

1st Case study

This is based on internal alterations to a 3 bedroom flat on second floor in the centre of London. Grade II* listed.

Meeting the client

First step is setting up a meeting with the client where we get the brief in outline and understand the requirements and style the client desire.

It is very important at this stage to establish how much the client wants to spend on the project. This gives us a good indication of what is achievable and also what our fees would be as we work on a percentage of the build cost. The percentage varies based on build cost and intricacy of the project.

Survey of the flat

When an agreement has been made we come out and measure up the flat in detail. This will be the foundation of all future plans we will carry out.

Design

The design stage now starts and we will come up with different conceptual designs for the flat. In most cases this will take about 1 week. The plans will be presented to our client and any amendments or changes are discussed where after we make the necessary changes and update our plans. The second presentation is made and we agree on the outline layout and scheme of the changes. This also takes about 1 week.



Planning – listed building consent



The plans are now being prepared for submission to the planning department to obtain Listed Building Consent which is required when alterations to a listed building is proposed. There are no submission fees to be paid to the council. This normally takes 2 weeks to prepare drawing but upon submitting the plans the planning department has 8 weeks to process the application.

Managing Agent and/or freeholder

Most flats in London are leaseholds which mean a managing agent is appointed by the freeholder to look after the building. You need approval from the freeholder to make any internal alterations to your flat if the layout and/or fixtures are changed i.e. floor covering. This is called License to Alter (LTA). All permissions shall be granted by the managing agent prior to any build work being carried out.

297 mm

Existing and proposed drawings and the scope of works shall be submitted to the managing agent who will pass it on to their surveyors and/or structural engineers. A meeting will be set up between us and the managing agent on site to clarify any queries. This normally takes about 1–2 weeks. The application normally costs in the region of £1,300.

Additional information to the managing agent

- *Sound check.*

Many of our clients have wished to have wooden flooring installed in their flats. As you can imagine your neighbours may not be overly excited about this as even the smallest impact on the floor can be heard in the flat below. In order to accommodate this problem special sound insulated floor boards shall be installed under your finished floor. Most managing agents will require



a sound check to be carried out before and after installing the wood flooring to prove that the new installed floor boards doesn't provide less sound transmission to the flat below. Those two surveys normally cost £800.

- *Schedule of condition for adjacent flats*

Before any work can be carried out it's important to carry out a schedule of condition to the flats adjacent to yours. This is basically a photo documentation of the state your neighbours flat is in. This will protect you and them should there ever be any dispute about cracks occurring in their flat caused by any build work. It doesn't take long to carry out these schedules of conditions as long as we can gain access to your neighbours flat. We normally send off letters for their attention and hope they will contact us at their earliest convenience. However, they may not be as cooperative as we would like which can delay the process. In some instances the caretaker may be helpful and with the occupiers permission let us in.

- *Schedule of condition for common parts*

It is normally also required that a schedule of condition is carried out of the common parts of the build. This will be entrance or lobby area and stair wells. The managing agent will make sure that no damages are made to the building by the contractor whilst the build work is going on. It is not uncommon that a deposit is made to the managing agent before the build work starts just in case any damages occur. The deposit is normally £7,000.

- *Structural alteration*

If any structural walls are being demolished or changes are made which will affect the structural integrity of the building; a structural engineer shall be appointed. We will liaise with him and make sure we get the relevant drawings and calculation from him. His fee may vary a lot but in average it is £1,500.

- *Changing radiators*

In most instances the proposed layout also affects the plumbing installation. The reason can be adding an extra bathroom or changing the position of radiators. In many old blocks the central heating and hot and cold water supply is shared with the rest of the building. If

your flat hasn't been recently refurbished it's very likely that no isolation valves have been installed and that you can't turn off the water just for your flat. We will liaise with the services engineers for the block to make sure your neighbours are notified when and if we need to drain the central heating system for a day so we can isolate all the pipes. The cost for isolating the water system can vary a lot but would normally cost £800.



- *Fireplaces*

95% of any Victorian or Edwardian buildings have original fireplaces installed. These are generally protected as a part of the listed building so cannot be removed. They are often not in working order but purely a 'left over' from a time where the only source of heating came from the fireplace. The mantle piece can be very decorative and in most cases we try to re-instate them so they are fully operational. To test



Before



After

the fireplace (flue) an integrity test has been carried out. Unfortunately in some cases the flues have been blocked in the chimney stack in flats above yours and therefore make it impossible to rectify.

Choosing a contractor

The process of choosing a contractor can be relatively simple. We have very good relationships with a dozen of different contractors who we trust and know can provide the right service for the right job. Every project we work on is sent out to tender. This means that we send out drawings and specifications to at least three different contractors and get individual quotations from each of them. Most commonly the cheapest contractor gets the job. However, there may be reasons why a different contractor is chosen such as availability or predicted duration of the project.

Building Control

48 hours a building notice needs to be submitted to the councils building control department or a private building control company. This authority will make sure the build work is carried out as per current regulations and that all certificates are obtained such as gas and electrical certificates. The fee to the building control department is set by the cost of the work being carried out which normally vary from £350–1,200.

Contract administration

Once a contractor has been chosen we will draw up a contract between our client and the contractor. We will also take care of the contract administration which means that everything is carried out as per the contract and also hold the fortnightly valuations. The contractor will only get paid when we provide him with a certificate for interim payment. The client shall then pay the contractor the agreed amount based on the current valuation for the work carried out to date.

Our fee structure

The majority of our projects are similar in the way they are structured. We spend most of our time in the beginning of the project designing, attending meeting, printing and sending out tender packages etc. This is why we have regulated the fee structure to reflect the work involved and time spent on a project. We ask for 35% down payment when we are instructed by our client. Then we invoice the outstanding money pro rata for every valuation held fortnightly.

VAT exemption

Male any alterations or improvements to a flat within a listed building means you have some VAT benefits. For a complete refurbishment of your flat you may only pay VAT on 5% of the build cost. This may vary from project to project. We are always here to assist you and make sure you don't pay more than you have to.