



FROM WORN-OUT TO RENT-READY

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO REFURBISHING &
RENOVATING BUY-TO-LET PROPERTIES

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INTRODUCTION

UPGRADE SMART. AVOID MISTAKES.
MAXIMISE RETURNS.



Whether you are a landlord pitching for high-quality tenants, or an investor hoping for good resale value, upgrading your property can boost property value and rental income.

However, as straightforward as it may seem, property refurbishment and renovations require a strategic approach to avoid costly mistakes and make the right decisions.



In this guide, we will take you through the common pitfalls to avoid and the necessary checklist to ensure you get the desired return for your home upgrade efforts and investment.



RENOVATION VS REFURBISHMENT

WHATS THE DIFFERENCE ?





Before discussing what to avoid, it's crucial to understand the key difference between renovation and refurbishment. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they refer to very different types of work, and understanding which one you need can save time, money, and stress.



WHAT IS RENOVATION?

FOCUSED ON RESTORATION OR MAJOR IMPROVEMENT



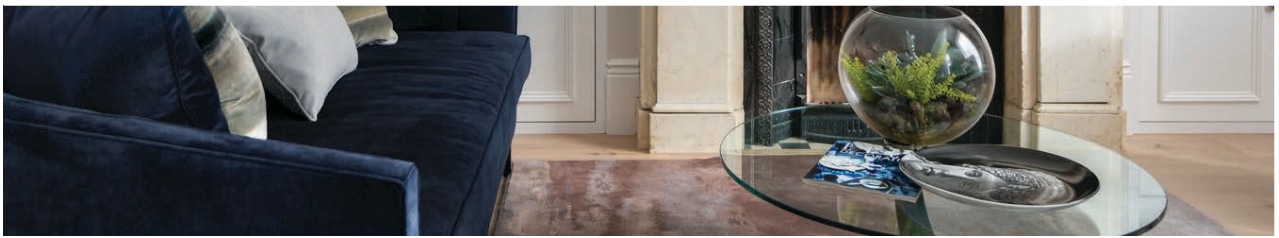
- 1 REWIRING AND PLUMBING
- 2 CHANGING LAYOUTS OR KNOCKING DOWN WALLS
- 3 UPGRADING STRUCTURAL FEATURES
- 4 USUALLY REQUIRES PLANNING PERMISSION OR BUILDING REGULATIONS
- 5 LONGER TIMELINES, HIGHER BUDGETS





WHAT IS REFURBISHMENT?

FOCUSED ON COSMETIC AND FUNCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

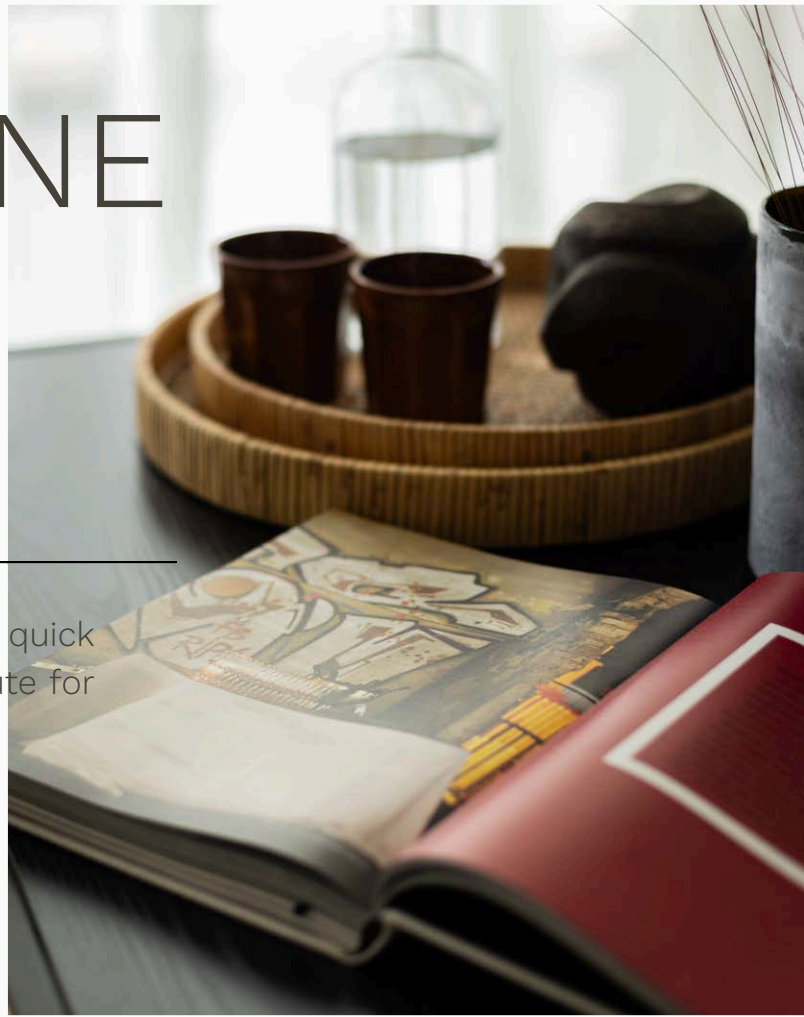


- 1 PAINTING AND DECORATING
- 2 REPLACING FLOORING
- 3 UPDATING FIXTURES, FITTINGS, AND FURNITURE
- 4 DEEP CLEANING AND REPAIRS
- 5 FASTER, LESS INVASIVE, TYPICALLY NO PERMISSIONS REQUIRED



WHICH ONE DO YOU NEED?

