

COLLABORATION IS KEY



Clare Pascoe, Director Pascoe Interiors Ltd, discusses the relationship between Interior Designers and Architects, and why collaboration leads to winning results.

Thankfully the days where Architects and Interior Designers were believed to have a divisive, cat v dog relationship has now well and truly passed. It is now widely recognised that there are several mutual benefits to a project, the client and the design team when Architects and Interior Designers collaborate.



This is underscored by the intimate partnership between the RIBA & BIID (British Institute of Interior Designers). Both are world recognised professional bodies, who together have agreed best working practices to streamline relationships and processes. As an BIID Registered Interior Designer ® with 20+ years' experience, and a bed rock of skill sets from an engineering-based Design BSc Hons degree, I have always approached projects with the mindset and planning of an engineer. Calling myself an 'Interior Engineer' would be a more accurate term. I relish projects where I am part of a wider design team; not least because I purposely keep Pascoe Interiors Ltd small so that I am personally involved in every project and can run an efficient company to keep my fees competitive; but also because projects that have a wider base of skills can only deliver better results for longevity, sustainability and design. The best projects I've worked on have a full design team – consisting of Architect, Interior Designer, Contractor, Structural

Engineer, M&E / Smart Home consultant, Project Manager & Quantity Surveyor. Granted employing such a skilled design team comes at a high cost to a project, so it is only projects of a certain size where such an investment in skills is justified to offset the mistakes and pitfalls that could blight the time line and budget if professional foresight wasn't in place to prevent such things happening in the first place. Slightly smaller projects might simply have an Architect, Interior Designer and Contractor. The size of the team indicates to the Design team the scale of the project; the Clients viewpoint in investing in professional skills and how efficiently the project is likely to be run. Different Design Team experts bring different skills to a project. While of course there are many grey areas and overlaps, in simple terms you could view an Architects role as dealing with fixed assets that would be covered under Buildings Insurance; and an Interior Designers role as dealing with loose assets that would be covered under Contents Insurance. The overlaps between

the skill sets should not be seen by the Client as points where they are charged twice for the same service(s); instead it is vital to have an overlap to seamlessly blend the Architects' & Interior Designers' role – without an overlap, you would have a gap where some things could get missed. Both Architects and Interior Designers will consider the interior and exterior of a property and both will focus on the ergonomics and anthropometrics of a space, but I think it's fair to say we typically approach projects from different angles – with Architects, the interior is often led by the exterior; while Interior Designers will – as their name suggests – design the interior first. By approaching a project from different angles, we can brainstorm together to consider the redesign of a property from a fully rounded viewpoint. Collectively we will consider elements the other won't have broached yet. By giving priority to decisions in different orders we consider more elements of the project at earlier design and planning stages, delivering our Client a more informed design, that leaves less room for unforeseen complications during the construction phase.

Let's take the design of a kitchen extension for example, as this offers a perfect microcosm of a full house project, to give an example of this in practice. An architect would, quite rightly, look at how to extend the property aesthetically, to the Client brief and in line with local area constraints (planning, conservation, listed etc); while the Interior Designer will plan the layout of the space to consider the lifestyle, comfortable movement within the space by the occupants alongside practical and aesthetic considerations. Both points of view will influence the other. Where I have worked on projects where the extension has been designed without detailed analysis of the interior, I have often found that the kitchen design needs to be compromised because the extension falls slightly short of allowing a fully symmetrical run of units, or we have to compromise the depth of a storage unit because waste pipes have been boxed in internally to save them being an unsightly addition to the exterior. Had I been involved earlier in the project this would have been highlighted to the Client earlier when they had more opportunity to consider, and possibly choose, a different solution.

From the Interior Designers point of view; a project that has an architect at the helm tells us straight away that the Client values professional opinion and that they are

Vernon House, a 64 studio apartment building, that Pascoe Interiors was commissioned to re-design



Clare has successfully collaborated with Lukasz Gruszczynski of Modulo Studio



Originally tired and dated nurses accommodation, Vernon House was redesigned and refurbished into high specification rental studio apartments

prepared to invest in the design, planning and management of their project to get the best results. It also indicates that the Client is a busy professional themselves who will entrust their team to run the project for them. Knowing this allows us to deliver a far more accurate Service Schedule fee structure, as we can more confidently rely on quick decision making smoothing the process.

Clients shouldn't be put off by the cost of a fully diverse design team. While surrounding themselves with a multifaceted design team comes at a cost, the true value of which can be more than easily justified when you consider the wealth of experience leading the project without undue distraction and stress, avoiding costly mistakes then can and do happen without professional involvement, while allowing the Client to focus on their own professional commitments so they themselves can function to their optimum value.

From the Architects point of view, having an interior designer on board with a similar design style, ethos and work ethic makes for a very complimentary relationship. The Architect can focus on their role, without having to spend time considering the minutiae of interior details and finishes. The Interior Designer will steer the Client through the material choices, provide lighting plans, calculate quantities, provide

technical specifications for the tender pack and construction, then place orders and oversee the installation of the interior FF&E (fixtures, furniture & equipment – an interior design term that encompasses all that a project needs). The Architect can quickly divert interior related queries to the Designer, avoiding time consuming distraction. Likewise, the Interior Designer doesn't have to invest time on the tender and contractor selection, planning or building control. Even with a degree

of separation, both teams are there too support each other's roles. Together we have each other's & the clients back, too run the best project that will ultimately exceed our client's expectations. In short, when Interior Designers & Architects collaborate a project is more efficient, encounters fewer setbacks and complications that delivers better results with less stress for the client. It's a win win win.

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Exterior shot of a Vernon House studio apartment

