



HOME *stylish* HOME

Award-winning Cheshire interior designer Kerrie Griffin is in the spotlight as her own stunning home goes on the market, as **Mike Crutchley** finds out



Kerrie Griffin has been an interior designer for more than 20 years and a painter for 35 and set up The Interior Co 12 years ago to turn houses into homes.

That is something she is still passionate about and even more aware of as her own historic home - the 500-year-old five-bedroom character property on the Cheshire border in Breaden Heath, Whitchurch - goes on the market.

It is full of enhanced oak period features and an improved flow throughout are the result of a stunning refurbishment by Kerrie and The Interior Co to create a spacious and beautifully styled living room, and open plan kitchen/dining room that opens up on to two decking areas and an expansive garden. As well as knowing what works in a property, Kerrie makes sure everything that is done to it adds value to it.



She said: "Property is my passion. Getting the look you want to achieve is my goal with the least amount of stress and always moneysaving and money-making tips at hand. When I spoke to the estate agent about putting my house on the market, it was the house, converted garage and a barn which was absolutely bursting at the seams with all sorts of things I had collected over the years.

"He asked me if I could empty it which I managed to do and painted it so that it is ready to be used as a home office - because people are still working from home - a granny annexe or holiday let. The key is adding to the footprint. This added over 500sqft taking it to 3,300sqft in total adding value.

"Holiday lets are big at the moment with many people still preferring to stay in this country so if you have an outbuilding that can be converted into accommodation, you can make money as well as adding value to your home. My award-winning Air B&B is a double garage and now by converting the barn, ➔

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my house has gone from 2,500sq ft to over 3,000sq ft which gives more options. I've put in a bed at one end and a settee at the other and separated them with shelves to give people an idea of what can be done with it. I have written a book called *From Shed to Chic* available on Amazon, giving you all my top tips.

"The first people that came to view the house walked straight by the barn when it was used for storage, but after clearing it, I recently had someone who was sitting on the settee talking about the house. A lot of people struggle to see the potential in a property, especially if it has different uses. It is all about showing them the space they have got. Sometimes they cannot see the wood for the trees. You literally have to spell out each room use by adding the correct furniture.

I approach each client's property with the aim of adding value to it, not just designing it. I think they have to see the commercial potential in it and I always ask them how long they are planning on staying and what their long term and short-term goals are."

For anyone looking to improve their home, Kerrie recommends that they speak to an architect or designer first to make sure they get the most of its potential, rather than a quick makeover which may not add value but will suit them for that day! And she encourages clients to step back and see the overall picture, rather than focusing on a detail they want to build a look around.



Kerrie, who won Cheshire Interior Designer of the Year in the Prestige Central England awards November, 2020, said: "People often say they want a particular pattern or colour on one wall in a room because they like it, but my experience over the years has been that colours need to work from room to room and flow properly. What often happens is they go for that one wall of colour and after about a year decide they hate it because it doesn't fit in with the rest of the house and they don't know what to do. I stay well away from these make over shows looks.

"Another problem I find is that people see an idea on a TV programme or in a magazine and try to recreate it in their home and it doesn't work at all, then they call me. What they haven't considered is whether the one they liked was north or south facing and what else influenced the overall look."

Kerrie has used all her experience to create the lovely home she is selling. She said: "There is plenty of space which means I could really be creative. People are afraid to make



changes to certain parts of their homes and I tell them to go for it and just ask if you are unsure. On my Facebook page I invite people to come to me with their dilemmas and I'll try to answer their questions, but I think they are afraid to share photos because their house isn't like mine. It won't be, because this is what I do, but I can help them! By employing me for a day I can save them many expensive mistakes!"

There are several myths and unwritten rules when it comes to home improvement that can put people off achieving what they want. Kerrie believes that the current need for holiday and temporary accommodation is the cue for people to make better use of outdoor spaces that have been forgotten or become dumping grounds. We hoard far too much items we keep for the just in case, get them out and sell them or give them away let someone else have the pleasure of them.

She said: "Structures like garages, sheds and outbuildings and old stables all have the potential to be turned into Air B&Bs. It doesn't take a lot to get planning permission and you can either run it as a separate, full-time business generating income all year round, or offer it at peak times and use it as an office or granny annexe the rest of the time. My super-host Air B&B was a two-bay oak-framed garage. It's no longer a garage and I park my car on the drive by the house, but it's worth it for the money it brings in as accommodation."

While adding extra accommodation with a commercial angle is a definite "do", one of the home improvements that can still put people off is pools. Kerrie said: "Any home with three, four, five or more bedrooms is likely to appeal to a family and when there are young children, there is still a fear of having pools and ponds for safety. I would have a pool, but that is personal choice and I can see why it can put people off."



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Recycling and upcycling are also important to Kerrie, who picks up hardly used high-end furniture and items at auctions and repurposes them in homes and businesses.

She said: "When homes and businesses are refurbished, most of what was there ended up in the skip, irrespective of how old it was or how much it had been used. "Developers are now more aware of this and put good-quality items on auction sites. So much of what is going out can be repurposed. A lot of it is expensive, good-quality furniture which I can do something with to create a bespoke look.

"I have a cabinet at home which came from Harrods' entertainment suites. The detail is incredible and the hinges are the best. I have put my own stamp on it and absolutely love it, but it is something that would cost in excess of £8,000."

Kerrie is working with a client on The Wirral and has managed to obtain seven Italian-designed bathroom suites and luxury beds for a fraction of the original prices.

She said: "You have to know where you can cut corners. With things like beds and kitchen cupboards which are constantly being used, you have to do it properly, but you can definitely save some of the budget by having a stone worktop instead of marble and save a fortune. All these tips come from over 20 years of experience in the trade."

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