

KLP DESIGN SOLUTIONS

KIT POWELL · UX & BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANT

DOCUMENT 4 OF 4 · LEADERSHIP

Executive Summary

A cross-discipline review of the Harbourly booking application — interface, experience and behavioural psychology — prepared for the leadership team.

CLIENT

Harbourly Ltd

PROJECT

Harbourly Mobile & Web Redesign

DISCIPLINES COVERED

UI · UX · Behavioural psychology

DATE OF ISSUE

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PREPARED BY

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VERSION

1.0 — Final

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This document is designed to be read on its own. Full detail sits in the UI Audit Report, UX Audit Report and Behavioural Psychology Audit Report. Sample report. “Harbourly” is a fictional product created to illustrate the format, structure and depth of a KLP Design Solutions audit. All findings are invented and client screenshots are omitted.

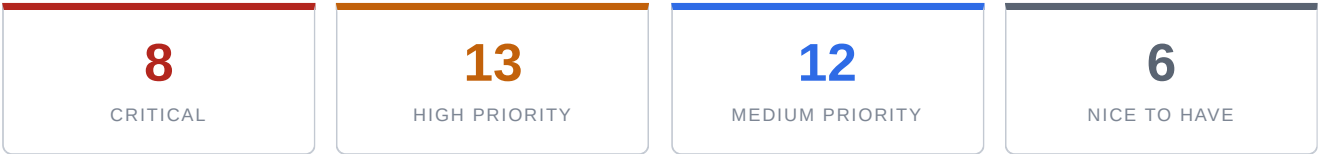
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The position in one page

Harbourly is a well-made product with a problem concentrated in one place. Search, discovery and property evaluation are genuinely good — fast, legible, and organised the way guests actually think. Almost everything that needs attention sits in the twenty seconds between a guest deciding they want a property and the money leaving their account, and in the trust mechanics wrapped around that moment.

Three things happen in that window. The product asks for account creation before it has shown a price or given a reason. It then raises the total by roughly 18% with fees that were never mentioned. And it applies urgency messaging that is not derived from real data, while running a countdown the guest cannot pause. Individually each is a common commercial decision. Together they mean the product is asking for maximum trust at exactly the moment it is giving the guest the most reason to doubt it.

The encouraging part is the shape of the work. Of the thirty-nine findings across the three audits, most of the highest-priority items are copy changes, token changes or deletions — not rebuilds. Two structural pieces, checkout architecture and pricing display, need proper design and engineering time. Everything else can be cleared while those two are scoped.



DISCIPLINE	FINDINGS	CRITICAL	HEADLINE
User interface	14	3	Accessibility failures and visual drift from an unenforced design system.
User experience	13	2	Strong discovery, weak checkout. Control and error recovery are the weak points.
Behavioural psychology	12	2	Trust spent before it is earned; anticipation and repeat custom left untapped.

01

Usability health check

The product scored against Nielsen's ten usability heuristics — the standard high-level measure of a product's usability. Detail in the UX Audit Report.

#	HEURISTIC	SCORE	ONE-LINE ASSESSMENT
1	Visibility of system status	3/5	Good in search, absent during payment processing.
2	Match with the real world	4/5	Natural language, with occasional internal jargon.
3	User control and freedom	2/5	No safe way back once checkout begins.
4	Consistency and standards	3/5	Visual and behavioural drift between product areas.
5	Error prevention	2/5	Invalid input accepted, then rejected late.
6	Recognition rather than recall	3/5	Users must remember their own filter choices.
7	Flexibility and efficiency	3/5	Nothing rewards a returning guest.
8	Aesthetic and minimalist design	4/5	Clean and confident throughout.
9	Error recognition and recovery	2/5	Error codes instead of explanations.
10	Help and documentation	3/5	Help exists but not where it is needed.

OVERALL: 29 / 50

A clear pattern sits behind these numbers. The product scores well on everything to do with presentation and poorly on everything to do with control, prevention and recovery. It has been designed carefully for the journey where nothing goes wrong, and left largely undesigned for the moments where something does — which are also the moments that determine whether a guest books again.

Flow completion risk map

Every primary user journey with a traffic light. Green means guests complete it without noticing anything; amber means they complete it but pay a cost; red means a meaningful share do not complete it at all.

