

DEN LIFE interior's RENOVATION CHECKLIST

How to use this checklist

A practical guide to what needs deciding, and when

Renovating a home involves hundreds of individual decisions, many of which affect something else. The key is to make the important decisions in the right order, so your design, budget and building work all work together.

This list is not exhaustive but gives you an idea of most key things that will need considering ahead of a renovation or extension. One of the biggest sources of stress during a renovation is having to make decisions in the wrong order — choosing finishes before the layout is settled, for example, or realising that lighting and electrical positions need to change after the kitchen or joinery has been designed.

The sequence below is a typical guide for a UK home renovation. The exact order will vary depending on the scale of the work, structural changes, planning requirements and your builder's programme. Also be aware that the correct sequence varies by project and that structural, building-control and specialist installation requirements should always take precedence.

Hiring an interior designer with project management expertise can mean a number of these tasks can be managed for you. They will ensure that communications between all trades are clear and decisions are logged and managed accordingly. It helps stop anything falling between the gaps and ensures a smoother running project with a design that works for you. You can also secure construction teams that will offer project management of all trades which can also ease the load. Local trades and designers will be well versed in current regulations, local recommended trades and more which can also save you time.

PHASE 1: Before you start — establish the brief

- [ ] **Define what you want to achieve.** What isn't working in your home now? What do you need more of — space, storage, better flow, light or flexibility?
- [ ] **Think about how you live.** Consider family routines, entertaining, working from home, pets, future needs and how each room needs to function.
- [ ] **Agree your priorities.** Separate the must-haves from the nice-to-haves, and identify where you're happy to compromise.
- [ ] **Set a realistic overall budget.** Allow for building work, professional fees, kitchens and bathrooms, lighting, flooring, furniture, window treatments, decorating and installation.
- [ ] **Set aside a contingency.** Unexpected building issues are common, particularly in older properties. Keep a reserve appropriate to the condition and complexity of the house.
- [ ] **Decide how much professional support you need.** Establish whether you need an architect, structural engineer, interior designer, project manager or a combination of these.
- [ ] **Agree your timescale and living arrangements.** Consider whether you'll remain in the property during the work, need temporary accommodation or want to complete the renovation in phases.

PHASE 2: Understand the property and what's possible

- [ ] **Arrange surveys and accurate measurements.** Establish the existing layout, ceiling heights, structural constraints and any condition issues that could affect the design.
- [ ] **Investigate potential problems early.** Check for damp, roof issues, outdated wiring, plumbing problems, asbestos where relevant and other defects before committing to a final budget.
- [ ] **Confirm planning and Building Regulations requirements.** Establish whether the proposed work needs planning permission, building control approval, listed-building consent or other permissions.
- [ ] **Resolve structural questions.** If walls are moving, openings are changing or extensions are planned, obtain the appropriate professional advice before finalising the layout.
- [ ] **Agree the broad scope of building work.** Identify what is being removed, retained, relocated or built, including walls, windows, doors, plumbing and heating.

PHASE 3: Design the whole home before choosing finishes

- [ ] **Finalise the layout.** Agree room functions, furniture positions, circulation routes, door swings and how spaces connect.
- [ ] **Plan kitchens and bathrooms.** Establish appliance positions, sanitaryware, storage, worktop requirements and plumbing locations.
- [ ] **Plan bespoke joinery and storage.** Design wardrobes, alcove units, shelving, media walls, utility storage and other built-in elements. These can affect electrical positions, room proportions and available space.
- [ ] **Develop the overall interior concept.** Establish the colour palette, materials, finishes and architectural details so individual rooms feel connected.
- [ ] **Plan lighting in layers.** Consider general lighting, task lighting, accent lighting, decorative fittings, switches, dimming and control systems.
- [ ] **Coordinate electrical requirements.** Confirm socket locations, switches, data points, television positions, appliances, extractor fans and any specialist equipment.
- [ ] **Review heating, ventilation and plumbing.** Coordinate radiators, underfloor heating, towel rails, pipework, ventilation and controls with the proposed layout.
- [ ] **Plan window treatments.** Decide whether you need curtains, blinds, shutters, recessed tracks or specialist treatments, allowing for their space and fixing requirements.
- [ ] **Choose flooring and establish levels.** Consider transitions between rooms, floor build-up, underfloor heating, thresholds and how flooring meets kitchens and joinery.
- [ ] **Check the design against the real property.** Confirm measurements, proportions, product dimensions and practical clearances before ordering or building.

