

KBB REVIEW INDUSTRY AWARDS 2009



CATEGORY

DESIGNER AWARD FOR KITCHENS - CONTRACTS AND HOUSEBUILDERS

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DEVELOPMENT

Centrus at The Meads is a contemporary development situated in the heart of Farnborough and will comprise a mix of 115 stylish one, two and three bedroom apartments. This exciting, sustainable residential development is being delivered as part of St Modwen Properties regeneration of Farnborough Town Centre which spans 14 acres and provides the local community with a thriving and cosmopolitan destination.

BRIEF

When we were commissioned to design the internal specification of The Meads for St Modwen Properties we were very aware that this was the first residential development they were to complete as they had previously sold on the residential element of their developments. We were conscious that they would want to launch this side of their business with a confident design that would reflect the quality they have already established in their brand. Therefore the specification could well become a barometer for how they could establish themselves within this area of expertise.

This was held at the forefront of our minds whilst establishing the correct design for the local marketplace. As this development consists predominantly of 1 and 2 bed apartments the bulk of the purchasers would come from first time buyers. The areas surrounding Farnborough are fairly affluent and we decided that although we wanted the design to appeal to the younger trend-setting purchasers we felt that it would be appropriate to keep the design from feeling to 'on trend' and over dramatic. It was possible that this first time purchase could be partly funded by parents and as such they could well play a large part in selecting the correct product.

BUDGET

We worked to an overall budget for the kitchen area including appliances, worktops and fitting. We tend to work with two or more kitchen suppliers on a project to enable us to source

the best product at the best price. I am not sure whether the client would be happy with me disclosing the amounts in question but this specification is a great example of what can be achieved on a decent but not overblown budget. The first time buyer market is renowned for offering a fairly standard product and can end up quite bland and of mediocre quality but this development is completely contrary to that by investing in design and quality interior fittings.

We were keen to supply a unique looking design for a good price so it was important from the outset to decide on the areas where we could make a saving without sacrificing the overall design. We decided that the visible appliances should be Siemens, a good high end brand, and we made a saving on the integrated ones. Worktops are notoriously expensive but we felt we could use a laminate option to reduce the expenditure without cheapening the design. We actually made this one of the feature areas within the design by using a contrasting finish to the cabinets and running the same finish for the worktops as a splash back to the underside of the upper cabinets. The end result actually looks more effective than the rather limited small upstands that tend to get used in a much more expensive material. By using the laminate in this way we not only enhanced the design but it resulted in a truly economic solution.

DESIGN

We designed the kitchens in conjunction with the interior specification for the entire apartment and it was imperative that there was a cohesive feel throughout the whole environment. The kitchen design was linked to the bathrooms as we worked with the kitchen manufacturer to bespoke a unique solution for the bathrooms also. Please see also my entry for Contract Designer Award for Bathrooms.

The last couple of years have seen a massive introduction of colour to both bathrooms and kitchen cabinetry. We wanted to introduce this into our design but we were aware that the strong colours that are prevalent in the market could also be quite brave and off putting to some purchasers. To provide a contemporary solution but cater to the varied marketplace we decided to offer three colour options within the design to enable the purchaser to choose an appropriate finish to their taste. The colour options were, white (the safe option), charcoal (to appeal to the sophisticated and potentially older market) or olive green (the brave and more daring selection) these were combined with a mushroom lacquer used on the main body of the kitchen. As with many new build apartments the kitchen area was open plan into the living and dining so we wanted to create a design that would feel like a nice piece of furniture as well as a practical kitchen solution. The coloured area was used on the full height built in storage wall only and could be linked to the furniture finish within the rest for the living area. The end result is a unique design with a small variant that can fundamentally alter the overall effect.

As mentioned previously we wanted to create a contrast with the worktop so we selected a

wood laminate to add some warmth to the design and soften the slightly harder feel of the lacquered doors. By using it on the worktop and full height splash back you end up with a solid band of the wood finish dividing the upper and lower cabinets which is visually very dramatic. We purposely kept all the sockets and switches off the splash back and located them on the two end walls so that there was no interruption to the clean lines of the wood panel. The full height built in storage wall is a great way of providing plenty of storage as well as housing the larger appliances such as the fridge freezer and oven.

The final design had the funky solutions that we felt would appeal to the younger market combined with the more subtle fixtures and finishes to keep the overall feel sophisticated and stylish.

