

SELECT INTERIORS
CREATORS + MAKERS

FREE GUIDE · 2027

The 2027 Office Fit-Out Budget Guide

Cost drivers · Cat A vs Cat B
What to allow for · Avoiding surprises

select-interiors.com

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INTRODUCTION

Budget with confidence in 2027

Most fit-out projects that go over budget don't fail on the build. They fail at the start: a brief that keeps moving, a budget set before anyone has seen the building, or costs nobody remembered to include.

This guide pulls together what we've learned from more than 35 years of designing and building offices, hospitality, industrial, retail and education environments across Manchester and the North West. It's written for office managers, finance and HR leads, and anyone else handed the job of making a new workspace happen.

1989	35+	1	5
creating and making since	years of fit-out experience	team from concept to completion	sectors: office, hospitality, industrial, retail, education

A quick ballpark figure first? Try our office fit-out cost calculator. It gives you a starting figure in minutes, before you speak to anyone.

select-interiors.com/office-fit-out-cost-calculator

"We are Creators + Makers. From concept to completion, we guide our clients every step of the way and handle the detail, so they can focus on what truly matters: their business."

Carl Brown, founder



SECTION 1

What really drives the cost

Two offices of the same size can cost very different amounts. These are the factors that move the number most.

01 The condition of the space

A shell, a Cat A space and a previous tenant's fit-out are three very different starting points. Stripping out, making good and upgrading tired services all add cost before design even starts.

02 Size, and how much you change

Cost is usually quoted per square foot, but the rate rises with the amount of change. New partitions, meeting rooms and kitchens cost more per square foot than open, flexible floor.

03 Specification

Finishes, furniture, lighting and acoustic treatment can each be specified at very different levels. Deciding early where to invest and where to save keeps the budget honest.

04 Mechanical and electrical (M+E)

Heating, cooling, ventilation, power, data and lighting are often the largest single package. More meeting rooms and more people usually means more M+E.

05 Bespoke joinery and furniture

Reception desks, tea points, storage and booths add character, but bespoke items take longer to make and need fixing early in the programme.

06 Programme and working hours

Out-of-hours or phased working in an occupied building, tight deadlines and restricted access all add cost.

07 Sustainability targets

BREEAM, SKA or energy targets, reused furniture and low-carbon materials can shift where money is spent. Some save money; some need investment up front.

08 Location and access

City-centre sites, loading restrictions, lift access and parking all affect how materials and people get on and off site, and how long that takes.

Where to invest: spend on what people touch and use every day (chairs, desks, acoustics and lighting) and save where it won't be noticed.



SECTION 2

Cat A vs Cat B

These two terms come up in every lease conversation. Knowing the difference helps you understand what you're getting and what you'll be paying for.

	Cat A	Cat B
What it is	The landlord's base build: a clean, functional shell ready for a tenant	The tenant's fit-out: everything that makes the space work for your business
Typically includes	Raised floors, suspended ceilings, basic lighting, heating and cooling, toilets, fire alarm	Partitions and meeting rooms, kitchens and tea points, furniture, flooring, branding, AV and IT, feature lighting, bespoke joinery
Usually paid for by	The landlord	The tenant, sometimes with a landlord contribution
Watch out for	Cat A elements you rip out and replace, which you pay for twice	Changes to Cat A services (extra cooling, moved lights) needing landlord consent

Cat A+

Some landlords now offer Cat A+: a fitted, ready-to-use space with kitchens, meeting rooms and sometimes furniture. It can save time and up-front cost, but you'll have less say over the design.

> **Our tip:** before you sign, ask what Cat A specification the landlord is delivering, and whether they'll leave it out where you plan to change it. Not installing something is cheaper than stripping it out.



SECTION 3

What to allow for beyond the build

The construction cost is only part of the picture. These are the items most often missed when budgets are first set.

- **Design and professional fees:** design, project management, cost management and any specialist consultants
- **Statutory approvals:** building control, and planning or listed building consent if needed
- **Landlord consent:** a licence for alterations, plus the landlord's surveyor and legal fees
- **Furniture:** desks, chairs, meeting and breakout furniture, often a separate budget line
- **IT, AV and security:** cabling, Wi-Fi, screens, room booking, access control
- **Moving costs:** removals, IT migration, overlapping rent and rates during the works
- **Dilapidations:** the cost of reinstating your current space when you leave
- **Contingency:** an allowance for the unknown. Many projects carry somewhere between 5% and 10%, depending on how much is known about the building
- **VAT:** check whether figures you've been given include it

5–10%	9	1
typical contingency range on many projects	costs to budget beyond the build	contract with design and build

