



CALLIDUS
ARCHITECTS

7

mistakes people make when renovating

+ Renovation Guide

*Tips, architectural principles and insights on renovating
character homes in New Zealand.*





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Foreword

Congratulations! Chances are that since you are sitting with this booklet you are already living in, or are contemplating buying an older home of your own. Character homes preserve a sense of place and the feeling of home, however they often need refitting to make them work for the demands of modern family living.

This booklet outlines the 7 Mistakes clients often make before they even start planning their renovation. I trust that once you have read through this booklet and addressed those mistakes with respect to your own renovation project, you can feel confident that you are on the path to achieving a truly compatible, stylistically resonant home upon completion.

Enjoy!

– *Callidus Architects*



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Introduction

Make sure you have done the research before you start digging

The most popular house styles today are still the classics from yesterday, villas, bungalows and art deco. Old houses have a charm all their own. The perennial struggle, however, is how to best live in them with our changing needs. Charm doesn't always translate into livability. Often we need more space.

The challenge? How to do it right.

Undertaking major renovations is a bit like carrying out open heart surgery. Everything is exposed, there are wires and tubes, details to remember to put back together correctly and making sure everything is neatly stitched up at the end.

Who would you trust to carry out your heart operation? Your mother? Your cousin?

In my years as an architect I have often been contacted by clients, when they have attempted renovations themselves or as a measure to save money have hired non-qualified professionals to do the work. Sadly so and to the detriment of the end result: i.e. a poorly executed renovation to an otherwise wonderful house, costing additional time, effort and money to put to rights, rather than getting it right from the start.

Deciding to renovate is a big financial, emotional and time consuming investment. Make sure you have done the research, before you start digging. I have gone through this process with clients many times and have found that these are the following '*7 Mistakes People Make When Renovating*'.

The best time to eliminate these mistakes is before you start.

Location, Location, Location

Is this where I want to be?

Consider your location before you decide to renovate. Are you in the right location? Should you be across the street? You cannot move the mountain, but you could move to the other side of the mountain to get better sun, be closer to the school your kids go to, perhaps even closer to your favorite cafe so you do not have get in the car in the weekend to go for brunch. It may seem like trivial things but what we are trying to successfully create is an overall enjoyment of your whole life. To that end your home and ultimately the location of it is a huge factor in achieving this.

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You hear about life coaches, and I believe having the right home is very important for creating the life you desire and want. It is well worth your money to have a property evaluated by an architect prior to purchasing it to confirm its renovation or development potential.

A lot of older homes have the best locations, the most established gardens, lets face it, they were there first, and despite maybe being completely run down and looking the worse for wear they could have all the qualities that can be hard to buy or build new.

A hundred year old tree is very hard to achieve over a two-year period, whereas a beautifully renovation over a two-year period is very realistic.

A lot of older homes have the best locations, the most established gardens, lets face it, they were there first.



after

We reduced this property
by 60sqm and doubled
the value of the property
by reinstating its
heritage features.



before



Re-instatement of arts and crafts features upped the emotional value to fetch top dollar when re-sold. Never mind the parking.

Deciding to Invest

Intrinsic value versus Capital value

Traditionally we value a home around the nuts and bolts it costs to build or renovate it versus the real estate value applicable for a potential resale. We count the number of bathrooms, car parks, bedrooms and living areas and in that way nominate a capital value to a property. I believe that is only part of the puzzle in determining a building's worth.

The highest price I have received when selling a home was a one bathroom property with terrible off street parking. We (I) would often crash into the side of the adjacent woodland when trying to get in and out of the garage. *So why was it so valuable?*

The house was a rare example of the Arts and Crafts movement in New Zealand (1920-30s). The design and history of the place and the quality of the materials used, gave this particular property its uniqueness, and as such it's resale value.

Logically a property might be assessed as being worth \$600,000.00. But with the intrinsic X-factor the property may be sold for \$700,000.00. This 'premium' is paid by the new owner for the X-factor and 'feel' a beautifully renovated character villa can produce when done correctly.