Not sure where to start? Here's a quick guide to help you choose the right route for your rental property.



REFURBISHMENT

Refurbishment is usually the best route to make a property rental-ready, improve marketability, or increase appeal without major building work.



RENOVATION

Renovations may be needed for older properties, structural issues, or layout changes.



WHAT WE THINK

In most cases, a strategic combination of the two—paired with quality furnishing—delivers the best outcome for landlords and investors seeking higher returns and fewer voids.

WHY RENOVATE OR REFURBISH A RENTAL PROPERTY?

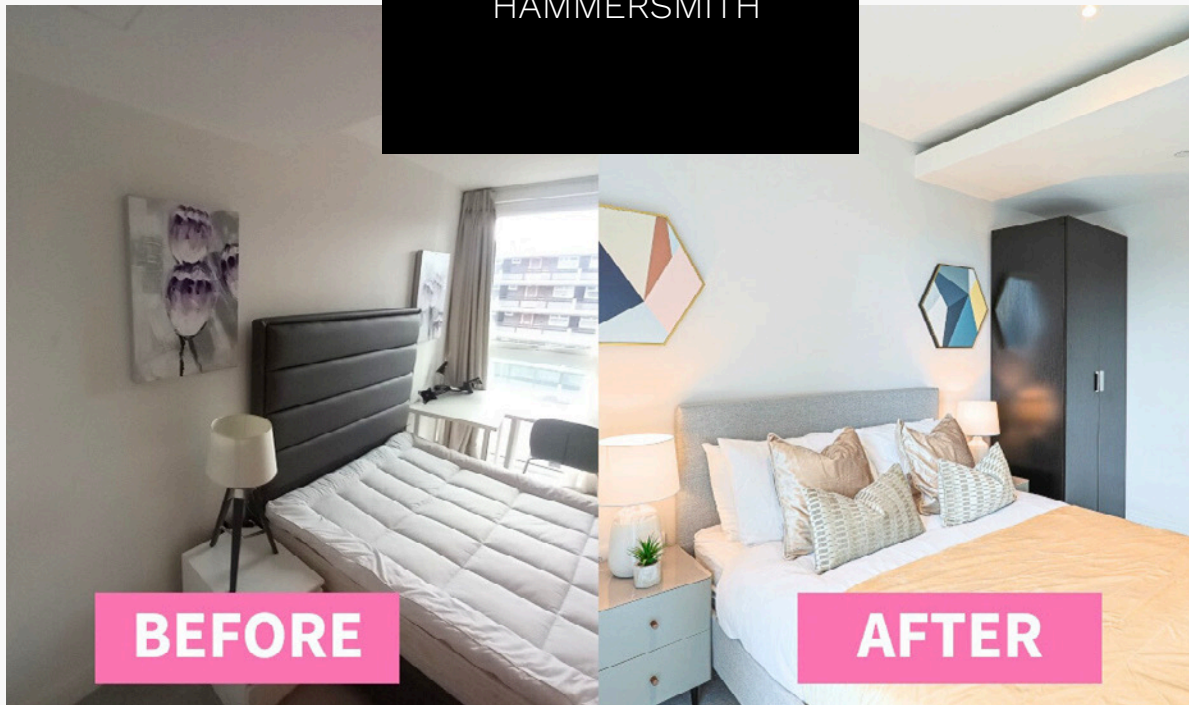


Smart renovations and timely refurbishments can benefit London landlords in a competitive rental market with a high demand for quality accommodation. Whether changing the layout or rejuvenating the interiors with new furniture and design upgrades, a renovated or refurbished property is quick to stand out among other listed rentals.

In addition to attracting better tenants and justifying premiums, such well-maintained and aesthetically appealing homes are often quick to get let out and seldom face any void periods. Improved energy efficiency with the latest fittings and a boost in property value are some of the other long-term benefits.

“Whether it’s a light refurbishment or a full renovation, upgrading a rental property can make a real difference. It helps attract quality tenants, reduce void periods, and increase the property’s rental and resale value over time.” — Amar Tufail, Associate Director

A REFURBISHMENT SUCCESS STORY IN HAMMERSMITH



After years of successful renting, the landlord of a two-bedroom / two-bath apartment at Sovereign Court in Hammersmith wanted to refresh the interiors. Our team worked towards giving the property a comprehensive makeover, including a sophisticated ash-grey palette for all the walls, ceilings and woodwork. Upgrading furniture pieces, such as a new dining set and luxurious bedding with attractive accent walls, were among the aesthetic enhancements added to the finishing touches.

The result was a quick let with an instant 8.2% increase in the asking rent despite six other two-bedroom apartments being available in the same building at a lower asking price.

THE TOP 7 MISTAKES TO AVOID

i. OVERCAPITALISING

Every property has a return potential which landlords can maximise with strategic improvements. However, pumping funds into repairs and renovations without design-led plans to extract value from them can be a colossal waste of time and money.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD?

