

# A GUIDE to building your high specification HOUSE.

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# What is a "High Specification House"???

A high specification house is generally a house that is well designed and well built using correct construction details and standards. Interior and exterior finishes of a high specification house is also higher in quality. The design of such a house is very highly customized to fit the home owner's requirements based on their lifestyle, family size and other individual needs.



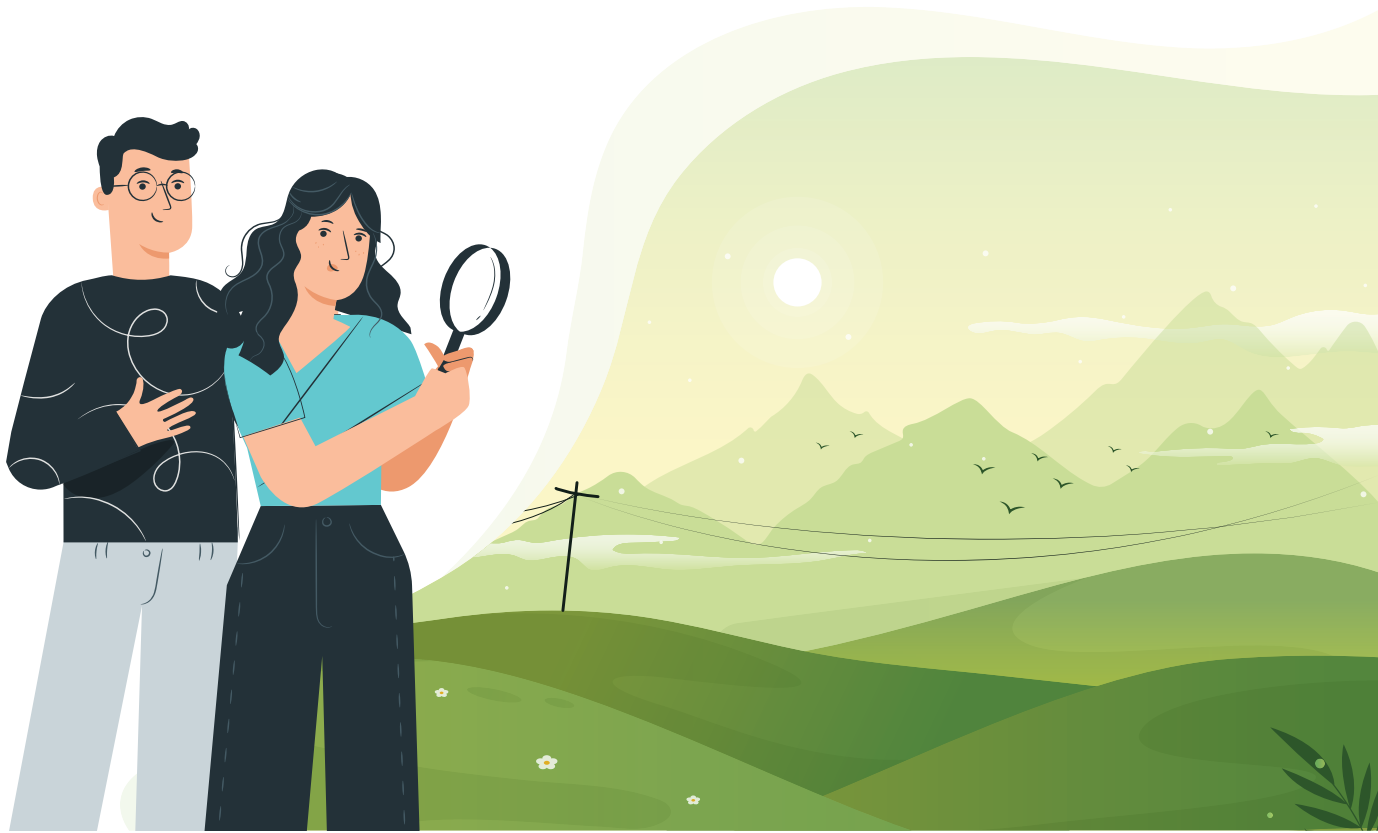
Embarking on building your high specification house maybe considered a daunting task at face value. However, with correct decisions taking at the correct time and with the use of the right professionals , this can certainly be a dream come true.



