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Testimonial for Style Within

We wanted to express our thanks to Nick Prescott of Style Within and to recommend his interior design and project management service to others. We could not have produced such a successful renovation of our home without his professional support. With no experience of what to expect from major surgery to our house, we were very grateful for Nick's oversight and control of all aspects of the work. His advice, management and, ultimately, his design flair has produced for us a home with a stunning, practical interior.

Background

For some years, we had planned to extend our 3 bedroom, end-of-terrace property and already had plans drawn up and approved. However, with the passage of time, we wanted to be sure that these plans continued to suit our purposes.

We invited Nick to review the proposals and he made a number of very useful observations. Importantly, he helped us to see that we could reconfigure the space and change our way of living to enjoy an improved view of the garden and across the valley in a light-filled, open-plan kitchen-diner with separate seating area. He also identified some simple changes to the layout to maximise functionality of the various new spaces, creating a separate utility room that we had always wanted, and an area for our pets. He also spotted a design simplification that would facilitate installation of a new kitchen.

The proposed renovation would affect many of the spaces in the house, so Nick produced several 3D models of the whole property to help us to envisage optional layouts. His advice, supported by the different models and estimated costs, also identified elements that were not worth pursuing, releasing funds for other aspects that were more important to us.

With the basic layout agreed, Nick worked with the architect, structural engineer, and Council planning officers to ensure that the agreed re-design would be approved.

In parallel, he produced a very detailed specification with electrical and lighting layout and schematic for the TV, music and IT installation; this, together with architect's drawings, formed the tender package against which 3 contractors bid a fixed price. We came to realise that this detailed document with specific references was critical to containing the price within defined limits; through the specification, the contractor was given very clear instructions on specific building works, plumbing and heating, joinery, lighting, flooring and other aspects of the project.

Nick ran a competitive tender working closely with us and the 3 bidders. Together, we then selected the winning contractor and work started. In essence, whilst we lived with the building work, Nick was on site almost every day to keep an eye on developments and make decisions where required. Largely, we sat back and made cups of tea for the builders. If we spotted

anything of concern, we generally raised this with Nick in the first instance and he would either explain the issue to us or, if some action was required, would address it with the contractor.

Having established the principal price for the works, Nick was also keen to show us the total cost of the project including carpets, window dressings, audio equipment etc. He had also designed a number of bespoke storage units some of which were eventually fabricated and fitted. Early in the planning process we met to review decorative schemes with samples to show how each room would look and feel, along with the associated prices. He maintained a detailed spreadsheet, so that we could budget for furnishings over a timescale that suited us. The spreadsheet included a risk budget for identified risks, to help us understand the level of caution required as the project progressed. The value of the main contractor's work was £120k + VAT (including kitchen) and the total project budgeted price was £150k + VAT (including furnishings etc).

Nick oversaw the contractor's implementation of the design. He also managed any interfaces between the contractor and other suppliers, and organised purchase of additional items such as the kitchen, carpets, blinds, and audio kit. He took us to view kitchens and appliances so that we could confirm our requirement. He then negotiated a good price for us which saved several £ks. This was another feature of working with Nick; not only did he negotiate good prices on our behalf, he also passed on elements of his trade discounts to us, and identified cost effective solutions which more than paid for his fees.

We were particularly fascinated by Nick's attention to detail and came to realise and appreciate its importance. For example, his insistence on the apparently small detail of aligning the floor level at the threshold to the French doors was simple to implement, but the contractors would have proceeded to fit a step over the threshold (because it was easy and what they always do) without Nick insisting otherwise. We now have no such trip-hazards.

As the project proceeded, Nick spent more time with us and our teenagers, confirming styles and tastes, bringing samples and putting together schemes, before sourcing carpets and other fixtures and fittings. He introduced us to a number of new ideas: all of our friends marvel at our purple glass splashback and resin-worktop; the walk-in rain shower is fabulous; the music distribution system is fantastic, the wide floorboards are a real feature, and the look of our spacious, contemporary kitchen-diner is very special. He also future-proofed the property with an ethernet network in all key areas of the home.

To manage cash-flow, the project was split into 2 phases. In planning for this, Nick ensured that all foundations, cabling, and pipes for phase 2 were installed during phase 1, negating the need for re-work or additional work later.

In fact, during the 6 month break between phases, the contractor failed to record works already completed and paid for, and were preparing to escalate the ongoing price significantly (by approximately £8k, or 30% of the price remaining). However, Nick's dogged determination and scrupulous record-keeping allowed us to maintain the project largely within the original price (allowing only for a legitimate inflationary increase in materials and labour).

Throughout the project, we had every confidence that Nick would address any issue with the work. He produced a detailed snagging list at the end of each phase and ensured that all items were closed before the project was signed off.

We are delighted with our "new" home and, having lived with it now for over a year, we find it practical as well as stylish, with plenty of functionality, space and light.

Nick is a pleasure to work with. He offers fresh ideas and has opened our eyes to opportunities that we would otherwise have missed. Equally, he accepts respectfully that a client may not always be able to follow a particular recommendation. He is extraordinarily diligent and reliable and his involvement saved us money overall (to the tune of many £ks). We will certainly continue to use his services for future developments of our home and it gives us great pleasure to recommend him to others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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