DRAFTLINE
CONSTRUCTION

HOME RENOVATION

GUIDE

Complete Step-by-Step Blueprint — From First Ideas to Final Sign-Off

8 Chapters | Checklists Included | UK Building Regs | ROI Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Renovating a home is one of the most rewarding — and most complex — projects you can undertake. The same principles always apply: plan thoroughly, budget wisely, hire well, and manage proactively.

This guide takes you through every stage — from the first idea to your completion certificate. Each chapter gives you knowledge and tools to stay in control throughout.

At Draftline Construction we have guided hundreds of homeowners through successful projects. This guide distils that experience into a practical blueprint you can rely on at every stage.

■ **How to use this guide**	Work through chapters 1–8 for a new project. If already mid-build, jump to the relevant chapter. Printable checklists are in the appendices.

CHAPTER 01

Vision & Planning

Turning ideas into a clear, deliverable brief

1.1 Defining Your Goals

Be clear about what success looks like before a single measurement is taken. Ask:

- Are you renovating for long-term enjoyment, or primarily to add resale value?
- Which rooms cause the most day-to-day frustration?
- Do you need more space, or better use of existing space?
- What is non-negotiable versus nice-to-have?
- How long will you stay after the works are complete?

■ Pro tip	Build an inspiration folder for every room — images communicate far better than words when briefing designers and contractors.

1.2 Assessing Your Property

Understand your property's structural reality and planning constraints before committing to any scheme.

Structural checks

- Commission a full structural survey if you haven't done so since purchase.
- Inspect roof, guttering, damp-proof course, and ventilation.
- Assess age and condition of electrics and plumbing throughout.
- Identify asbestos-containing materials if the property was built before 2000.

■ Never assume the condition of hidden services. Opening walls often reveals urgent remedial work that must be fixed before anything else — failing to do so costs far more later.

Planning constraints

- Listed building status — any grade requires consent for all alterations.
- Conservation area — stricter rules on windows, cladding, and extensions.
- Permitted development rights may have been removed by prior conditions.
- Covenants on title deeds restricting certain alterations.
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on or near your site.

1.3 Creating a Project Brief

Document your project in writing before approaching anyone. Include:

- **Scope of works** — every area being touched: loft, extension, rewire, etc.
- **Must-haves** — non-negotiable outcomes. Without these the project fails.
- **Nice-to-haves** — desirable but cuttable if budget tightens.
- **Style references** — images that capture your aesthetic direction.
- **Timeline** — any fixed deadlines: school terms, new baby, sale completion.
- **Budget** — your overall financial envelope (see Chapter 2).
- **Occupancy** — will the property be lived in during works, or vacated?

CHAPTER 02

Budgeting & Finance

Know your numbers before the first brick moves

2.1 Setting a Realistic Budget

Use these UK benchmark ranges as a starting framework, then validate with quotes:

Project Type	Range (per m² unless noted)	Notes
Basic redecoration	£200–£400/m²	Paint, flooring, fittings
Kitchen/bathroom refurb	£800–£2,500+/m²	Specification-dependent
Single-storey extension	£1,800–£3,500/m²	Groundworks to plaster
Double-storey extension	£1,600–£3,000/m²	Cost efficiencies at scale
Loft conversion (dormer)	£40k–£75k total	Per project, not m²
Full house renovation	£500–£1,500+/m²	Condition and finish dependent

2.2 The Contingency Fund

- New build or recently refurbished: allow **10%**.
- Pre-1980 property, unknown condition behind walls: **15–20%**.
- Victorian or Edwardian, suspected damp or subsidence: **20–25%**.
- Listed building: **25–30% minimum** — surprises are a certainty.

■ **Golden rule**	Never dip into the contingency for upgrades. It exists solely for unforeseen remedial work. Finish without using it and that money is yours.

2.3 Finance Options

Cash savings	Cheapest — no interest. Keep emergency reserves separate.
Further advance	Additional borrowing from your existing mortgage lender.
Remortgage	Releasing equity built up in your home, subject to LTV.
Personal loan	Unsecured; higher rates. Suitable for smaller works only.
Self-build mortgage	Released in stages as construction progresses.
Bridging finance	Short-term, high-cost. Only where repayment is certain.

■ Never begin work without confirmed, accessible funding. Half-finished projects are enormously costly to restart if payments stall mid-build.

CHAPTER 03

Permits & Regulations

Navigate the legal landscape with confidence

3.1 Planning Permission

Many improvements fall under Permitted Development (PD) rights, but the rules are detailed and property-specific. Always confirm before starting.

