

Refurbishment and interior fit-out for the hospitality business

How to avoid the stresses and strains of a refurbishment

Re-inventing and refurbishing front-of-house or restaurant areas can provide a positive impact on your business by drawing in new custom and by encouraging guests to spend more time in the location. A refurbishment project need not be a nightmare. If all available options are fully considered, prior planning is carried out and the correct team is procured to execute the works, then the management risk and business downtime during renovation can be successfully mitigated.

There are no hard and fast rules as to what can and cannot be achieved with a refurbishment project; anyone considering a project for the first time, without a detailed knowledge of the construction process or without dedicated resources to manage the project is advised to secure the assistance of an experienced team who are aware of and can manage the process and its likely pitfalls. The following information will act as a useful outline plan to help you achieve this process successfully.

Planning your project

Assess all projects on their own individual merits to identify the key drivers of the business:

- Reception area – the shop window to the establishment – should create a sense of arrival. Remember, first impressions are critical.
- Bar – from pre-dinner drinks to a more traditional meeting place, be sure to provide alternative seating arrangements to cater for a variety of groups.
- Dining – developed to attract non-residential diners.

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- Banqueting facilities – to cater for the party and business conference guest.
- Drop-in points – the introduction of internet-enabled areas and sufficient seating to facilitate informal meetings can also significantly enhance beverage revenue throughout the day.

These crucial areas have a direct effect on kitchen requirements and staffing levels. Whilst the interiors are going to add value to the business the external aesthetics must also attract trade in the first instance.

Planning the refurbishment or fit-out

The following are key points to be considered in relation to any refurbishment project or new fit out and will act as useful guidelines. The successful delivery of any project on time, to the desired quality and within the allocated budget is of paramount importance.

Begin your project by visiting other establishments and reviewing trade press to identify the desired image of the completed scheme – it should be friendly, visually interesting and relaxing in an attempt to create a 'venue'.





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- Identify high level business objectives – develop a strategy that can be implemented in order to achieve the key objectives. Proprietors should know their market and be able to identify the relevance of guests, locals and passing trade.
- Identify available budget and proposed return to the business – any aspirations have to be realistic.
- Select a consultant to lead the design and cost management of the scheme.

Planning approval and legal considerations

There are a number of planning and legal considerations to be undertaken once your project has been decided. Once the design is developed to a suitable level you will need to make the necessary planning applications to the Local Authority and time should be allowed for this process. It may be prudent to check the likely time of submitting and receiving planning approval with the Local Authority and to liaise with your contractor/surveyor who will have first hand knowledge of this. In addition:

- Make necessary applications for building regulations approval to the Local Authority.
- Be aware of access issues for disabled employees, guests and their carers. Consider the addition of new technologies to facilitate communication with the disabled and to create or enhance access.
- Appoint a planning supervisor to maintain an overview of Health & Safety standards (this can also be part of the contractor's role where suitably qualified).
- Dependent on the age of the property, appoint a contractor to carry out an asbestos survey in advance of any works commencing – if asbestos is discovered it could dramatically change construction costs and the duration of the works.

The design team

Open conversations with the lead designer or the design and build contractor as early as possible. Input from an early stage prevents the need for costly changes part way through the works. You should develop the design in conjunction with the lead designer and the contractor:

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- The lead designer prepares the 'designer's risk assessments' for issue to the contractor.
- A pre-tender health & safety plan should also be developed.
- Identify items such as paintings, furniture, crockery that you may wish to procure outside of any contract with the fit-out contractor:

Appointing a contractor

Once the scheme is developed sufficiently, a contractor needs to be appointed – the quality of contractor employed could make or break the scheme so it needs careful consideration. The appointed contractor should have the ability to work weekends and nights to suit the requirements of the project in order to mitigate any lost revenue – or you should agree upon hours where 'quiet work' will take place to avoid impacting guests too early or too late.

Identify contractors with the following credentials:

- a track record in fit-out and refurbishment who can provide references (don't just opt for the telephone directory and a local builder). Contractors should be able to give the names of at least three past clients or professional consultants with whom they have worked who can be contacted to bear testimony to their capabilities.
- knowledge of alternative systems and materials.
- a design department to facilitate 'construction drawings' taken from the design concepts and as built drawings for inclusion in the Health & Safety File.
- the ability to readily provide all necessary materials and specialist trades.
- a dedicated site-based manager to control the work at first hand.
- the ability to provide a detailed construction programme.
- the ability to provide a detailed breakdown of cost.
- valid Health & Safety accreditation.





