

The Design Brief.

Profession & Business 1

Level 5

Mod Code: M5X01982

What is a Design Brief?

A thorough and informative design brief is an imperative part of the design process. It is an essential point of reference not only for the architect, but for all people involved in the design and implementation of the project. The more information we can gain from the client in the early stages of design, the more effective our decision making and problem solving process will be.

There are two main types of architectural design brief:

- There is the private domestic type client that may be looking to have a home designed. They could be someone that has never employed an architect before, and has little or no experience of the architectural design and construction process.
- The commercial client however, generally is more experienced, and has very different priorities to a domestic client.



- A Domestic Client Brief.

This is a statement that you, as the architect should assist your client in preparing, making them feel part of the process from the outset.

Briefing requirements will vary from project to project depending on scale and need. You will also find some aspects will be dictated by local authority regulations, planning requirements and conservation restrictions – it is important to be mindful of this from the outset.

You may also find that the brief will change and develop as you work on your early proposals as you interact with your client and gain a better understanding of their needs.







About your client:

Describe your current home. What do you like and dislike about it? What is missing, and what you change.

What kind of ideas do you have about design and/or materials?

Do you have any images from magazines/internet that show us a style that you like? (a scrap book)

Are there any particular design features that are important to you?

What kind of style do you require for the project e.g.. contemporary, traditional, industrial, bold, elegant, minimal etc. (be mindful of context)

Do you have any specific materials or surfaces in mind that you would like to see included in the project?

Do you have specific time requirements for the project to be complete?

Do you have any specific accessibility requirements, for example is anyone in your family disabled or do you have any regular visitors that would have special needs?

Do you have any specific considerations toward sustainability and energy efficiency – is there a particular system you would like to use: i.e., solar panels etc.

How much time and energy would you be willing to invest to maintain your home?

About the site:

Is there anything about the site that you particularly like or dislike?

Are there any views within the site that are particularly important to you?

About the occupants:

How many people will be living in the new home?

Any pets that will need to be accommodated?

About the lifestyle:

Describe your lifestyle and the kind of spaces that you need? For example, work from home, entertain often, etc

How much time do you spend in the different areas of your home (indoors and outdoors)?

What type of entertainment systems do you require? Music, TV, projectors, speakers throughout the house?

What type of storage do you require? Specific hobbies that require lots of storage space? Large wardrobe space?

Indoor spaces:

Number of floors/rooms/spaces and use for each?

Are there any particular areas that are to be more private than others? Or particular rooms that you would like to be connected?

Do you have any preferred room layouts/relationships or orientations – a south facing kitchen for example

Outdoor spaces:

- Do you have any specific ideas or plans for the outside spaces that you would like us to consider?
- Do you like gardening?
- Any requirements for 'Grow your Own'?
- Physical Exercise?

Specific questions for clients looking to extend or renovate current homes:

- What would you like to see in your newly extended/renovated home that it currently lacks?
- What additional areas/functions/activities will be housed in the new proposed space?
- Do you have any particular preferences to the relationship between the rooms? Would you be happy to reconsider the internal layout?

Important Questions to a Domestic Client.

Do you own the property? Do you have permission from the owner?

Is there anything in the title deed that would prevent the development?

What is the project budget?

What do they consider the project value to be? – often a reality check.

How is the project funded?

Do they have equity in the property?

Consider the value of the work and estimate the property value upon completion.

A Commercial Client Brief. (Initial Check list)

Client Information:

- Does the client have any specific wishes with regard to design?
- What attitude do they have towards architecture and design?
- Will the drawings need to be understandable by non experts?
- Has the client worked with an architect before? If so who?
- What are the time constraints of the project?
- Are there any particular phasing requirements?

Fees:

On what basis is the calculation of fees based?

Should the project cost be estimated in order to base the fee calculation?

What is the client budget?

Basic Design Factors:

Depending on the type of project questions will vary, however some of the domestic questions may apply.

- What is the client looking to achieve with this project?
- What do the surroundings look like? Landscaping, trees, orientation, climate etc?
- What are the existing buildings and surround buildings? What materials are they?
- Does any later construction need to be taken into account now?
- What sort of materials would the client like to use?
- Does the client/company have any leaning toward a sustainable energy efficient ethos?
- Would they like to include new technologies in the project?

Occupants:

Who will use the building?

What are the requirements of the users of the building?

Are there any specific accessibility requirements?

Spaces:

- What floors/rooms/spaces are required? Indoor and Outdoor
- How would the spaces need to connect?
- Are there any specific external landscaping requirements?
- Are there any specific mechanical or electrical requirements?

Briefing Documents for Building Design

Briefing documents are crucial to the success of a project as they describe the requirements for which the design provides the solution. The briefing documents can be listed as:

- **Statement of need:**

A first attempt to describe the possible requirements of the project, which may be used as the basis of appointment for independent client advisers.

- **Strategic brief:**

Describes the client's requirements in sufficient detail to allow the appointment of consultants. It is then developed further with the benefit of comments made by the consultants during the appointment process to allow feasibility studies to be carried out.

- **Project brief:**

The key document upon which the design will be based.

The Statement of Need

The statement of need describes the client's possible requirements in outline, which at this stage may or may not result in the need for a project. It may include the following information:

- A description of the business need that may result in a project.
- An assessment of how it will contribute to the corporate strategy.
- An analysis of the high level options (such as; do something, do nothing, new build, extend, refurbish, relocate, change the way the organisation works, etc).

- A description of the nature of the client, and its history.
- A description of the nature of client's operations.
- Information about existing premises and likely future requirements.
- The assumed budget (and the basis for the budget).
- The assumed programme.
- An assessment of the potential for future changes.

