum specification, minimum landscape layout, colour scheme, assessment of tendered prices.

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- Retention, Building Designer availability to client, Building Certifier, Town Planner, Engineers and other consultants on an ongoing basis throughout the approval and construction stage of the project via phone.
- Lengthy personal consultations. Additional work outside the scope of the original agreement. Indulgence by the client in the design process rather than in working immediately towards a final outcome.
- The volume of drawings needed to explain your project to those who will build and those who will give development or building approval.
 - The research, design and documentation of custom details will contribute significantly to volume of drawings and cost.
 - The use of industry-standard and off-the-shelf details reduces the cost of documentation and construction.
- The amount of building code research and consultation needed to ensure the highest probability of approval. We always strive to establish as early as possible the likelihood of approval to avoid disappointment and forced costly changes at the approval stage.
- How complete a concept of your project you bring to the table. Some clients simply want us to draw up what they have laid out, others will provide a room list, a site and hint at the style.
- Whether it is an alteration or addition or a completely new build.
 - Alterations and additions are more expensive and difficult, because the old and the new and the difference between the two are to be considered, documented and designed around.
 - A new house is comparatively less expensive because you start with a green field site/blank sheet and are relatively unconstrained with the layout.

As you can see that many variables we need to carefully assess each project and much will depend on your preferences.

Design process.

New home:

- ✓ Initial consultation.
- ✓ Brief / Proposal.
- ✓ Acceptance of proposal.
- ✓ Measure by Designer or Surveyor.
- ✓ Design development.
- ✓ Sketch design.
- ✓ Working drawings.
- ✓ Engineer.
- ✓ Building Certifier submission.
- ✓ Builder starts.

Renovation:

- ✓ Site consultation
- ✓ Proposal /Brief.
- ✓ Acceptance of proposal.
- ✓ Measure by Designer or Surveyor.
- ✓ Design development.
- ✓ Sketch design
- ✓ Working drawings.
- ✓ Engineer.
- ✓ Building Certifier submission.
- ✓ Builder starts.

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The Rules.

The box into which your house must fit is governed by rules defined by the local town plan, a state development code and the national building code. These rules set a minimum community standard.

There are 3 levels of assessment each more expensive than the other:

1. Self-Assessable. As of right Building Approval. Stay inside the box and you need only have your building proposal checked for compliance before almost certainly gaining approval.
2. Code assessable. Building Approval requiring variation of the rules. Common exceptions to the rules. Parts of the building you are allowed to have outside of the normal box but you need more people (Building Certifier, Town Planner, local Council) to agree and have a say.
3. Impact assessable. Development Approval to be obtained before proceeding to Building Approval. Outside the rules. Everybody (Building Certifier, Town Planner, local Council, neighbours) gets to have a say. You are advised to engage your own Town Planner to professionally argue your case.

One of the first things we do is to establish what level of assessment will be needed and the likelihood of success. Common reasons for a Development Approval are that a town planning overlay applies to your building which automatically triggers the need for a Development Approval prior to a Building Approval.

The rules are constantly evolving and changing and this is one reason why the exact wording must be checked and a Building Certifier or Town Planner consulted before advising you. What has been done to the building next door does not automatically give you permission to do the same thing.

Typical fees.

We keep good task records so we know for sure that nothing takes zero time and is of zero value to you.

There is an amount of typical overhead on every project which makes smaller projects comparatively more expensive than larger projects. Here are our typical fees for a basic level of service based on a percentage of the cost for a builder to construct. All work subject to individual quotation. The values below do not constitute an offer. Fees don't include GST.

You are about to invest thousands of dollars in your project, you will receive blunt project specific advice from someone who does not have a vested interest in the construction contract. This advice should ensure ensures your investment is not wasted.

We do not write proposals based solely on the percentages below each project is assessed individually, but since you will want to know:

Domestic Construction Consultation fee:

First half hour free, then \$150 for first hour, then \$125 per hour thereafter.

Roofed Deck \$0-\$100,

Minor Addition \$150-\$250, (add a room, small reno)

Major Addition \$250-\$750, (house raise, big reno)

New House on small lot \$400-\$700,

New House, two story \$400-\$600,

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New House, slab on ground, single-storey \$350-\$450.

