



# DESIGN DELIGHTS

No project is too big or small for home furniture store Holloways and its team of expert interior designers located in the picturesque village of Suckley





“The answer is yes; what is the question?” That, says interior designer Annie Blackledge, is the default position when dealing with customers at Holloways of Suckley. You like a sofa but want a different fabric; that’s not a problem when you have a roomful of swatches to choose from.

You love the scatter cushions but they are too big; the size is not set in stone, we can get you one made. The armchair is perfect for the room but you have a bad back; the furniture is made to order so it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that we could tweak the angle of the backrest so you can get up from the chair more easily.

Holloways is not your standard home furniture store. It’s a lifestyle destination, a place to browse, buy gifts, while away time with friends at the Glasshouse cafe or even visit the Sanctuary, the purpose built hair and beauty salon where you can de-stress with some aromatherapy and massage treatments.

Not that there is anything stressful about visiting Holloways; on the contrary. This is out of town shopping at its most chilled. Suckley is a village in the middle of nowhere. Well, not literally. It is six or seven miles from Malvern and Bromyard and 12 miles from

Worcester so not that far off the beaten track but you drive down a little country lane to get to it and it is located in a bona fide rural haven. When it comes to a business, location, location, location is all important. But that usually means making sure you are in the right venue with lots of footfall.

If instead you are opening a business in redundant hop kilns adjacent to your farmyard, you don’t have a choice. You have to be better than everyone else to succeed, and you have to offer something different.

Step forward Diana Holloway who started the business thirty years ago as a farm diversification business alongside her husband Edward. A chartered accountant by training whose mother was an interior decorator, Diana had both an eye for design and the ability to realise a business opportunity when she saw one.

Her mother was finding it difficult to source furniture for a conservatory and Diana recognised there was a gap in the market just as the trend began for home extensions in the late 80s. Edward collected antique garden ornaments and with both indoor and outdoor furniture they had the seeds to grow a business.

Today they are one of the UK’s leading specialists in garden room, conservatory and garden furniture, but over the years they have expanded to furnishing the whole house.

And they do not rest on their laurels. Last year Holloways opened a state-of-the-art new wing to showcase the contemporary Neptune range of furniture and the upstairs Gallery 1 is a unique mix of contemporary pieces, antiques and object d’art designed to help customers visualise how they can incorporate period pieces in a stylishly, modern home interior.

It is easy to see how customers can warm to the relaxing vibe. Annie, who is one of three in-store designers along with colleagues Annabel Amphlett and Louise Gipson, says ➔







customers have been known to come in for a coffee and leave with a sofa they spotted while strolling through the showroom.

"People can go upstairs and see a mirror or a side table and they can see that it would work in their house. We have even had people buy a complete room set, literally buy every cushion, rug, vase, platter and coffee table along with a big arrangement of flowers we had organised for the table."

The interior design service is completely free – part of the customer service – and that applies whether you want to redesign a boot room, bedroom or your whole house.

Others lack confidence in their own judgement and simply want reassurance about what colours or fabrics work well together, while others want a designer to draw up a complete interiors scheme for their approval.

Annie had one customer who was moving from a small cottage to a large new house. "When the size of the rooms and the bigger hallway became apparent, she panicked and said 'I haven't a clue where to start'."

And that is where an interior designer can step in to make sure the process is an enjoyable journey of discovery rather than a stress fest. A consultation usually starts with a customer browsing the showroom with one of the interior designers who can quickly gauge a customer's likes and dislikes.

A home visit follows and the designer puts together a mood board to discuss with the customer, tweaking it until the customer is happy with the room plan. Annie's client who was moving to a bigger home was living in the country and wanted a country look.

She had pheasants in her garden so one of the fabrics Annie included in the living room was illustrated with pheasants which reflected the exterior and created a traditional country feel. Annie suggested a more modern look


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for the cinema room which fitted about 30 people and played host to many gatherings of family and friends. Here she used greys, charcoal and more contemporary colours.

Upstairs the master bedroom was painted plain white but Annie introduced soft mauve, greys and driftwood colours. "An accent colour on a wall, a bespoke throw over the bed, a lovely rug and the room was completely transformed. The homeowner has now put an armchair in the room and it is a place she likes to spend time in."

Wanting to spend time in a room is a hallmark of good interior design, and for that reason one of Annie's favourite projects is a bedroom she redesigned using pale cream and duck egg blue shades.

Satisfied customers come back too. One of Annie's clients was so delighted by the redesign that she has asked Annie to revamp a little TV room snug adjoining her kitchen.

Annie says: "We have often had people who say they were dreading redesigning their home because they didn't know what they wanted and they were completely flummoxed by the range of fabric books. We made their shopping easy so they come back. There is no hard sell. You can browse freely but if you want advice we can give it." 



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