

WORDS VALERIE KHOO

ON THE DRAWING BOARD

You need clear plans to turn a vision of your ideal home into reality. Sometimes, the smartest decisions are made while your dream is still on the drawing board.

THE SAYING GOES: "IF YOU FAIL TO plan, you plan to fail". However, when it comes to designing your dream home, it can be easy to gloss over seemingly mundane planning aspects. After all, picking luxury bathroom fittings, fancy kitchen appliances and selecting the ultimate plasma TV is a whole lot sexier than poring over line drawings and wondering if your windows give you enough solar access.

However, investing in your planning stage can save you considerable time and money later on. When you consult the right professionals and other stakeholders – such as your local council – you can adjust your plans while they are still on the drawing board. This is a much smarter option than trying to fix any issues after building has already started. Here are three homes that are about to finally leap off the drawing board and become a built reality.

EXTEND EXISTING EAVES
FINISHED 900mm FROM WALL

Plan your dream
home carefully.

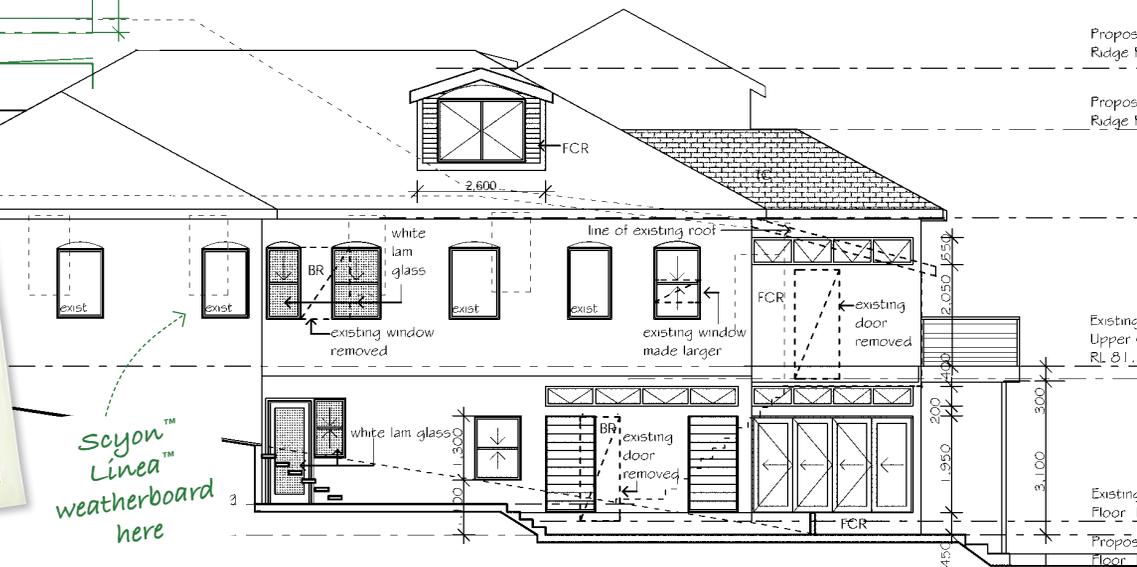




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*Scyon™
Linea™
weatherboard
here*



SLOPING SUCCESS

When Bruce Potts and his wife Deb bought their early 1900s semidetached house in Sydney’s up-market suburb of Mosman in 2004, they already knew they were likely to renovate it. After the birth of their first child three years ago, the couple began thinking about how they could renovate their home.

When they discovered twins were on the way, the imperative to renovate became even more pressing. Bruce Potts told us about their plans.

“We had four bedrooms all on one level,” says Potts. “But it’s built on a sloping block, so there was a lot of room under the house.”

Furthermore, the backyard was accessed by some rickety steps. “Even though we have a little grassy area which our three-year-old loves, he only gets to play in it when one of us is there because it’s out of sight from the main house,” says Potts. “We wanted to put the kitchen downstairs and have it open straight on to the garden in order to maximise the space available.”

The couple engaged local architect Sarah Schoffel of Sandberg Schoffel. “We wanted an increased living area, better use of the outside area so we

could access the lawn for the kids, and we also moved and replaced the existing bathroom with a bathroom and separate ensuite.”