Domestic construction approximate Design and Documentation fee:

Roofed timber deck to an existing dwelling.	7%
Minor Addition.	6%
Major Addition.	5%
New House, two story small lot, 10 m wide <500 m ² .	4.5 %
New House, two story.	4%
New House, slab on ground, single-storey.	3.5%
New Houses over \$400,000 the base rate flat lines at around 3%.	
Development applications	+1%

Building Designer hourly rate	\$80/hr
Minimum total Building Designer fees	\$1700
Runoff. (Designer availability after for construction issue.)	Hourly rate or 33% of total fees.

The above are building designer fees only and do not include: GST, consultants, application fees, or other incidentals. The percentages above are based on the cost of construction by a licensed builder using licenced trades and increase for owner builders.

Quality of Documentation.

Good enough to receive Building Certifier approval is not the same as good enough to build from. Our documents are better than minimum standard which is something which builders appreciate when quoting and building from them as it results in accurate quotes and less problematic construction. Documents for owner builders include slightly more information but on the whole owner builders need to inform themselves about the building process.

Consultants.

We act as your agent to: brief, obtain quotes from and liaise with consultants on your behalf. We commonly work with, Building Certifier, Land Surveyor, Geotechnical, Engineer, Town Planner and less often an, Hydraulic Engineer, Interior Designer, Colour Consultant or Architect. You pay consultants invoices direct to the consultant.

Who can do your drawings?

For any building work the Building Certifier requires drawings provided by: a Licensed Building Designer, Registered Architect or the Licensed Builder (for construction by that same Builder). Engineers can only act as a consultant to the above mentioned and not submit drawings to a Certifier. There is an interpretation of the rules which allows owner builders to produce their own drawings for approval but most owner builders lack the technical ability to do that and most Certifiers prefer to avoid the liability inherent in non-professional plans.

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Proposal.

Because words may have different meanings to each of us we like to have a long conversation with you and question you about what you want to ensure we both understand.

After discussing your project with you at length we write it up and include it in the proposal in the client brief section. We then write a response to your brief in writing which can be as short as "as per your brief" or may include information you need to consider in order to choose between one or more options.

We like to do a very detailed brief and response to brief in order that everybody understands what our deal is based on. We will tell you the truth early on so that you may have realistic expectations and so that we can find solutions which give you as much of what you want as possible.

The proposal is included in a standard contract which has been written to be fair to both parties. The contract includes a description of the project and payment stages and often includes estimates of consultant's fees up to the point where you engage the builder.

Why have a written contract?

It is a Government requirement that a Building Designer use a written contract for work of any value. We have found that both parties are much happier with the certainty that this brings. Should there ever be any disagreement the contract wording will help sort it out.

It's up to you.

We will issue to you a proposal which includes contract and schedule of fees. We like to provide a bound hardcopy but this is not always possible and some clients will print sign, scan/photograph and return an electronic version.

Then it's up to you carefully consider if your project is adequately described and for you to decide whether or not to accept the contract.

We do not chase work. If we haven't heard from you we will give you a call to ask if you have any questions or whether we need to change the proposal. But other Than that it will be up to you to decide.

Before we can start work we need the signed proposal and contract in our hands.

What if I change my mind?

If you wish to vary your brief at any time you may do so, however it must be done in writing and be signed by both parties to the contract. We include a variation notice form in the contract which lists the information needed to make a change. Until we receive the form, work will not commence on the changes.

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Building Designers and Architects.

Whether you choose a Building Designer or an Architect you can do so based on merit and whether or not you can work with the individual.

Building Designers have been licensed in Queensland since the early 1990s and by law may not take on work outside of their licence. The class of licence issued on the basis of education and experience.

An Registered Architect; who holds the equivalent of an open licence; will decide if they have the relevant experience to take on the project.

Subject to licence class, in Queensland a Building Designer may contract to do the same work as an Architect with the market deciding who should be selected.

What about small changes?

Throughout your project we will be in communication and there will often be additional information or clarification. Where the Building Designer feels this is typical and within the scope of the contract it will be diarised and added to our checklist.

Who decides what is typical?

