



## *Behind the Schemes: A luxury lockdown makeover in Notting Hill, via Zoom*

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• By PrimeResi Editor • 16th October 2020

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On 24th March, the day after prime minister Boris Johnson addressed the nation and told us that we could only leave the house for food or medication, or to exercise once a day, a new client of ours bravely purchased an investment property in Notting Hill.

Undeterred by lockdown, the client - who we have not met at all, through the design development stage and successful fit out, snagging, marketing and letting journey - went ahead with his plans for the three bedroom, and now 3.5 bathroom property.

We were appointed as interior architects and designers on the project, having been kindly introduced by Guy Meacock of the buying agency Prime Purchase, to become the client's on-site eyes and ears. We undertook a full redesign and refurbishment, and the house was instantly let - for the full asking price of £11,483.33 a month - at the start of September.

Previously, we might have thought it unreasonable to ask our designers to fully design a property that they had only seen on video. But lockdown put paid to all that. With thought, clear presentation, resourcefulness and Zoom (of course), it has become absolutely do-able to work remotely and deliver physically - beautifully, on budget and on programme.



Interestingly, running a project at arm's length requires more intensive communication than usual. We had to build trust quickly and at a distance but this project proves that it can be done. Typically, with a face-to-face project we may meet with the client every two weeks to develop the design concept. This is the crucial step in the design process where we listen to the client and guide them through the sometimes-overwhelming volume of design decisions; and where we refine ideas in line with our proposal and their wishes and in this case, commercial logic.

We were lucky that the client is incredibly intelligent, thought about the design and what we were asking, and gave us clear responses. What's more, not only did the client appreciate our virtual handholding, he was also able to enjoy the process.



Despite lockdown happening all around us, our client didn't bat an eyelid.

We started on site the first day we were able to and used builders we had worked with

before. From the word go, we all had a clear idea of what we were working towards, and understood the client's aims in terms of his investment and anticipated return. We also spent a lot of time talking to the agents - we wanted to understand the competition, what the house would be up against eventually in the rental market and the USPs we would need.

Some designers have more of a recognisable practice style; however, we can undertake half a dozen projects for a client and they will all be completely different from each other. In this instance it was important to retain some of its Notting Hill edge and charming quirks. We are used to working with much bigger budgets but this project demonstrated that we could deliver 'the look' on the client's tight budget.



Previously decorated all the colours of the rainbow, we 'neutralised' the bedrooms, aiming for broad marketing appeal with subtle charm and character. By creating a new space for the laundry room, we were able to incorporate an additional shower room, adding commercial and practical value. The house also rented quickly because it has its own garden and pretty much its own front door, so there is no communal entrance or extensive common areas, which appeals to tenants looking for a home during a pandemic.



Image credit: Paul Raeside/K&H Design