The key point is that the property has to be done right. The two differences between working with a great architect and an average one are:

- 1) *How do you feel while living in the house, and*
- 2) *What you can sell the property for on completion.*

The key point is that the property has to be done right.

2

Heritage

Buildings weren't erected to be historic

Today we are still breathing life back into character homes that are over a 100 years old. Character homes have continuously been demolished, rebuilt and changed over the decades. Some have been lovingly restored several times, some have been transported on the backs of trucks to new locations as towns have grown and changed.

Character homes differ from modern renovations and treating the two the same is a huge mistake. Part of renovating an old character home is about rescuing an old building from obscurity and taking it back to its former glory.

3

Each region of New Zealand has its own architectural heritage. They all have stories to tell: the people who built them and those who used them. Taking the time to dwell into a buildings heritage may reveal some unexpected discoveries, which could change the way you want to renovate your home.

Great architects should be able to capture the heritage from the past and translate it into the design for the future.

Will we be trying to renovate the homes of today in another 100 years? Probably not.





Research Period Style

The devil is in the detail. Have you got the right devil?

I am often saddened when I see heritage buildings devoid of their splendor and slowly falling into dis-repair. Often they are in such a state, that actually getting them back on track seems an insurmountable obstacle. It is however important to get it right.

Do not spend any money on pretty details, new corbels or doors or other detailing **BEFORE** you are certain they are of the same period style of the house.

Deciding to veer away from an existing style period of a house requires even more consideration of the design. If you are going to mix different period details in your design you are taking a huge risk. While experts can pull it off, more often your renovation can end up looking tacky.

Not all architects are heritage specialists. Find an architect who is great at explaining how character houses go together and what gives them their unique design appeal. If your architect does not understand heritage detailing of your character home look for someone else.

The detailing of your planned renovation is crucial to a successful end result.

Choose the right fretwork, cornice, scotia, architrave, mullion, eaves finish – the list goes on.



4

Living with Renovations

Are you ready?

Living in the mist of a major renovation can be one of the most stressful things you can do. It pays to be prepared and organise your surroundings so that you are better able to cope with the building process once it gets underway.

We all know the term 'my house my castle'. Imagine your castle being invaded by foreign knights, (builders), carrying swords and shields (skill saws and protective head gear) alongside battering rams (demolition equipment) siege towers (scaffolding) and an assortment of archers and various common army folk (electricians, plumbers and other sub trades) and you will have a fairly adequate idea of what it means being 'invaded' for a renovation project.

5

Be realistic about your own ability to cope with having to crawl over building equipment, timber framing stacked in the hallway, cooking on a hot plate for months on end and sleeping on a mattress on the floor. You may be perfectly happy to live amongst the sawdust and not want to be without it; however safety with respect to your family is another point to consider.

It may not be safe to have a two year old crawling around if you are cutting holes in the floor. The process can be very stressful for some children, they feel insecure as the thing they understand as reliable and constant (their home) is undergoing change.

It may pay to move out for a while to keep your sanity and create a bit of distance between yourself and your renovation project so that you are both happy to see each other after you finish.

*Imagine your castle being invaded
by foreign knights...*



My daughter enjoying a bath during the major renovation at our villa.



Emotive

The touchy feely side of architecture

How do you want your new house to feel?

Basically if you do not want to talk about the emotive response you wish to create in your renovation, put this booklet down right now and read no further.

One of the great but often unmentioned causes of both happiness and misery is the quality of our environment: the kinds of walls, chairs, buildings and streets that surround us.

What is a beautiful building? What is home? What emotions would you like to feel as you arrive at and move through your house?

The BIGGEST MISTAKE is not to inform your architect of the emotional response you would like to get out of your renovation. This is the crucial overriding factor on any building project.

In general we should pay more attention to the psychological consequences of design when renovating, as it is the emotive side of architecture which will affect the lives, the happiness and ultimately the wellbeing of the people living in the homes created.

Emotion should be part of every design brief and rate just as highly as the more tangible aspects of building and renovating.

Emotional triggers in a home play a much more important role than we think.



