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A BeCreative Editorial Production

www.becreative.ie

Editor

Mark Corcoran

Contributors

Tara Leigh, Meghan O'Dowd, Eric Davidson

Advertising

Philip Wharton
pwharton@independent.ie
(01) 7055 445

Design

INM Design Studio
studio@production.ie

Repro

Independent Newspapers (Ireland) Ltd
27-32 Talbot Street
Dublin 1



What's on your wish list?

You have been putting it off for too long! It's time to make your dream home a reality

Now is the perfect opportunity to get working on those home renovation plans you have been putting off for so long. That's the message from Dublin-based architect Joe Fallon.

As Fallon points out, the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI), provides added motivation to create your dream home.

"This is the perfect time for homeowners to renovate their houses," says Fallon. "The Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) is a fantastic opportunity for people. People can claim back a significant amount of money over a period of two years.

"From what I am seeing the industry for small builders is absolutely booming. And the HRI is playing a big part in that."

Wish list

When you decide that you are going to go for it your first task is to decide what exactly it is you want to achieve. Do you want an extension for some extra space? Or are you hoping to make better use of what you already have? While the choice is yours, some people can be left in a spin by the prospect of undertaking a home renovation. Architects such as Fallon specialise in whipping vague notions into dream-house plans.



"When I first meet with a client I ask them to have a wish list prepared. What do they want to get out of doing this? We assess their budget and how best to go about achieving their goals. Often my clients want to introduce light into darkened corners or maybe they want to make better use of a very large living room.

"The next thing we do is survey the building - one of our surveyors would measure up the building and we would draw it in a CAD format. We then try to incorporate the wish list into the drawing, while always keeping factors such as lighting and heating in mind. We then send that first draft - or conceptual drawing to the client. That drawing will then evolve until we reach the final plan."

Pursuing

Fallon says that the prospect of planning permission can put off many clients from pursuing their dream home. But he says there is nothing to be afraid of. Your architect will guide you through every detail of the planning process.

"Some people have huge reservations about planning permission. They really want to keep under the threshold of it."

And plenty can be achieved without planning permission. For example, you can add a two square meter porch to the front of your house and you can add a 40 square meter single story extension to the back of your house (provided a minimum garden size of 25 square metres is retained). These are subject to the house not being extended since 1963.

However, if you do have to undertake the planning process Fallon says that people should not worry.

"Planning permission is not an overly onerous task. It just means that there is a bit more work in a planning application. But it is not something that people should be afraid of. If we feel something is contentious in terms of planning permission, we would organise a pre-plan meeting with a planner - this is a free service from the planning department.

"Most architects like myself would have a 99 per cent success rate. We would know what is contentious and we would address that before the application goes in."

Interestingly, many of Fallon's most recent clients are Irish expats who are planning on a return to Ireland. They have contacted the architect based on the work they have seen on his website - www.joefallon.com.

"I am regularly contacted by expats in America and Australia, people who have come across me on the web. They are planning on returning to Ireland and they want to renovate their old home. I got an idea of the style of the house and the amount of surveying involved and I was able to give them a quote over the phone!"

