

Building a Better Home

Seven practical principles to help you create a home that's comfortable, intuitive and a joy to live in.

aa.net.nz

A Personal Note

When we started Automation Associates in 1995, a smart home meant something very different to what it does today.

We've seen an enormous amount of change in technology since then. But one thing hasn't changed.

The happiest homeowners aren't necessarily the ones with the most technology. They're the ones whose homes have been thoughtfully designed around the way they live.

Creating a home is one of life's great adventures. There are hundreds of decisions to make, and it's easy to get caught up in products, specifications and the latest technology.

But beneath all of those decisions is something much more important: creating a place where you and your family will live, relax, entertain, grow and make memories for years to come.

Whether you're building your forever home, renovating an existing one, or simply exploring what's possible, I hope these pages give you a little more confidence and help you ask better questions along the way.



On behalf of everyone at Automation Associates, I wish you and your family every success as you begin creating your new home.

I hope it becomes everything you've imagined - comfortable, welcoming and a place you'll love coming home to.

Thank you for spending some time with us. We sincerely appreciate it, and if we can help at any stage of your journey, we'd be delighted to have a conversation.

Warm regards,

Brendon

Managing Director

Inside You'll Discover

Seven Principles of a Better Home

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The best smart homes bring comfort, convenience and enjoyment to your everyday life.

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Principle One -

The Difference Between Smart Things and a Smart Home

"A smart home is defined by how effortlessly everything works together."

It Starts With the Bigger Picture

Building or renovating a home is an exciting opportunity to create a space that truly reflects the way you live. Technology will be part of that conversation. You might already have ideas about what you'd like your home to do better, or ways you'd like things to feel more effortless. But a smart home isn't created by simply adding more technology.

A smart TV is useful. Smart lighting can be useful. So can automated blinds, security and climate control. We've seen plenty of homes where all of those things work perfectly well on their own, but the overall experience isn't simple. The real difference is what happens when those individual pieces work together. A smart bulb is a smart thing. So is a Sonos speaker. So is an internet-connected alarm.

Connect them together, though, and suddenly something more useful starts to happen. You arrive home and the path from the garage to the kitchen lights up automatically. Your favourite playlist starts playing. The house knows you're home - without you having to tell it.

That's the start of a smart home.

When Everything Works Together

Think about the homes you've most enjoyed spending time in.

What do you remember?

Probably not the technology.

You remember how the home felt. The atmosphere. The comfort. The way everything seemed to work without anyone having to think about it.

Now imagine you're heading to the airport.

One press of Vacation and the house takes care of the rest.

The lights go off. Music stops. The underfloor heating and towel rails shut down. The air conditioning the kids left running in the rumpus room is switched off too.

You haven't opened five different apps - or stopped.. to update two of them. Your home has simply responded to what is needed.