Devise a proper plan involving professional expertise to improve the overall rental appeal. These strategic enhancements will be cost-effective and result-oriented.

ii. IGNORING LOCAL TENANT EXPECTATIONS

Most London neighbourhoods cater to different tenant groups, such as students, working professionals, and families. Renovating without a plan on how these improvements will benefit the end user may not be rewarding if tenants don't find them helpful.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD?

Research the most popular tenant profiles in your area and make upgrades targeted to them. For example, adding a dedicated workspace can appeal to professionals, while families will appreciate extra storage created for kids' toys and clothes.

THE TOP 7 MISTAKES TO AVOID

iii. USING CHEAP SHORT-TERM FIXES

Low-cost materials may seem like a bargain initially, but they wear out much sooner and are often more costly in the long term than getting high-quality, durable fittings and fixtures.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD?

If premium-quality fittings seem too expensive, consult experts for durable materials that can withstand wear and tear and look good without costly price tags.

iv. DIY OVER PROFESSIONAL HELP

While a DIY approach may work for simple tasks, it could be counterproductive when dealing with complex renovations and repairs. If work is not done correctly with proper expertise, it can cause permanent damage to your property or that of your neighbours.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD?

Hire a dedicated refurbishment and renovation company that provides a comprehensive range of services and takes full responsibility for all the work carried out during such a process.

THE TOP 7 MISTAKES TO AVOID

v. NO CLEAR PLAN OR BUDGET

Always remember home renovations are complex tasks that require intricate detailing. Without a proper plan or budget, you could be dealing with issues such as cost escalations and unsatisfactory results.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD?

You should always have a proper plan with a checklist of all the required repair or renovation work and an estimated cost quotation for each job.

vi. NEGLECTING COMPLIANCE

Changing a property's physical layout may require extensive changes to its plumbing, electrical and fire safety measures. Complying with local regulations is mandatory at such times, and failing to do so can lead to hefty fines and legal reparations.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD?

Ensure all the work being carried out is within the building or council framework and adheres to regulations such as fire safety, EICR, EPC, etc.

The background of the entire page is a soft-focus photograph of a bedroom. On the left, a green plant is partially visible. In the center, a bedside table holds a lamp with a brass-colored base and a white conical shade, and a small potted plant. To the right, a bed with white and striped bedding is visible. The overall tone is warm and minimalist.

THE TOP 7 MISTAKES TO AVOID

vii. POOR FINISH AND LACK OF DURABILITY

How much you've spent is irrelevant to tenants if the end result does not improve functionality and aesthetics. Sloppy work will eventually show and affect a property's marketability and rent potential.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD?

Focus on delivering clean, high-quality finishes that will attract potential tenants and justify the asking rent for the property.

THE BUYER'S CHECKLIST

CREATING A PRIORITY-WISE CHECKLIST OF ALL THE NECESSARY UPGRADES IS CRUCIAL BEFORE STARTING ANY REFURBISHMENT OR RENOVATION WORK. THIS WILL AVOID MISTAKES AND ENSURE THE DESIRED RESULTS. HERE'S A CHECKLIST TO GET YOU STARTED.



THE BUYER'S CHECKLIST



#1: INSPECT EXISTING CONDITION

Start by thoroughly inspecting the property's current condition, especially the state of the plumbing, electrical, and flooring, to identify any urgent repair needs.



#2: IDENTIFY MUST-DO VS. NICE-TO-HAVE UPGRADES


Always prioritise must-do upgrades that improve safety features, energy -efficiency or other practical repairs over aesthetic upgrades.

THE BUYER'S CHECKLIST



#3: UNDERSTAND YOUR TARGET TENANT OR BUYER

A sound understanding of your target buyer or tenant will help reorient your efforts towards enhancements that improve your property's sale or letting potential.



	Budget Available	Perce. Used
umb.	(1,544.28)	106.0
	10,165.76	93.3
	290.37	21.7
	93.28	82.1
	(133.17)	103.8
	10,228.50	56.8
	(1,300.31)	100.0
	(304.83)	100.0
	(4,920.34)	
	(5,489.6)	
934		
65.25		
	481.52	
	1,191.56	
2.50		
1,300.31	304.83	
304.83		
4,920.34		
8,051.97		
657.40		
12,926.49		
10.76		
	1,046.17	
	61.60	

#4: SET A REALISTIC BUDGET

While you don't want to overspend, undercutting quality or essential improvements can affect your plans to achieve the desired outcome.

THE BUYER'S CHECKLIST



#5: CHECK BUILDING AND FIRE SAFETY COMPLIANCE

Ensure all works comply with building and fire safety regulations, including EICR, EPC, and smoke alarms.



#6: PLAN FURNITURE AND FINISH UPGRADES EARLY

Check for the best deals on furniture that align with your property theme, layout and budget preferences.

THE BUYER'S CHECKLIST



#7: HIRE REPUTABLE PROFESSIONALS

Work with a reputed company that hires skilled builders and trained professionals for the best outcome.



