

Feasibility Studies

A guide to preparing for your feasibility study

2030 Architects

What is a feasibility study?

A feasibility study considers all of the aspects of your project, including design aspirations, market demand, time constraints, financial and other resources, as well as technical factors to enable you to determine if you should take your project idea forward.

It all comes down to the brief

A good working relationship with your architect is based on open, honest communication. This starts with a good brief that helps architects understand your expectations, preferences, wants, needs and aspirations. If the brief is not clear, the project if the brief is not resolved the architect and the follow on through to the contractor and all his associated trades people will be compromised. They will struggle to understand what it is they need to allow for in the pricing and realisation of your project.

Given this it is important to really think about your brief and consider all aspects of it. The construction of a new building or extension is a big commitment, and spending time at the early stage of a project and carrying out feasibility studies, deciding your priorities and investigating alternatives will reap rewards later in the design and construction stages.

This document will help you cover critical aspects of a feasibility brief.

Right then, let's get started!

Your Project: Preliminary Project Feasibility

A preliminary feasibility study allows you to assess if a project idea is really viable before it has even reached the drawing board. During the early stages of a project, the feasibility study serves to test the project vision. The preliminary feasibility study has the potential to be the cold bucket of water, or the reality check that assesses viability against aspiration and project vision. It also has the potential to identify ideas and scope that had not been considered, and where design and spatial organisation can add value to the project most

What you need to know

When you undertake a feasibility study, there are a number of important strategic, technical and organisational questions you need to answer before you begin. Considering why you are undertaking the feasibility study, and what you hope to clarify.

Questions to consider

Strategic questions to consider include:

What is the need identified in the project vision?

And is the project vision best framed to serve that need?

Identify if you hope to re-use buildings, create a new build, or if this should be considered as part of the study.

The feasibility study can be used to identify level of community support and market demand for the project: consider what you are aware of and list out any concerns or constraints you know of.

Provide us with your envisaged budget and any time constraints linked to funding sources.

List out what is non-negotiable in terms of location, site, space typologies, and operating assumptions?

List out the alternatives that you might consider, for instance different sites, a review of the scale of the proposal, so that we know where there is scope to adjust the study.

Consider any relevant precedents: models of business or designs that you have seen achieve similar outcomes to those you hope to achieve.

Where no site has been selected, have a number of potential sites been identified and appraised, or is there a preferred site?

The financial constraints of a project are often the driving force behind the design. Letting us know as much as possible prior to commencing the feasibility study will help us to as-

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This provides an outline of the main sections you can expect from your feasibility report. This summary aims to help you understand what we can produce and what information to provide us with prior to your study.

1.0 Executive Summary

The executive summary will highlight the key findings of the full study, or group of studies, so that the reader can rapidly get a clear overview of the most pertinent project details. For many of the people you most want to influence – local politicians and senior officers in municipalities, potential funders for the capital project, members of the local community and perhaps even the press – the executive summary is the only thing they may read, so this contains a complete summary of findings in a succinct form.

2.0 Introduction and Project Background

This section introduces the project vision and its origins. It highlights what was or were, the driving factors behind the instigation of the project; who initiated the project. For instance was it your organisation, or a local community group or artists group, or perhaps a developer of your local municipality approached you with an idea?

The project background will establish who you consider to be stakeholders in the project vision, and set out the main pre-project planning activities you have undertaken prior to this Feasibility Study.

This section will set out:

The terms of the Feasibility Study (perhaps appending the Brief) and the expected outcomes. These will be agreed before commencing the study.