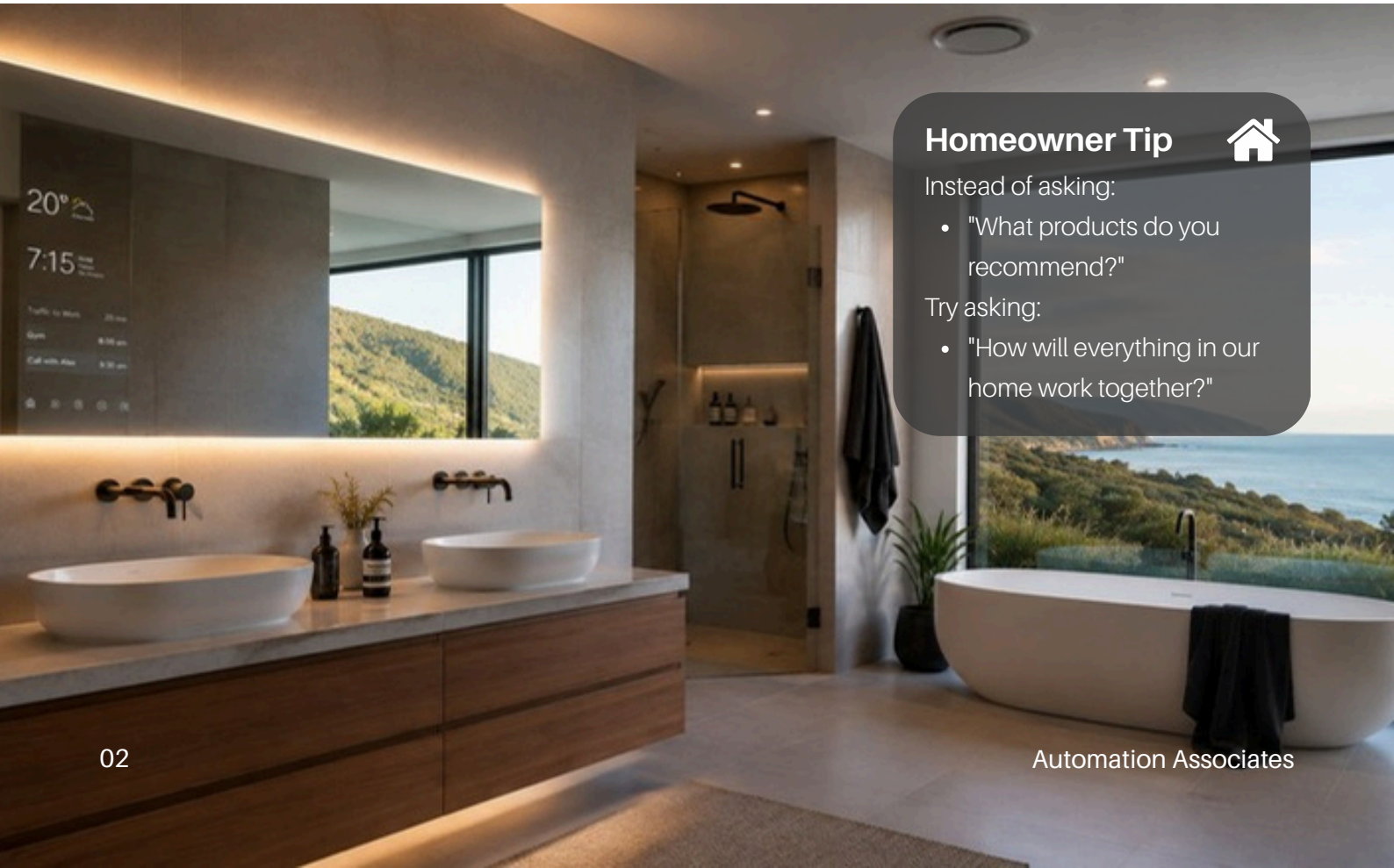
Avoid This Mistake

Choosing technology one piece at a time without considering the bigger picture.

It's easy to choose a great product for one part of the home without thinking about how it will work alongside everything else.

The result can be a collection of systems that each work well on their own, but don't quite feel like they belong together.

Think about the whole home from the beginning, even if you choose to install things in stages.



Homeowner Tip

Instead of asking:

- "What products do you recommend?"

Try asking:

- "How will everything in our home work together?"



A Real-World Example

"Automating our house has totally transformed how we live. Before building, we questioned whether we really needed it, but now that we live with automation, we can't imagine life without it! I highly recommend automating your home and using the team at AA to provide the perfect solution for you." - Gina and Matthew

Questions to Ask Your Provider

- How will everything in our home work together?
- Will we need multiple systems to manage different parts of the home?
- If we add technology later, will it integrate with what we have now?
- Can you demonstrate to us what a typical day in our home might look like?

Before moving on, ask yourself:

□ Have we asked how everything will work together?
□ Are we choosing technology to enhance our family spaces?
□ Will this home feel simple for everyone to use?
□ Does the design focus on our lifestyle rather than individual products?

Smart Home Notes

Use this space to jot down ideas, questions or features you'd like to discuss as you explore different smart home solutions.





Principle Two -

Think Beyond Today

"The best smart homes aren't designed just for the way you live today. They're designed for the way life will evolve tomorrow."

