DEORE DHAMNE
ARCHITECTS & PMC
ESTD. 1975

PRE-DESIGN CHECKLIST

25 Questions to Ask Before Your First Drawing

Before You Build™ Series - Episode 01 Resource

50 Years of Practice. 25 Critical Questions.

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Why This Checklist Exists

Most construction projects don't fail during design or execution. They fail much earlier—during the thinking stage. After 50 years of practice across institutional, government, industrial, and large-scale private projects, we've identified 25 questions that, if answered honestly before the first drawing is made, can save months of delays and lakhs in costs.

This checklist is not about perfection. It's about awareness. Use it to identify blind spots before they become expensive problems.

How to Use This Checklist

1. Answer each question honestly with **YES** or **NO**.
2. If you're unsure, the answer is **NO**.
3. Each section has a scoring guide.
4. Your total score (out of 25) determines your project readiness.
5. A low score isn't failure—it's clarity about what needs attention before you invest in design.

SECTION 1: LAND DECISION (Questions 1-4)

- ☐ **1. Have you conducted a detailed access hierarchy study showing primary, secondary, and emergency vehicle routes?**
- ☐ **2. Have you mapped the location and capacity of all existing services (water supply lines, sewage systems, electrical feeders, gas pipelines, telecom infrastructure)?**
- ☐ **3. Have you commissioned a geotechnical investigation report including soil bearing capacity, water table levels, and seismic zone classification?**
- ☐ **4. Have you calculated the true cost impact of site topography including cut/fill quantities, retaining wall requirements, and drainage systems?**

SECTION 1: LAND DECISION (Questions 5-7)

- ☐ **5. Have you verified all legal encumbrances including easements, rights of way, existing litigation, and title clarity?**
- ☐ **6. Have you assessed immediate neighborhood context including future development potential of adjacent plots, industrial activity, flight paths, and noise pollution sources?**
- ☐ **7. Have you evaluated this land against your 30-year operational vision, not just today's requirements?**

> **SCORING GUIDE:**
>
> 6-7 YES: Land selection is strategic
>
> 4-5 YES: Significant gaps remain
>
> 0-3 YES: Reconsider this site

SECTION 2: FEASIBILITY LOGIC (Questions 8-10)

- ☐ **8. Have you planned for phased development with each phase being independently functional and revenue-generating?**
- ☐ **9. Have you calculated realistic market absorption timelines, not just theoretical demand?**
- ☐ **10. Have you included true operational costs (staffing, maintenance, utilities, security) in your financial projections, not just construction costs?**

SECTION 2: FEASIBILITY LOGIC (Questions 11-13)

- ☐ **11. Have you built in exit flexibility—can this project be sold, leased, or repurposed if your primary plan fails?**
- ☐ **12. Have you stress-tested your feasibility against 3 scenarios: worst case (30% cost overrun, 6-month delay), likely case, and best case?**
- ☐ **13. Have you accounted for approval delays from multiple authorities (municipality, fire, pollution control, aviation, heritage, etc.) in your timeline?**

SCORING GUIDE:

5-6 YES: Feasibility is strategic

3-4 YES: High financial risk

0-2 YES: Feasibility is arithmetic, not strategy

SECTION 3: REGULATIONS & SERVICES (Questions 14-16)

- ☐ **14. Have you understood how FSI/FAR rules will shape your building's massing, not just calculate allowable area?**
- ☐ **15. Have you identified which setback and height restrictions will define your building's form and circulation logic?**
- ☐ **16. Have you planned for fire safety compliance (refuge areas, fire tenders access, sprinkler zones, smoke extraction) as a design driver from Day 1?**

SECTION 3: REGULATIONS & SERVICES (Questions 17-19)

- ☐ **17. Have you sized your sewage treatment plant, water storage, and electrical substation for 150% of Day 1 demand to allow future growth?**
- ☐ **18. Have you calculated the spatial impact of parking requirements—not just the number of cars, but ramps, turning radii, basement excavation, and ventilation?**
- ☐ **19. Have you integrated universal design and accessibility mandates (ramps, tactile paving, accessible toilets, hearing loops, braille signage) as core design requirements?**

SCORING GUIDE:

5-6 YES: Regulations are design drivers

3-4 YES: Compliance will be reactive

0-2 YES: Regulations are an afterthought

SECTION 4: MASTERPLANNING (Questions 20-22)

- ☐ **20. Have you identified specific expansion zones with protected access and services routes—not vague "future growth areas"?**
- ☐ **21. Have you designed your services infrastructure (water supply, sewage, power, HVAC, IT backbone) for 150% of Day 1 capacity?**
- ☐ **22. Have you planned your circulation system (roads, pathways, vehicle routes, pedestrian networks) to remain functional when future phases are under construction?**

SECTION 4: MASTERPLANNING (Questions 23-25)

- ☐ **23. Have you protected key view corridors, green spaces, and symbolic sight lines that future additions must not obstruct?**
- ☐ **24. Have you planned for a 20-year utility lifecycle with space allocated for future electrical substations, water treatment upgrades, EV charging infrastructure, and telecom nodes?**
- ☐ **25. Have you established clear governance rules for future additions—who decides, who approves, what design principles are non-negotiable?**

SCORING GUIDE:

5-6 YES: Masterplan is future-proof

3-4 YES: Expansion will be chaotic

0-2 YES: No masterplan, only immediate needs

YOUR PROJECT READINESS SCORE

23-25 "YES" - Ready to Proceed ✅

Your project has clarity. You've done the strategic thinking. You can confidently commission design knowing that foundational decisions are sound. Rare—but this is where serious projects begin.

18-22 "YES" - Address Critical Gaps ⚠️

You're close, but proceeding now means absorbing avoidable risks. Identify your weakest section and invest 2-4 weeks fixing those gaps. Design will be faster and cheaper if you do.

12-17 "YES" - High Risk 🚨

Your project is not ready for design. Consultants will make assumptions to fill your gaps, and those assumptions will become expensive problems during construction. Pause. Get clarity. Then proceed.

0-11 "YES" - Do Not Proceed ⛔

> Moving forward now is reckless. You will waste money on design revisions, face approval delays, and encounter cost overruns that could have been avoided. Stop. Rethink. Start properly.

What Happens Next?

If you scored below 18, you need pre-design consulting—not design services.

At Deore Dhamne Architects, we offer 4 levels of strategic pre-design support:

1. Land Viability Assessment

Before you finalize land purchase—we audit access, services, regulations, geotechnical constraints, and long-term suitability.

2. Strategic Feasibility Study

Not arithmetic—strategic. We evaluate phasing, market absorption, operational costs, exit flexibility, and stress-test your assumptions.

3. Regulatory Planning & Approvals Strategy

We map every authority, timeline, compliance requirement, and design constraint before you brief an architect.

4. Masterplanning & Expansion Framework

We plan for 30 years, not 3. Services, circulation, expansion zones, governance rules—all defined upfront.

The Cost of Skipping This Stage:
Most clients spend ₹5-15 lakhs fixing problems that ₹2-4 lakhs of pre-design thinking would have prevented.

The Investment in Doing It Right:
Pre-design consulting: ₹2-8 lakhs depending on project scale. The clarity it creates? Priceless.

Contact Us

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"Architecture begins before architecture. Thinking precedes drawing. Planning precedes form. Responsibility precedes aesthetics.

This is the work that matters most—and the work most often skipped.

Don't skip it."

— **Deore Dhamne Architects**

ESTD. 1975 | 50 Years of Practice