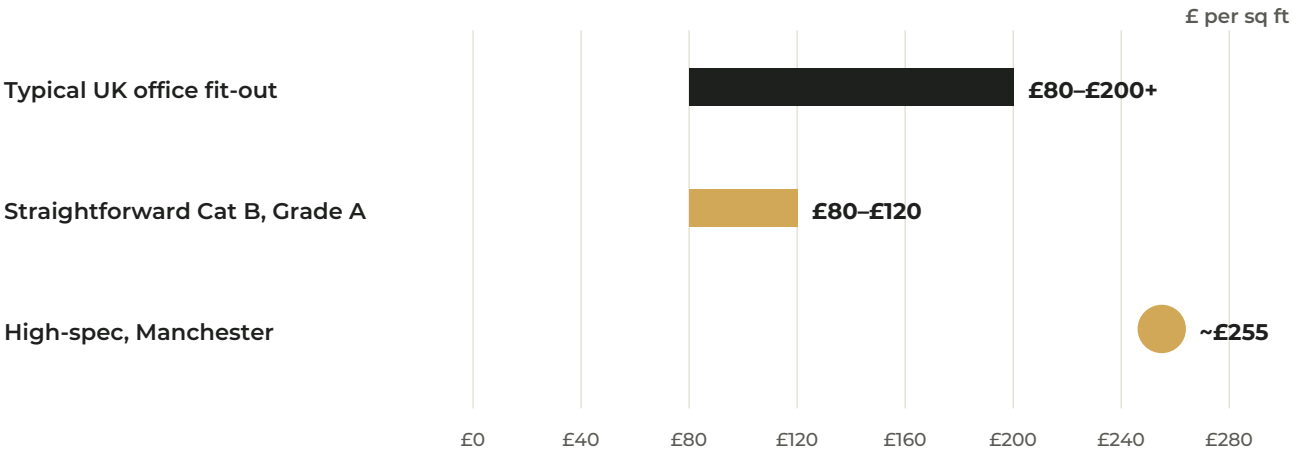
> **Rule of thumb:** if a quote looks much lower than the others, check what it leaves out. The gaps usually sit in the list above.



SECTION 4

2026–27 cost benchmarks

Every building and brief is different, so treat these published figures as a sense check, not a quote.



+2.1%
tender prices, next 12 months (BCIS)

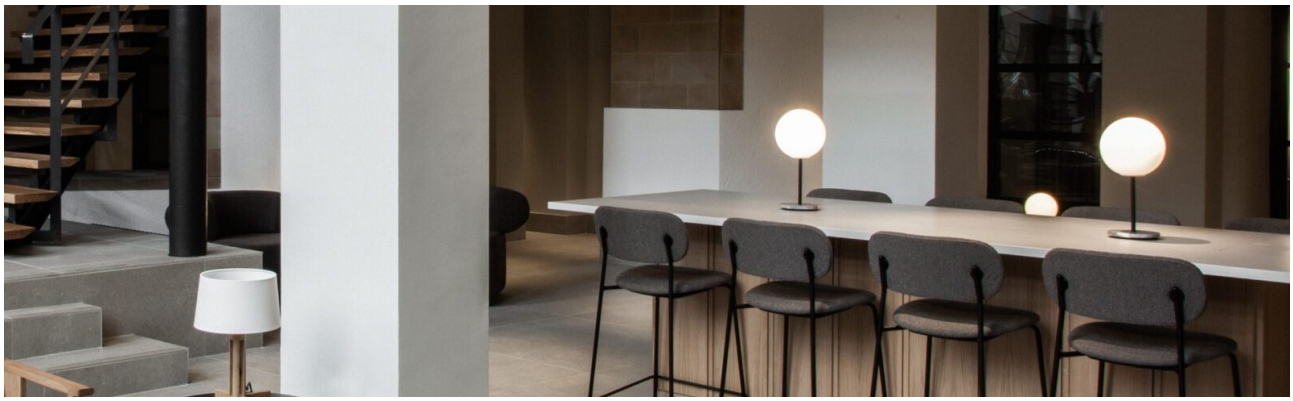
~3%
further rise expected in 2027

£255
per sq ft, high-spec Manchester (T&T)