Homes Change Because Life Changes

Great homes evolve with the needs of the family

A room that starts life as a home office might become a nursery a few years later. Before long it could be a child's bedroom, a teenager's retreat, or a space for a hobby you haven't discovered yet.

The spaces and routines that work perfectly today may look quite different in the years ahead. It's worth thinking about that while you have the opportunity to plan for it.

When you're discussing your new home, talk about who's going to live there and how life might change.

Are there young kids? Are they about to start school? Will they be heading off to university before you know it? Is there a chance Mum or Dad might join you one day?

You don't need to know exactly what the future holds.

But a good integrator will take those conversations and use them to inform technology decisions you might never have thought about yourself.

Homeowner Tip

Don't just describe the house you're building.
Describe the life you're planning to live in it.
You don't need to have it all worked out. Even talking through the possibilities can help you make better decisions now.

You might be thinking about:

- A growing family
- Working from home
- Creating better spaces for entertaining
- Kids becoming more independent
- A family member living with you one day

Create Options for What Comes Next

Future-proofing" is one of those terms that gets misused a lot. It can sound as though you're expected to predict what technology will look like ten or twenty years from now.

Nobody can do that.

But you can make a few thoughtful decisions now that leave more options open later.

We've heard it many times:

"I wish we'd allowed for that while we were building."

Once the walls are finished, making changes can mean cutting into something you've just built.

Avoid This Mistake

Thinking only about move-in day.

It's easy to focus on getting everything right for the day you move in.

But the home you're building will be there long after the boxes are unpacked. Make decisions now that leave room for your family tomorrow.

Questions to Ask your Provider

- Is the system flexible if our needs change?
- Can we change how it is programmed ourselves?
- What are the main things people tell you they wish they had provided for?

Before moving on, ask yourself:

□ Have we thought about how our needs might change?
□ Have we made the important decisions while they're easiest to make?
□ Have we left ourselves options for later?
□ Are we making the most of the opportunity while we're building?



Smart Home Notes

Use this space to record ideas, future plans or questions you'd like to discuss while your home is still on the drawing board.

Before you turn the page...

You don't need to predict exactly how life will change.
You simply need to give yourself the freedom to change with it.





Principle Three -

Wired Where It Matters. Wireless Where It Makes Sense.

"Good infrastructure gives you choices for decades to come."

Not All Smart Homes Need the Same Approach

Some home automation technology uses physical cabling, while other technology communicates wirelessly. Both are part of a well-designed, integrated system.

Choosing the right solution depends on the home, the project and the people who'll live there.

If you're building or renovating, you have an opportunity to put the right infrastructure in place while the gib is off.

If you're working with an existing home, today's wireless technology can deliver a great experience without the need for building work.



If You're Building, Create the Right Foundations

You can put a solid wired foundation in place that supports your technology now and into the future.

Once the walls are closed, something as simple as adding a cable can mean cutting into finished walls, repainting and disrupting a space you've just completed.

So wire for it when you can.

Wireless Has Changed What's Possible

Wireless technology has come a long way. Older wireless systems could struggle to provide reliable coverage throughout a home. Today, multiple wireless devices can work together to provide strong, reliable coverage wherever you need it.

For smaller renovations, finished homes or situations where running new cabling isn't practical, wireless can provide a great smart home experience without any building work.

In many homes, wireless is exactly the right approach. A good technology partner will be able to explain where wiring genuinely adds value and where wireless makes more sense.

Avoid This Mistake

Choosing wired or wireless before understanding your home.

Adding technology to a new build or renovation versus an existing home presents different opportunities.

The right approach depends on your home, your priorities and where you are in the building journey.



Questions to Ask Your Provider

- Is a wired or wireless system the right choice for our home?
- What opportunities should we take advantage of while the walls are open?
- If we don't wire something now, what would be difficult or expensive to add later?
- If this were your own home, what would you do?

Smart Home Notes

Use this space to record any wiring recommendations, questions or ideas before construction begins.

Quick Questions

□ Do we understand where wiring will genuinely add value?
□ Will wireless give us what we need in terms of functionality and reliability?
□ What are the ‘must haves’ vs the ‘nice to haves’?

Before you turn the page...