The statement of need is likely to be in a report format, however, where possible, information and requirements should be scheduled in a database or spreadsheet that will be easy to expand and will be easy to use to test whether proposals satisfy requirements later in the project.

The Strategic Brief

The strategic brief is written by the client and provides sufficient information about the project to allow the appointment of a consultant team

A thorough strategic brief can take a considerable time to develop and is prepared through a process of:

- Developing the information in the statement of need and preliminary business case.
- Consulting with champions, user panels and stakeholders.
- Visiting similar facilities.
- Lessons learned from previous projects.
- Feedback from consultants during the selection process.
- Testing ideas with feasibility studies and options appraisals.

The strategic brief may include:

- The client's mission, objectives and vision.
- The overall context for the project.
- The triggers for change and requirements for future proofing.
- Other stakeholders needs.
- The qualities that will be required from the project, and their relative priority, including any design quality indicators.
- Any comparable facilities that set the standard.
- Functional requirements.
- Overall sizes, adjacencies of spaces, ceiling heights and other known spatial requirements.
- Information about the site if it has been selected, or potential sites that may need to be assessed.

- Information about existing facilities.
- Internal environmental conditions.
- Spaces that require separation.
- Departmental structure.
- Technical requirements described in sufficient detail to allow feasibility studies to be carried out (such as broad servicing requirements).
- Assumptions about the procurement strategy.
- Project procedures, including any existing client procedures, frequency of progress reports, and so on.
- Targets for whole-life costs showing; initial costs, periodic costs, annual costs, income and disposal value.
- Durability, lifespan and maintenance requirements.
- Flexibility and future uses.

- Physical and operational constraints, such as site access issues.
- Planning constraints
- Health and safety issues.
- Environmental standards. This might include a requirement for formal assessment of the project, such as BREEAM.
- Project programme, key milestones and any phasing requirements.
- The project budget.
- Inclusions and exclusions.
- Previous studies.
- Access for people with disabilities.
- Transport and parking strategy.
- Security policy.
- Conditions imposed by funding bodies.
- Targets for post-occupancy evaluation.

The Project Brief

The project brief is a development of the strategic brief.

It's the key document upon which the design will be based. It evolves through the project brief stage and the concept design stage with the benefit of information gained from consultations with the client and other stakeholders and ongoing design development. It is frozen at the end of the concept design stage and any further changes are then subject to change control procedures.

Preparation of the project brief is likely to be coordinated by the lead consultant.

As well as gathering information about physical requirements, the briefing process should:

- Verify the objectives and priorities of the project.
- Ensure space, time and budget parameters are aligned with the client's vision and needs.
- Ensure expectations are reasonable and attainable.
- Clarify client roles and the project structure.
- Establish how much the client knows already and their level of experience; do they already have a clear brief?
- Gather contextual information.
- Gather user information.
- Establish the building life span and flexibility requirements.

It may be developed based upon:

- Existing information such as the business case, the statement of need and the strategic brief.
- Site surveys, site information and site appraisals.
- Analysis of existing accommodation.
- Workshops with champions and user panels to establish needs, expectations and priorities.
- Input from other stakeholders.
- A wider consultation process.
- Interviews.
- User surveys.
- Input from statutory authorities such as the fire brigade, statutory utilities, local authority, heritage organisations and so on.

The project brief may include:

A description of the client

- A description of the client's brand, culture and organisation.
- A description of the client's vision, mission and objectives.
- A description of the client's priorities and the criteria that will be used to measure success.
- Organisational structure and decision making processes.
- Changes to the client that the project will bring about.
- Interfaces with other projects.
- Client policies that may be applicable to the project (for example; transport policy, energy policy, natural ventilation policy, sustainability policy).
- Client preferences for the project (for example; image, use of local materials, use of landscape etc) and quality expectations (including health and safety, sustainability and design quality).
- A description of the principles that will be adopted in the development of the design.

Site information

- Building surveys
- Site surveys
- Information about ground conditions
- The location and capacity of utilities
- Access and other constraints
- Legislative constraints
- Existing planning consents

Spatial requirements

- Schedules of accommodation, areas and special requirements.
- Schedules of users (including external users), their numbers, departments, functions, organisational structure and operational characteristics.
- Spatial policies (for example open plan or cellular offices, daylighting requirements, temperature ranges and acoustic standards).
- Required adjacencies, groupings and separations.
- Zoning.
- Circulation guidelines and identification of major circulation flows.
- Phasing.

Technical requirements

- Structural strategy (columns and gridlines to be adopted, special loads, floor to ceiling heights).
- Servicing requirements, including specialist requirements.
- Comfort conditions and level of user control.
- Acoustic requirements.
- Equipment requirements.
- Specialist requirements for furniture, finishes, fixtures and fittings
- Information and communications technology (ICT) requirements.
- Requirements for specialist processes and plant.
- Fire compartments.
- Maintenance and cleaning requirements.

- **Technical requirements (Cont...)**

- Likelihood of future change (for example staff numbers) and flexibility required.
- Sustainability objectives and energy use targets.
- Safety and security requirements.
- Resilience to potential hazards or threats.
- Waste and water management.
- Pollution control.
- Flexibility and future uses.
- Durability and lifespan.
- Other performance requirements.
- Benchmarking information.

Component requirements

- Long-lead items
- Potential requirement for specialist design or specialist contractors design.
- Cladding strategy and materials selection procedures.

Project requirements and other issues

- Planning requirements.
- Outcome of any consultation processes.
- Budget.
- Project programme and key milestones.
- Known risks.
- Targets for post occupancy evaluation outcomes and other performance targets.