What this means for you

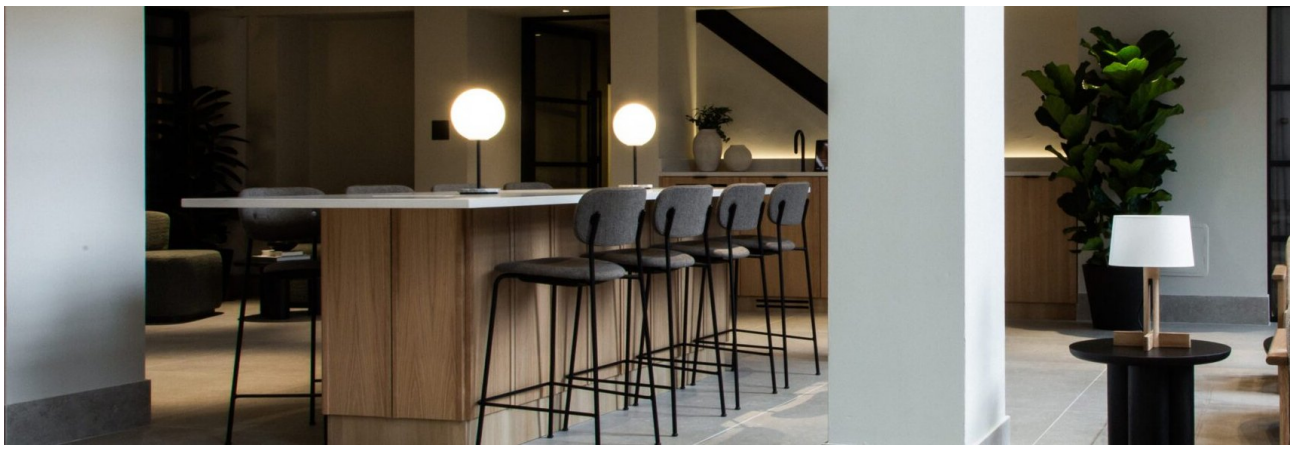
- Costs in Manchester and the North West typically sit below London rates, but specification and building condition matter more than location
- With prices still rising, fixing your brief and programme early is the simplest way to protect your budget
- Ask for costs per square foot and as a total, and check both are measured on the same area

Sources: industry fit-out cost guides 2026 (typical UK and Cat B ranges); Turner & Townsend 2026 (Manchester high-spec, £2,745 per sq m); BCIS forecast, July 2026 (tender prices). Figures are published estimates with different assumptions. They are not a quote from Select Interiors.



SECTION 5

Eight ways to avoid budget surprises



1 Share a realistic budget early
So the design team designs to your number from day one.

2 Survey before you design
Look above the ceiling and below the floor while problems are cheap to fix.

3 Fix the brief early
Agree headcount, meeting rooms and must-haves before detailed design.

4 Order long-lead items early
Bespoke joinery, contract furniture and some M+E kit take weeks to make.

5 Plan M+E with the layout
Moving a room after services are designed is a classic cause of extra cost.

6 Keep one point of contact
Design and build puts everything under one contract and one team.

7 Compare quotes like for like
Check the scope, specification and exclusions match before comparing prices.

8 Hold a contingency and track it
Agree who can spend it and report against it as you go.

Most overspends start before anyone is on site.

A clear brief, a realistic budget and early decisions do more to protect your numbers than any amount of value engineering later. Talk to your fit-out partner as early as you can: the first few weeks are where the biggest savings are made.

SECTION 6

Your budget checklist

Tick these off before you approve a budget.

- [ ] Current lease position, break dates and dilapidations understood
- [ ] Headcount now, and in two to three years
- [ ] Must-haves vs nice-to-haves agreed
- [ ] Building surveyed, including Cat A condition
- [ ] Cat A and Cat B responsibilities confirmed with the landlord
- [ ] Licence for alterations and building control allowed for
- [ ] M+E capacity checked for your headcount
- [ ] Furniture, IT, AV and security budgeted
- [ ] Moving costs and overlapping rent included
- [ ] Contingency agreed
- [ ] VAT treatment confirmed
- [ ] Programme agreed, including long-lead items

Notes

OUR SERVICES

Everything under one roof

From concept to completion, we guide our clients every step of the way and handle the detail, so they can focus on what truly matters: their business.

01 Interior Design
Creative, practical interiors shaped around the brand, people, space and project goals

02 Fit-Out
Complete fit-out delivery, fully coordinated from strip-out to a smooth final handover

03 Mechanical & Electrical
Mechanical and electrical systems, designed for comfort, safety and lasting efficiency

04 Furniture
Carefully selected furniture that balances comfort, durability, style and daily performance

05 Graphics & Branding
Bold graphics and branded details that give the space identity, personality and impact

06 Project Management
Hands-on project management keeps budgets, programmes, people and every detail aligned

07 Bespoke Joinery
Tailored joinery, designed to maximise space and deliver a distinctive, premium finish

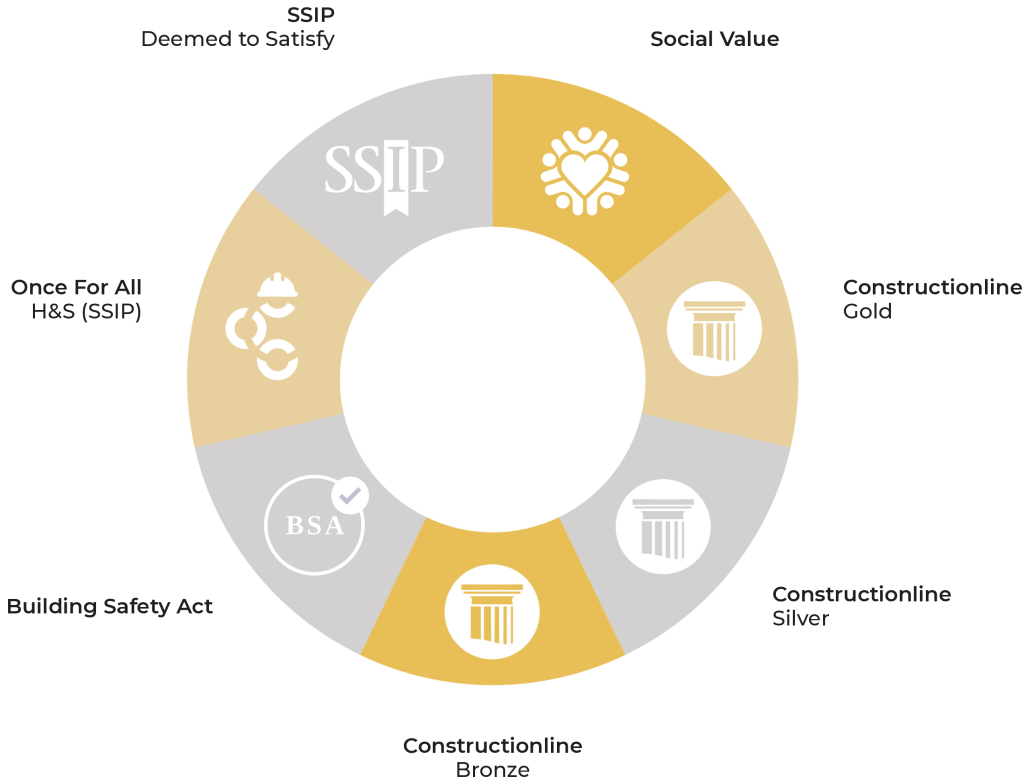
08 Building Control
Building Control support, keeping approvals, compliance and technical details on track



OUR ACCREDITATIONS

Independently accredited

We have independent accreditations and pre-qualification standards that demonstrate how seriously we take quality, environmental responsibility, social value, health & safety and building safety.



Why it matters

Choosing an accredited contractor takes risk out of your project before it starts.

- **Faster procurement:** independent pre-qualification means much of the due diligence your procurement team would normally do has already been checked
- **Safer sites:** SSIP and Once For All health & safety accreditation show our site management and safety systems are independently assessed
- **Building safety:** we work to the requirements of the Building Safety Act, so compliance is built into design and delivery, not added at the end
- **Social value:** we are committed to delivering wider benefits for local people and communities through our work
- **Peace of mind:** landlords, managing agents and public sector clients often require these standards, so you can appoint us with confidence

WHY SELECT

Don't be fooled by the polished façade!

Behind every great-looking space is a huge amount of practical thinking, technical coordination and hands-on construction knowledge, which is why buildability, budget, programme, compliance and finish are considered from the very beginning.



01 Delivery

Our project team is used to managing workstreams, suppliers, consultants, approvals and live site activity, keeping everything coordinated, solving problems quickly and maintaining momentum throughout.

02 Quality

We care about how every element comes together. From the first concept through to the final snag, we stay close to the detail and push for a consistently high-quality finish.

03 People

Design, technical coordination, procurement, fit-out, bespoke joinery, furniture and handover, all brought together through one experienced and accountable project team under one roof.

04 Experience

Established in 1989 by Carl Brown, we bring decades of commercial interiors experience while remaining responsive, practical and personally involved in every project.



SELECT INTERIORS
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LET'S TALK

Talk to us about your project

Whether you're planning a refurbishment or a move, a short conversation now can save time and money later. We'll talk through your space, your team and your budget, with no obligation.

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This guide gives general information only and is not a quotation. Costs vary by building, specification and programme. Benchmarks are from the published sources named and were current at the time of writing (November 2026).