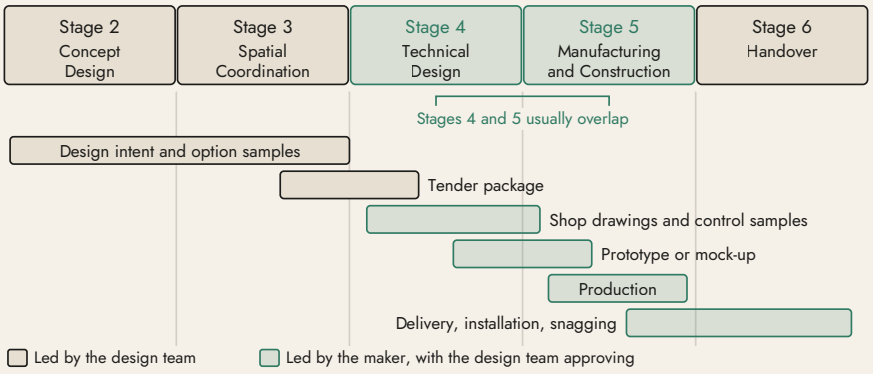
Where bespoke work sits in the *RIBA Plan of Work*

Where bespoke milestones sit against RIBA Stages 2 to 6, and who usually produces and approves each.

AT A GLANCE

RIBA stage (2020)	What the Plan says it is for	Bespoke milestones that usually sit here (our mapping)	Who usually leads
Stage 2 Concept Design	The concept is set and approved by the client against the brief. An outline specification is aligned to the cost plan.	Design-intent drawings, first material and finish choices, option samples, first talks with makers	Design team; makers advise when asked
Stage 3 Spatial Coordination	The concept is tested and coordinated so that every designer, specialist subcontractors included, can finalise their information in Stage 4.	Developed drawings, finishes and FF&E schedule; early maker advice; budget pricing; tender package prepared	Design team; maker consulted
Stage 4 Technical Design	All the design information needed to manufacture and construct is completed, by the design team and by specialist subcontractors.	Final specification; tender, quote and order; shop drawings; control samples signed; prototype or mock-up	Maker for shop drawings and samples; design team reviews and approves
Stage 5 Manufacturing and Construction	The building is made and built. There is no design activity except resolving site queries. Stages 4 and 5 overlap on most projects.	Production and quality checks, delivery, installation	Maker and partner workshops; contractor sets the site programme
Stage 6 Handover	The building is handed over, aftercare starts, the building contract is concluded and residual defects are put right.	Snagging and sign-off, care and O&M information, warranties	Contractor and maker; design team and client accept

The RIBA Plan says what each stage achieves, not who does the work: your Responsibility Matrix, appointments and contracts decide. 'Who usually leads' is our reading of common practice. Stages 0, 1 and 7 sit outside this sheet.



Bespoke milestones against RIBA Stages 2 to 6: our mapping of common practice, not RIBA content; timings illustrative. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

STAGE 4 INFORMATION TO BE ISSUED

By [date] the design team will issue, for each bespoke item: design-intent drawings [refs and revisions]; the specification [ref]; finish references and approved samples [refs]; the FF&E schedule row [item code]; and the interface information the item depends on (structure, services, adjacent finishes) [refs]. Information for [item] is [prescriptive / descriptive]. The Responsibility Matrix [ref] records who designs and who checks each item.

MAKER'S STAGE 4 DELIVERABLES

[Maker] will issue shop drawings for [item] showing dimensions, materials, joints, fixings, hardware, finishes, tolerances and site joints, for approval by [party] before manufacture is released. Shop drawings carry a revision letter and are returned marked [approved / approved as noted / revise and resubmit] within [ ] working days. No manufacture of [item] starts before approval is recorded in writing.

SAMPLES, RELEASE AND CHANGE

Control sample [S-nn] is signed and dated by [party] and held by [party] and by the maker. A [prototype / mock-up / first article] of [item] is approved by [party] before the production run is released, by written instruction dated [date]. Stages 4 and 5 may overlap [yes / no] for [package]. After release, design changes are made only by written variation stating the effect on cost, programme and approvals; resolving a site query is not a design change.

TERMS USED

RIBA Plan of Work 2020

The RIBA's eight-stage framework (stages 0 to 7) for organising building projects, from strategic definition to use. Bespoke work typically moves from design intent in the early stages to the maker's detailed drawings, samples and manufacture in the later ones.

Shop drawings

Detailed drawings prepared by the maker or supplier showing exactly how an item will be built, with dimensions, materials, fixings and finishes, for the designer to check before manufacture. They interpret the design team's drawings; they are not a chance to redesign.

Prescriptive specification

A specification in which the design team states exactly what products, materials and workmanship are required, leaving the contractor to supply and install them as described. Design responsibility stays with the design team.

Descriptive specification

A specification that states the required result and performance, and leaves a specialist or contractor to design and detail how to achieve it. Design responsibility for that part generally passes to whoever completes it.

Control sample

The one sample that the client or designer has approved and the maker keeps as the benchmark against which production is judged. It should be labelled, dated and signed.

Responsibility Matrix

A RIBA Plan of Work 2020 document, prepared at Stage 1, that records who undertakes the tasks behind the project information, including whether the design team will issue prescriptive or descriptive information for each building system.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Overview (RIBA, 2020): read in full as the published PDF on 5 Nov 2026; page numbers on this sheet are PDF page numbers; text is paraphrased, not reproduced. Copyright RIBA.
- NBS: RIBA Plan of Work 2020 and specification (Dale Sinclair, 17 June 2020): prescriptive and descriptive information, design responsibility, shop drawings (read 5 Nov 2026).
- BIID: RIBA Plan of Work and interior designers: stage names; the RIBA/BIID interior design contracts used the Plan as their foundation (read 5 Nov 2026).

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/bespoke-work-in-the-riba-plan-of-work. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.