1	2	3	4
Check PD rights	**Get an LDC**	**Submit if needed**	**Discharge conditions**
Use the Planning Portal or confirm with your LPA	Lawful Dev. Certificate protects you at sale	Full planning via the LPA portal	Pre-start conditions cleared before work begins

What typically falls under Permitted Development

- Single-storey rear extensions: up to 4m (detached) or 3m (other houses).
- Loft conversions: up to 40m³ (terraced) or 50m³ (detached/semi).
- Side extensions: up to half the width of the original house.
- Garage conversions (not in designated areas).
- Internal alterations, including removing non-structural walls.

■ PD rights can be removed by prior conditions or local restrictions. Carrying out unlawful work is a criminal offence and will prevent you from selling the property.

3.2 Building Regulations

Full Plans Application	Submit drawings before work. Inspector approves, then visits at key stages. Best for complex projects.
Building Notice	No plans submitted upfront. Inspector visits key stages. Simpler process for smaller works.
Regularisation	For unauthorised works already completed. Difficult if the work is now hidden behind walls or floors.

3.3 Party Wall Agreements

The Party Wall etc. Act 1996 applies when works affect a shared wall, boundary, or are within 3–6 metres of a neighbour's foundations.

- Serve formal notice on affected neighbours 1–2 months before starting.
- Neighbours may agree in writing or dissent — dissent triggers a surveyor.
- A Party Wall Award records the neighbour's property condition beforehand.
- You (the building owner) bear the surveyor costs.
- Failure to serve notice can result in injunctions stopping your project.

CHAPTER 04

Design & Material Sourcing

Create spaces that are beautiful, functional, and future-proof

4.1 Working with Designers

RIBA Architect	Fully qualified, ARB-regulated. Best for complex or listed projects.
Architectural Designer	Non-RIBA but experienced. Excellent value for extensions.
Interior Designer	Focused on finishes and atmosphere. Engage once shell is resolved.
Design & Build Firm	Single point of contact. Convenient but less independent oversight.

■ **Fees**	Architects typically charge 8–15% of construction cost. Always agree scope and deliverables in writing before engagement.

4.2 Choosing Materials

- Blockwork vs timber frame: consider thermal performance and acoustics.
- Roof: natural slate and clay tiles add character; concrete tiles are economical.
- Windows and doors: thermally broken aluminium or high-spec timber for longevity.
- Flooring: engineered hardwood outperforms solid in moisture-variable rooms.
- Insulation: meet or exceed Building Regs minimums — marginal cost, major savings.

4.3 Future-Proofing Your Home

- ASHP-ready: upsize radiators or add underfloor heating; improve insulation first.
- EV charging: run conduit and cable during works — far cheaper than retrofitting.
- Solar PV: rough-in cabling for panels if roof orientation suits.
- Specify FSC-certified timber and low-VOC paints and adhesives throughout.

CHAPTER 05

Hiring Contractors

The most important decision you will make on your project

5.1 Finding & Vetting Tradespeople

1	2	3	4
Get referrals	**Get 3 quotes**	**Verify credentials**	**Award contract**
Personal referrals from people with similar completed work	Written, like-for-like quotes from vetted contractors	Insurance, memberships, Companies House check	Written contract with stage payments and retention

- Personal referrals — the gold standard. Ask people with similar work done.
- Architect or designer recommendations — they work with contractors regularly.
- Federation of Master Builders (FMB) — vetted members with dispute resolution.
- TrustMark — government-endorsed quality scheme for tradespeople.

Vetting checklist

- ■Visit at least two completed projects of similar scope in person.
- ■Speak directly with two verifiable previous clients.
- ■Verify Public Liability Insurance (minimum £2m) — see current certificate.
- ■Confirm trade memberships: Gas Safe, NICEIC/NAPIT, FENSA, FMB as applicable.
- ■Search Companies House if engaging a limited company.
- ■Obtain minimum three written, like-for-like quotes.

5.2 Contracts & Payment Terms

Scope of works	Detailed description referencing drawings and specification.
Programme	Start date, key milestones, and anticipated completion.
Price	Fixed price preferred. Variation process must be defined.
Payment schedule	Stage payments tied to defined work stages — never all upfront.
Retention	Withhold 5% at practical completion; release after defects period.
Dispute resolution	Adjudication is standard — agree a process before works start.

■ Never pay more than 10% upfront. Never release the full contract sum until all snagging is resolved and final inspections are passed.