We will do our best to define what the deal is however it is impossible to define succinctly with the written word what is included and "typical" and what is not. This is why it will be entirely up to the Designer to decide when the amount of work has gone beyond the scope of the contract, whether it be changes or number of proposed sketch layouts. We are tolerant and will often do more than we should, but at some point we have to vary the contract and issue additional invoices.

How We Begin.

Preliminary.

Research an Extension.

Preliminary research is included in the initial consultation fee and is necessary to provide the advice in the proposal and contract. Research includes: local town planning rules, state building codes, national building codes, underground services location and seeking the opinion of a Building Certifier, Town planner, Surveyor or Engineer if necessary.

The next stage is to measure the existing buildings and locate site features. For larger projects or where evidence of ground levels is needed we will engage a licensed Surveyor on your behalf to provide a contour and a detail. Later on the Surveyor may come back to set out the proposed works especially if it is close to existing boundaries.

We ask clients to provide existing house plans; existing house drains plans, a current title search and a survey plan. The first two are available from the local Council and the second two are obtained from either the Surveyor or the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

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Research a New Build.

As for an extension (but without the existing house plans), we always engage a Surveyor to provide site contours and a benchmark level. This is important evidence if the floor levels must be above a defined flood level or the roof peak be below certain height. Almost all our work is in built-up areas however if you have a greenfield site you may be able to get site contours from the developer. These need to be current contours not old proposed contours. A greenfield site may have developer conditions. Always remember that the boundary is not necessarily where the fence or the peg says it is.

We always identify your site and look at the general area before we start. Such things as height of neighbouring buildings and where neighboring entertainment areas are, distance to and exposure to large open areas including water and what the slope is can be important.

Why so accurate?

When hand drafting on a board the lines are approximately to scale with the dimensions calculated and written down; we draw using a computer and 3-D software so whatever is shown on a computer screen is assumed to be located accurately. This is why we need to start with the exact dimensions, bearings and heights for the site and building. A computer drawing is real like the final building and means we can see what will fit and what will not.

Sketch design.

Design development.

Now that we have defined the box in which your project should fit and the likelihood of it being approved, we can move on to converting our conversation to date into line work. If you are certain about the layout you want we can go directly to working drawings. Early sketches are normally hand drawn on yellow tracing paper over an outline of the site as this is the only way to keep up with the flow of ideas and capture them on paper. Then follows the revision process where good ideas cross pollinate producing a branching tree of related layouts which are then pruned back to the one or two which feel best. You will be consulted during this process as to what you feel is important because after all it's your project.

Sketch design.

The put and look stage. Where you find out whether you still want what you said you wanted. Putting the proposed layout on computer tests the practicality of the layouts in 3-D as pencil sketches often bend reality. As with design development it's mainly about plan layouts at this stage with sections, elevations and perspectives coming in as your certainty increases.

Why Sketch design costs more.

There is more intellectual property in the sketch design stage but also because the project is being constructed in 3D much of the practical constructability and preliminary detailing is done at this stage but only revealed in the working/construction drawings.

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Development application (DA).

Some projects need Council town planning approval before building approval can be applied for. If your project needs this we will produce DA drawings. These go to our Town Planner who prepares a report and arranges the DA. Town planner, Council fees and advertising will cost about \$5000. We use Craig Christie of ASI Planning.

Why use a Town Planner? Using a Town Planner is like using a Lawyer. Town plans are large complicated wordy documents (MBRC townplan 4465 pages) whose meaning is subject to interpretation. As you can see a town planning application is a costly exercise so you'll want to get it exactly right first time.

Good house design.

Because every house lot is different every house design will be different and tailored to suit its location. Off-the-shelf house designs rarely work.

Capital.

You will need to consider capitalisation. Whether this to be your permanent home or if you intend to move on in a couple of years combined with the value of houses in the area will determine how much money you can spend? Most people are prepared to spend more on themselves especially if they intend to be resident for a long time compared to a shorter term investment.

Street and views.

It is best to respect the style of other houses in the neighbourhood. The style of your house does not need to match but should at least be complementary. Views are an asset and obviously will be taken advantage of but this does not always mean large windows or a deck sometimes it is better to frame a view to make your own.

Contours.

We need to know the slope of the land as this will affect how it drains and how deep needs to be cut to make a level building platform. Too steep and slab on ground construction becomes impractical because of the cost of retaining walls. About a metre is the limit.

