

# I GET KNOCKED DOWN, BUT I GET UP AGAIN

BY EMMA WARNER ALLEN



The dream of becoming a homeowner is an achievement deeply embedded in our psyches, but once attained, more challenging still can be converting your newfound residence into the place of your dreams. Here, Emma Warner Allen chats with Steven Hedger, Director of Hedger Constructions, to discuss whether to undergo extensive renovations or to knockdown and rebuild to achieve your forever home.

Photography by P Bloc Media  
Architecture by Fiona Drago  
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Architecture by Michael Wozniak  
Photography by Paul West Photography



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It is well-known that when you move into a new property, little alterations will need to be made – be it something as simple as a fresh lick of paint or more extensive such as knocking down walls – to make this little corner of the world feel a bit more like home. After what can be an arduous acquisition process, once you have bought your new abode the thought of immediately knocking it down can be intimidating. However, when faced with the long and laborious process of significant home renovations or a knockdown rebuild, often demolition is the preferable option.

## TO REBUILD OR NOT TO REBUILD?

That is the question many homeowners must contemplate when faced with a home which needs considerable work done to transform it into their dream home. The reasons underpinning a homeowner's decision to undergo remodelling or demolition can vary drastically, with some of the most common reasons given relating "to the limitations faced by the size and condition of the existing home." "Often homeowners love the area they are located in but are looking for more space or functionality in their home," Hedger states.

In addition to the assurance of having a blank canvas to construct your dream home, "a knockdown rebuild can deliver a new home with improved energy efficiency, which therefore reduces ongoing costs. At times, the cost of bringing an old home up to sustainable energy efficiency is not attainable when compared to the cost of a knockdown rebuild, which can also deliver a range of lifestyle and functionality improvements as well as sustainable living", Hedger explains.

Making the decision to knockdown and rebuild or renovate is an important choice. As each case will be surrounded by its own unique set of conditions, it is important to weigh up the pros and cons of both to determine which route is best suited to your situation. Some of the benefits of knocking down and rebuilding a home in place of significant renovations are that the home will be specifically designed to suit your needs – it will benefit from modern technology such as energy efficient savings and higher quality materials, and often existing gardens and landscapes can be retained – all while remaining in an area which you love. While some drawbacks for knockdown rebuilds include council requirements that will need to be considered when building a new home, and it may ultimately be more expensive. On the other hand, when

considering renovations, the home's orientation and the materials used may make it difficult for the existing home to achieve a good energy rating without it being exorbitantly expensive.

All things considered, "ultimately it depends on the project. It is easier to knockdown and rebuild and start fresh, but sometimes it can be very rewarding to renovate and add on to a residence in a creative way and make great use of the spaces. Some older homes can be transformed through a renovation to a beautiful mix of old and new", Hedger advises.

## MAKE SURE THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Aside from the practicalities, cost should be a major factor in determining whether you renovate or knockdown and rebuild, and this can vary significantly depending on what you hope to achieve. To help navigate this issue, "defining the extent and purpose of any renovation is crucial for any successful project. The client should be conscious of what they want to achieve versus the budget." Hedger continues, "a renovation can get expensive if there is a lot of structural works. There are limitations on what can be achieved with an existing home, so clients should be smart about when to choose to extend or renovate. Sometimes it is easier

to rebuild and get everything right from the start. A knockdown rebuild also has a fixed contract, so the owner has transparency of the financial cost from the start. When renovating old homes, there is the potential for unknown problems related to the age of the property that may need to be addressed, which may require additional budget."

Ultimately there are a range of factors which will contribute to the project's cost, so if you are uncertain, it is advisable to speak to an industry professional. Hedger wholeheartedly agrees, "establish communication with a builder early in the process. This enables you to work through the project with everyone involved and ensures it is a functional, affordable, and buildable home that meets all your needs and desires."

## YOU GET WHAT YOU GIVE

After the decision to knock down your home and rebuild, when starting with a blank canvas, it can be daunting to put together your ideas to ensure that ultimately you will achieve the result you desire. Often, "most clients start out with a 'wish list' of features and fixtures, which over time helps them identify what the 'must have' items are. This also helps give the builder an idea of the vision and the budget so these elements can come together to produce the build scope for the client."

If you haven't given much thought to your home's new design yet, "creating a digital scrapbook on Pinterest, Instagram, or Houzz can help collate your ideas." However, Hedger recommends that, "clients focus on the kitchen and living areas first because these are the areas that we spend the most time in at home. Correct orientation of these spaces is key to the successful flow of the home. Then focus on the design room by room, from the master and ensuite to other bedrooms and spaces, with an emphasis on their functionality and how the room will be used."



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