

Selected Case Studies

2018 - 2020

Rob McCarthy

My approach is to keep work clean, simple, and effective. Fuss-free interfaces and careful execution - design as it should be.

Throughout my career I have collaborated with passionate people to create desirable, feasible and viable digital products and services.

Skills

Design system build and maintenance

Use case and user story creation

Wireframing and sitemapping

Lo-fidelity prototyping

Hi-fidelity prototyping

Case Study - W4P

Rebuilding the UK Pub industry's leading specialist website builder.



The challenge

Take a decade old website builder system; upgrade, update, and improve, whilst retaining and growing an established customer base.

The project

Websites4Pubs had a system that had been built upon over the years into a fully functional website builder for the pub industry. Throughout this time, the system had become bloated with features, the UI had been left untouched, and a customer acquisition strategy was non-existent.

Working within a small product development team, our strategy was simple; keep existing customers happy on the current system, whatever it took, whilst developing a new system that we could soft launch to existing customers.

At the early stages of development, we engaged with the existing customer base who were invaluable for user research, and for creating use cases.

Prioritisation of features was key, and this was driven by conversations with existing customers as well as usage data logged in the existing system. Whilst the existing system was extensively feature rich, we found a number of features that were completely unused. These features never made it onto our backlog.

1. Cycle

Hi guys,

Here's a bit of information and a record of the work we're planning on completing during this cycle. We can come back to this when we have our cycle update meetings to act as a little reminder for ourselves.

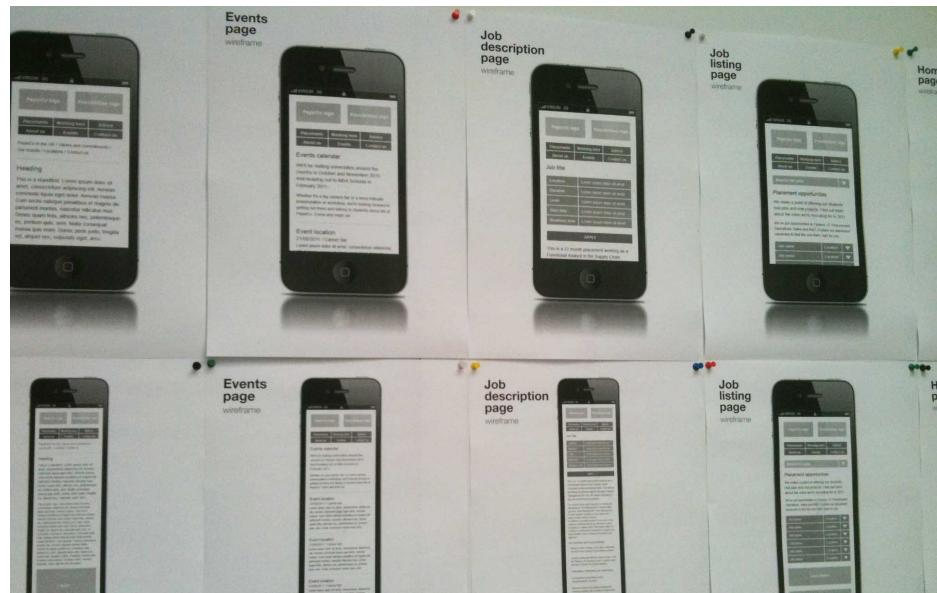
A big aim of this cycle is to move towards a live environment by setting up a Google server. This will be fantastic as it means that we'll be moving towards a process of 'getting it done' rather than 'getting it perfect'.

The work we're aiming to complete within this cycle is shown below:

- ▼ 1. Creating and managing an account
 - 1.1 User goes through a sign up process.
 - 1.2 A user's account is created.
 - 1.3 An email notification is sent when account is created.

Wireframing

Sketching, lo-fidelity prototyping & storyboarding for hospitality job listings



The project (contd.)