#8: PLAN TIMELINES TO AVOID MISSED RENTAL PERIODS

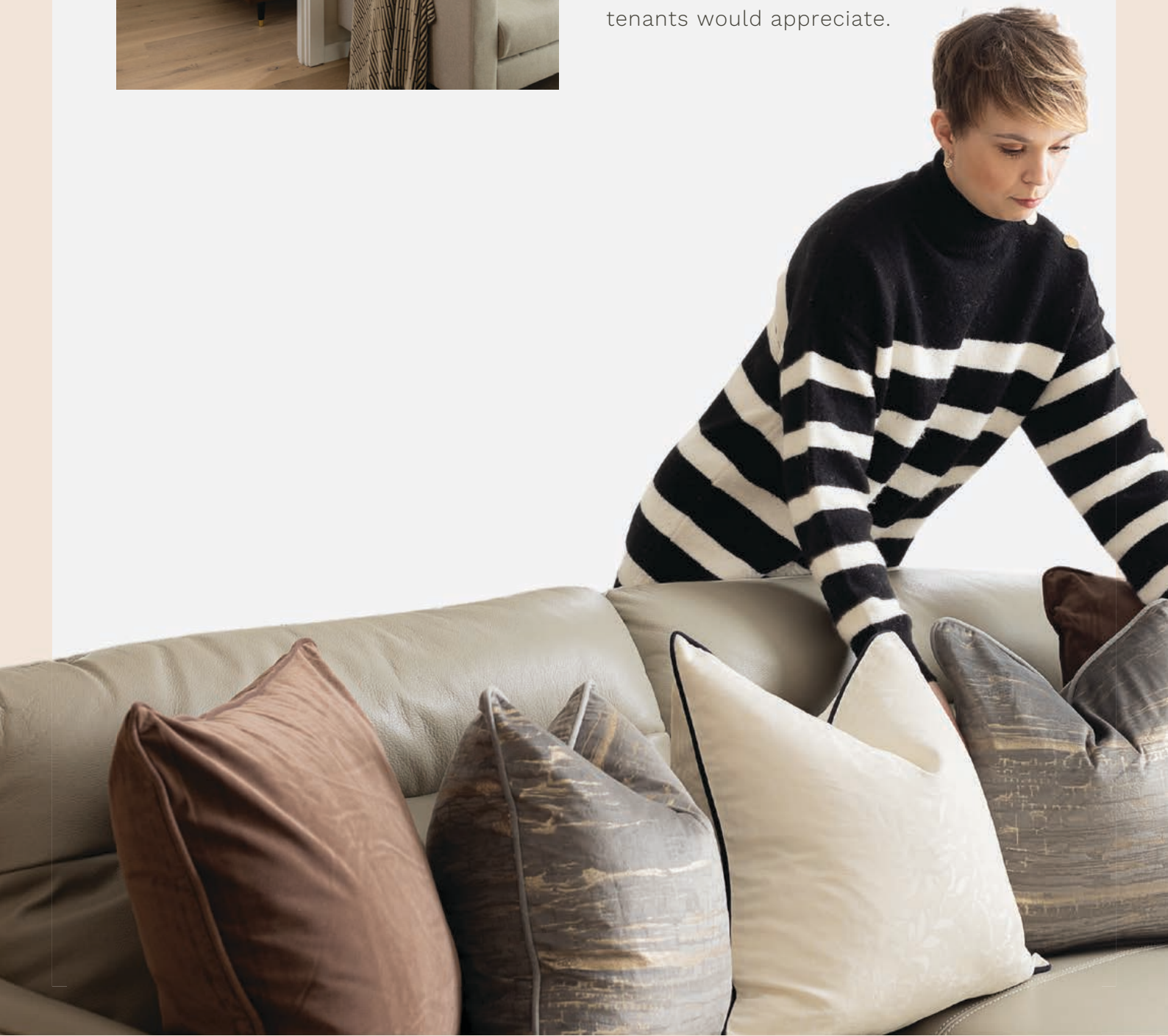
Set proper timelines and ensure your contractor sticks to them so that no opportunity for rental income is lost due to delays.

THE BUYER'S CHECKLIST



#9: CONSIDER DESIGN NEUTRALITY AND DURABILITY

Instead of focusing on offbeat colours and templates, choose neutral shades and durable products that a wider group of tenants would appreciate.



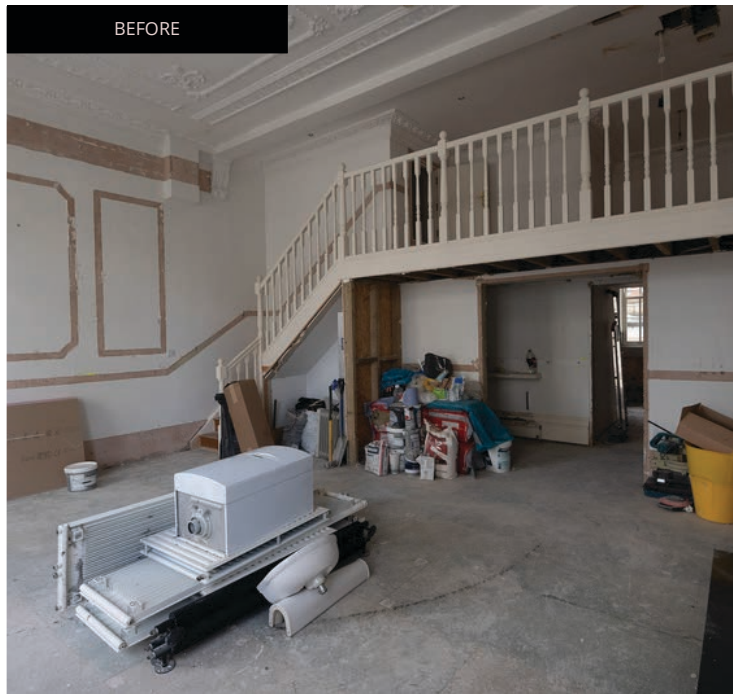
COST VS VALUE WHAT TO PRIORITISE?