Just as every family is different, so is every customised integrated home.
If you are being offered a smart home “bundle”...

Smile politely and back away slowly.

There can be a fair amount to consider, and a great integrator will guide you through the process at your own pace in a way that feels comfortable.



Principle Four -

Keep It Simple

"The smartest homes aren't the ones with the most technology. They're the ones that are the most enjoyable to live in."

The Best Technology Is the Technology You Hardly Notice

Have you ever been in a home where everything simply felt effortless?

The lighting felt right. The temperature was comfortable. Music gently filled the space. Nothing distracted from the people, the conversation or the moment.

Chances are, you weren't thinking about the technology at all.

The best smart homes don't constantly remind you they're smart.

They simply get on with their job, so you can get on with enjoying your home.

Homeowner Tip

Start with your daily routine - not your wish list.

Before discussing products, think about the moments in your day.

- What frustrates you?
- What takes longer than it should?
- What would you like to have done for you automatically?

Is it walking into a cold, dark house at the end of the day?

Is it remembering to turn the electric blanket on an hour before bed?

Is it wondering whether it's time to water the garden again?

Look for the moments that could be smoother or simpler.



Simplicity Doesn't Happen by Accident

We've found one of the best tests of a smart home is watching someone use it for the first time.

Do they know what to do without being shown?

If they can, it's usually a sign that someone has already done the thinking.

The House Sitter Test

"I had to leave the house unexpectedly and needed someone to look after the pets while I was away. There wasn't really time for a crash course in how everything worked, so I downloaded the app onto the house sitter's phone, got them logged in, said a very hasty goodbye and headed off.

I was convinced I'd be getting phone calls asking how to turn things on, change the lights or work the music. But the phone stayed remarkably quiet.The only call I got was to ask where I'd hidden the can opener for the cat food." - Sandra, Auckland

Avoid This Mistake

Adding technology because it's available rather than because it's useful.

A good designer knows when to recommend something - and when to leave it out.

Not every room needs automation.

Not every feature needs to be included.

Every feature should earn its place.

If you wouldn't miss it when it's gone, ask whether you need it in the first place.

The Little Things Add Up

The features people appreciate most are often the ones they stop noticing.
You walk into the kitchen and the lights come on at the level you need.
The house is already comfortable when you get home.
It's time for bed. One press turns everything off.
None of those moments are dramatic.
But they're the little things that, day after day, make a home feel more effortless and enjoyable.

Smart Home Notes

Capture any ideas or everyday moments you'd like your home to make simpler or more enjoyable.



Questions to Ask Your Provider

- How have you designed this system to keep it simple to use?
- Can we speak to a reference?
- How would Grandma or the house sitter know what to do?



Before moving on, ask yourself:

□ Will everyone in our home feel confident using it?
□ Do we have a need for the features proposed?
□ Are we solving everyday frustrations?
□ Will our home feel simpler because of the choices we've made?

"When you stop noticing the technology and simply enjoy your home, you've got it right."

Automation Associates



Principle Five -

After the Installation

“Move-in day seems like the destination, but it's where the real journey begins.”

Your Smart Home Journey Continues Beyond Installation Day

Building or renovating is an exciting project. Eventually the paint is dry, the lawn is laid, the builders leave, and you get to enjoy the home you've spent months or years planning.

But your home won't stay exactly as it is today. Your family, routines and priorities will evolve. Some changes may happen in days or weeks, others years down the track.

So when you're choosing who to work with, it's worth looking beyond the installation itself.

Homeowner Tip

When comparing providers, ask:

What do I do when I've burnt the toast, the siren's sounding and I can't remember where the reset button is?
What if I want to change something?
Can I make changes myself?



The Relationship Doesn't End at Handover

At Automation Associates, we've been looking after our clients for over 30 years.

Things change. Kids grow up, rooms change, technology changes and sometimes you want to do something differently.

When we get the call:
"Can you change this for me?"

It's simple. We log in and make the change. We're also keeping an eye on the systems, so if something needs attention, we already know about it.

Having trouble with your internet provider? We can check the logs. Need a function tweaked? We can sort it.

And when something does need a visit, we already know the home and the system.

That's the nice thing about having someone who already knows your home.

A Home That Grows With You

"When we built our home, we had speakers installed in our daughter's room and they became part of our bedtime routine, playing white noise when she was little. Fast forward and our six-year-old now uses her room for dance parties with her friends! The speakers have certainly had a workout, and we realised she has a very different idea of an appropriate volume to us! We asked Automation Associates to programme a volume limit on the room so the kids can enjoy their music without us worrying about the speakers - or our ears." - Ben and Alicia, Northland

Avoid This Mistake

Picking a provider based purely on the cheapest price.

Or picking a provider who can do most, but not all, of what you need.

Your smart home is something you'll live with for many years, so choose a technology partner who can look after it as your needs change and technology moves on.



Questions to Ask Your Provider

- Do you offer remote, proactive monitoring of the connected devices in our home?
- Are you able to make configuration changes without coming to site?
- Do you monitor for security issues on our home network?

Smart Home Notes

Use this space to record questions about ongoing support, maintenance or future upgrades.



Before moving on, ask yourself:

□ Do we know who we'll turn to for advice after we've moved in?
□ Can our system be updated as technology changes?
□ Will our provider keep an eye on our system to make sure it's always operational?
□ Will our system be kept up to date with security patches?

The home you create today will change as life does.
The technology will change too.
The right partner will be there to help you make the most of both.



Principle Six -

Choose the Right Partner, Not Just the Right Products

"The best smart homes begin with great conversations."

It Starts With You

It's easy to think the first conversation about a smart home should be about technology.

Which lighting system? Which speakers? Which security cameras?

But the best projects start somewhere else.

Before anyone recommends products, they should understand what's important to your family, how you use your home and what you want it to feel like.

The technology should be designed around you, not the other way around.

You Can Tell a Lot From the First Meeting

You arrive expecting to talk about technology.
Instead, they ask questions.
Before long, you're talking about your life and your family rather than about products and functions.
A clear solution often emerges once someone has taken the time to understand what they're designing for.



Experience Shows Up in the Questions

Pay attention to the questions you're asked. An experienced designer will often ask things you weren't expecting.

Do you work from home? How do you entertain? Are you iPhone or Android people? What would you like to be easier?

These questions aren't about selling more technology.

They're about understanding the bigger picture before making design decisions.

The best designers are naturally curious. They'll spend more time understanding your needs than talking about products.

A Good Company Will Tell You “No”

It might sound strange, but one of the best signs you've found the right technology partner is that they don't say “yes” to everything.

Sometimes they'll tell you that something you had in mind isn't necessary.

Sometimes they'll suggest a different approach.

And sometimes they'll tell you there's a better way to achieve what you're trying to do.



You're Choosing More Than an Installer

You're trusting someone with an important part of your home - someone who understands your vision, asks the right questions and helps turn your ideas into something you'll enjoy living with.

It's about choosing people you feel comfortable having alongside you through the project - and beyond it.

Avoid This Mistake

Choosing the proposal instead of choosing the partner.

Equipment lists can tell you what's included but they can't tell you how well someone understands your home, how carefully they've approached the design or what it'll be like to work with them.

Before making your final decision, ask yourself:

□ Do we trust these people?
□ Have they listened more than they've talked?
□ Are they helping us create a better home, rather than simply selling us technology?
□ Do they get us?



Questions to Ask Your Provider

- Why have you recommended this approach?
- If this was your own home, what would you do?
- What should we be thinking about that we haven't discussed yet?
- Can we speak to some references?

Smart Home Notes

Use this space to capture your final thoughts before choosing your technology partner.

A good designer should be able to explain why they're recommending something, not just what they're recommending.

The thinking behind a design often tells you more than a product brochure ever will.



Before You Turn the Page...

The products you choose will matter.

But the person guiding those decisions may matter even more.

Choose someone who listens first, asks good questions and takes the time to understand what you're trying to create.



Principle Seven -

Buy Quality. Your Future Self Will Thank You.

"The right choices keep rewarding you long after the build is finished."

Spend Where It Makes a Difference

Every smart home project has a budget.