This booklet prepared by **KWA Architects** attempts to help you through this process.



There are **7 important points** you should keep in mind, when building your high specification house.



# 1

## Site / Land Selection

In addition to the general considerations you put into selecting a land such as distance to your place of work, to schools etc, also pay special attention to the location and its regulatory requirements.

### **Pay special attention to the following when selecting lands:**

- Widths of access roads. (This has an impact on how many floors you can build)
- Road reservations (street lines & building lines)
- Other reservations such as river & canal reservations, coastal reservations (for beach front lands)
- Special zoning requirements for the location of the land (such as parliament high security zone, special primary residential zone in Colombo etc.)





**Floated House by KWA Architects**  
Winner - Best Architecture, Single Residence  
Asia Pacific Property Awards 2019





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## Employment of the correct Professionals.

When building a high specification house, you need to employ 04 key building professionals who will be your consultants in your home's design and construction process.



## i. Chartered Architect

The architect has the responsibility to put your dreams into reality in a practical and beautiful way while exceeding your expectations. You should select the architect that you prefer to engage depending on their design styles and the interrelationship you can have with them. Whether you want a traditional Sri Lankan style house or a very modern contemporary urban house or something in between need to be decided when selecting the architect for the project. All architects have their own approach and philosophy in design and sometimes a signature style that they are known for. Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA) has a published list of Chartered Architects in their website at [www.slia.lk](http://www.slia.lk).



## ii. Chartered Structural Engineer

The Chartered Structural Engineer will design your home's structural design in a way that is in line with the architectural design while being form and economical. Gone are the days where conventional 'rule of thumb' was applied by the humble 'bass' to decide the structural design of a house. In a high specification design, without the involvement of a structural engineer the project will run the risk of being expensively over designed or being dangerously under designed.



### iii. Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing Engineer

The MEP engineer(s) as better known, design the service systems of your house. From the water supply and sewage systems to the electrical systems, air conditioning system and other systems such as TV and telephone, CCTV, data etc can all be carefully designed and integrated to the architectural design of the house.

This ensures optimum performance of these systems as well as proper visual integration of those in to the building.



### iv. Quantity Surveyor

The quantity surveyor prepares the Bill of Quantities for the house and will also draft the construction contracts and take the project through tender process (formal quotation calling process) with potential building contractors as well as price negotiations and price evaluation of the tenderer prices. The quantity surveyor is also responsible for checking the bills submitted by the contractor for the work done and for preparing the payment certificates (including necessary deductions). Those then have to be signed and certified by the Chartered Architect before you can make a payment to the contractor.



In most instances, your architect will have his own team of consultants & will be able to offer you a consortium service including all above consultancies.