Climate.

Design for climate has become standard practice with design for climate enshrined in building codes. What this means is that houses must now meet minimum standard which can sometimes impact on window size and location. Fortunately Queensland climate has been taken into account and inappropriate rules have been watered down for Queensland.

In Qld access to breeze in summer and sun in winter (before 9am) is important to minimise energy use. If energy is to be used to cool with air conditioning then priority should be given to sleeping areas with ceiling fans used for other daytime cooling.

Orientation.

The rule of thumb is to have living areas to the north with bedrooms to the south and utility areas to the west. This is because summer the sun is overhead whilst in winter it is

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lower in the sky to the north and can penetrate living areas to warm them up. Service areas garage, built-in robes, laundry and storage areas are often placed to the west. The East gets as much sun as the west but as the temperature is higher in the afternoon a buffer to the living areas or bedrooms is important plus you need the sun to get in winter mornings. Ideally the long axis of the building should run east-west.

Sun control.

A pergola, shaded Veranda and trees can also contribute by providing shade at the right time. External masonry walls are low maintenance but can store heat, the geographic location of the dwelling must be considered when deciding when this heat should be allowed to come inside the building. In coastal subtropical areas masonry and lightweight walls are normally shaded and light in colour. Windows are also part of sun control with the size and orientation of the windows being checked against the minimum standard in the building codes. This can mean increasing the size of the window to allow more heat in for the winter or raising a sill to reduce heating in summer. If changing the size of the window doesn't work sometimes changing the type of glass or window frame material can help.

Insulation and venting.

Insulating and to venting the roof is included in building codes. You can expect your walls and ceiling and roof to be insulated with your roof space ventilated. The idea of ventilating the roof space is to improve the performance of the insulation by reducing the difference in temperature either side of the ceiling. Where a house is located must be considered because more insulation is not always better and allowing house to cool down quickly after a hot day can be as important as retaining heat in in winter. Floors do not normally benefit from insulation as heat tends to go up but suspended timber floors do benefit by being fully enclosed under.

Thermal mass.

Design for thermal comfort is often driven by the need to keep warm in winter in temperate climates notably the southern Australian states. However coastal south-east Queensland has one of the most benign climates in the world and we must be careful not to adopt overseas ideas which don't always work here. One idea from temperate climates is the concept of using heavy building materials to store and radiate heat. In coastal south-east Queensland thermal mass is best used in concrete floors where stable below ground temperatures can be used to contribute to stable indoor temperatures. Energy rating software loves a tiled or bare concrete floor especially if it is exposed to the low winter sun.

Be cool.

Humans stay cool by evaporating moisture off the skin a process which can be enhanced by air movement. Your project should include access to breezes and ceiling fans as these will reduce the number of hours per year air-conditioning needs to be run. Outside your house is often more comfortable than the inside so an outdoor room or roofed deck can reduce power use. The important function of air-conditioning is not to cool but to dry the air allowing the skin to cool naturally.

Working Drawings.

After the Sketch Design and/or Development Application drawings the next stage is Working Drawings, often referred to as Construction Drawings. As the name implies the drawings are referred to for quoting, subcontracting and construction. The local Council will keep a copy of the drawings as a record of what has been approved. Working drawings should be kept in a marked, insect proof box and be left in the house when you sell it.

The first working drawings produced are "technical" drawings which show site plan, floor plans, elevations and sections. Some or all of the "structural engineering" drawings may be produced by the Building Designer but since an Engineer is normally engaged for all but the smallest projects it is common to commission a structural Engineer to produce working drawings for the footings, slab, wall floor and roof framing, bracing and tie down.

The structure is always thought through by the Building Designer with preliminary structural layouts being included in the Engineers brief. For aesthetic reasons we never leave the structure entirely up to the Engineer. If the builder is known they will be consulted as to their structural construction preferences.

We cost more than the typical building designer. Nothing takes zero time to do and because we always take the time to answer all the "how is that going to work" questions and to talk to other consultants early in the process to ensure that potential problems are fixed on paper before they can cause financial surprises later. We understand that we are just as responsible for what is not on the drawings as what is. We produce a comprehensive set of drawings which have been measured against a comprehensive checklist. We believe in telling the whole story.