CHAPTER 06

The Build Process

Manage your project from groundworks to completion

6.1 Pre-Start Checklist

- ■All planning and Building Regs approvals received in writing.
- ■Party wall awards (if applicable) signed by all parties.
- ■Contract signed, programme agreed, insurance confirmed.
- ■Long-lead items ordered: windows, doors, kitchen, structural steel.
- ■Site access confirmed: parking, materials storage, welfare facilities.
- ■Utility diversions or disconnections arranged if required.
- ■Asbestos survey complete; ACMs removed by licensed contractor.
- ■Occupancy arrangements confirmed — decant if required.

6.2 The Nine Construction Phases

1. Demolition & Enabling	Strip out, remove unwanted elements. Temporary works installed.
2. Groundworks	Foundations, drainage, below-ground services. Inspected before covering.
3. Structure	New walls, beams, lintels, roof. Structural engineer sign-off at key stages.
4. Weathertight	Roof, windows, external doors installed. Site becomes watertight.
5. First Fix	Electrics, plumbing, heating, data cabling run before walls are closed.
6. Insulation & Boarding	Insulation fitted, walls boarded and plastered. Building Control inspects.
7. Second Fix	Sockets, switches, sanitaryware, radiators, and kitchen installed.
8. Decorating	Painting, tiling, and all floor finishes installed throughout.
9. Snagging & Commissioning	Heating commissioned, all services tested, defects rectified.

6.3 Project Management

- Hold a weekly site meeting — take written notes and circulate them.
- Never instruct variations verbally; always confirm in writing with agreed cost.
- Book Building Control inspection stages proactively — don't wait for the builder.
- Address problems immediately — small issues become large ones if ignored.

■ **Stay in control**	A simple shared spreadsheet tracking open items, responsible party, and due date beats expensive project management software for most residential renovations.

CHAPTER 07

Finishing Touches

Where good projects become exceptional ones

7.1 The Snagging Process

Snagging is the systematic identification and rectification of defects before final sign-off. It protects the 5% retention you have withheld.

- Snag on a bright overcast day — ideal conditions for revealing surface defects.
- Work room by room, top to bottom, using the checklist in Appendix C.
- Test every socket, switch, light fitting, tap, valve, and drain.
- Check all tiling for loose, uneven, or poorly grouted tiles.
- Walk all floors in socked feet — detect squeaks, dips, and raised edges.
- Inspect all external works: paving levels, drainage falls, fencing, gates.

■ **Professional snagging**	For high-value projects consider a professional snagging inspector (£300–£600). They typically find 3–5× more items than a self-snag, making them excellent value.

7.2 Interior Styling for Maximum Impact

- Layer lighting: ambient, task, and accent. Dimmer switches throughout.
- Declutter ruthlessly — buyers purchase space, not possessions.
- Quality curtains, rugs, and cushions tie rooms together cohesively.
- Greenery adds life — a bay tree at the front door makes a strong first impression.

7.3 Pre-Sale Photography Checklist

■All snagging complete — every surface pristine.

■Every room cleared of personal items, cables, and clutter.

■Beds made hotel-style; all linen crisp and fresh.

■Exterior: paths pressure-washed, windows clean, garden tidy.

■All lights working; all doors and hardware polished.

CHAPTER 08

Final Sign-Off & Sale

Protect your investment and maximise your return

8.1 Certificates & Legal Documentation

- ■Building Regulations Completion Certificate (from Building Control).
- ■Planning Permission consent and all conditions discharged.
- ■Lawful Development Certificate (where PD works were carried out).
- ■Gas Safe Certificate for any new or altered gas installations.
- ■Part P Electrical Installation Certificate for all electrical works.
- ■FENSA or CERTASS certificate for replacement windows or doors.
- ■Structural engineer calculations and sign-off letters.
- ■Party Wall Award (where applicable).
- ■All product warranties, manuals, and maintenance schedules.

8.2 Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

An EPC is legally required before marketing. Commission a fresh one after all energy-efficiency works are complete so the rating fully reflects your upgrades. A B rating or above is increasingly valued by buyers and can materially affect the sale price.

8.3 Maximising Your Return on Investment

Improvement	Typical Value Added	Notes
Loft conversion	15–20%	Strong in higher-value markets
Rear or side extension	10–20%+	Depends on m² gain and location
Kitchen renovation	5–10%	Quality matters; avoid over-specification
Bathroom upgrade	3–7%	En-suite addition adds disproportionately
Garden landscaping	5–10%	First impression at every viewing
New heating system	2–4%	EPC improvement plus buyer confidence
Redecoration	1–3%	Highest impact per £ spent

■ **Ready to start?**	Draftline Construction offers free initial consultations. Contact us today for a no-obligation budget estimate and expert guidance on your renovation project.