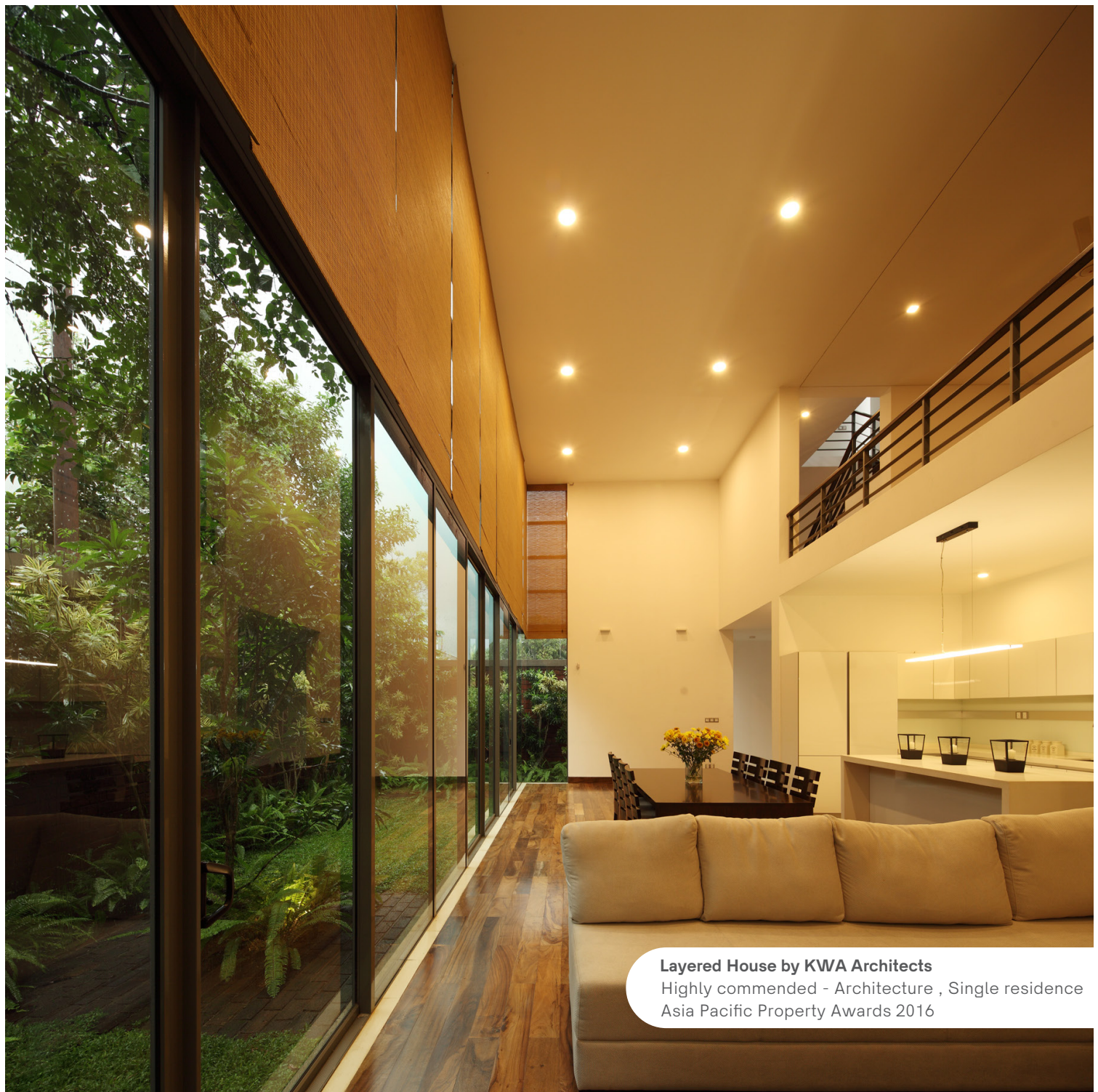




**Layered House by KWA Architects**

Highly commended - Architecture , Single residence  
Asia Pacific Property Awards 2016





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## Decide what you want & what your budget is.

Spend time talking to your architect to convey your ideas, thoughts and requirements. Decide together what are most essential things and what are nice to have things that maybe you can live without based on your budget or site restrictions. Workout your budget for the construction and convey this to your team of consultants so that they know what is possible.





## 4

# Using correct contractual procedures

In Sri Lanka, most houses are based on informal agreements with “basses” with the material being supplied by the home owner when required. While this is effective and economical in building a typical house, for a high specification house, the process is more complicated.

At the same time, you as the future home owner of a high specification house, will most probably have a very busy work life. So, it is recommended to engage a reputed contractor with a good track record to build your house.

In addition, it is essential to sign a proper construction contract with this contractor. In Sri Lanka, the most recognized and used contracts are those published by Sri Lanka Construction Industry Development Authority (CIDA). Your team of consultants lead by the Chartered Architect will be able to give you the correct advice with regard to this.



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## Make decisions early and stick to them.

