

## FREE REPORT: Building a driveway? What you must consider to avoid making expensive mistakes!

Driveways are an important part of your landscape. A well planned and constructed driveway will significantly increase the street appeal and value of your home or business premises.

In this **FREE REPORT**, you'll learn some basic tips on how to plan and design your driveway and how to choose and work with a contractor.

### Planning and designing your driveway

You can avoid many expensive mistakes through careful planning. First you need to consider all the options including:

- Layout
- Driveway site
- Design
- Materials

#### Layout

Ever tried to navigate a badly designed driveway with poor access, limited or no space for turning and inexplicable bends which make backing down the driveway almost impossible? (without scraping the side of your car on trees, walls or fences).

To avoid being known as the house with the horrible driveway, you need to plan the route and layout of the driveway in relation to your section. Make sure the driveway can be easily navigated and consider car parking, turning areas, how the garage will be accessed and how the completed driveway will connect to your house and garden.

If there isn't enough space for turning, you may want to consider a mechanical vehicle turntable particularly if your driveway is narrow or on a steep or windy hillside. If parking is a problem, consider using retaining walls to create flat usable areas for parking. If your driveway creates a new entrance to the road, you'll need to be aware of any local council compliance requirements.

Finally, develop a detailed site plan showing the intended layout of your driveway. This is crucial when you come to get quotes from contractors. Depending on the complexity of your driveway project, you may need to consider getting professional advice to help you develop your site plan. In this case, you'll need to consider involving a contractor early in the process who has the experience to work with you from the concept stage right through to final completion.

#### Driveway Site

Site preparation is a critical part of building a good driveway. You'll need to research and test the land which could include consulting an engineer and/or getting a geotechnical report. You'll also need to understand any local council consent and compliance requirements and associated costs.

The land may need to be cleared, excavated, shaped, levelled and graded, excess soil removed and the drive may need to be supported by reinforcing steel to give added strength.

To avoid stepping into puddles as you get out of your car or water flooding your house, garage or section, adequate drainage and trenching is a must. Consider the slope of your driveway and where water will fall and drain to. You'll need to discuss all of these areas with an experienced contractor.

## Design

Do you want your driveway to be kerbed, edged, bordered by garden, shrubs or fences? Good edging can really enhance the look of your driveway and make lawn mowing easier. If you need retaining walls or fences near the driveway, you may need to build some or all of these structures before building your driveway. Again, you should discuss this with an experienced contractor.

## Materials

There are a number of materials you can use including asphalt, concrete and chipseal. The appropriate materials will be determined by your driveway and property layout, budget, preparation requirements, level of use and how long you want the driveway to last. Again, you should discuss this with an experienced contractor.

## Choosing and working with a contractor

Choosing the right contractor can be time-consuming, but some forethought and a little research will make the process so much smoother.

First establish what sort of contractor is best suited to do the work. The planning stage is critical here as it helps you identify what work needs to be done and therefore the best type of contractor. The work required will include some and possibly all of the following:

- Site clearance and preparation
- Driveway formation
- Kerb & channel construction
- Driveway surfacing
- Trenching
- Drainage
- Retaining walls
- Footpath and carpark construction
- Soil/waste removal and cartage

You can start by looking in the Yellow Pages, but remember your contractor will have considerable influence on the quality of the work and your satisfaction with the work process and completed driveway.

Don't just pick the first name that pops out at you. You should look for contractors who are experienced, have a good reputation and are able to provide you with references and/or show you pictures of driveways they have completed.

If your driveway will be on a steep slope or hillside section, then it is important that your contractor is experienced in construction of hillside driveways as typically these types of sites add significant complexity to the project and potentially significant cost if the work is done poorly.

Ideally only one contractor should be involved in doing all the work (the main contractor). If sub-contractors are used for any aspect of the job, this should be arranged by your contractor, not by you. Having a main contractor will avoid any conflict between various parties if problems arise during the building process and after work is completed.

Other things you should do or discuss with prospective contractors include:

- Give them your site plan and talk to them about your driveway project. Ask them if they have any ideas or suggestions to improve the work or add value to the project
- Discuss site preparation and ask whether they think the existing soil on which the driveway will be built will support the traffic load or whether it needs improving
- Ask them to visit your site before providing a quote. This is where your site plan becomes an extremely important document. If you don't provide adequate plans for your project, each contractor will then be left to decide how they will carry out the work and what products and materials they will use. This will leave you with disparate quotes, much like comparing apples with oranges rather than apples with apples.
- Discuss the kind of surface finish that you want and ask them for their opinion
- Discuss schedules, timing and start date

Talking to prospective contractors gives you the opportunity to determine how you feel about each contractor. There is no hard or fast rule on how many contractors you speak to. Some people find they only need to talk to one or two contractors; others like to speak to several. What is important is that you have confidence in the contractor and are able to talk with them easily. If not, don't hire them as they are unlikely to be the right contractor for you.

Once you have decided on who you would like to hire, ensure you receive a written quotation containing details of everything that the contractor has allowed for. Also check whether they will bring protective sheeting (if required) to protect your house and garage from splashing during driveway surfacing.

## Why you should consider 1Geotechnical for your driveway project

At 1Geotechnical, we offer a seamless operation and can work with you on everything from initial concept, through to planning, preparation and construction. As no two sites are the same, every driveway requires its own unique solution. We work closely with you to ensure your driveway not only compliments your environment but is durable, waterproof and low maintenance.

We also have the experience, equipment and manpower to handle all facets of driveway construction, from section clearing and site preparation, driveway formation, kerb and channel, concrete, asphalt and chipseal surfacing, drainage and trenching to retaining walls and carpark and footpath construction.

Dealing with us gives you one point of contact, reducing stress and saving you time and money.

Hillside driveways and footpaths are a specialty and we have a reputation for detail and thinking outside the square resulting in quality workmanship and quick, cost efficient service and construction.

Take a look at our website [www.1geotechnical.co.nz](http://www.1geotechnical.co.nz) and especially our Project Gallery for images of our most recent projects. We welcome your enquiry and would be proud to show you our work.

1Geotechnical PO Box 17680, Christchurch, New Zealand.

P: 021 320 721 E: [info@1geotechnical.co.nz](mailto:info@1geotechnical.co.nz) W: [www.1geotechnical.co.nz](http://www.1geotechnical.co.nz)