



# WHAT LIES BENEATH?

With the wide range of vinyls, laminates, carpets and flooring paints now available, flooring can be a creative way of adding a feature to your property, writes **Carolyn Brooke**

Wood-look vinyl flooring is affordable and appealing

**TENANTS LIKE NICE**-looking floors – when they move in that is. Despite comfortable, clean and good-looking floors factoring high on tenants’ “must haves” when viewing a place, most of them, even the very best ones, won’t really actually look after the floors that well. Spills, stains, heel marks, scuffing ... you name it.

Putting down durable, hard-wearing, decent-looking and low-maintenance flooring will go a long way in reducing headaches later. Like all refurbishments, it is almost never best to go really cheap and you need to get the preparation right.

## CARPET

Solution-dyed nylon carpets are popular with both landlords and home owners. Newer varieties won’t fade and stains can be more easily removed from them, not to mention they look and feel more natural.

Nylon also won’t harbor bacteria so is low-allergen and it doesn’t hold carpet beetles either, which attack natural fibres like wool.

Maintain to Profit co-owner Dean Larritt says the manufacturing process of nylon carpet has come a long way. He works with lots of investors in recarpeting and says they want durable and easy to maintain carpet that cleans up well when tenants move out.

“Nine times out of ten times investors are going for heavy-duty, entry-level-loop-pile carpet, either poly polypropylene or solution dyed nylon,” Dean says

“Occasionally they want something a little nicer. Often you’re better to spend a little more and go for a nice cut-pile as it looks fantastic down and more expensive than it actually is.”

Loop-pile tends to be a bit more durable than cut-pile but cut-pile feels more luxurious underfoot. Wear will also depend on the foot traffic through the property. A decent solution-dyed nylon carpet should price around \$99 to \$119 per carpet metre.

If you have a fireplace then make sure your hearth is adequate or put in a row of tiles in front of the fire. An ember generally singes wool and melts nylon and Dean says the combustion rates across all carpet types are very similar.

To prolong the carpet’s life, Dean recommends an annual professional clean and asking tenants to vacuum it regularly (the more people in the household the more often it should be done). What people don’t realise is that even if shoes aren’t worn inside, natural oils from skin and oily films from the kitchen get tramped throughout the house.

There is no real no-no with using wool carpet though and it wears similarly.

“Wool is a great product, it’s a natural product, it’s sustainable and it’s a kiwi thing.”

## VINYL OR LAMINATE

Vinyl can be a great flooring option for rentals and there are many hard-wearing, low-maintenance styles and colours available. It is relatively inexpensive to put down and creates a nice look instantly. This flooring costs between \$20 and \$50 per square metre.

Clip together options like Kaindl laminate flooring is also a hardwearing and nice-looking product sold through Mitre10. A photograph of a board is digitally printed on to a timber composite base with foil



**“A NICE CUT-PILE LOOKS MORE EXPENSIVE THAN IT ACTUALLY IS”**

underlay to help keep heat in and to hide imperfections in the floor.

“It’s extremely hard-wearing and has up to 30-year warranties on it, you really do struggle to try and scratch it,” Mitre 10’s building expert Stan Scott says.

Grip strip flooring is made from vinyl and works by the planks gripping together, not to the base floor. It can be used over the top of existing floors like concrete, wood and lino, saving prepping costs. It is hard wearing, easy to clean and maintain. Vinyl grip strip flooring is priced between \$48 and \$60 per square metre.

Cork tiles have good thermal qualities, dampen noise and are fairly easy to put down but will generally price up a little dearer than vinyl. Cork tiles come in 305mm squares.

#### TILES

There is absolutely no disputing that tiles look great but most often are best suited to higher-end rentals only. Tiles can crack if items are dropped on them and can be costly to repair.

The price of tiles range from \$15 to \$50 per square metre and price generally helps to determine durability. Mosaics and feature-strip panels can be used to really



Laminate flooring is easy to replace if damaged



Seal your concrete to prevent water stains

enhance a room.

A variety of colours are available and tiles can be cut to fit spaces. The key is having them laid correctly, the floor needs to be prepped and absolutely level.

#### PAINT SPRUCE UP

It is a bit of a trend now to paint floors but time and costs of doing this will largely come down to the condition of the existing floor. If the floor is already coated then a sand and clean may be all that is needed before recoating.

New surfaces are generally easy to prep, prime and seal before painting or staining, while older, worn and previously uncoated



Tiles are well-suited for a higher-end rental

surfaces can take a lot more work.

Karen Warman of Resene says staining or painting floors is a great refurbishment without the expense of totally new flooring.

“The Scandinavian look of white floors is becoming increasingly popular but floors can be painted any colour – darker paint on the floor will tend to anchor or ground the area whereas lighter colours will make it feel more airy,” Karen says.

She recommends using a product like Resene Colorwood first if staining and then to finish in clear coats of Resene Qristal ClearFloor. The stain helps to refurbish the natural timber colour and the finish helps to protect it. As the floor wears generally only the clear finish needs to be redone.

Non-slip products can be used in areas that flow from outdoors.

Concrete floors can also be stained and

then be finished with a clear coat to help protect the concrete and make it easier to keep clean. Dirt and dust tends to get ingrained into bare concrete.

Areas like a garage floor that have seen many years of wear should look great after painting, she says. Keeping in mind outdoor areas need a more durable finish so a two-pack product like Resene Aquapoxy is recommended for garage floors. It is a very hardworking area when you consider the combination of spills, equipment use and hot car tyres but once the floor is prepared and coated then it is much easier to keep clean.

Small areas of tiled floors can also be painted. Use the likes of Resene Waterborne Smooth Surface Sealer as an adhesion primer and then topcoats of your flooring finish.

**CORK TILES HAVE GOOD THERMAL QUALITIES, DAMPEN NOISE AND ARE FAIRLY EASY TO PUT DOWN**

“This can be a good option if you are planning a renovation in the longer term but need a budget friendly option in the meantime.”

If you only have a short time to redecorate before a new tenant is due to move in, check the odour level of products. While solventborne polyurethanes are very durable, they also tend to be the most odorous and the smell can linger for a while, she says.

To coat the floor of an average size room should cost no more than \$250 depending on the product chosen and number of coats. Of course you need to factor in the time of doing it yourself.

Always check with your local painting supplier, talk through your existing floor condition and the best options for prepping and recoating it. ■