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Ensure that payment provisions are set down in the contract documentation; it is standard practice that work is valued on a monthly basis with payment being made 14 days after the issue of a certificate.

Prior to commencing the project work

Following the successful appointment of a contractor arrange a pre-contract meeting two to three weeks in advance of the works to discuss the project first hand with the key members of the contractor's team. A schedule of works including information on where and when they will be occurring must be made available; this is especially important if the venue is to continue trading. A single point of contact should be agreed by both parties to ensure that there is a clear method for daily communication throughout the works.

- Arrange a pre-access meeting one week prior to the project's commencement to identify the key routes for access and egress and to inform operational staff of the procedures to be put in place, the hours of the works and the location of the works.
- Maintain daily communication with the contractor's site-based manager – the key to the success of a project.
- Ensure the Health & Safety file is left on site - preferably at reception – for record purposes and in the event of any maintenance.
- Monitor the works at regular intervals via the use of formal project meetings.
- Value the completed works and make timely interim payments to the contractor.
- In the event of any dispute the contract will identify any recourse; it is however prudent to maintain communication. A positive working relationship will resolve the majority of problems as and when they occur.

Completion of the project work

Prior to final completion convene a pre-completion meeting to identify whether the project is on target for completion and to note any key areas of work that are left to be completed. Then at the agreed handover date 'walk' the project with the contractor and identify a list of defects (if any) that need to be rectified. The contractor should arrange to revisit and carry out remedial works at an agreed time without hindering the operation of the business.

Payment of the contractor

It is better to ensure that there is a fixed price for the completion of the work(s) as payment on an hourly basis could lead to your project being seriously over budget. Ensure that payment provisions are set down in the contract documentation; it is standard practice that work is valued on a monthly basis with payment being made 14 days after the issue of a certificate. Other methods include a payment schedule identifying key dates and percentages.

When selecting a contractor it is important not to opt for the lowest cost option without reviewing the basis on which it is priced; the lowest tender does not always mean the lowest final account. Ensure that the contractor is financially stable, experienced, fully understands the project(s) and can complete in the shortest period of time.

At project completion:

- The contractor should substantiate the final amount for payment as a result of any client variations.
- Final payment to the contractor should be made within a reasonable time as identified within the contract subject to making good all defects and receipt of a completion certificate.





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REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG), Building Regulations and Planning

Responsible for Building Regulations applying to old and new domestic, commercial or industrial buildings in England and Wales. Also provides planning guidance and policy documents, research, statistics and links to related sites explaining the planning system.

www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1130476

www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143104

HCIMA Management Guides are available on a wide range of topics. Members can access them through the HCIMA Online Catalogue. See in particular:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and Appendix*
- *The Use of Management Consultants*

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Responsible for health and safety regulation in Great Britain. Provides extensive information on health and safety topics of benefit to employers, employees and the general public.

www.hse.gov.uk

Ingram, H. and Ransley, J., 2004

Developing Hospitality Properties and Facilities

Oxford, Boston, Elsevier. Available from: HCIMA Online Catalogue [members-only].

Joint Contracts Tribunal

A suite of standard contracts for use within the construction industry.

www.jcttd.co.uk/assets/PN5_JBC_Chart_Dec_11.pdf

Local Authority Building Control (LABC)

Maintaining standards in building design and construction. LABC is a publicly accountable, independent building control provider providing an efficient and cost effective building control service aimed at providing a local service, nationally.

www.labc-services.co.uk

The National Association of Shopfitters

Designers and clients recognise the NAS mark as the symbol of quality and reliability in shopfitting.

www.shopfitters.org/pages/intro.html

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 2003

Building regulations; explanatory booklet

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Available from:

www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/117/BuildingRegulationsExplanatoryBookletPDF1191Kb_id1131117.pdf [Accessed 19 June 2006].

Royal Institute of British Architects

Provides a database of architects/designers with relevant experience.

www.ribafind.co.uk

Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

Provides a database of quantity surveyors experienced in various projects to manage financial and legal aspects of a project.

www.ricsfirms.co.uk

This Management Guide has been produced by the Hotel & Catering International Management Association (HCIMA) in conjunction with Bridgford Interiors – a specialist fit-out contractor working across the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors. Established in 1994 Bridgford Interiors has become one of the UK's premier interior contracting companies – providing flexible services tailored to individual client requirements. For an informal discussion of your project please contact:

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