

## Decide which approach is best

'Working with a designer to create the kitchen, and then getting the right people to make and install it, will give you the best, and most cost-effective, result. Kitchen showrooms are expensive to run, which can significantly inflate the prices of the products being sold. One of my clients took our design to five different companies – the prices he came back with ranged from £28,000 to £42,000. We then did a detailed design and asked a joinery firm to make it by hand, which cost £11,000.'

**Hugo Tugman, co-founder of Architect Your Home**

'All projects should have a basic contract stating what is going to be done, when, and for how much. Extras should be written up on a separate work sheet, costed, agreed and signed for by the client, and paid for when the work has been completed, or at the end of that stage.'

**Harvey Ellingham, managing director at Home Improvements Guarantee**

'It's crucial to let your home insurance provider know if you are improving or extending your property. Making revisions, such as adding new rooms, could change the value of a house significantly, and failing to report alterations may leave you under-insured or with invalidated insurance policies.'

**Tom Thomson, head of home insurance at Sainsbury's Home Insurance**

'When choosing a builder, always ask at least three to quote for the work. Rather than opting for the cheapest quote, take time to visit one of their recent projects, talk to previous customers, and ask how they found working with the tradesperson, to find the best option for you.'

**Brian Berry, chief executive at the Federation of Master Builders**

The smooth lines of this Mistral design, shown in Nutmeg and Ivory, give the space a contemporary, minimalist feel. Prices start from £5,000, for the cabinetry only, at Masterclass Kitchens



## Invest in the quality of space and materials

'If you're building a kitchen-diner extension, consider lowering the floor to give an increased floor-to-ceiling height. While this is not cheap, if it can be done without underpinning and the drainage is at the right level, the effect could hugely improve your initial impressions of the space, which could add value to the house.'

**Billy Heyman, managing director at BTL Property**

'Spending as much of your budget as possible on creating the highest quality walls, ceilings, flooring, and the space itself, is essential if you're undertaking a large-scale renovation. From a structural perspective, it is difficult and expensive to change the layout and structure of these elements once the cabinets have been installed. However, if your budget doesn't allow for your dream kitchen now, you could fit cheaper units and accessories and upgrade them in the future, when you do have the money. Cabinets are easier to change than the structure of the kitchen, which is why it's vital to get the space right in the first place.'

**Dan Davidson, design director at Build Team**

'Window frames made to Wood Window Alliance standards are likely to last, on average, around 60 years with proper maintenance, compared to 35 years for uPVC. Timber windows can be repaired simply and inexpensively, whereas when a fitting on a plastic window breaks, often the whole window needs to be replaced. In addition, both uPVC and aluminium windows have a higher environmental impact in comparison to timber, which

is carbon neutral, fully recyclable and biodegradable. If you can afford it, then a good option with a very high-end finish is oak, or, for a more affordable alternative, choose softwood timber frames that can be customised in a wide range of RAL colours and specifications.'

**Tony Pell, senior product manager at Jeld-Wen**

'If you are working to a budget and the existing space works in terms of where everything is situated, then you should resist changing the layout as it will increase the cost, particularly if new plumbing and wiring is required, as re-routing pipes and electrics will be costly.'

**Gerald Jones, designer at Masterclass Kitchens**

## Take advantage of the relaxed planning rules

You can save money on planning applications, which cost £172 in England, by finding out what can be achieved under permitted development rights. From 30 May 2013 to 30 May 2016, the government has increased the size of extension you can build without the need to formally apply for permission from the local planning authority. Single-storey rear extensions must not extend more than six metres beyond the rear wall of an attached house, or eight metres if detached, and within a maximum height of four metres.