

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

---

THE INTERIOR DESIGN PROCESS

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW  
FROM CONCEPT DESIGN TO SNAGGING

---

PIA PELKONEN  
INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

# CONTENTS

**PIA PELKONEN**  
INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

So you're thinking about refurbishing your property - that's exciting! However, there are many things to consider before you even get to the design stage - costs, specialists and time that you may not have allowed for. This Guide contains useful information to help you navigate from concept to completion.

1. SETTING OUT
2. SELECTING YOUR SPECIALISTS
3. THE BRIEF
4. CONCEPT
5. DEVELOPMENT
6. DRAWINGS
7. SPECIFICATION
8. TENDERING
9. PROJECT MANAGEMENT
10. ON SITE
11. SNAGGING & COMPLETION
12. CONTACT

# SETTING OUT

Before you set out on your refurbishment or decoration project, there are a number of key things to consider.

## **TIMELINES, BUDGET, PRIORITIES**

These three key considerations will set the parameters of your project. When do you want the project to start and finish - are your timelines reasonable to get everything prepared before the works start?

It is vitally important to consider what budget you have for the project - make sure you decide what you are happy to invest and where - what are your priority areas and are there things that could be done later, in case you need to split the project into stages? Making all the decisions before you start is wise in order to avoid costly last minute changes and impulse buys.

## **APPROVALS & REGULATIONS**

The first step is to have the property surveyed for structural soundness, asbestos and anything else that might need to be addressed as part of the works.

Does your project need planning permission? This process takes around 8 weeks from submission and most reputable contractors will only book in a job when planning has been granted. Party wall agreements with your neighbours can also be a lengthy and exhausting process and if you are a leaseholder, you will also need to obtain a Licence to Alter from the Freeholder of the property.

Closer to the start date of the works, you will also need to inform Building Control of the proposed works - for this you can either go directly to the council or use a private building control company.

# SELECTING YOUR SPECIALISTS

Although there is a lot you can do yourself if you choose to, there are certain parts of a project that are safer in the hands of an expert.

## **ARCHITECT // PLANNING CONSULTANT**

If you are extending or need planning permission, you will need to appoint an architect or planning consultant for the project. An architect will typically charge between 8-15% of the project value. Planning Consultants can usually offer a fixed fee.

## **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

If there are any structural alterations (extensions, moving load bearing walls etc) then you will need a structural engineer to calculate the size of steel beams or other supporting structures. An average cost for calculations could be anywhere between £200 - £600 + VAT.

## **INTERIOR DESIGNER**

You may want a designer who looks after the whole project for you and coordinates all of the designs, specifications and specialists. Or maybe you have a clear vision of what you want and just need some advice.

Every interior designer works and charges in a different way - some charge by the hour / day, others take a percentage much like an architect. It's best to get some indication of the overall cost of the design service from the outset.

## **OTHER SPECIALISTS**

You may also need specialists such as a Mechanical & Electrical (M&E) engineer, Audio Visual (AV) consultants (the list goes on) - take advice from your designer on whether you need additional specialists.

# THE BRIEF

Now that you have started working on the design of your property, the first thing you will need to do is to have an initial meeting with your Interior Designer to discuss the brief.

Every project is different, so getting to an in-depth understanding of your project is crucial to a great design. Lifestyle, personality and the all important budget help set the parameters of the project.

A refurbishment of your home is probably one of the most exciting, costly and stressful projects you'll embark on - I've heard people liken it to the stress of planning a wedding! Use the expertise of your designer to mitigate the stresses and costs of the process.

This is a very personal journey so be prepared to share the story of your life very openly with your designer - don't be shy about discussing your budget honestly- your designer's role is to help you navigate through the project stages and to make the most of your budget. That, and what's the best sized bedside table for your night-time needs.

It's a good idea to appoint an interior designer at the start of your refurbishment project as they will be able to advise you on the specialists you need for your project and help to ensure there isn't an overlap - you don't want to be paying multiple specialists for the same job!

# C O N C E P T

The next step is for the designer to interpret the Brief into a design tailored to your individual requirements. This process starts with a set of concept boards (mood boards) which represent your style and taste in a 'conceptual' way - they are the mood, or 'look and feel' that the design will strive to generate.

Your designer will use these concept boards to refer back to the essence of the design throughout the design process in order to help everyone stay on the same page when making decisions on layout, finishes and fittings.

The concept stage is vital in ensuring the final design has a cohesive feel, and that the outcome is representative of the dream or vision you had for your home.



# DEVELOPMENT

Once the concept design for your project has been agreed, the design will be refined through collaborative exploration of further layers of detail, into comprehensive and complete designs.

Your designer may wish to arrange regular meetings to present you with further layers of the design - starting with layout plans. The layouts should be developed in conjunction to your Brief to make the most of the floor area of your home, building in enough storage to suit your lifestyle and considering how you use your home to work out the best flow through the property.

Once the layouts have been agreed, specific rooms can be individually designed and detailed, from the finishes to the furniture (depending on what you have agreed with your designer).

Electrical / lighting and plumbing plans add another layer of detail to how your home will work, look and feel - and often raise some practical issues of how to implement the designs, so it's good to discuss these early on in the process.

Some aspects of the design might then be built up to elevations, such as kitchen and bathroom drawings and any joinery (wardrobes, TV units etc).

Sketches, visuals, material and sample boards also help to depict your schemes in three dimensions.



# SPECIFICATION

With so many options available online and from high-street suppliers, it can be daunting to even think where to start when it comes to specifying the fixtures, fittings and furniture (known as FF&E in the industry).

