

There is more to good interior design than meets the eye. You could be forgiven for thinking that creating a feature wall and scattering a few cushions would mean that a designer's job is done. In fact, you couldn't be more wrong.

"Interior designers must always realise that housebuilders are selling space – not their furniture and accessories," explains Esther Bond, founder and managing director of Designs for all Occasions. "It is important to maximise the space, light and atmosphere of the property, therefore showing it to its best advantage."

Sandra Hendry, marketing manager for Alexander James Interiors, agrees. "Many potential home buyers, especially in new builds, find it difficult to visualise a fully furnished room from a totally blank canvas," she explains. "An astute interior designer is able to use space to its optimum."

In a nutshell, interior designers can help buyers view space from a different perspective. For instance, if a housebuilder has a particular unit that seems predictable at first glance, an interior designer will show the purchaser an option that they might not have considered.

"The 'wow factor' could be achieved by doing something that buyers wouldn't have thought of – perhaps incorporating a small study area into the living space to sell the idea of that space being multipurpose," says Drew

Baxter, an account director at David Phillips. "That sort of thing makes people stand up and pay attention. I don't necessarily think that bright colours or unusual furniture is the way to do it. It's not about 'shock factor'. It's about showing people a real solution that everyone can understand, where it comes across as sophisticated and practical."

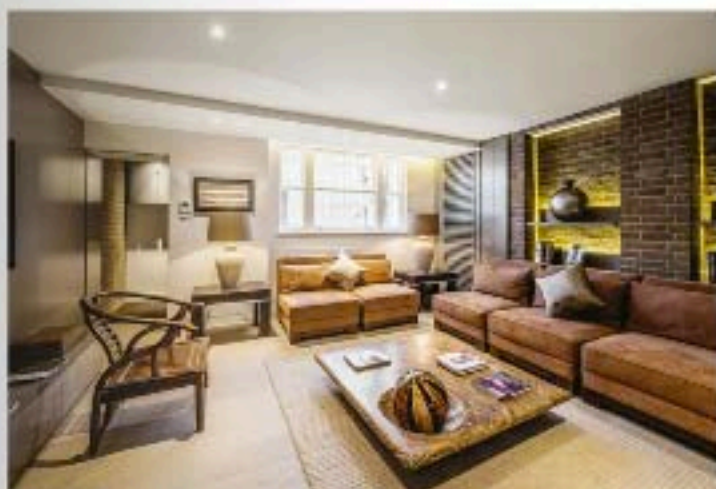
If you take this approach then you are more likely to maximise all areas of the property. And, let's face it, in these space-strapped times it is essential that you showcase all rooms to their utmost potential.

"An interior designer will know how to plan a space and take a visionary approach, with the expertise and knowledge on how to maximise your space, light and create the wow factor," adds Ben Bambrugh, managing director of bB Design House. "They will also have a clear understanding on technical and structural issues, health and safety issues and building codes of conduct."



ABOVE Ben Bambrugh, managing director of bB Design House
 TOP RIGHT Most people don't think of adding a new study space. Using an interior design company such as bB Design House can help bring a potential purchaser's dream to life
 ABOVE RIGHT Designing all Occasions believes that it is essential for key areas are looked at closely
 THIS PAGE Royal Avenue, featured in our 2014 Showhouse





apartments, a marketing/sales suite/reception area to each block and decoration and artwork for all the common parts. No doubt the client really invested a good amount of money and the results were outstanding. As a result, the scheme almost sold out in just two months."

And, while it has been known in the past for show homes to be sparsely furnished in order to create the illusion of more space, today's designers are focusing on an honest approach whereby the furniture suggestions are realistic as well as aspirational.

Lincolnshire-based housebuilder Larkfleet Homes builds high-quality housing developments across the east of England and East Midlands, and the interiors of its latest scheme have focused on such an approach.

Helen Hick, Larkfleet's HR and office management director, has managed the interior design of all of Larkfleet's show homes, including both of the show homes at The Croft – a lifestyle living development for the over 55s. Hick has created a synergy of old and new throughout the scheme but, perhaps most importantly, has officially pledged that Larkfleet will use full size and realistic amounts of furniture in its show homes – a promise that has paid dividends where sales are concerned.

In short, today's interior designers not only attract buyers but make valuable space work to its best advantage. Interior designers role is

to deliver the most creative and well-balanced use of space. To do this they will consider every square foot of the plot to maximise the potential for any prospective purchaser – which for the housebuilder client also means maximising the sales potential of their properties. ■

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TOP Royal Avenue, furnished by bB Design House
 ABOVE Interiors designed by Alexander James on site to use space to its maximum
 THIS PIC A bespoke kitchen installed by Suna Interior Design