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Ealing Property Lettings

Keep decor subtle and add on-trend accents

Tenants love a trend-inspired interior – but how far should landlords go, asks Nick Hubbard, manager, Benham and Reeves Residential Lettings' Ealing branch

WE ALL love to live in a beautiful home, one that reflects our tastes and personality, and one whose interior is inspired by designer trends and style. Tenants living in rented homes are no different. Renting is now a long-term lifestyle choice for many and professional tenants in particular demand high standards of presentation – they expect their home, rented or not, to echo their status and aspirations.

So of course the interior of a rental property should be contemporary and stylish – but how far should a landlord go when it comes to following the latest home design trends?

The key to furnishing a rental property is to create a neutral, sophisticated backdrop so that tenants can easily imagine themselves living in the apartment. The balance is to add just enough individuality, with a nod to the latest trends, to make it stand out from the competition.

A brand new apartment in a development is perhaps the best example of how a completely neutral décor can look dull and uninspiring, however high the spec. In fact, we always find that an attractively furnished apartment lets more quickly than an apartment that is presented 'off the shelf', straight from the developer.

Of course, for the basics, a neutral colour scheme is practical and will stand the test of time. So, choose a décor that will work well with other colours – soft taupes and greys always look good. Furnishings are a major investment so these too should be simple, in neutral colours and in good quality, hardwearing fabrics – again greys, khakis and sand colours are a versatile option.

Next, soft furnishings, accessories or artwork. This is where you can really breathe life into your rental property, easily, and without spending a fortune.

One of the key influences for interior design, as well as for fashion, is Pantone's Colour of the Year and choosing accessories in these shades is a simple way to update the look of a property. This year Pantone has chosen two – Rose Quartz and Serenity, calming shades of pink and blue which

NEUTRAL TONES: The understated grey and taupe colour schemes work well in these contemporary apartments.

are designed to work in harmony with each other. Soothing and relaxing, the two colours create a sophisticated look and beautifully complement neutral shades such as taupes and greys – choose trend-inspired pieces such as cushions or maybe bed linen, perhaps in a geometric print for a contemporary twist.

A big inspiration for the summer is sure to be the Rio Olympics and we are already seeing bold, Brazilian designs and colours coming into the shops. Vibrant fabrics and textiles create warmth and fun, a look which holds real appeal on a cold, grey winter's day in London! But don't be tempted to go for an overpowering theme that completely takes over – instead translate the Brazilian idea into an exciting look with some colourful lamps or maybe a bright piece of abstract artwork inspired by tropical Brazilian colours and designs. For most 'catwalk' trends, less is usually more.

Travel is always a great source of inspiration for interior designers. We've seen a lot of Middle Eastern influences recently, simplified and translated into a very contemporary look using bold and contrasting colours. Perhaps choose a colourful vase or a rug in

a bold, geometric pattern. Choosing accessories in a variety of materials and finishes also helps to add interest and individuality to a room.

What's important about adding these 'designer' touches is that it doesn't mean changing the original décor. Clever interior design, particularly for a rental property that has to have broad tenant appeal, is all about ringing the changes with soft furnishings and accessories. It is easy to change the look of your rental property regularly to make it look fresh, appealing and right on trend – and only you will know that you haven't spent a fortune doing it.

To find out more about furnishing a rental property to create real tenant appeal, we provide full furnishing packs specifically for rental properties at competitive prices. Call 020 8280 0140.

Winkworth

LETTING LEGISLATION UPDATE – SMOKE ALARMS

During 2015 the government introduced a number of new regulations that landlords need to be aware of. At Winkworth we ensure our landlords are up to date with the latest legislation.

We are running a series of articles highlighting changes in the law that affect the letting market.

Landlords must ensure that a smoke alarm is equipped on each storey on which there is a room used wholly or partly as living accommodation.

When determining a storey or room, a bathroom or lavatory is to be treated as a room used as living accommodation.

There is no definition as to what is a suitable smoke alarm for the purpose of the regulations therefore any type will be sufficient. We would suggest the best ones to fit would be either a mains interlinked with battery backup.

As a general rule, the best place to fit a smoke alarm is in a hallway leading to an escape route. In a regular 2 storey house, this would mean installing one on the ground floor and one on the first floor hallway by the stairs.

There is a further obligation to ensure that checks are made by or on behalf of the landlord to ensure that each prescribed alarm is in proper working order on the day the tenancy begins if it is a new tenancy.

The guidance issued by the DCLG suggests a suitable way of showing the alarms were tested on the start day of the tenancy by making provision for the tenant to sign the inventory to record that the alarms have been tested and the tenant is satisfied they are in working order.

Where a local authority breach has occurred, they must then serve notice requiring the landlord to take remedial action.

Remedial action means action to install, repair or check a prescribed alarm is working.

Where a local authority is satisfied that a landlord is in breach of the remedial notice, a penalty charge of up to £5,000 as set by the local authority will be payable.

A penalty charge notice must be served on the landlord within six weeks after they become aware of the landlords failure to comply with the remedial notice.

If you are considering renting your property or are currently seeking tenants and want to make sure you are up to date with all legislation give our experienced team a call. We'd be delighted to help.

Andrew Gilbert
Partner