PHASE 4: Cost, specify and appoint

- [ ] **Prepare a detailed specification.** Record what is required for each room, including finishes, fixtures, fittings, joinery and decorative items.
- [ ] **Obtain comparable building quotes.** Make sure builders are pricing the same scope of work and that exclusions and provisional sums are clear.
- [ ] **Cost the interior as well as the construction.** Include products, delivery, installation, decorating, window treatments and furniture rather than focusing only on the builder's quote.
- [ ] **Choose actual products and materials.** Check dimensions, availability, lead times, performance, maintenance and suitability for the intended use.
- [ ] **Review physical samples.** Look at paint, fabrics, flooring, tiles, worktops and timber finishes together, and in the lighting conditions of your home.
- [ ] **Confirm who is responsible for each task.** Agree who manages trades, places orders, checks deliveries, coordinates installation and deals with design queries.
- [ ] **Agree the programme of works.** Identify key milestones, decision deadlines, long-lead items and when each trade needs access.
- [ ] **Order long-lead items at the right time.** Kitchens, bespoke joinery, specialist glazing, certain tiles and made-to-measure products may need ordering well before installation.

PHASE 5: Before building work begins

- [ ] **Freeze the key design decisions.** Make sure the layout, kitchen and bathroom designs, joinery, lighting and main finishes are sufficiently resolved for the work to proceed.
- [ ] **Issue the relevant drawings and specifications.** Ensure your builder and trades have the latest information, not outdated sketches or verbal instructions.
- [ ] **Confirm electrical and plumbing positions.** Check these against the final layouts, cabinetry, appliances and lighting plans.
- [ ] **Confirm product sizes and installation requirements.** Check that the specified items fit and that the required preparation, supports, clearances and connections have been allowed for.
- [ ] **Check orders and delivery dates.** Make sure products will arrive when needed and that someone is responsible for checking deliveries and reporting damage or shortages.
- [ ] **Agree how changes will be handled.** Establish how variations are approved, how extra costs are confirmed and how changes affect the programme.
- [ ] **Protect the property and plan access.** Agree site access, waste removal, protection of retained areas, storage and any arrangements for neighbours or shared spaces.

PHASE 6: During the renovation — the typical construction sequence

The exact order depends on the project, but a typical sequence is:

- [ ] **Site preparation and strip-out.** Protect retained areas, remove agreed fixtures and finishes, and expose areas requiring further investigation.
- [ ] **Structural and major building work.** Complete approved structural alterations, openings, extensions and other primary construction.
- [ ] **First-fix plumbing, electrics and heating.** Install the pipework, cabling, ventilation and other services that will be concealed within walls, floors or ceilings.
- [ ] **Close up and prepare surfaces.** Complete required inspections and checks before covering concealed work, then board, plaster and prepare surfaces as appropriate.
- [ ] **Install major fixed elements.** Fit items such as windows, kitchen components, bathroom elements and bespoke joinery at the appropriate stage for the project and supplier requirements. Some installations may need to happen earlier or later.
- [ ] **Complete flooring and surface finishes.** Coordinate flooring, tiling, decorating and other finishes in the sequence required by the materials and installation instructions.
- [ ] **Second-fix electrics and plumbing.** Fit sockets, switches, light fittings, taps, sanitaryware and other final connections once the relevant surfaces and installations are ready.
- [ ] **Complete decorating and final details.** Finish paintwork, trims, hardware, silicone, snagging and other outstanding items.
- [ ] **Install furniture and dress the rooms.** Position furniture, hang window treatments, install accessories and artwork, and complete the final styling.

PHASE 7: Completion and handover

- [ ] **Inspect the work and create a snagging list.** Record defects, incomplete work and items requiring adjustment.
- [ ] **Test systems and appliances.** Check heating, plumbing, ventilation, electrical installations and appliances as appropriate, and obtain relevant certificates and handover information.
- [ ] **Collect product details and warranties.** Keep manuals, care instructions, paint references, spare materials and supplier information together.
- [ ] **Confirm outstanding works and responsibilities.** Agree what remains to be completed, by whom and by when.
- [ ] **Review the finished home as a whole.** Check that the rooms function as intended, storage is practical, lighting works for different activities and the overall design feels cohesive.
- [ ] **Keep a record for future maintenance.** Store drawings, specifications, invoices, guarantees and relevant approvals somewhere easy to find.

The most important thing to remember

You don't need to choose every cushion before the builders arrive. But you do need to understand how the big decisions connect.

Layout affects lighting. Lighting affects electrical positions. Joinery affects sockets and switches. Flooring affects levels. Window treatments need space and fixing points. And all of these decisions can affect cost, lead times and the order of work.

A clear design plan helps you identify what must be decided early, what can wait and who needs the information. That is what turns a collection of individual choices into a renovation that feels considered, coordinated and manageable.

If you are working with me on a renovation then I provide clear documentation which is accessible to you and details all decisions, timelines, purchases, electrical decisions and more, even down to paint colours by room.

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