As the house was built on a sloping site, the Pottses and their architect knew that lightweight materials would be ideal. “We could construct with minimal fuss,” says Potts. “At the back of the old house, a previous owner had added a lean-to, which gave them some extra living space. We’re knocking that off and rebuilding in lightweight cladding.”

FUTURE PLANS

Although the Pottses are currently only renovating “out and down”, they have plans to go “up” in the future. “We will eventually put in a loft over the main part of the house, also built with lightweight materials.”

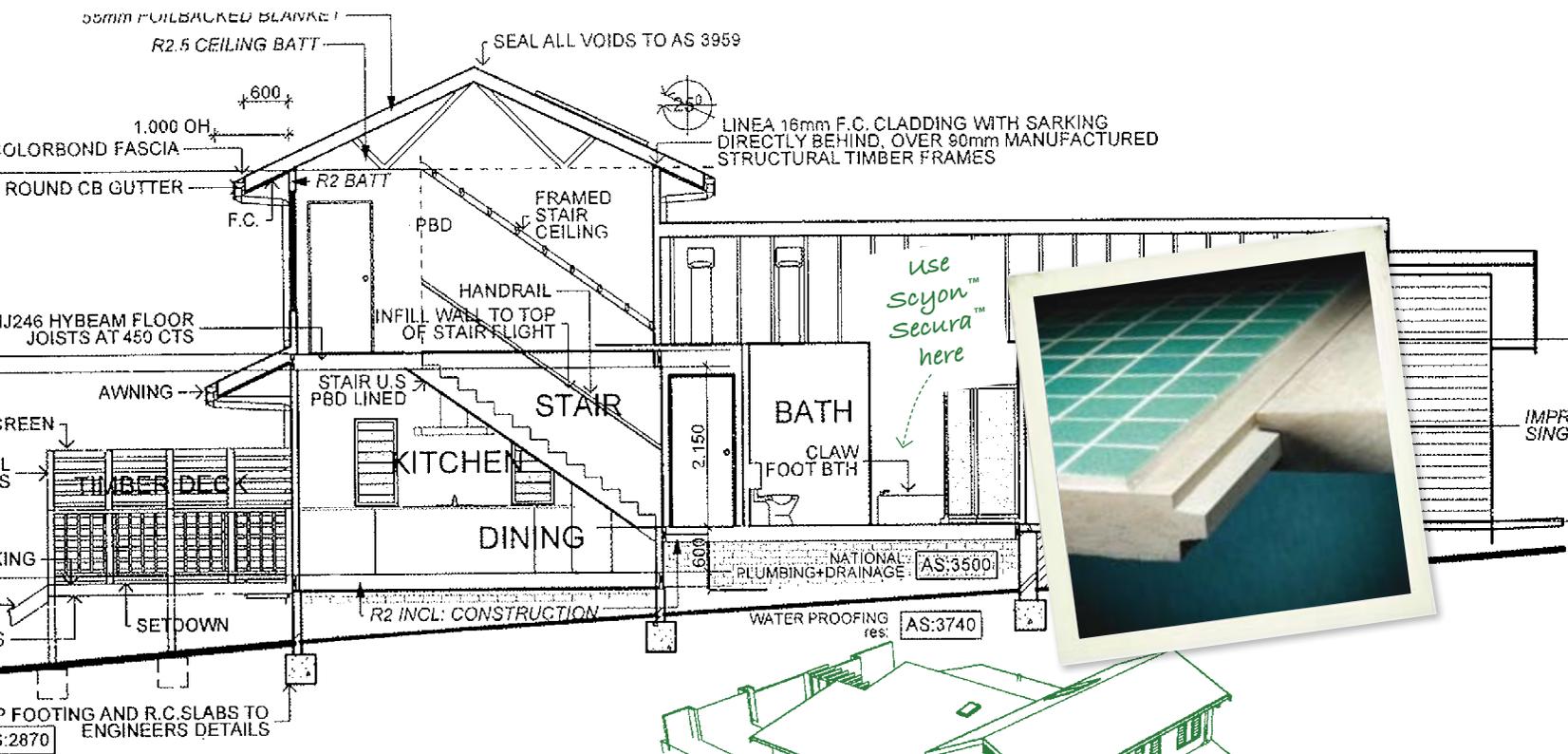
Specifically, the Pottses have chosen Scyon™ Linea™ weatherboard, which will provide a classic weatherboard look to complement the rest of the house. However, aesthetics aren’t the only reason for this choice. “It’s easier to use going down the slope of the land, but it also means there is a reduced need for some steel work. Steel adds considerably to the cost. In particular, because of some

of the delays we have faced, we are starting our renovation about a year later than we expected to – and in that time, the cost of steel has skyrocketed.”

