

FOR NEW ZEALAND NEW BUILDS

13 questions to ask your builder about energy.

The questions that help you design energy in from day one, for the cleanest and most integrated install your build can deliver. Print this guide, take it to your next site meeting, and tick them off as you go.



GROUPED BY BUILD STAGE

Pre-consent · 4 questions

Build contract · 3 questions

Framing & install · 3 questions

Fit-off & handover · 3 questions

Plus: what a good answer sounds like

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Builders aren't the problem. Missed conversations are.

Every good builder in New Zealand wants to deliver a great home. Most aren't experts in energy systems though, and the build contract is signed long before the energy partner shows up. That's where the gaps appear.

The 13 questions in this guide are the ones we'd ask if we were building our own home. They cover every stage of the build, from the first plans you put in front of council through to the final fit-off and commissioning of the system.

Bring this guide to your next builder meeting. Ask the questions relevant to where you are in the process. Use the answers to decide whether to confirm scope, push back, or bring in an energy partner to fill the gap.

You don't need to be an expert to ask any of them. You just need to ask them early.

A NOTE BEFORE YOU START

The earliest questions matter the most. Decisions made before consent cost nothing to change. Decisions made after framing can cost thousands. The four questions on page 3 are the most important in the guide. Don't skip them.

1 PRE-CONSENT & DESIGN

Before the plans go to council.

Roof orientation, switchboard, hot water, ducted heating. The four decisions on this page cost nothing to specify at design phase and thousands to undo after the build is consented.

01 "What's the roof orientation, pitch and clear area we'll have for solar?"

Solar yield for the life of the home is decided here. **North-facing pitches between 15° and 35°** produce the most year-round generation. East and west also work; south is the only one to avoid.

02 "Where will the switchboard go, and is it sized for an inverter and battery?"

A standard 4-row switchboard is too tight for an inverter, breakers and the cabling for a future battery. **Ask for it upsized, located somewhere accessible** (garage or laundry, not a master bedroom wall, since it hums), and pre-cabled for the load you may add later.

03 "Will the home be wired for an EV charger from day one?"

EV prewire costs a few hundred dollars during the build. Cutting it into a finished wall later is many times that. **Ask for a cable run from the switchboard to your chosen garage wall**, even if you don't own an EV yet.

04 "Have you allowed cavity space, ducting and truss spec for ducted heating?"

Ducted heating is the cleanest, quietest HVAC option, but only if the cavity, ducting routes and truss layout are designed in early. **Retrofitting ducting into a finished home costs three or four times more** than during the build.

2 BUILD CONTRACT

What's funded by the loan?

Anything in the build contract gets paid for by your construction loan. Anything outside it you pay for separately, usually in cash at fit-off. Get clarity here before you sign.

05 "Can I see a line-by-line list of what energy systems are in the contract?"

"Solar-ready" is not the same as "solar". Get an itemised list: solar PV (or prewire), inverter, battery, ducted heating, ventilation, hot water heat pump, EV charger (or prewire). **Anything not on the list is something you'll pay for separately**, post-CCC, when green-loan top-ups become available.

06 "When can our energy partner come to site for prewire and ducting?"

Energy installers need **specific windows tied to framing and roof completion**. Conduit and prewire go in before lining. Ducted HVAC plenums go in before ceiling fit-off. Panels go on the roof after it's finished. Get these windows scheduled into the build programme.

07 "What's the install order for trades through the build?"

A good builder will have a clear sequence: electrical rough-in, plumbing rough-in, framing inspection, lining, ceiling fit-off, painting, fit-off. **Your energy partner slots into specific points in that sequence**; the more visibility you have, the easier the coordination is.

3 FRAMING & INSTALL

Once the roof closes.

Cavity work, ducted ceiling routes, outdoor unit pads and the solar mounting feet. The questions here are about coordination, timing, and what happens if a trade misses a window.

08 "Can I have the week-by-week schedule of which trades are on site?"

A clear build programme tells you when the cavity is open, when the roof is going on, and when lining happens. **Without it, you have no way to coordinate the energy install**, and you're at the mercy of whichever trade shows up first.

09 "How are solar mounting feet being fitted relative to the roof flashings?"

Mounting feet should be fitted **under the roof flashings, not bolted on top**. Bolted-on-top installs are the most common cause of long-term roof leaks. Ask your builder to confirm the roofer and the solar installer are coordinating on flashing detail.

10 "Where are the outdoor unit pads, and what's the clearance plan?"

Heat pump and hot water heat pump outdoor units need pads with the right clearances, drainage, and access for service. **These can't be retrofitted into a finished landscape** without re-pouring concrete. Confirm pad locations and pour them with the foundations or paths.

4 FIT-OFF & HANDOVER

Tested and signed off.

The last three questions are about commissioning, compliance, and whether you're getting handed a fully working system or a half-finished one with paperwork pending.

11

"Will permanent home internet be live before commissioning?"

The inverter, battery and HVAC controllers all need a permanent internet connection to be commissioned, tested, monitored and updated. **A phone hotspot won't do.** Make sure the fibre or fixed wireless connection is provisioned and active before fit-off, not after handover.

12

"Who is responsible for AS/NZS compliance and lines company paperwork?"

Every install needs sign-off against AS/NZS 4777 (inverter), AS/NZS 3000 (wiring) and AS/NZS 5033 (solar PV), plus a connection application with your local lines company. **Your energy installer should handle all of it** and give you copies. If the builder is vague here, call the energy installer directly.

13

"What's the warranty and ongoing support story after handover?"

Solar panels typically come with a 25-year performance warranty; inverters and batteries usually 10. Heat pumps 5–10. **Make sure every component is registered, you have copies of the paperwork, and you know who to call** when something needs attention.

LISTENING FOR THE ANSWER

Good answers vs red flags.

A short field guide. Five of the questions in this guide, with what a confident, well-prepared builder will say, and what to watch out for if the answer makes you uneasy.

Q1 · Roof orientation, pitch & solar area

● **Good answer.** "North-facing, 22° pitch, here's the clear roof area we've protected from chimneys, vents and dormers."

● **Red flag.** "We'll work that out when the solar installer comes" or "you can put panels wherever later."

Q2 · Switchboard sizing

● **Good answer.** "Eight-row switchboard in the garage, single phase, sized for your inverter and a future battery. Here's the location on the plans."

● **Red flag.** "We'll figure it out on the day" or it lands on a bedroom wall.

Q4 · Cavity space for ducted heating

● **Good answer.** "Truss layout is set for ducting in the ceiling cavity. Routes and vent positions are on the plans."

● **Red flag.** "We don't usually do ducted, you'd want a high-wall split in each room."

Q5 · Line-by-line contract scope

● **Good answer.** "Here's the itemised schedule covering solar, hot water heat pump, ventilation, ducted heating, EV prewire."

● **Red flag.** "It's all in the contract" with no line items, no schedule, no specifics.

Q11 · Internet live before commissioning

● **Good answer.** "Fibre is provisioned, we'll have it active before fit-off so the energy install can commission on site."

● **Red flag.** "You can sort that after handover" or "use your phone hotspot for now."

NEXT STEP

Bring us in before you sign.

Book a free, no-obligation new home energy consult. We'll review your plans and your build contract, walk you through what your builder has and hasn't included, and recommend the right energy package for your home and budget. No charge, no pressure.

[Book a free new home energy consult](#)[Call us on 09 873 3531](#)

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