As a small development team, we were working in a highly collaborative way throughout the entire project. Whilst working with 2 x full stack developers, I was responsible for the information architecture, UI and UX design, as well as product ownership and management.

I created a design system, named Optic, that worked across a website builder, account system, and site management system. Creating this design system enabled my colleagues to apply a consistent and coherent UI whilst I continued to work on information architecture for further features.

Secure a domain X

Build your brand by getting a memorable domain name that sets you apart from the crowd.

- Menu Label (Static)
- Menu Label (Static)
- Menu Label (Static)

Secure a domain X

Build your brand by getting a memorable domain name that sets you apart from the crowd.

Choose an available domain

- Menu Label (Static)
- Menu Label (Static)
- Menu Label (Static)
- Menu Label (Static)

Secure a domain X

Build your brand by getting a memorable domain name that sets you apart from the crowd.

Choose an available domain

- Trial Upgrade
-

Secure a domain

Build your brand by getting a memorable domain name that sets you apart from the crowd.



The image displays a variety of UI components and color swatches. At the top left, there are two buttons: a green button labeled 'Secure Your Domain' and a grey button labeled 'Not now, thanks'. To the right is a dark grey rectangular area with a small white icon. On the far right, there is a vertical stack of three color swatches labeled 'Menu Label (Active)', 'Menu Label (Hover)', and 'Menu Label (Static)'. Below these are three rounded rectangular buttons: a blue one labeled 'Trial' and 'Upgrade', a red one labeled 'Live' and 'Go Offline', and an orange one labeled 'Offline' and 'Go Live'. The bottom section features two rows of typeface specifications. The first row shows '5XL' in a bold Roboto font, 48px size, with a bounding box of approximately [138, 618, 215, 718]. The second row shows '5XL' in a regular Roboto font, 48px size, with a bounding box of approximately [138, 478, 215, 578]. Both rows have columns for Typestyle, Typeface, Weight, and Size.