We normally don't produce a schedule of fixtures, fittings and finishes. This is best left between yourself and the builder. Your involvement in the selection of fixtures and fittings and finishes is one way to make your project your own. The drawings will speak in general terms of roofing type, claddings, finishes and floor coverings but not in detail.

Other consultants.

As early as practical we will act as your agent to engage consultants as their input is needed before the drawings go to the Building Certifier for assessment and approval.

Geotechnical Engineer.

A soil test, report and recommendations are a legislative requirement for slabs and footings under habitable construction. This costs around \$600 and involves at least two test holes be bored into the ground on site.

Structural Engineer.

The Structural Engineer uses the Geotechnical Engineer's report to design the slab and footings. The Structural Engineer may also be engaged to design the building framing, bracing, and tie down. They are always engaged to design big retaining walls, steel beams and detailing.

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Hydraulics Engineer.

Are used on un-sewered properties where an on-site treatment system is needed or where the drainage design is beyond the capacity of the Building Designer or Plumber and Drainer.

Energy Efficiency Consultant.

We like to do our own energy efficiency assessment as it allows us more control over changes to the design needed to comply with building code requirements. We can do either "deemed to satisfy" or "software assessment" of the buildings energy efficiency. The deemed to satisfy may be used either on a full building or on an extension and is a matter of following recipe in the code, except for windows which are assessed on a spreadsheet. Assessment by software can only be used for whole of building assessment and must include a kitchen. An addition with the existing house can be assessed but will normally fail unless the existing house has or can have installation installed on the walls. If you are not recladding or relining the existing then only the addition can be assessed.

Options.

Not everyone needs the options offered in our proposal. They are listed to make you aware of what else may be needed.

Certifier submission.

Building approvals used to be done via a council office using Council building inspectors. Councils no longer carry out building approvals and the Council staff that used to do this work are now in private practice and call themselves Building Certifiers. So the older term Council approval has now becomes Certifier approval.

Most people take our working drawings to a builder for pricing and then either the builder or the owner take the drawings to a Certifier for approval. The Certifier checks that the application complies with the rules and approves the application. The Certifier will also carry out up to 4 building inspections but some inspections may be carried out by the Engineer's office or parts could be self-certified by the plumber and drainer.

You need the Certifier to sign off on the drawings before construction can start and also to sign off before the building can be occupied. To sign off on the drawings the Certifier needs the cost of construction and the QBCC insurance certificate

For the Council's records the Certifier does pass on the approval to the Council. The Council has little interest in self assessable applications but does get involved in higher level (code assessable and impact assessable) and where a development approval is required prior to a building approval.

Answers to common questions.

Note that all Council/Shire areas have different town plans with different rules applying. For answers to common questions with a local Building Designer or Certifier.

1. **We're doing some building work at home what do we need a permit for?**
 - a. Any structural alterations.
 - b. Any new plumbing drainage which is not a simple fixture relocation during say a kitchen renovation. The Plumber and Drainer can self-certify their work and lodge for a small fee with the local authority.

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- c. Building over or near infrastructure (sewer main, storm water main, et cetera)
 - d. Garden sheds and some low decks under a certain size don't need an approval.
 - e. Kitchen and bathroom renovations don't normally need a permit but you need to be certain that the plumbing and waterproofing are carried out by competent licensed trades and obtain certificates from them.
- 2. We would like separate accommodation for our relative.**
- a. Generally this can be done. The local town plan needs to be checked for limitations.
 - b. Commonly called a "granny flat" but referred to by various councils in their town plans as a "secondary dwelling", or "relatives accommodation", or other town planning term.
 - c. Rules vary depending on Council area, size of lot, location and zoning of lot. Councils want to control what essentially a solely occupied unit built on land not zoned for units.
 - d. If the layout implies that the occupant of the "granny flat" is not part of the household then it becomes a sole occupancy unit (a flat) which is normally not allowed on land zoned for a dwelling.
 - e. To be part of the household typically means that all areas except bedrooms are shared and accessible to all occupants.
- 3. How close to the front fence can we build a carport?**
- a. Short answer is 6m to 5.4 m. Varies between local authority areas. Can normally be very close to side and rear boundaries but not the front boundary.
 - b. Long answer is. Town planners do not like townscape's dominated by double garage doors so they default to setting them back in line with the house. In spite of this it is common to locate carports (not garages) as close as a metre from the front boundary.
 - c. The location of any building closer than the standard boundary offsets requires a variation/relaxation application.
- 4. How close to the side and rear fence can we build?**
- a. Depends on the height which is normally measured to the outermost projection of the roof not including the gutter.
 - b. It steps up like this:
 - i. 1.5 m offset up to 4.5 m high,
 - ii. 2 m offset up to 7.5 m high,
 - iii. Roofs are not normally over 7.5 m high but the offset continues to step in until you reach local height limit.
 - iv. The above offsets reduce for narrower lots.
 - v. Garages and carports can normally be built very close to boundaries anything closer than 0.9m needs to be fire rated/isolated.
- 5. Should we extend or move?**
- a. It will largely come down to personal preferences.
 - i. The budget for an extension should be sufficient to enhance the existing building. Trying to extend on too small a budget is one reason most older houses benefit from a restoration in which everything added by previous owners is first removed.