Upgrading a rental property requires thoughtful planning. Always prioritise improvements that drive the ROI and boost a property's aesthetics and functionality. Repainting with neutral colours, upgrading flooring, and modernising kitchens and bathrooms typically offer the best returns.

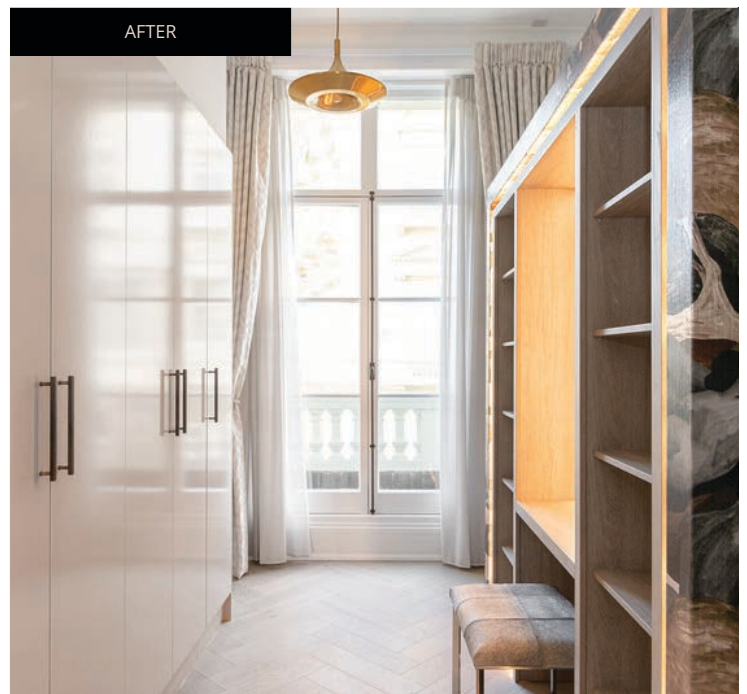
Improving these high-utility areas directly influences tenant interest and rentability. Have a clear action plan on what can be refreshed and what needs replacement. For example, deep cleaning of existing tiles and replacing all cabinets can sometimes be sufficient instead of getting everything new and escalating the cost.

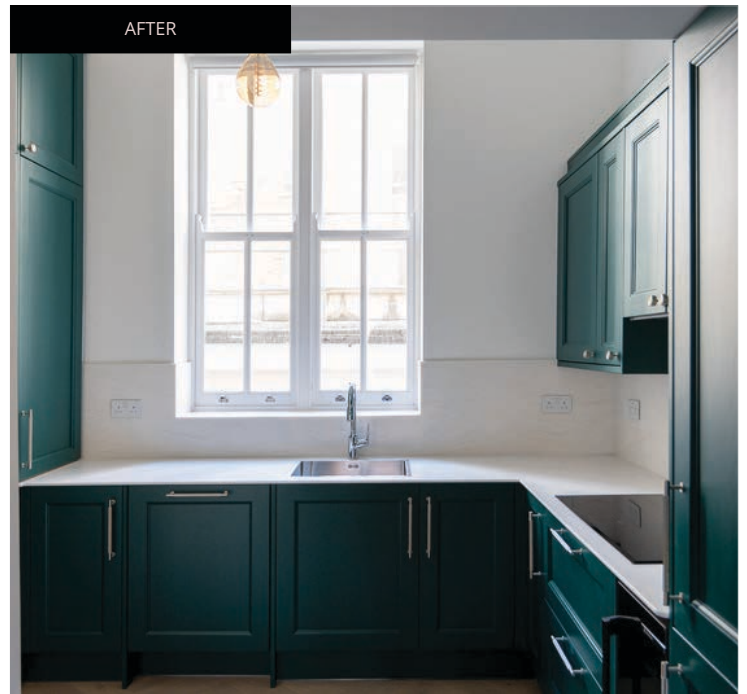
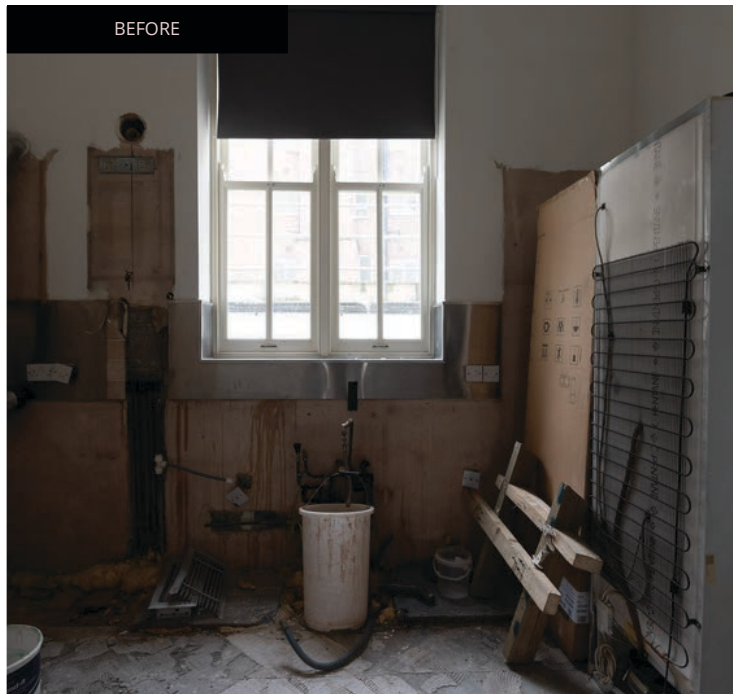
Focus on high-impact, cost-effective upgrades that enhance both function and appeal. Prioritise what tenants notice most—like flooring, kitchens, and bathrooms—to maximise returns without overspending.