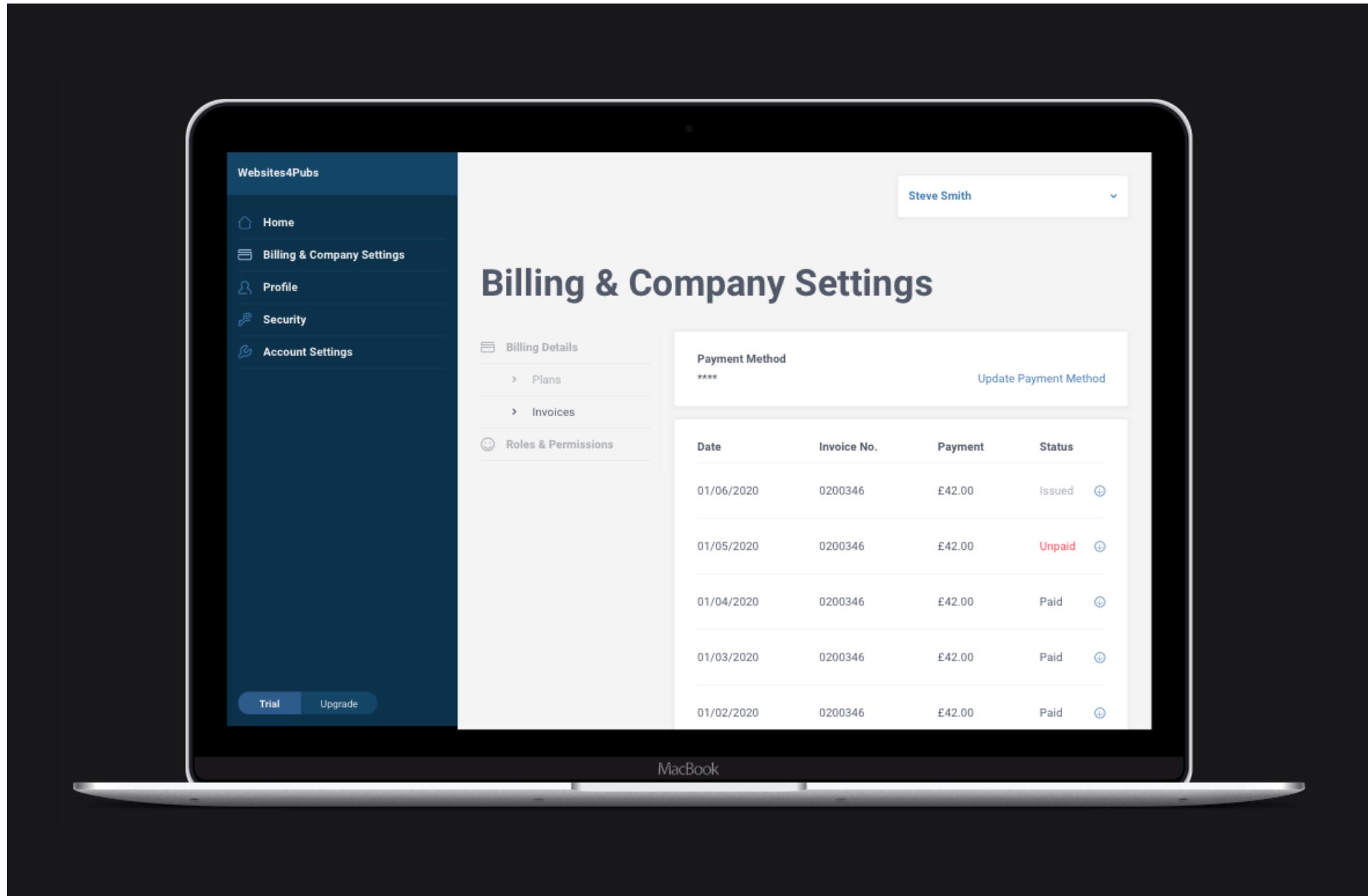
Typestyle	Typeface	Weight	Size	Size
5XL	Roboto	Bold	48px	59px
5XL	Roboto	Regular	48px	59px

Are you sure?

This is an example of supporting text for an overlay. It's important that a description is supportive of the primary heading/question. This may include additional information a customer needs to know in order to make the correct decision for their situation.

Oops. No, cancel that!

Yes, I'm 100% sure!



What was learnt

With a small team, building a new product whilst keeping an existing one going is hard... really hard. At times, the existing product would require more of our time which would be really important to keep existing customers loyal, but this would also stop us from progressing the new product further - a double edged sword.

Case Study - Colchester Borough Council

Improving the customer experience of self-serve transactions at local government level.



The challenge

colchester.gov.uk serves 20,000 residents each week in carrying out many self-serve transactions, inc; reporting missed bins, paying council tax, reporting anti-social behaviour, + many more!

Prior to me joining Colchester Borough Council, there was a push to move away from a previous website supplier (and contract) which led to a rapid program of design and development. During that time, consideration for quality assurance, usability, web standards, accessibility, and user experience, was sacrificed for speed of delivery.

*"Your site would not let me register to vote.
Your site only took me to 'How to Register to vote'.
The start of the first page was not visible and
my address was not recognised!"*

Anonymous Colchester Resident

The project

With such a vast program of work being delivered in such a short period of time, there was some reluctance to acknowledge and address the apparent issues.

Through the use of overwhelming negative customer feedback and user testing, I was able to peel away the reluctant barriers and begin to bring stakeholders along a different journey. This journey was one of improving the customer experience.

I proposed to move away from the 'big bang' approach to website design. Rather than rip up what had been done and go on a 2 year+ crusade to design and develop a new site, I suggested that we approach the redesign in an iterative manner.

This iterative manner began by highlighting patterns across the site; recurring page types, transactions, processes, and user journeys. Improving these patterns would make highly noticeable changes to the website.