APPENDIX A

Master Budget Template

Category	Estimated (£)	Actual (£)	Notes
Professional fees			Architect, surveys, engineers
Planning & Building Regs			Application fees, inspections
Demolition & strip-out			
Groundworks & foundations			
Structural works			Steelwork, beams, lintels
External envelope			Roof, walls, windows, doors
First fix M&E;			Electrics, plumbing, heating
Insulation & boarding			
Second fix M&E;			
Kitchen supply & install			
Bathroom supply & install			
Joinery & fitting			
Plastering & screeding			
Tiling			
Floor finishes			
Decoration (internal)			
External works & landscape			
SUBTOTAL			
CONTINGENCY (15%)			Do not reduce below 10%
VAT (20%)			Reclaim via HMRC if eligible
TOTAL PROJECT COST			

APPENDIX B

Contractor Vetting Checklist

- ■Obtained a minimum of three written, like-for-like quotes.
- ■Provided identical information (drawings, spec, surveys) to all tenderers.
- ■Verified Public Liability Insurance — minimum £2m; current certificate seen.
- ■Visited two completed comparable projects in person.
- ■Spoken directly with two verifiable previous clients.
- ■Confirmed relevant trade body memberships (Gas Safe, NICEIC, FENSA, FMB).
- ■Checked Companies House or verified sole trader identity.
- ■Agreed fixed-price contract or clear dayrate with a capped estimate.
- ■Payment terms tied to work stages — no more than 10% upfront.
- ■5% retention agreed; released only after defects liability period ends.
- ■Variation process agreed in writing before works start.
- ■Programme with key milestones agreed and signed by both parties.
- ■Building Control inspection stages identified and booked.

APPENDIX C

Room-by-Room Snagging List

External & Structural

- ■Roof — no slipped, cracked, or missing tiles or slates
- ■Guttering and downpipes — secure, correctly graded, no drips
- ■External walls — no cracking, staining, or missing pointing
- ■Windows and doors — open/close freely; seals fully intact
- ■Paths and driveways — correctly levelled; no trip hazards

Internal — Every Room

- ■Walls and ceilings — no cracking, staining, or poor paint finish
- ■Skirting and architraves — neatly fitted, filled, and painted
- ■All doors hang correctly and latch without force
- ■Floor finish — level, no squeaks; edges neatly trimmed
- ■All sockets and switches level, secure, and operational

Kitchen

- ■All cupboard doors align and close fully on their hinges
- ■All drawers run smoothly on their runners
- ■Worktop joints tight, sealed, and flush
- ■All integrated appliances tested and functioning correctly
- ■Under-sink plumbing watertight; access panel correctly fitted

Bathrooms

- ■All sanitaryware secure — no movement or chips
- ■All taps deliver adequate pressure; no drips when closed
- ■All waste outlets drain freely without backing up
- ■Tiling — no loose tiles; grout complete and even throughout
- ■Extractor fan operating correctly on the isolator switch

Services

- ■Heating system commissioned — all zones and controls working
- ■Gas Safe certificate obtained and handed over in writing
- ■All electrical circuits tested — Electrical Installation Certificate issued
- ■Smoke and CO alarms installed, tested, and correctly positioned
- ■EV charging point tested and operational (if installed)

GLOSSARY

Key Terms Explained

ARB
Architects Registration Board — statutory regulator for architects.

Building Regulations
National minimum technical standards for construction.

Conservation Area
Designated area with stricter planning controls.

Defects Liability Period
Period (6–12 months) in which contractor must fix defects.

EPC
Energy Performance Certificate — rates a property A–G for efficiency.

First Fix
Services installed before walls are closed.

LDC
Lawful Development Certificate — confirms works are lawful.

LPA
Local Planning Authority — council planning department.

Party Wall Award
Legal document governing works affecting a party wall.

Permitted Development
Works proceeding without planning permission, if conditions met.

Practical Completion
Works substantially complete; client takes possession.

Retention
5% withheld at completion; released after defects period.

Second Fix
Finishing elements installed after plastering is complete.

Snagging
Systematic identification of defects before final sign-off.

TrustMark
Government-endorsed quality scheme for tradespeople.

UFH
Underfloor Heating — pipes or mats beneath the floor surface.

Variation
Formally agreed change to scope, price, or programme.