

## Planning your development or refurbishment project

When embarking on a building project it is important to ensure that you spend a significant amount of time planning your project. Whether you take on the project management yourself or employ a dedicated project manager such as **Bursting Shell**, remember to use your most important currency – time – well. You should also be honest with yourself as to what you can afford financially, taking into consideration that budgets often increase and priorities change.

Given that most people are constrained by their budget, you should also be clear of the financial benefits and weigh these against such subjective factors such as improvements in quality of life brought about by the works or the length of time you intend retaining or living in a property.

Finally, on a personal note, never under-estimate the impact that undertaking a refurbishment scheme in a property where you are resident. If you are able, move out whilst the work is being undertaken and include these costs in your budget. If you can not, make sure you spend the time assessing how the impact of the project on you and your family's life can be minimised before the works begin.

At **Bursting Shell**, we are always happy to discuss your refurbishment objectives to see how we might be able to assist. Please feel free to contact us via the following:

e-mail: [info@burstingshell.com](mailto:info@burstingshell.com)

Phone: **+44 (0)20 8522 6688**

Mobile: **+44 (0)7876 50 66 76**

We hope that the list of key issues over the following pages provides a useful *aide memoir* to refer to when you begin the process of thinking about your next development project.

Good luck and we would be very please to hear from you.



Alex Baker-Woods  
Director

**Bursting Shell**

[alex.baker-woods@burstingshell.com](mailto:alex.baker-woods@burstingshell.com)



## 20 key things to think about:

1. Be clear on what you want to achieve and why you want to achieve it.
2. Ask a local agent to confirm the value of the property taking into account the improvements you are proposing.
3. Be realistic about how much of the planning you can do yourself and whether you need the assistance of a designer project manager and other specialists to plan the project.
4. Allocate adequate time and money to draw up a specification and plan(s) for your piece of work to obtain three quotes for each separate element.
5. Do not rush into a project or be rushed into starting it by anybody else.
6. With the quotes in-hand, make sure it still makes financial sense to pursue your idea and if so, that you can afford it.
7. For major refurbishment schemes allow for the budget to be exceeded between 25% (modern buildings) and up to 50% (historic buildings) to account for unforeseen remediation work (e.g. having to replace major timbers etc, which can't be seen until work begins).
8. For specific and wholly visible elements allow for 15% cost uplift
9. Keep any cost increase assumptions to yourself: the job should only be allowed to expand if it really needs to. If in doubt seek a second opinion on whether additional works recommended to you are really necessary.
10. If the prices look prohibitive, look at reducing your specification by removing the elements you can realistically do without.
11. Always agree the payment schedule with your builder or project manager before any work begins.
12. Confirm with your builder and the local authority's planning department whether you need planning permission and/or Listed Building and/or Conservation Area consent to undertake your project.
13. If you are undertaking and structural work, confirm with the structural engineer whether you need whether you need to enter into a Party Wall Agreement with any of the neighbouring freeholders and tenants



14. Confirm with your builder and the local authority's Building Control department whether the work you are looking to undertake requires building control consent under the Building Regulations<sup>1</sup>
15. Clarify the utility supply situation at the start of your project: were possible have new or upgraded services (gas, electricity, water and telecoms) provided as soon as possible.
16. Always think through the implications of changing the brief in mid-flow or of agreeing to suggestions being made by others: the 'knock-on' effects of additional work may well be disproportionately costly. Again, do not rush into agreeing extra work or be rushed into starting it by anybody else.
17. Undertake regular site visits to check on progress or employ a project manager to act as your eyes and ears on the ground.
18. Always ask for evidence that the work you are being invoiced for has been done and maintain regular contact with the project team: if you have a project manager ask for regular updates and photos of the progress.
19. Keep your neighbours and any other effected parties on board: rectify any adverse occurrences as soon as soon as you are able.
20. Finally, at the end of the project undertake a de-brief to establish what worked and what did not in terms of the various relationships and processes and above all learn from your successes *and* mistakes.

© **Bursting Shell, 2007**



---

<sup>1</sup> As a rule of thumb, renovations and electrical, gas and plumbing work leading to major changes in a property's existing provision will require some form of additional consent and require you to provide the Building Control officer with a certificate from an approved contractor to confirm that the work meets the requirements of the Building Regulations