Regardless of your budget and taste, with their years of industry experience and extensive 'Black Book' of trusted suppliers and tradespeople, your designer can help to specify everything from the hardware to the kitchen taps, wooden floor to architraves - right until the finishing touches of hanging the curtains and the artwork.

You may already have some key pieces of furniture you want to bring with you into your new home - your designer can help coordinate your existing pieces with new ones and advise on clever ways to incorporate high-street finds and objects of personal importance into the scheme.

If you want to do some (or a lot) of the specification yourself, then you may wish to call on the expertise of your designer's network of local and international contacts - a trusted, recommended supplier or tradesman can be a life-saver when it comes to spending your budget wisely - or even save you from costly re-work if things were to go wrong.

# TENDERING

Now you have your design, drawing pack and specification, you are ready to go out to tender. It is advisable to tender out to between 3-5 contractors. Go by recommendation (ask your neighbours, architect or designer) and make sure you have a good Schedule of Works (detailed list of the works to be done) so that you can get a like-for-like comparison between quotes.

Make sure that you are also specific about your expectations on start date and completion date - many reputable builders get booked up months in advance, so to avoid disappointment or unnecessary stress, don't leave this process until the last minute.

You will need a contract for the building works - there are many to choose from and depending on the size of your project, you may want to consider the JCT Homeowner's Contract, or the JCT Minor Works Contract.

You will also need someone reliable to act as Contract Administrator - their role is to oversee the contract and typically assist with the tender process, as well as dispute resolution should the need arise. You can do this yourself but read up *carefully* on what this entails - if you have an Architect or Lead Consultant (such as a designer) on the project, they can act as CA on your behalf.

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT

By the time the project goes live on site, your architect and designer have handed over their set of drawings, schemes and specifications to the main contractor. The contractor will have their site foreman overseeing the day-to-day progress of the project.

However, it is crucial to ensure that the implementation of your design is overseen by someone close to the project, with regular site visits and meetings with the contractor - no matter how perfect the drawing pack and design, you never know what could be uncovered on site once the strip out goes ahead (or at any given time).

The truth is, it is almost unheard of for a project to run from start to end with not a single hiccup, question mark or problem of some sort.

If you are going to project manage yourself, have you fully considered the time commitment this entails? Are you able to get to site quickly in the middle of the day if there is a question? On a building site, solutions need to be found quickly and decisions made confidently to avoid delays and accumulating costs. Do you have enough knowledge of the building and design trades to manage a team of people smoothly under pressure?

If you are unsure, speak to your designer - there are ways to organise the management / coordination of a design implementation in a way that doesn't break the bank.

# ON SITE

Even if you're taking a more hands-off approach and leaving the project management to professionals, it's good to understand what happens on site in terms of the processes.

**PROTECT:** Take out buildings insurance and public liability insurance, ensure the building is weathertight to stop decay.

**STABILISE:** Make the building stable - this might mean underpinning or piling work to stabilise the existing foundations, steel tension rods or props, or insertion of steel beams.

**SALVAGE:** Save what can be recycled or sold at salvage yards and keep what can be reused on the build (original features add character!)

**MAJOR BUILDING WORK:** Build or replace floors, walls, roofs or extensions. Carry out re-pointing, tanking, damp proof membranes, rendering etc.

**SEAL:** Once any roof or extension work is complete, exterior doors and windows are installed and glazed, or covered with boards.

**FIRST FIX:** Build internal stud walls, fix floorboards, door linings, window reveals and cills and then undertake first fix plumbing and electrics.

**PLASTER:** Apply plasterboard/dry-lining to walls and ceilings, or repair any damaged plaster. Floor screeds for the ground floor will be laid at this point

**SECOND FIX:** Lay timber, stone or tiled floors, hang doors, fix skirting and architraves, box in services. Install the bathroom, kitchen, boiler and fit radiators.

**DECORATING:** Complete all painting, staining and tiling.

# S N A G G I N G

At the end of the building works, you may want to prepare a snagging list of anything minor (hopefully not major) that needs to be rectified.

Test the electrics, plumbing and other services to make sure everything works as expected, and check the decorating carefully (paint drips and scuffs).

It's best to start this process a couple of weeks from the completion date, while the building team are still on site so it's easy for them to fix things straight away. It's your home so you are likely to have a keen eye for anything that isn't quite right, or ask for the expertise of your designer to help prepare a comprehensive list (no builder will thank you for endless, incomplete snagging list after another).

If you've undertaken structural work (or it's a new-build), some small cracking is to be expected and will likely appear in the 3-6 months post completion, but you should have a retention agreement in your JCT contract that will protect you in case any issues present themselves after snagging.

# COMPLETION

Now that your home is complete, you are ready to move in!

If you decided to stage your project, your designer should advise you on the next steps to action the subsequent stages of the build - or if you are holding off until later, make sure you keep them in the loop so that they can advise you on the best time to carry on with the next stages.

Whether for the next project or for support and advice, the end of the project signifies the beginning of a relationship that lasts a lifetime.

*ENJOY YOUR NEW HOME!*

# CONTACT



Get in touch to chat through your project requirements and for friendly advice on which design solution is right for you. :)

[www.piapelkonen.co.uk](http://www.piapelkonen.co.uk)  
[pia@piapelkonen.co.uk](mailto:pia@piapelkonen.co.uk)  
+44 (0)77 17685 222

Pia Pelkonen  
INTERIOR DESIGN // CREATIVE CONSULTING

M +44(0) 77 17 685 222  
[pia@piapelkonen.co.uk](mailto:pia@piapelkonen.co.uk)  
[www.piapelkonen.co.uk](http://www.piapelkonen.co.uk)

**PIA PELKONEN**  
INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN