

Better laid plans, for just £20 a time

Riba is again offering you an hour from an architect for a donation to Shelter. **Jill Insley reports**

DO YOU have a kitchen that's too small to swing a hamster, never mind a cat? A squalid bathroom only fit for bathing the dog. Or one child too many for the number of bedrooms in your otherwise perfect home?

Now is your chance to find out whether it's possible to do something about it without spending a fortune. As part of its annual Architecture Week, the Royal Institute of British Architects is offering to put homeowners in touch with an architect for a one-hour consultation that costs just £20.

Ian Shoesmith and Janice White had been thinking for some time about redesigning an 'appalling' conversion with three doors in the 6ft space that housed their bathroom and kitchen when they read about Riba's 'Architect in the House' scheme in *Cash*. Ian says: 'I'm a graphic designer and thought I could envisage what we wanted there, but we needed a builder we could trust. Then we read the article and thought it would be interest-

ing to see what an architect made of it.'

The couple booked an appointment with Richard Dudzicki of the eponymous architects' firm in Dulwich, south-east London. 'He came round and it was amazing. Richard had so many ideas instantly. He didn't go "Oh my God", which I had half been expecting. It took him just a few minutes to virtually reconstruct it in word form.'

Ian and Janice decided to proceed, and were 'pleasantly surprised' at the fees they were to be charged - about 5 per cent of the total cost.

It was easy and quick for Janice and Ian to view the plans at different stages and to choose building materials as the architect's office was conveniently near their home. (Architect in the Home tries to put homeowners in contact with local firms with expertise in the type of work needed).

Dudzicki selected builders and managed the job, which was complete by the following Christmas. 'He also suggested a place for bathroom furniture where we could get a discount, and he sourced the bath and kitchen cupboards, which were specially fitted,' says Ian.

The project came in over the couple's original budget, but the eventual cost was not a surprise because they had been consulted on and had agreed changes along the way.

Ian and Janice have recently moved house, but enjoyed the use of the revamped kitchen and bathroom for two years. 'We would certainly like to think that we could use the same architects again,' says Ian.

People are often deterred from consulting architects because they think the work they need doing is too lim-

ited, but Riba spokesman Jonathan Morrison says most architects are prepared to design and manage projects costing as little as £10,000, such as moving interior walls or building conservatories: 'It's their bread and butter. But however small the job, an architect can bring an element of design expertise to it. They

can do things that other people just wouldn't think of.'

Dudzicki says many architects' firms, including his own, also do interior design. 'This project was a little gem. The space was originally a disaster, but this was a low-cost way of making sense of the chaos that had been there before.'

Homeowners can register

for an Architect in the House consultation on the website www.architectureweek.co.uk. The £20 consultation fee will be donated to Shelter.

Richard Dudzicki Associates: www.rdauk.com.

Full details of 450 events nationwide during Architecture Week (18-27 June) are at www.architectureweek.co.uk



The sleek new bathroom was a joy for the couple who had lived with the appalling previous design incorporating three doors.

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