As Potts implies, the road to renovation has not been totally smooth. “When you are dealing with council and getting your plans approved – or rejected – this can be a very time-consuming and costly process as well as emotionally draining,” says Potts. “Your plans can get rejected with no prior warning and with no certainty as to the changes needed for approval. You have to submit new plans and pay another new set of DA fees, which are based on the council’s estimate of the cost of the works. This is what happened to us.

“If I did it over again, I’d become more personally involved in the process, get to know the people at council, and [gain] a clearer understanding of what they want or at least the process that would be followed.”

Nevertheless, the Potts’ renovation is now underway. “I’m looking forward to the final result,” says Potts. “We wanted an addition to the house, but also wanted to ensure it will marry with what is already there.” ⇒



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KNOCK IT DOWN

When Stephen Hellenpach and his partner Elizabeth considered starting a family, they knew their small two-bedroom fibro house in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, wasn't going to be big enough for the next stage of their life. The couple were also keen to have more room for entertaining. However, after a lot of research – inspecting houses for sale in the area and looking at project home options – they decided to renovate. Stephen Hellenpach provided us his reflections on their experience.

Hellenpach says that their decision to use a building designer was a wise one. "It's much easier when you work with a designer and start from scratch," he says. "We're really getting value out of that. They really know their stuff, particularly in energy-efficient design and the practical aspect of home design – even for simple things like how big your bedroom should be."

His decision to work with a designer came after investigating many other

options. "Initially, I was just going to re-clad the external walls and re-roof," he says. "And I was probably going to renovate internally. I was going to do it myself, but then I thought I may need a builder, which made me consider getting a building designer. One thing led to another and now we're knocking down and rebuilding with a two-storey extension at the rear of the house. It's become a major project."

DO YOUR RESEARCH

When initial quotes from a builder came to about \$300,000 for the renovation, Hellenpach decided to look into project homes and other homes in the area. "The homes we did see weren't perfect and some of the project homes we saw were small and didn't take advantage of all aspects of the block where we currently live, nor had the quality we wanted. I think it's a good exercise to look at comparable homes in the area. Get an agent involved and look at what new homes are worth."

Ultimately, Hellenpach decided to stay put. "We like where we live and the block has a good aspect," he

says. "It faces north, has good solar access and backs on to a reserve." He managed to get the quote down to a more manageable \$250,000 for the renovation. However, they then decided to knock down and rebuild at a cost of about \$350,000 to \$400,000, but the end result will be better value for money. He estimates the new house will be worth between \$500,000 and \$600,000 when finished.

Hellenpach is aiming for a modern home that still maintains a traditional weatherboard look. He plans to use Scyon™ Linea™ weatherboard and Scyon™ Secura™ wet area flooring in the project.

Hellenpach expects that his dream home will start taking shape in about a month.

Although his plans started small, Hellenpach admits they have developed considerably as he has taken advantage of what the site has to offer. "We're going to have a concrete slab at the front of the house to facilitate the solar heat gain in winter," he says. "In summer it will act as a 'heat sink' by keeping the house cool with the help of shade awnings and a natural breezeway.

MOVING ON UP

When James Collins from building design firm collins.w.collins was asked to renovate an original 1960s weatherboard home, he knew he wanted a modern result with hints of traditional beachside design. The owners bought a three-bedroom house with a double garage and wanted Collins to transform this into a five-bedroom family home.

This will be achieved by extending the rear of the home and adding on to the existing single storey by going up. The second storey will also take advantage of the home's ocean view to the north at the front of the home.

"We've designed it so allow the northern sun in," says Collins. "There are also strategically placed northern windows for the north-east winds to get into the primary living areas, but we still maintain privacy for the home itself."

Collins says the home's cathedral ceilings also allow for the northern

light to get into the house. "The brief was to turn this small, mundane house into a family home through the use of good solar access and some smart internal features," says Collins. These include raised ceilings and stone featured on the inside and outside.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

The owners wanted to achieve a traditional Cape Cod design and Collins says it's the design's attention to detail – and the products chosen – that will make this renovation a success. "The home was 100% weatherboard with exposed internal beams," says Collins. "The main product we're going to use is Scyon™ Linea weatherboard, with HardiGroove® lining on the eaves and Scyon™ Axent™ trim on the home's windows."

Scyon™ Linea weatherboard provides a classic weatherboard look that's ideal for beach house transformations. Not only that, but it has also been engineered to be resistant to damage from termites,

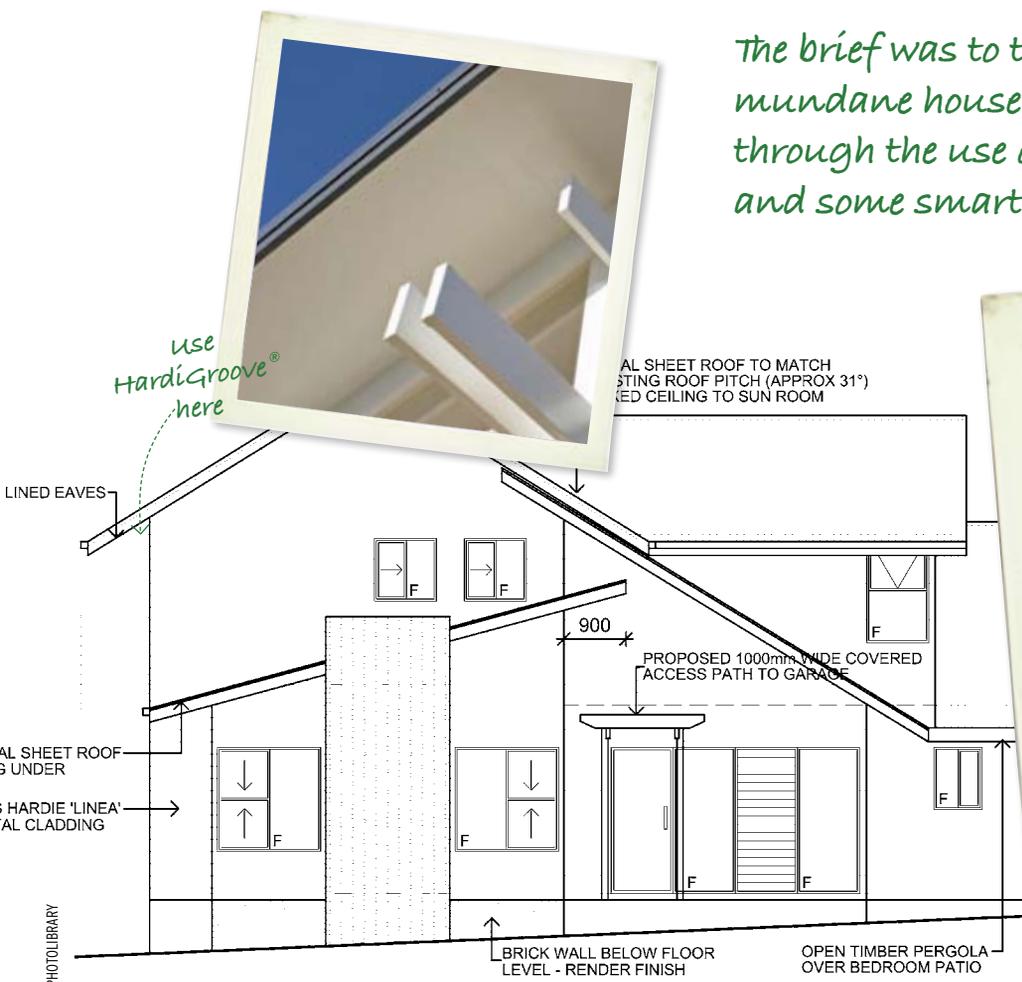
rot and fire when installed and maintained correctly.

"Aesthetically, Linea weatherboard is a very streamlined product, which is most suitable for what we are trying to achieve," says Collins. "We've also chosen to use lightweight materials over masonry because they're more flexible and appealing from a streetscape point of view. Furthermore, using lightweight materials in an older-style home like this means there is less weight bearing on the existing footings and foundations."

Collins adds that using masonry would have limited their options. "We tried to maintain the footprint of the home – and we've done that," he says. "If we had to use a thicker cavity wall, we would lose on the floor area."

While the design is currently on the drawing board, work is about to commence on the project and Collins expects his vision will become a built reality for February 2009. **■**

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