[Breadcrumb link](#) > Breadcrumb current page

Service name goes here

Use this service to:

- Do something
- Do something
- Do something

Before you start:

- You will need something
- You will need something
- You will need something

! This is an important message and is to be used for highly important information that a user needs to know before doing a transaction (e.g. being responsible for their privacy when using a public computer)

[Start now >](#)

[Breadcrumb link](#) > Breadcrumb current page

Service name goes here

A useful and informative confirmation message

Include a reference number if applicable

e.g. **ULW7833P**

What happens next

- Something that is going to happen next (e.g. We have sent you a confirmation email).
- It might be something else like (e.g. Your transaction will be processed and we will contact you via email once it has been approved, completed, and processed).
- Any other information that will be useful for a user.

[Home](#) > [Allotments](#) > Apply for an allotment

Apply for an allotment

Do you agree to the allotment tenancy [terms and conditions](#)?



I accept the [terms and conditions](#)

[Continue](#)

Payment summary

12 month allotment fee
2 x additional keys
+ concession

Amount to pay

£82.39

Apply for an allotment
Do you live in the Colchester Borough?

Yes No

[Continue](#)

[Home](#) > [Careers](#) > [Current opportunities](#)

Current opportunities

Marketing Officer

Salary	Contract type	Contract hours	Closing date
£23,406 to £29,862	Fixed term contract for 2 years	37 hours per week	August 7th 2019

Assistant Marketing Officer

Salary	Contract type	Contract hours	Closing date
£20,444 to £24,046	Fixed term contract for 1 year	37 hours per week	August 2nd 2019

Purchasing and Income Apprentice

Salary	Contract type	Contract hours	Closing date
£4.35 an hour for age 16-17 £0.15 an hour for 18-20 £7.70 an hour for age 21-24	Apprenticeship	37 hours per week	August 2nd 2019

Contact and Support Adviser - Housing

Salary	Contract type	Contract hours	Closing date
£17,363 to £20,444 pro rata for part time hours	Permanent	Either part time working 22.2 hours or Full Time - 37 hours per week	July 28th 2019

Things you need to know when making an application
[View information](#)

[Home](#) > [Allotments](#) > [Apply for an allotment](#)

Apply for an allotment

Your details

Please provide the following details to secure your plot.

First name

Last name

Telephone number

Email address

Your address
 Please enter your postcode and select your address.

[Find address](#)

[Continue](#)

Apply for an allotment
Payment summary

12 month allotment fee
 2 x additional keys
 + concession

Amount to pay
£82.39

[Continue](#)

[Recycling and rubbish](#) > [Report your missed bins](#)

Report your missed bins

What have we missed?

We should have collected your household rubbish, glass, cans, tins, and food waste. Let us know what we missed.

Black bags / wheelie bin
 Cans and tins
 Glass
 Food waste

[Continue](#)

Do you receive any benefits?

You are entitled to a concession on your part of your allotment tenancy fee if you receive any of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit including qualifying for free prescriptions
- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Guaranteed Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit with a disability element (you must have an income for tax credit purposes of £15,276 or less)

Yes No

[Continue](#)

The project (contd.)

A design system was developed in order to create much needed consistency that was not previously present. As an example of the situation, during a review of the current website, I recorded 15 different action styles (buttons and links) on a single page - this resulted in customers having to work extremely hard to know where to interact with the site.

We consciously and blatantly took inspiration from the Gov.uk design system which GDS actively encourage. Central Government have spent a lot of time and money to create a design system (and service language) that meet the needs of customers. Rather than ignore their learnings and start again, we intelligently used the Gov.uk design system to inform our own.

This design system has been used to improve not only the many transactions on the website but also drive important changes to improve the web templates used for presenting information to customers. A number of landing pages, series and content pages have been created to roll out to the 4,000+ pages on colchester.gov.uk.

