



FAQ's about restaurant and cafe design

“Although every cafe, bar or restaurant design project is unique most people have similar initial questions

I am always happy to talk with you, but you may find that the advice on this page will save your time and possibly an initial meeting too.

If you don't find an answer you are looking for please feel free to post a question on my facebook page”



Why should I engage a professional designer for my restaurant, bar or cafe?

Will I have to pay design fees and, if so how much?

How long will my project take?

How much will my project cost?

OK, but what are some rough costs?

Can I use my own builder, printer or other existing suppliers?

Do you have your own contractors and suppliers?

Do you take responsibility if the builder or supplier you recommend lets me down?

Will I have to close my cafe, bar or restaurant during refurbishment?

What planning consents will I require for my cafe, bar or restaurant?

What other statutory obligations will I have to fulfil?

Why should I engage a professional designer for my restaurant, bar or cafe?

A professional designer will know how to design so that your restaurant, bar or cafe will best appeal to your customers and meet your business objectives. Restaurants, bars and cafes are known to be amongst the most technically-difficult interiors to design as well as one of the most risky categories of business start-up.

An experienced designer will understand the technicalities but will also have worked with many other restaurant, bar and cafe owners. Consequently, they will know many things you have yet to learn and will have first hand experience of many of the common pitfalls. They should tell you honestly if they think your own ideas will work and if they have reservations or doubts they should not be afraid to tell you and explain why and to come up with new positive suggestions.

A professional designer will help you develop and build a strong, marketable brand with clear, focused objectives. They will work with you over the whole life of your business.

I am a member of the Chartered Society of Designers, who vet all their members for quality of work and professional practice. You can download a copy of this Chartered Society of Designers Code of Professional Practice here. <http://www.csd.org.uk> where you may also check if your designer is a member.



Will I have to pay design fees and, if so how much?

All professional designers charge design fees. Some designers may do some initial work without charging although this is frowned upon by professional design organisations. I always charge fees before I do any design work.

In fact, the only money I earn comes directly from my clients. I do not earn any income from sales commissions or secret sources and I refuse to work with anyone that offers me any dubious inducements. I choose to work this way so that my advice is impartial and intended solely to meet your business objectives. If you are offered a cheap or free design I suggest you ask the designer to confirm that they are earning income only from you.

Design fees vary widely according to the size of the project, depth of involvement and experience of the designer. Typically, they will be between 10 and 20% of the cost of building your restaurant, bar or cafe. This is a small proportion of the cost in return for which you should receive :-

- A beautiful restaurant, bar or cafe that is fit for purpose and appeals to your customers
- Someone to encourage you and guide you through your project from beginning to end
- Compliance with all government obligations such as building codes and regulations
- More time to work on running your business
- The benefit of the designer's professional indemnity insurance in case things go wrong



How long will my project take?

The shortest time for a minor project (up to £250k contract cost) is 16 weeks from starting design work to commencing trading but this depends on the availability of contractors and is best avoided since working so fast can add to costs. The chart shows a typical 26 week program which can be followed comfortably for the interior design and building of most minor projects. This program can only start once the design brief is ready and once all your branding is designed (otherwise the interior and brand designs will not match up).

Larger projects costing over £500,000 usually take 9 months to a year or more to complete.

If my team and I are managing a complete refurbishment we will act as quickly as we can. In the UK the slowest parts of the process are usually obtaining planning consent and building regulations approval from your council and obtaining tenders and quotations from builders and other suppliers.



week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
measured survey	█																									
scheme design		█	█	█	█																					
planning applications				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█													
detailed design				█	█	█	█																			
building regulations							█	█	█	█	█	█	█													
tenders														█	█	█	█									
negotiations																		█	█							
lead time																				█	█					
site work																					█	█	█	█	█	█

How much will my project cost?

Refurbishing a cafe, bar or restaurant is never cheap. Restaurants and night clubs in particular can require very large investments. This is partly because of the need to keep up with your competition and partly to comply with all the rules and regulations that are getting more stringent every year. Also most good building and shop fitting firms are very busy and their prices reflect this. If you can find a builder who can act quickly and seems cheap then it is likely that they are not very good. Most good builders are booked well ahead.

It is impossible to say exactly how much your project will cost without preparing a design and having it properly priced. The only way to obtain an approximation is to find out what other similar, recent projects have cost. You may have been given a rough price or estimate. I advise you to be cautious of this unless it is based on project-specific drawings and has been prepared by an expert Quantity Surveyor.

I am often contacted by people who have engaged builders on flimsy agreements only to find that the price agreed did not cover even half of the work eventually needed.



OK, but what are some rough costs?

Bearing in mind what I have written above, here are some very rough example costs for complete refurbishments based on UK prices.

- A small cafe or wine bar of 20-50 covers started from scratch with new equipment will often cost about £150,000 to £300,000.
- A small restaurant of 50-70 covers, requiring an internal refurbishment but with an existing kitchen will often cost between £200,000 and £400,000.
- A medium-sized restaurant of 100 - 150 covers and a new rear building extension for kitchens or toilets usually costs at least £300,000 but can easily cost more than £500,000.
- A large bar with a restaurant and function area for 300 users will often cost between £500,000 and £2.5M.
- Work in big city centres such as London often costs more than work in the provinces because of higher labour costs, difficult site access, parking and other restrictions.
- Fitting out work in malls and other new developments often requires starting from scratch and working to high standards, especially in the Middle East. Construction industry surveys in the UK suggest an average UK cost of about £1419* per square meter excluding professional fees (at least 15%) and costs of direct supply plant and equipment. I find that this is generally much more than most novice clients expect, but that it accords with my own experience. Regional prices vary due to different labour and material rates, but many fixtures and fittings are proprietary and so cost much the same all over the world.

