



Talking RENOVATIONS

With plans to renovate their 1930s bungalow ready to go, including a rear and side-return extension and loft conversion, it's time for **Janis and Dave King** to find a builder.

We were already well prepared when it came to finding a builder.

As part of the guidance notes from our architect Gráinne O'Keeffe of Gráinne O'Keeffe Architects, she included a list of eight suggested builders worth checking out – all of whom had completed projects for her former clients – along with advice on pricing and going to tender.

My husband Dave and I began there and phoned each one in turn to see if they were interested. After this, it was simply the case of narrowing down the list which was actually fairly straightforward in the end. Seven of them asked us to send the package Gráinne had prepared for us, while the eighth never returned our phone calls. Five of them, after receiving the drawings, asked to visit the site, but the other two didn't get back to us. With the shortlist quickly getting smaller, the five who came were all very personable and said we could visit houses they had renovated before – a good sign in our eyes, as we know how important it is to see their previous work. However, we were slightly concerned that only two brought a notepad with them to jot stuff down, and only one actually brought the plans with him to go through everything with us as we went around the house.

I did think it was good that they all took their time to explain how they work and how many men they would employ for it as well as their timeline, which was very useful in terms of imagining when we could start seeing our dream home take shape. We parted ways in the knowledge that their quotes

would come within a fortnight. It seemed like a very long wait, as we were itching to start the work.

Eventually we got four quotes, but comparing them took some time as they all had their own way of setting them out – even though Gráinne supplied the same tender document for each builder to complete – so we couldn't compare like with like. Some included VAT as they went along and others added it at the end. Some of the quotes varied by more than 20% in price, and all were slightly different in what they listed. We had to look out for things such as not including some of the works or the price of the windows or decoration. Although this was difficult, the ones who featured less actually helped us in shortening the list, as we really wanted all works and items included so we could move straight in.

Thankfully, two builders stood out. At this point we arranged to visit their previous projects and talk to their customers. In the end, the company we decided on took us to a completed whole-house renovation as well as a project they were halfway through so we could see the building process taking place and meet the team that would work on our house. We chose this builder as he seemed to be the most meticulous, we were satisfied with his previous work and comments from former customers, and coincidentally he lived nearby. He

was always on time for our meetings and seemed enthusiastic about our ideas, which Dave and I both thought were important factors, too. Just to make sure, we had another couple of meetings with him and then signed on the dotted line. We're so excited, as he can begin work very soon. Now we have a start date, we can't wait to get going with the renovation, as it seems like such a long time since we first decided to go for it... **KBB**

Next month I talk about...

THE START OF THE BUILD



↑ The existing conservatory will be replaced by a rear extension.

→ Janis and Dave mapped out the size of the utility room using tape before work started.



The original pink bathroom fixtures and fittings.



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