FLOW	STATUS	WHERE IT BREAKS DOWN
Search & discovery	WORKING	No material risk. Filters are not persisted on the results screen — a minor recall burden.
Property evaluation	WORKING	No material risk. Badge density competes for attention.
Booking & payment	SERIOUS	Account wall at step 3; 18% price rise at step 6; no route back to amend dates without losing everything.
Account creation	FRICTION	Eleven fields where four are needed, none marked optional, no autofill support.
Booking management	FRICTION	Any amendment requires contacting support.
Cancellation	SERIOUS	Entry point hidden five screens deep; refund amount never stated before confirming.

READ THIS ALONGSIDE THE REVENUE

The two red flows are the two that touch money. Everything the product does well happens before a guest has spent anything, and everything it does badly happens at or after the point of payment. That is the commercial shape of the finding, and it is why the recommended sequence starts at checkout rather than at the visual layer.

03

Accessibility compliance summary

A WCAG 2.1 Level AA snapshot, drawn from the UI Audit Report. Relevant to procurement, regulated sectors and international scaling.

REF	CRITERION	STATUS	CONSEQUENCE
1.4.1	Use of colour	Fail	Colour-blind guests cannot tell available dates from unavailable ones.
1.4.3	Contrast (minimum)	Fail	Secondary text unreadable in bright light and for many older guests.
1.4.11	Non-text contrast	Fail	Form field boundaries are hard to see.
2.4.7	Focus visible	Fail	Keyboard and switch users cannot tell where they are.
2.2.1	Timing adjustable	Fail	Checkout timer cannot be extended.
1.1.1	Non-text content	Partial	Icon buttons unnamed to screen readers.
1.3.1	Info and relationships	Partial	Headings not exposed semantically on three screens.
2.1.1	Keyboard	Partial	Date picker requires a pointer.
1.4.10	Reflow	Pass	Works at small viewport widths.
3.3.1	Error identification	Pass	Errors are described in text.

COMPLIANCE POSITION

The product does not currently meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA. Five criteria fail outright. None is structurally difficult — four of the five are token or CSS-level changes deliverable inside a single sprint. The exposure is real but the remedy is small, which is an unusually good position to be in. Relevant contexts: UK public sector procurement requires AA conformance, the European Accessibility Act applies to consumer booking services, and enterprise buyers increasingly request an accessibility statement during due diligence.

04

What works well

Strengths across every discipline reviewed. These are assets to protect during any redesign.

- ✓ **Search and filtering are genuinely strong**
The filter taxonomy matches how guests actually narrow a choice, results are fast, and the feedback loop between refining and seeing results is tight. Users feel effective here, and that is not accidental.
 - ✓ **The property page answers the right questions**
Information is grouped the way guests evaluate a place rather than the way a database stores it. Photography and review volume do real work.
 - ✓ **Visual craft is high where the design system is followed**
Where components come from the shared library, the product looks considered and current. The problem is drift, not taste.
 - ✓ **Language is plain and unpretentious**
No unnecessary jargon and no marketing voice in functional copy. The copy problems are of framing, not of clarity.
 - ✓ **Progress is shown honestly in checkout**
"Step 3 of 7" is more honest than most competitors manage, and worth keeping even while improving how it is framed.
 - ✓ **Reduced-motion preferences are respected**
A detail most products miss, and a sign that accessibility has been considered somewhere in the process.
 - ✓ **No subscription traps or disguised advertising**
Promoted listings are labelled and there are no forced-continuity mechanics. The commercial posture is more honest than the urgency messaging suggests.
-

05

Biggest usability problems

The most consequential findings from the UX Audit Report.

ID	PROBLEM AND CONSEQUENCE	PRIORITY
UX-03	Account creation is forced before any value is delivered. At step 3 of 7, before a price is shown, guests must register with no explanation and no guest-checkout alternative. Forced registration before checkout is among the most consistently documented causes of abandonment in e-commerce, and it costs most with first-time customers.	● CRITICAL
UX-04	The full price appears only at the final step. Fees add roughly 18% and are not shown in search, on the property page, or at any earlier step. This is both an abandonment driver and a compliance exposure under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act.	● CRITICAL
UX-05	There is no safe route back to change dates. Going back at any point after step 3 discards everything with no warning. Re-checking dates is normal behaviour when booking a holiday, and the product punishes it with total data loss.	● HIGH PRIORITY
UX-06	Account creation asks for eleven fields where four are needed. None are marked optional and platform autofill does not engage, so the form is typed out manually at the product's weakest step.	● HIGH PRIORITY
UX-02	Cancellation is hidden five screens deep. Converts a self-service action into a support call and reads as deliberate obstruction whether or not it is.	● HIGH PRIORITY

06

Biggest visual design opportunities

The most consequential findings from the UI Audit Report.