A RENOVATION SUCCESS STORY

The right renovation and refurbishment job can surely increase rental value, but the potential margin of improvement remains a question that many landlords seek an honest answer to. So, here we have a real-life case study, where we transformed a four-bedroom apartment at Cleveland Gardens in Westminster into a more spacious three-bedroom layout.

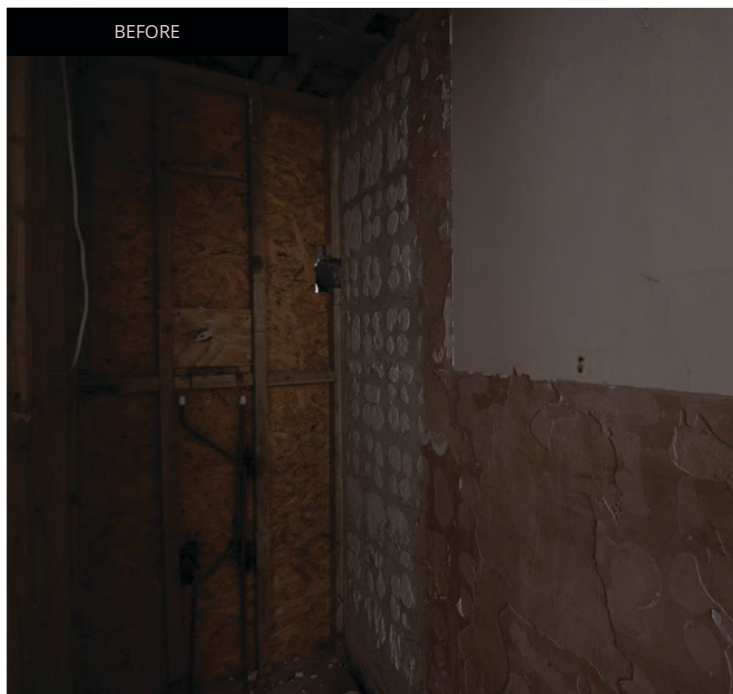




A RENOVATION SUCCESS STORY

The new layout could accommodate a larger master bedroom with a walk-in wardrobe and en-suite bathroom. The old block staircase was replaced with a stylish new spiral alternative, while the updated ironmongery, kitchen cabinets, and elegant corian marble tiling in the bathrooms added a luxurious finish.

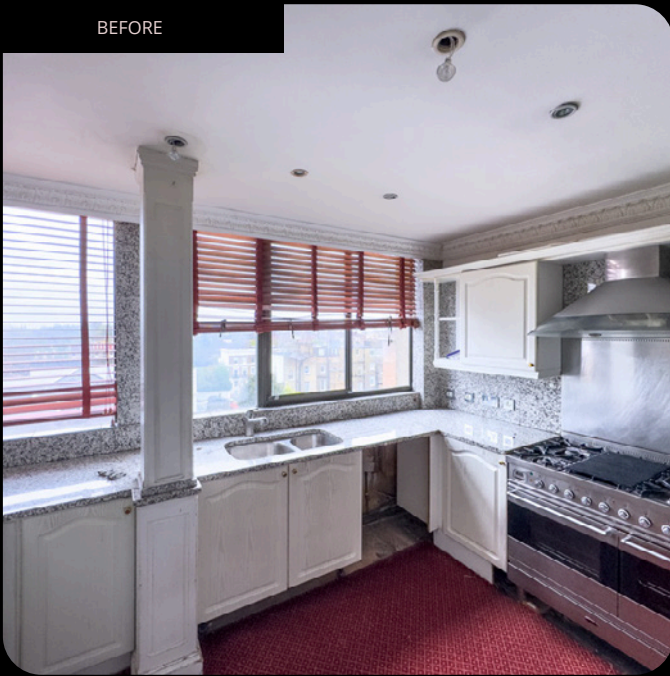
The end-to-end service provided for this makeover resulted in over 100% rent increase for the landlord, who was pleased to see the monthly rent more than double from **£4,100 to £8,500**.





