

Landscape Architect interview questions

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What to expect

Landscape architecture interviews usually open with a portfolio walkthrough, then move into questions that test how you think through a site and a design process, how you handle the people side of projects, and how comfortable you are with the software and documentation that gets a design built.

- **Process/technical:** Questions asking you to walk through how you'd approach a stage of work, such as site analysis or tender documentation, to test your method and technical grounding.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about working with clients, engineers or planners, used to gauge how you actually operate under real project pressure.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical situations, such as a budget cut or a site condition changing mid-project, to see how you'd trade off design intent against practical constraints.
- **Software and tools:** Direct questions about which CAD, BIM or GIS tools you use and how, since these skills are used daily in the role.
- **Client-facing communication:** Questions testing whether you can explain design decisions clearly to non-technical stakeholders such as clients or community groups.

Expect the interview to start with a review of your portfolio or recent projects, move into process and technical questions about how you'd handle specific project stages, then shift to behavioural and scenario questions about stakeholder and site challenges, and close with a chance for you to ask about the firm's current project mix and software setup.

1. Walk me through how you'd approach the site analysis and feasibility stage of a new landscape project.

Why they ask

This tests whether you have a genuine method for the first, foundational task in the role rather than jumping straight to concept sketches.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through structure: describe the sequence of steps in order, from information gathering to identifying constraints, and note what you'd flag to the client or design team at each stage.

Example answer

"I'd start by pulling together the survey, any existing services information and planning overlays for the site, then do a walkover to check things like fall, existing vegetation, access points and any obvious drainage issues that don't show up on paper. I'd note constraints and opportunities as I go rather than waiting until the end, so the client and I can talk through trade-offs before concept design starts. Anything with cost or approval implications, like a significant tree or an easement, gets flagged early so it doesn't surface as a surprise later in the project."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage conflicting expectations between a client and an engineer or planner on a project.

Why they ask

Stakeholder management is a core listed skill for this role, and conflicts between design intent and technical or planning constraints are routine.

How to structure your answer

STAR: set out the situation, your task, the action you took to bring the parties together, and the result.

Example answer

"On one project the client wanted a large feature tree close to the building line, but the structural engineer flagged root zone conflicts with the footings. I organised a short meeting with both parties, brought a couple of alternative planting positions and a species option with a smaller mature root spread, and walked through the trade-offs on paper. The client kept a strong feature planting and the engineer signed off without needing a redesign of the footing detail, so we kept the project on programme."

3. A client tells you halfway through documentation that the budget has been cut significantly. How do you respond?

Why they ask

Budget changes mid-project are common, and this checks whether you protect design integrity while still being practical about cost.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure structure: state your immediate response, how you'd assess options, and how you'd communicate the revised plan back to the client.

Example answer

"I'd first go back through the specification and identify where cost sits, separating structural and safety-critical items from finishes and softer landscape elements that have more flexibility. I'd put together two or three options showing what stays, what's value-managed and what's deferred to a later stage, with the reasoning for each. Then I'd present that to the client directly rather than quietly cutting scope myself, so they're making an informed decision about what the reduced budget actually buys them."

4. Which CAD or BIM software are you most confident in, and how do you use it day to day on a project?

Why they ask

AutoCAD, SketchUp and Revit are core tools for this role and interviewers want to know your practical fluency, not just familiarity.

How to structure your answer

Direct technical answer: name the tools, describe a specific task you use each for, and mention any workflow between them.

Example answer

"I use AutoCAD for detailed construction documentation and setout drawings, SketchUp for early concept massing and quick client presentations, and Revit when a project is running on a shared BIM model with architects or engineers. I usually move from a rough SketchUp model in concept design through to coordinated Revit documentation once the design firms up, which keeps the visuals and the construction drawings consistent."

5. Describe a time site conditions turned out to be different from what was expected once construction started.

Why they ask

This tests adaptability and whether your design inspection work actually catches and resolves problems on site.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result, focusing on what you changed and why.

Example answer

"During a site inspection I found that subsurface rock was shallower than the geotechnical report had suggested, which affected the planned depth for a retaining structure and garden bed. I worked with the contractor and engineer on site to adjust the detail to a shallower footing with a revised drainage"

layer, and updated the drawings that afternoon so the crew wasn't waiting on approvals. The change added a short delay but avoided a much larger rework later in the build."

6. How do you explain a design decision to a client or community group who doesn't have a technical background?

Why they ask

Written and verbal communication with non-specialist stakeholders is a routine part of the job, particularly for public and community projects.

How to structure your answer

Approach and example structure: describe your general method for translating technical detail, then give a concrete instance.

Example answer

"I try to link the decision back to something the person already cares about, like shade, safety or how the space will feel to use, rather than leading with technical justification. For a community consultation on a park upgrade, instead of explaining planting selection through species names and maintenance schedules, I framed it around which areas would give shade in summer and which plants would cope with kids playing nearby. That got people engaged in the actual trade-offs instead of getting lost in terminology."