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- ii. Cost of moving compared to the cost of addition added to the personal cost of living on a building site. Ask the question can we achieve what we want for the same or less money but with less drama by moving?

6. They threw the baby to us and ran!

- a. Post purchase it is common to discover unapproved alterations and additions to your house. If you didn't discover this before purchase you are now morally responsible for tidying this up unless there is something in your contract of sale which enables you redress against the seller.
- b. If the work was competently carried out by licensed trades and does not grossly violate local town planning rules or other codes it is possible to have as constructed drawings drawn up for submission to a Certifier for approval.
- c. If it cannot be made to comply with building codes, town planning, structural, plumbing and drainage then it must be removed.

7. We want to build in under or raise and build in under.

- a. Check the zoning first. Can mean you can't do all of what you want to do.
- b. A development application needed in some areas before a building application can be made.
- c. Check the boundary and height limits. Raising a house may mean you need more distance to the side boundaries. The peak of your roof may go through a height limit.
- d. Building in under. Generally the undercroft of houses was never designed to be inhabited. Typical issues are:
 - i. Ceiling height. You need 2.4 m to the underside of the floor joists.
 - ii. Floor and walls. These need to be of a habitable standard which means no moisture on the habitable side. Single skin brick does not comply.
 - iii. House drains. Can mean that the floor to a shower or bathroom has to be at a higher level than the rest of the floor.
 - iv. Termite management. Old termite barriers are often located at the top of the lower walls and will need to be relocated to below floor level.
 - v. Approval of habitable rooms with less than 2.4m to the ceiling is possible by arguing the performance of the room is not diminished. Most Certifiers draw the line at 2.250m to the ceiling and 2.1m to the underside of the bearer and will charge a huge fee for violating the community standard of 2.4m. Don't do this. Raise or dig out instead.

8. What's this about energy ratings?

- a. Reducing household energy consumption reduces energy bills and the mission of greenhouse gases by power generation. Most people are more concerned about reducing their power bill.
- b. What used to be best practice reducing household energy consumption has now been included in building codes. All new houses and significant renovations and additions must comply with energy efficiency codes.
- c. See above under "Energy Efficiency Consultant".

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9. The town plan changed recently, didn't it?

- a. A new town plan for the Moreton Bay Regional Council area came into effect in early 2016 and has been amended several times since.
- b. The old town plan was relatively easy to understand and was a compact couple of hundred pages. The new town plan is 4464 pages with no indication of what section or table you are in when you jump to a page by clicking a link. I work with two copies open so I can look at the index to tell where I am!
- c. A simple "can I put a carport or garage in front of my house" question is now so difficult to determine with certainty that our Certifier is now referring queries to the Council as the Council are constantly overruling the Certifiers opinion.
- d. The town plan can have two to four layers of rules applying to your lot. Which is why such questions as "can I put a carport in front of my house" or "can I sub-divide by boundary re-alignment if my block is in the balance of flood area zone " can become several hours of working though the town plan.
- e. For a quick answer if it gets complicated we will consult with the Certifier, more complicated and we engage a Town Planner to talk town planner speak to the councils Town Planner so a development application has the best chance of approval on first application because do-overs cost.

Colin Roe

Principal

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