LOOK BOOK

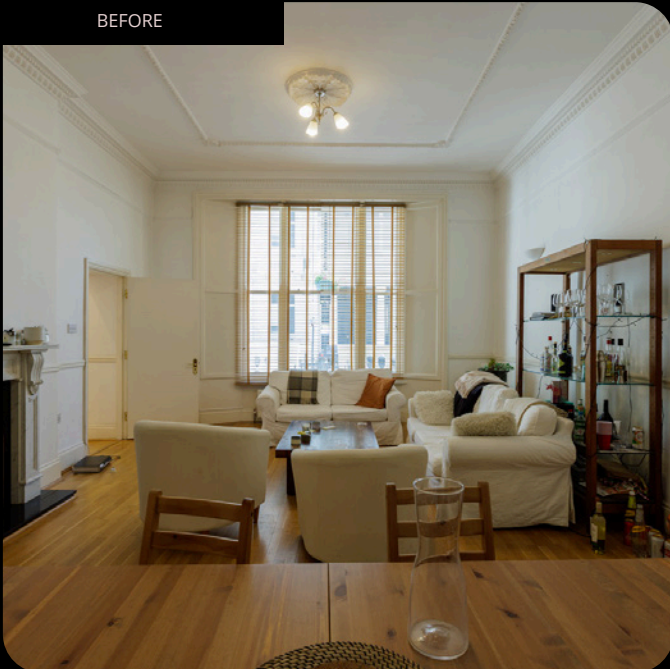
BEFORE



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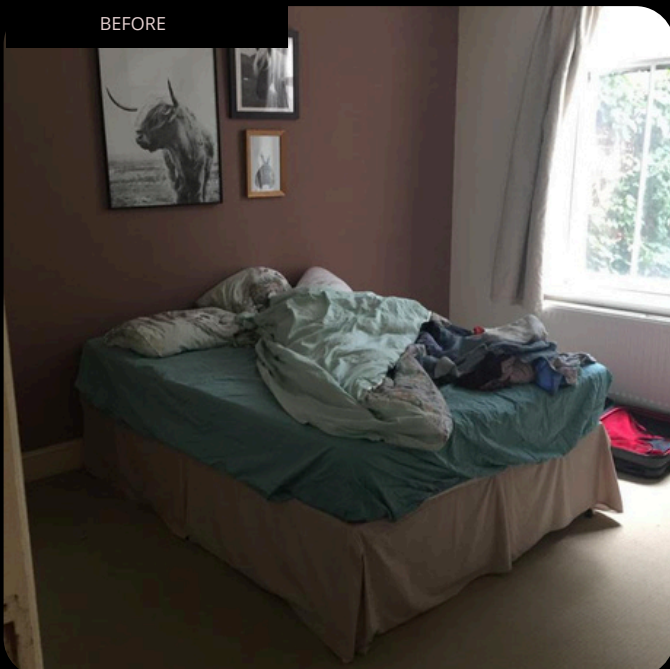
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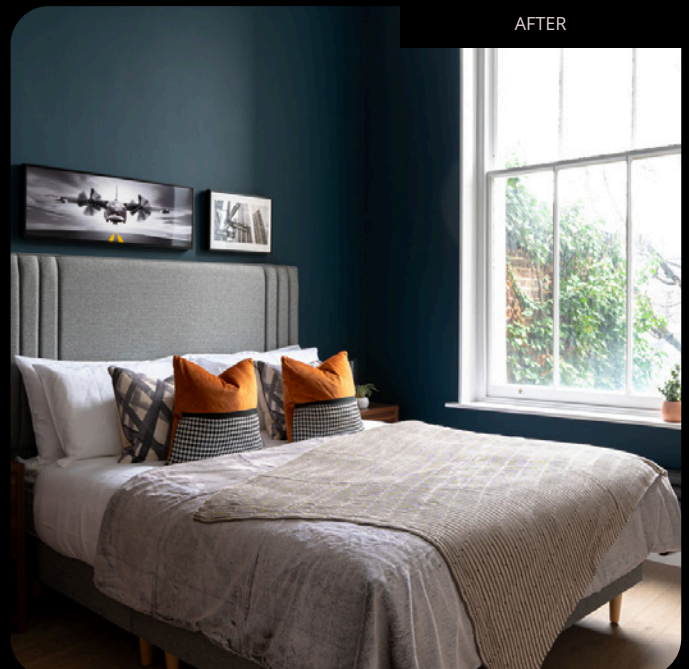
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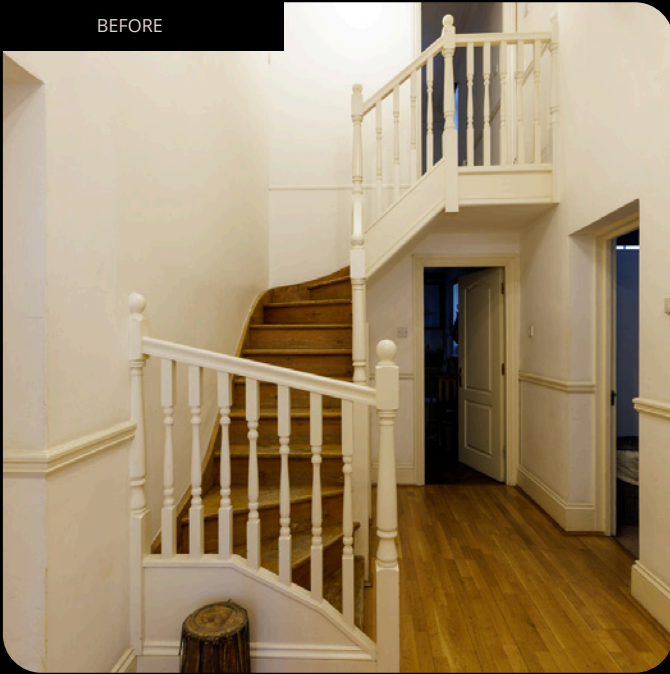
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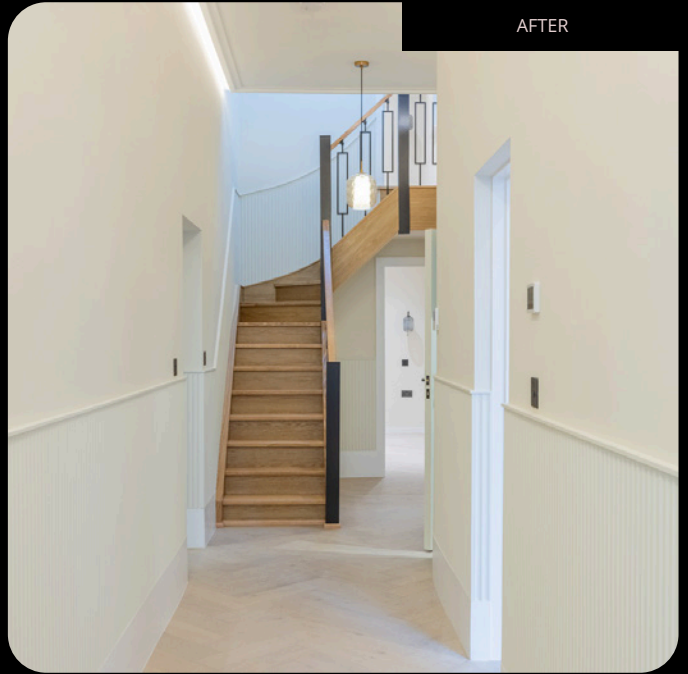
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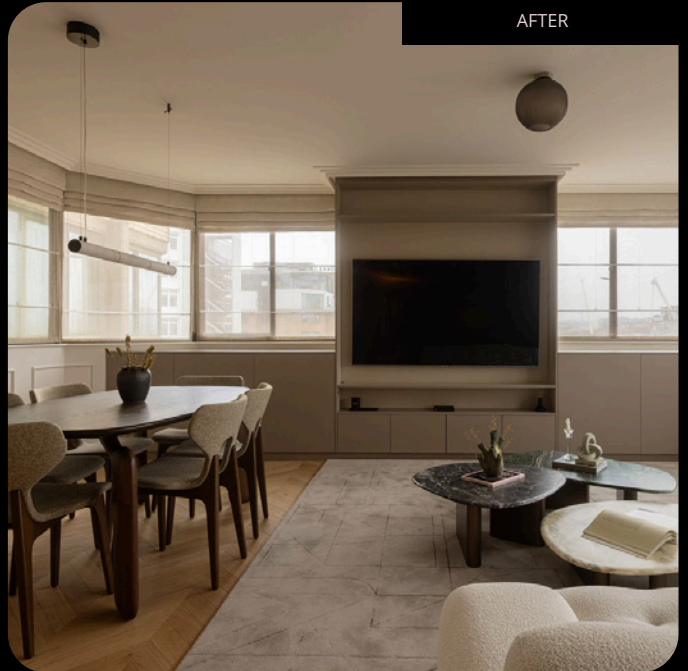
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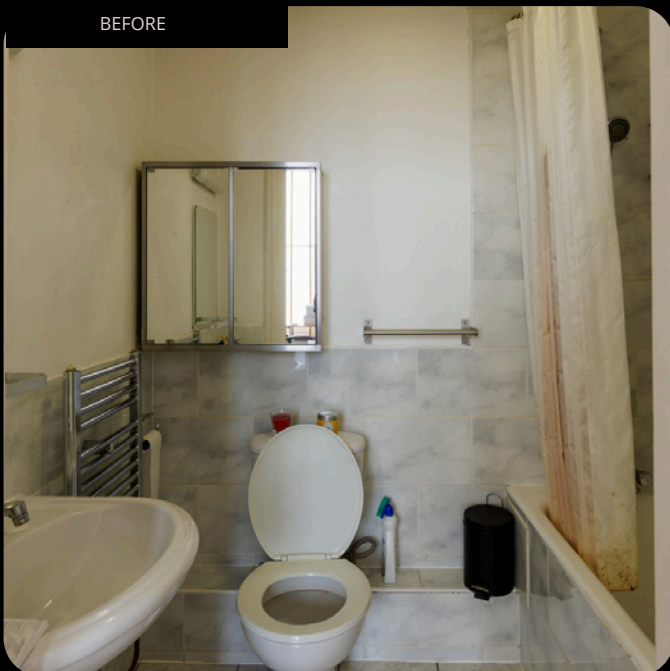
BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER





HOW WE CAN HELP

At InStyle Direct, we offer a one-stop solution tailored to the refurbishment, renovation, furnishing and window dressing needs of all London properties. Whether you are an investor, landlord, homeowner or developer, our bespoke services cater to every client needing a professional and stylish home makeover.

With almost 100 years of shared industry experience, our team of expert interior designers, project managers, builders, and skilled professionals ensures all projects are handled meticulously and completed on time and within the agreed budget. Our end-to-end service approach means clients need not worry about dealing with any external vendor or contractor.

With most aspects of refurbishment managed in-house, we are the top choice for overseas clients looking to get their London property investments in top shape. Our services are result-oriented, as we have helped thousands of landlords and investors increase rental yield with thoughtful and practical modifications appreciated by modern Londoners looking for high-quality rentals.



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