* source, Building Magazine data <http://www.building.co.uk>



Can I use my own builder, printer or other existing suppliers?

Yes, my team and I will work with any building contractors, printers and suppliers who are experienced, professional and capable of implementing our designs properly. You may know such people or firms or you may prefer us to make suggestions and recommendations from companies our other clients have used successfully. We will be pleased to work with you in either event. We'll probably refuse to work with unqualified people or anyone whose normal work is not refurbishing cafes, bars or restaurants.

Do you have your own contractors and suppliers?

No, we are not contractors or suppliers but we will be happy to suggest and recommend builders and other suppliers we know, if you require. We do not add any hidden mark-ups or make any secret profits from this. We charge for our time doing the design work instead.

It is easier to attract a good builder to a series of big projects than it to a single small one. In some regions, such as parts of the UAE for instance, good builders are too busy to entertain small single projects, but may do so for a client of a designer who has many other regular clients.

Do you take responsibility if the builder or supplier you recommend fails to perform?

We are responsible for making sure, so far as our specific terms of engagement permit, that the builders and suppliers for your project are engaged on clear terms with detailed, written agreements signed by all parties. If necessary, we will take legal advice when necessary to make sure we do this work properly.

In the unlikely event that things do not work out properly you will then be protected and compensated as far as the law allows and we will advise you how to deal with such problems. However, ultimately we don't guarantee anyone else's obligations, responsibilities or work. We guarantee our own and we have professional liability insurance for this.

will I have to close my cafe, bar or restaurant during refurbishment?

It is almost impossible to safely and efficiently refurbish a trading cafe, bar or restaurant without closing, unless it is large enough so that the work can be phased. Even then the disruption to trade is so significant that it is often better to close temporarily and get the work over and done with sooner rather than later. You can then have an exciting launch event when the work is finished and often this will more than make up for the lost business.

My team and I will plan all building works so that as much as possible is done off site beforehand and the closed time is minimized.



what planning consents will I require for my cafe, bar or restaurant?

(most of the following advice is for the UK only - different laws apply elsewhere and you should obtain local assistance)

If you have a restaurant, pub or bar or takeaway you will require a premises with A3, A4 or A5 use classification. Some sandwich bars can be operated in premises with A1 use classification, usually when there is no primary food preparation or cooking on the premises but this is not always clear in the planning policies so we advise you to check with your local council's planning department.

Normally, consent is easily obtained to convert an A5, A4, A3 or A2 premises to A1, but it is much more difficult to convert an A1 or A2 premises to A3, A4 or A5 or an A1 premises to A2. For a small fee we can check the council policies in your area.

In addition, you will require planning permission for almost all external alterations to your premises including the installation of new shopfronts, building extensions, fume extraction, air-handling

plant, ductwork and new signs.

We have prepared hundreds of successful planning applications. We are especially experienced in dealing with planning applications for changes of use to A3, A4 or A5 use, small building additions, new shopfronts and signs.

If we consider that the help you require is beyond our knowledge we can introduce you to expert town planning consultants who advise us and who can run appeals in the event of refusal.

Due to government policy changes over the last few years all councils have become very much more demanding about the quality of detail they require before considering planning applications. This is particularly true of changes of use to A3, A4 and A5, which are considered in great detail. As a consequence, it is now very difficult to manage these matters without specialist professional help and we advise you to speak with us or a chartered town planning consultant at an early stage.



what other statutory obligations will I have to fulfil?

In most countries you will require building control regulations approval (or the local equivalent) for many alterations.

In the UK if your property is a listed building you will require listed buildings consent. It is a criminal offence punishable with large fines or even imprisonment not to comply with the Construction Design and Management (CDM) Regulations. Similar laws may apply in other countries.

In many countries if you are going to serve alcohol you will require a liquor license, if you are planning to have live performances or play music you may also require a public entertainments license. We do not deal with these matters but we can recommend other professionals who do and we can provide them with any drawings they require. A set of good drawings often proves invaluable in obtaining consent quickly and inexpensively.

If you are a tenant you will require the consent of your landlord before you alter the premises. Your solicitor will deal with this and we can provide them with any drawings they require; again good drawings will speed the process.

It is helpful to obtain a full structure and condition survey of any buildings you are planning to convert to a cafe, bar or restaurant. We will carry out a laser survey when we start our work for you and we will not rely on anyone else's drawings. It is often advisable to have soil contamination, electrical, plumbing and drainage surveys - especially if the building is old. These can help us specify appropriate remedial works and protect you from the costs of any damage caused by your builders.

If your project requires structural building alterations or inspections you will require a Structural Engineer.

If your project is large or complicated you may require a professional Mechanical and Electrical (M and E) consultant. This consultant will deal with all of the service installations, including heating, air handling, lighting, and fire services.

If you require we can recommend suitable consultants and engineers that we have worked successfully with before.

When you market the project you may require a public relations consultant, marketing materials, advertising and a web site. We can provide you with all of these services as part of our design service (for an additional fee)



Legal Disclaimer

Please note that information in this help sheet is intended for help and guidance only and you use it at your own risk. We only accept responsibility for advice given to individual clients who have paid us for it.