ID	OPPORTUNITY AND CONSEQUENCE	PRIORITY
UI-01	Secondary text fails contrast requirements everywhere. A single token change resolves the most widespread accessibility failure in the product and improves legibility on every screen — including outdoors, which is where a booking app is used.	● CRITICAL
UI-05	Calendar dates are too small to tap reliably. 32pt targets against a 44pt guideline, on the one screen every customer must pass through. Mis-taps here produce wrong-date bookings, support contacts and refunds.	● CRITICAL
UI-09	Availability is shown by colour alone. Around 8% of men cannot distinguish available from unavailable dates, and will conclude the app is broken.	● CRITICAL
UI-03	Dark mode is an inversion rather than a designed theme. Roughly a third of mobile users run dark mode permanently, and evening browsing is when a booking app is most used.	● CRITICAL
UI-08	Design tokens are not the source of truth. The root cause of most visual drift. Fixing it makes every other UI fix roughly an order of magnitude cheaper, so it pays for itself twice.	● HIGH PRIORITY

07

Biggest psychological misalignments

The most consequential findings from the Behavioural Psychology Audit Report.

ID	MISALIGNMENT AND CONSEQUENCE	PRIORITY
BP-01	Urgency messaging is manufactured rather than real. "3 people are looking at this right now" appears regardless of actual activity. It works until a guest notices, at which point they revise their view not of the message but of the company. There is also live regulatory exposure — the CMA has taken enforcement action against this practice in online booking.	● CRITICAL
BP-02	Three taps to book, five screens to cancel. Difficult cancellation does not prevent cancellation; it converts it into a support call and a grievance, at the last interaction before the next booking decision.	● CRITICAL
BP-07	A late price rise forces the whole decision to be re-made under a countdown. Drip pricing creates the loss and the timer removes the ability to process it calmly. This is the highest-abandonment-risk moment in the product.	● HIGH PRIORITY
BP-08	Payment failures leave guests unsure whether they have been charged. "Error 4021" at the moment a guest most needs certainty. The most trust-destructive screen in the product, resolved by writing better sentences.	● HIGH PRIORITY
BP-05	The emotional peak of the journey is met with "Transaction complete". Confirmation is both the peak and the ending, which is what guests remember and describe. Spending nothing there is spending nothing at the only moment they are fully receptive.	● HIGH PRIORITY

08

Highest impact changes before launch

Drawn from all three documents and ordered by impact for effort. This is the list to work from.

01	Show the all-in price from search onward — UX-04, BP-07	Medium effort Critical
	Removes the single largest abandonment driver, the compliance exposure, and the cognitive shock that makes the countdown timer feel coercive. Expect slightly lower click-through and materially higher completion.	
02	Remove the account wall; offer guest checkout — UX-03	High effort Critical
	Move registration to after payment and frame it as saved effort for next time. The single highest-value structural change available.	
03	Remove fabricated urgency; use real scarcity — BP-01	Low effort Critical
	A deletion. Removes the largest trust liability and the clearest regulatory risk. Real demand data in this category is genuinely persuasive and survives scrutiny.	
04	Fix the five accessibility failures — UI-01, UI-05, UI-06, UI-09, UX-07	Low–medium effort Critical
	Four are token or CSS changes. Clears the AA position, removes procurement friction, and improves the product for every guest, not only disabled ones.	
05	Make cancellation visible and state the refund — UX-02, BP-02	Low effort Critical
	One link in two places plus the refund figure before confirming. Reduces support cost and removes a visible trust problem.	
06	Rewrite payment and validation errors — UX-08, BP-08	Low effort High
	State the money position first, then the cause, then the next step. Copy only.	
07	Cut account creation to four fields with autofill — UX-06	Low effort High
	Removes seven fields from the weakest step and lets platform autofill do most of the rest.	
08	Rebuild the confirmation screen around the stay — BP-05	Low effort High
	Property, dates, host and countdown instead of a reference number. Changes what guests remember and repeat.	
09	Design dark mode properly rather than inverting it — UI-03	Medium effort Critical
	A five-step elevation ramp and desaturated brand colours for the dark theme. Token-level work with no layout change, affecting roughly a third of mobile users on the theme they use every evening.	
10	Consolidate the design tokens — UI-08	High effort High
	Replace hard-coded values with token references and add a lint rule rejecting literals. Enabling work: it makes every other fix in this report substantially cheaper.	