Page Templates Before

The homepage features a teal header with 'GROWTH OPPORTUNITY WELLBEING' and navigation links for Home, Business, Our Council, and Media Centre. A 'Sign in / Register' button is in the top right. The main content area has a light blue background with a house icon. It includes a 'COUNCIL TAX' section for managing accounts online, a 'Single Person Discount Review' article, and a 'Tell Us What You Think' feedback form. Below these are sections for Disability Reduction, Charity Exemption, and Changes to Housing Benefits. The footer contains 'Quick Links' for various services like Jobs, Help Us Get it Right, and Freedom of Information, along with social media icons and a 'Follow Us' section.

This page is part of the 'Debt and Money Advice' section. It shows the 'MONEY ADVICE SERVICE' article, which discusses managing money through a free and impartial service. It includes a 'Related Articles' sidebar and a 'Feedback' button. The footer features 'Quick Links' for Jobs, Help Us Get it Right, and Contact Us, along with social media icons and a 'Follow Us' section.

This page is part of the 'Council Tax Enforcement' section. It displays the 'FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS' article, which provides answers to common queries about Council Tax Bandings and How Much You Pay. It includes a 'Related Articles' sidebar and a 'Feedback' button. The footer features 'Quick Links' for Jobs, Help Us Get it Right, and Contact Us, along with social media icons and a 'Follow Us' section.

Page Templates After

The homepage features a dark green header bar with the council's logo and navigation links. Below the header is a large hero image of a park. The main content area has a dark blue background with white text. It includes a 'Service name goes here with character limit of 50' placeholder, an introductory paragraph, and several call-to-action boxes with red borders. A sidebar on the left contains four primary link sections, each with a title, a short description, and a 'CTA link here' button.

Quick Links:
Jobs, Help Us Get It Right, Our Services, Freedom of Information, Amphora, Colchester Ambassadors, Brexit And You, North Essex Garden Communities.

Contact:
Rowan House, 33 Sheepen Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3WG, Contact Us.

Info:
Strategic Plan, Privacy Policy, Fraud, Customer Service Charter, Terms & Conditions, Disclaimer & Copyright.

Follow Us:
Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google.

Powered by Microsoft Dynamics, Built & Designed by The Online Team @ Colchester Borough Council

This template shows a breadcrumb navigation path at the top. The main content area features a large image of a park. On the right, there's a sidebar with a 'Primary link' section containing a list of secondary links. Below this is a 'Highly important notice about the service can go here' box. The main content area contains two 'Sub heading goes here' boxes, each with a 'Link goes here' button. At the bottom, there's a 'Back to top' button.

Quick Links:
Jobs, Help Us Get It Right, Our Services, Freedom of Information, Amphora, Colchester Ambassadors, Brexit And You, North Essex Garden Communities.

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Page last reviewed: 6 August 2019
Next review due: 6 August 2022

This template is similar to the previous one but includes more detailed sidebar content. The sidebar now lists all secondary links under 'Primary link'. It also includes a 'Secondary link' section with a list of secondary links. The main content area contains three 'Sub heading goes here' boxes, each with a 'Link goes here' button. The sidebar on the right contains a 'Primary link' section with a list of secondary links, followed by a 'Secondary link' section with a list of secondary links. At the bottom, there are several 'Text' sections with placeholder text and a 'Feedback' button.

Quick Links:
Jobs, Help Us Get It Right, Our Services, Freedom of Information, Amphora, Colchester Ambassadors, Brexit And You, North Essex Garden Communities.

Contact:
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What was learnt

I have learnt that whilst our initial approach was to iterate fast and hard, Local Government does work at it's own pace. Rather than push against this and potentially fail to bring stakeholders along the journey, we have been iterating in the background with a dev site. Once in a position to be given the green light, a program of pushes to the live site will be rolled out that will make dramatic and instant improvements to the customer experience on colchester.gov.uk.

Thank you.

Rob McCarthy