The main activities undertaken in preparing the Feasibility assessment (i.e. desk research, interviews, focus groups, community meetings, site appraisal etc)

3.0 Project and Community Context

The Feasibility Study will review and augment any community context research, and community and stakeholder engagement, that was undertaken before the study was commissioned. Depending on the brief of the study, this section of the report can:

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Give a clear description of the local cultural assets and resources and the broader local/community context, and explain how the project vision responds to this

Establish the extent to which the vision is shared with the community and a wider stakeholder group

Establish the broader policy environment in which the project will operate and how the project vision serves this

Establish if there is a preferred site or location

Where there is no preferred site or location, identify the planning and policy frameworks which may help advance your project

4.0 Precedent Research

It is often helpful to identify and research existing projects in other communities which share some of the characteristics of the project you envisage developing. Precedent research can offer both inspiration and useful insights into development and operational models, programming, community involvement and much more. Be aware, however, that projects in countries outside the UK will operate in significantly different funding and development contexts.

5.0 Market Demand Analysis

The Feasibility Study can help to establish the level of unmet demand for the type of project you envisage, if relevant. There are a number of ways in which you can also test for market demand, including online surveys, focus groups, stakeholder and community meetings and the review of relevant research undertaken by others.

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6.0 Site Selection/Site Appraisal

Whether you have a particular site or building in mind, or you are looking at a number of potential sites or buildings for your project idea, the feasibility study can help to establish the suitability and practicality of the site for your project. In some cases, the appraisal of a range of potential sites or properties will be one of the tasks undertaken through the Feasibility Study. In other cases a Feasibility Study will assess the viability of a chosen site or property to deliver the project vision and may offer a number of alternate options to consider.

7.0 Building Program

The building program sets out the main types of space that the building will require, the likely use or uses, size and characteristics. For example, in a multi-tenanted space you may need to decide how much space you will need for individual artist studios or for organisation spaces for non-profits, the sizes of these spaces and what special characteristics they need to have (ventilation, large windows, high ceilings, acoustic separation, etc.). You will need to think about how much space you want to be allocated to common or shared areas and public event spaces. Also consider practical needs for storage, mechanical rooms and washrooms. The constraints of a particular property or location will have to be considered if the project is a renovation or includes an existing structure. Planning constraints will also be analysed against your desired brief.

8.0 Design Analysis

If a site or property has been selected for development or redevelopment, the Feasibility Study will include initial architectural plans and renderings based on the vision, and building program that has been developed around the opportunities and limitations of the site or property itself.

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9.0 Resource Analysis

Financial Resources

The study will need to assess, as far as possible, the likely financial feasibility of the project, in order for you to draw conclusions about the balance of investment and risk that would be reasonable for this type of project.

Although you will not have detailed designs and line-by-line cost estimates, the study can help to establish a reasonable estimate for the overall capital budget.

10 Implementation Plan

This section of the study will set out the major next steps and milestones in taking the project forward. The timetable will be driven by a range of factors, including factors related to the time required to undertake the design and development process.

11 Statement of Viability

In this final section a conclusion will be drawn about the potential of the project, which will allow you to assess if the project is viable, which is the ultimate objective of the Feasibility Study.

Key Questions to consider before undertaking a feasibility study:

One key factor to assess is why you are undertaking the study. If you can dig down into what you hope to establish and achieve with the study it is much more likely to meet your needs.

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Nuts and bolts

Having listed the 'whys', we've dealt with the big elephant in the room. Now it is time to dwell on the nuts and bolts. The following questions that will help you further elaborate on your feasibility brief.

How will the space you envisage be used now and in the future?

What different new activities might you need to accommodate?

How do you want your building to fit with the existing environment?

What building type would you really like to create?

How do you consider the project will connect to and support your wider organisation?

How do you consider the project will connect to and support the surrounding communities?

Are you interested in creating a very low-environmental impact building?

Do you want a single construction phase or a staged process?

Are there critical approvals required for funding/construction apart from Planning?

Are there any key time constraints?

Whatever project you have in mind, we hope this guide has helped you to delve a little deeper into what you aim to achieve with your feasibility study. We're experienced delivering feasibility studies and would be keen to help you explore the potential of your project. To book an appointment to discuss your project, just give us a call or drop us an email:

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