A high specification house normally has many decisions that you as the home owner needs to make. From the type and the brand of toilet fittings to the types of finishes, brands of the kitchen cabinetry etc all need your decision and input. While your architect and other consultancy team members will advice you, finally it is your decision. Making these decisions early allows for a smooth run of the construction program without unnecessary delays and cost escalations.





## 6

## Be Involved

While your team of consultants will take the project forward together with the building contractor and other sub-contractors and suppliers, do not forget that it is your house and ultimately you and your family will live in it. So where possible, attend to site meetings, visit the site and in general stay on top of things and stay yourself updated. It will also help you in making decisions when they are need from them.

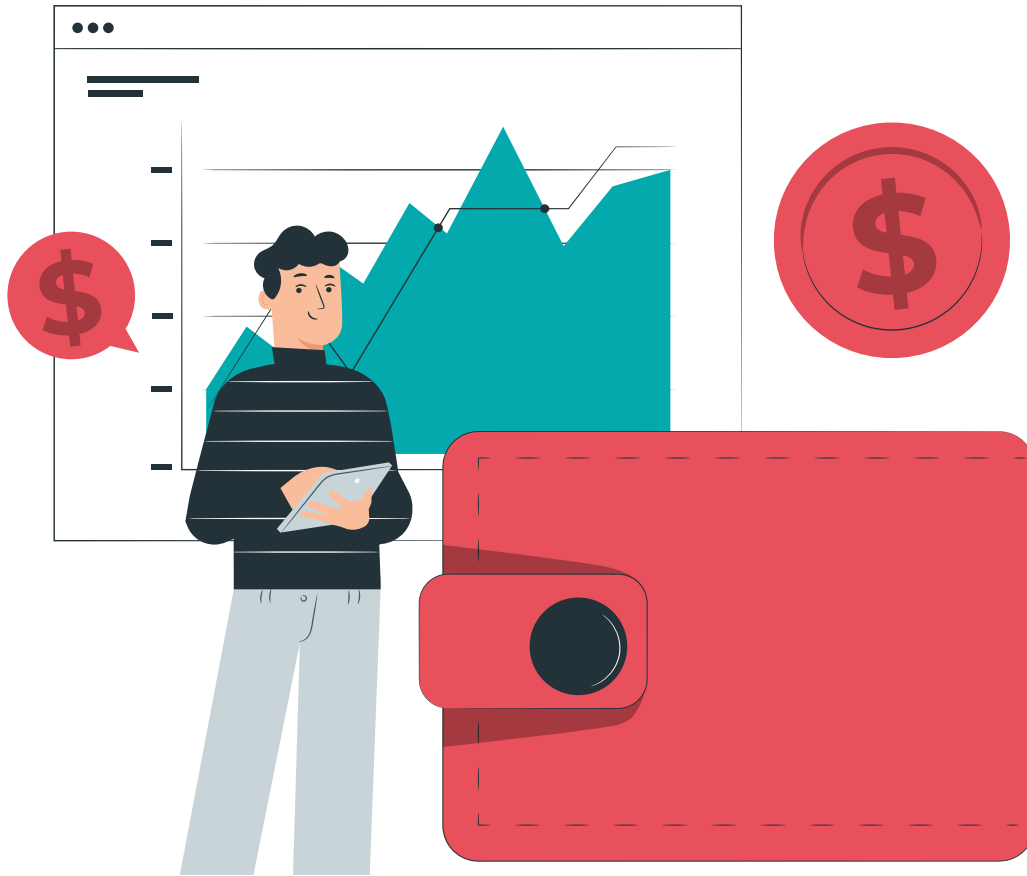


**Tropical Stack House by KWA Architects**  
Winner - Gold Award, Residential Architecture  
Muse Design Awards 2020, New York





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## Manage your cash flow

Once the construction contract is drawn and costs of different nominated supplier items are known, (such as kitchen cabinets, toilet fittings etc.) it is important to manage your cash flow so as to avoid any interruptions to work. Your quantity surveyor and architect will be able to help you in achieving this.





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