1. What specific allowances and exclusions are in the estimate (e.g., finishes, landscaping, utilities, party wall costs)?

The current estimate is a comprehensive ballpark figure, intended to initiate discussions while covering the full scope of works. It includes all necessary construction elements such as structural works, internal fit-out (shell & core and second fix), final finishes (e.g. flooring, kitchen, joinery), Party Wall matters (excluding third-party surveyor fees if required), and design and project coordination. The only exclusion at this stage is incoming utility services (gas, water, electricity), as these depend on external providers' quotes and response times, which are outside our control. However, we will support this aspect fully with practical and efficient solutions, to be discussed during the technical stage.

2. Could you share a provisional cost breakdown, including labour, materials, and design fees?

We have not yet provided a full cost breakdown, as we are in early-stage dialogue and wanted to keep the scope flexible for now. However, our estimate does include all key components such as labour, materials, and design. Once we agree in principle, we will issue a full breakdown in standard format, including labour, materials, prelims, design and coordination, and any contingency (to be added).

3. What contingency percentage is being assumed for unexpected ground or structural issues?

We have not included contingency yet, as we are still in the early proposal stage. Typically, we would advise allowing 7.5%–10% contingency depending on ground conditions, structural assumptions, and site constraints. This will be reviewed in detail at the next stage.

4. How would delays related to planning condition discharge or Party Wall agreements be managed?

We closely monitor all planning conditions and coordinate with consultants and local authorities to ensure early discharge. For Party Wall matters, we offer full guidance and documentation. If a neighbour appoints a surveyor and wishes to take a more cautious approach, it may introduce delay, but in most cases, the process is very straightforward. We'll bring some example documents to Friday's meeting to illustrate.

5. Are there any risks of additional planning amendments during the technical design stage?

There can always be minor design amendments during technical coordination, but we have found that these can be managed effectively through proactive design control and clear communication. Bourne Architects will oversee this aspect and Asena will be on hand to advise during the pre-construction process.

6. Will you also be responsible for landscaping, bike storage, and bin storage installation?

Yes, we are happy to include these elements as part of our scope. These can either be treated as fixed items or priced as provisional sums, depending on your preference and level of specification at design stage.

7. Which JCT contract do you propose (e.g., Design & Build, Intermediate)?

We recommend using the JCT Design & Build 2016 contract, which offers cost control and a clear single point of responsibility. We hold the following insurances as standard: £10m Employers' Liability and Public Liability, £1,5m Contractors All Risk, and £2m Professional Indemnity. These levels of cover are well above the minimum requirements and reflect our professional and responsible approach to delivery.

8. How will quality control checks be handled and documented at each stage?

Although Bourne Architects and Bourne Management are sister companies, we operate independently, with clearly defined roles and mutual respect. Quality control will be handled by Bourne Architects, who will conduct regular site inspections and document each stage through photographic records, internal sign-offs, and reports. This dual structure has worked extremely well across previous projects and ensures the client always benefits from both technical oversight and transparent construction.

I will be visiting the site around 11:00am on Thursday for an informal review and to familiarise myself with the driveway and access conditions. I don't believe there is a locked gate, but I will be entering the front drive and taking a few reference photos. If anyone needs to be made aware of this, I'd appreciate it if you could kindly inform them on my behalf.

As the project qualifies as a new build, it's important to factor in the requirement for a structural warranty certificate (e.g. NHBC, LABC, or equivalent). This is completely separate from Building Control and must be arranged independently. The cost can vary depending on provider and build value, so it's not included at this stage. That said, there are approved Building Control firms that offer both services in-house, which can streamline the process and help reduce cost. We'd be happy to explore this route with you to simplify delivery and improve efficiency.

Although this is still a ballpark estimate, it is structured to cover the full design and build scope, and we do not anticipate any major drift from this figure unless there are exceptional conditions such as unforeseen ground contamination or complex Party Wall issues. Provided the process runs smoothly, we are confident in delivering the project within the estimated budget.

Lastly, I want to say that I genuinely enjoy working with clients who know what to ask and what to check, it always leads to stronger collaboration and better results.