Practical

Sort the basics, do the budget

Building or renovating your home is a daunting task, and there is always so much to do and so many decisions to make. However, your basic requirements such as heating, cooling, electrical and security systems are areas you cannot afford to overlook. They need to be considered and implemented into the brief from a very early stage in order to avoid additional expense, frustration and time delays once works starts on site.

Do you have any particular lights, switches, or lighting systems you want to use? What heating system should the house have? Do you plan to install inter-connected sound systems?

7

They all take up room and the space required must be worked into the early concept stages of your design, to make sure it will all fit. It is often difficult to know about all the services required, but a character home specialist will definitely be able to talk you through the requirements.

Last but not least: ***What is your budget?***

It pays to be honest right from the start with both yourself and your architect. How much do you want to spend? If you are not clear on the amount you want to invest, it can be very tricky for your architect to guess. Be upfront, you are all on the same team.

Be clear with your architect whether your budget is the construction budget or your overall budget for the whole renovation including consultant fees, consent fees, furnishing and landscaping. Remember to include GST.

Be up front, you are all on the same team.



How to Hire an Architect

10 Questions to ask your architect before signing up.

Choosing the right architect is the most important step in the process of achieving a successful renovation of your character home. Working with an architect who shares your vision and with whom you can communicate with easily will ensure that your building project is everything you dreamed it would be.

The following checklist is a great beginning to the conversation:

1 *What does the architect see as important issues or considerations in your project? What are the challenges?*

Character homes are always a challenge. Make sure your architect under take the proper research required before identifying potential issues and important details that must be carried through to the brief.

2 *Who from the architecture firm will you be dealing with? Will it be the same person throughout the process to ensure a consistent follow through of your needs and wishes?*

Bigger firms chase bigger projects, you often end up dealing with 3 or 4 different architects during the process, who have varying degrees of understanding of your project.

3 *How interested is the architect in your project?
Does the architectural practice specialise in
your type of project?*

Architects are like doctors; specialising in different fields. If you have a character home you need a character home specialist architect.

4 *How does the architect outline the steps of
establishing the brief and scope of the project
to suit your budget?*

Provided you have a character home specialist architect, the most important part of the whole process is getting the right brief established as soon as possible.

5 *How does the architect explain the different
stages of the project?*

What is required in terms of building and resource consents, producer statements, heritage requirements, structural engineering and surveying? Make sure this is explained to you clearly before signing a contract with an architect.

6 *How are the above steps in the process of
getting the project completed from start to
finish organised by the architect?*

The architect is your coach through this process They know it a lot better than you and their ability and willingness to take you through the process will affect your ability to enjoy it and feel in control.

7 *What services does the architect provide during construction? How disruptive will it be? How long does the architect expect it to take to complete your project?*

Once again, make sure they clearly communicate the work process to you.

8 *How does the architect establish fees? If the scope of the project changes how will additional fees be established?*

There must be a clear concise line of communication on establishment of fees between the architect and the client.

9 *Does the architect provide testimonials from past clients?*

This is the only way to assess their skill and level of competence of your architect.

10 *What sets this architect apart from the rest?*

- are they specialists in their field?
- do they have a good track record?
- do you like the work they have previously done?

The Next Step...

Where to from here

- + Decide you are ready to move ahead
- + Gather your plans, ideas, visions and scrapbooks together
- + Call Mona for an initial briefing session. This session will achieve 3 outcomes:
 - a) Get your ideas out of your head and onto paper.
 - b) Have your plans and ideas assessed for their practicality and feasibility.
 - c) Provide an assessment of a ball-park investment for your early draft ideas.

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C A L L I D U S
A R C H I T E C T S

About Callidus Architects

Who is Mona Quinn?

Mona Quinn architect, author and commentator is one of NZ's leading character home architects. Her education started in Denmark at the prestigious Royal Academy of Arts, School of Architecture and she has drawn inspiration from her extensive travel around the world ever since.

She has a passion for restoring character buildings both through her work for clients and her own personal development projects.

She set up Callidus Architects in 2010, specialising in Character Home Renovations. Her combination of Scandinavian design flair and NZ N°:8 wire attitude provide a practical approach to design and construction. A love of old buildings and her unique skills set result in designs that enhance the original character and add a sophisticated flair.





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