The question is where that budget will make the biggest difference.

Sometimes that's spending more. Sometimes it's choosing a simpler solution.

The important thing is understanding the difference between price and value.

The right technology should be reliable, well designed and capable of performing the way you expect it to over time.

Quality isn't about choosing the most expensive option. It's about making choices you'll still be happy with years from now.

Homeowner Tip

When deciding where to invest, think about the things you'll use most.
They're the decisions you'll appreciate most.



Quality Shows Up Every Day

Your home should just work.

The TV turns on. The lights respond. The network stays reliable. The system does what you expect it to do.

You don't have to reset things, work around failures or wonder why something isn't behaving properly.

It comes from choosing the right products, designing the system properly and getting the installation right.

You appreciate it from day one. And continue to appreciate it as the years go by.

"Not every part of a smart home needs the same level of investment.

The best designs put quality where you'll notice the difference most - and simplify where you won't."

The real value of quality isn't obvious on the day you move in.

It's something you'll appreciate years later - every time your home simply does what it was designed to do.

Avoid This Mistake:

Comparing proposals on price alone.

The lowest price does not represent the best value. Thoughtful design, quality products and experienced advice can make a much bigger difference to what you get from your investment over time.

Questions to Ask Your Provider

- Why have you recommended this option?
- Where will we notice the biggest difference by investing in quality?
- Where could we simplify without compromising the experience?

Your Smart Home Planning Checklist

Before You Choose Your Technology Partner

□ We've thought about how we want our home to feel, not just what technology we want.

□ We understand the difference between smart products and an integrated home.

□ We know our home will likely evolve over time.

□ We've discussed what should be done while the walls are still open.

□ Our design keeps technology simple and intuitive.

□ We know what support will be available after we've moved in.

□ Our technology partner understands us and how we want to live.

□ We understand the thinking behind the recommendations.

□ We're investing where it will make the biggest long-term difference.

□ We're choosing a partner we trust, not simply comparing products or prices.

If you've ticked most of these boxes, you're well on your way to creating a home you'll enjoy living in for many years to come.





Before You Close This Guide...

Building or renovating a home is an exciting journey,

....and it's easy to get caught up comparing products, prices and specifications.

We hope these seven principles have helped you step back and look at the bigger picture.

Because the homes people love most aren't remembered for the technology they contain.

They're remembered for how they feel.

Welcoming when you walk through the door.

Comfortable on a quiet Sunday morning.

Effortless when you're entertaining friends.

And simply enjoyable to live in, day after day.

They're the backdrop to family dinners, celebrations, movie nights and all the little moments you'll create that make a house feel like home.

Whether you choose Automation Associates or another technology partner, we hope this guide has helped you ask better questions, make confident decisions and create a home you'll enjoy for many years to come.

We hope you enjoy living in the home you create.



“The best smart homes are remembered for the comfort, convenience and enjoyment they bring to everyday life.”

Whether you're building your forever home, renovating an existing one or simply exploring what's possible, we hope this guide has helped you ask better questions and given you confidence for the journey ahead.

About Automation Associates

Helping New Zealanders Create Better Homes Since 1995

For more than 30 years, Automation Associates has been helping homeowners create homes that are more comfortable, more intuitive and more enjoyable to live in.

Our philosophy is simple.

Technology should simplify life.

That's why every project starts with a conversation, not a product catalogue. We take the time to understand your family, your home and what's important to you before recommending a solution that's tailored to your home and lifestyle.

Whether you're building a new home, renovating or simply exploring what's possible, we'd love to help you create a home that's thoughtfully designed, enjoyable to live in and ready for whatever comes next.



Our Team Are Specialists In:

- Smart Home Design
- Lighting Control
- Multi-room Audio
- Home Cinema
- Intelligent Security
- High-performance Wi-Fi and Networking
- Climate Control
- Automated Blinds
- Energy and EV Integration
- Ongoing Support and System Care

Complimentary Smart Home Consultation

- Talk through your ideas and plans
- Explore what's possible for your home
- Understand where it's worth investing
- Get practical advice with no obligation
- Leave with greater clarity and confidence

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