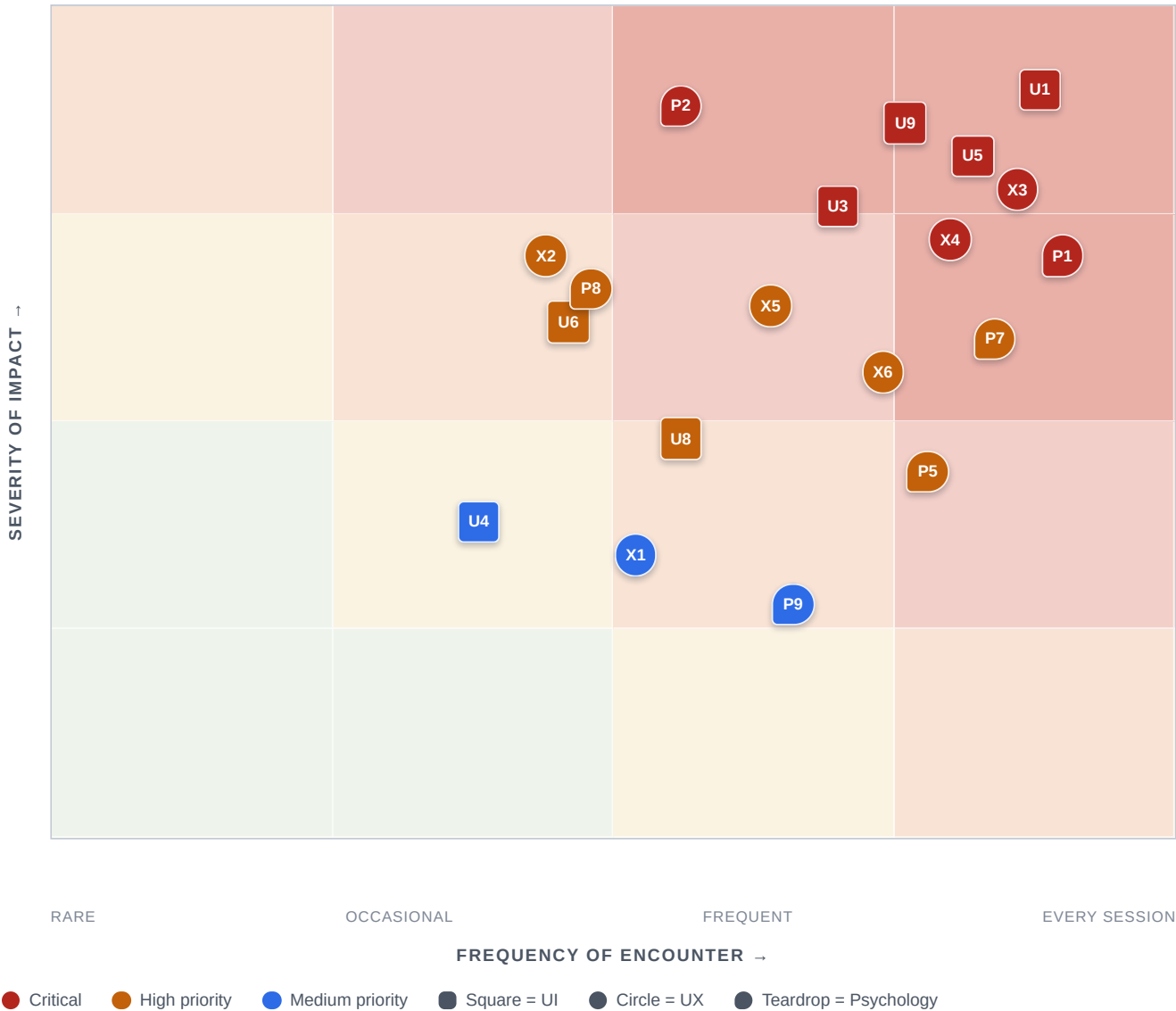
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|-----------|--|------------------------|
| 11 | Standardise on one primary button treatment — UI-07
Retire the gradient and shadow variants and enforce one primary per screen in the component library. Restores the product's most valuable piece of visual vocabulary. | Medium effort
High |
| 12 | Reduce corner radii, shadows and loading indicators to one set each — UI-10, UI-13, UI-14
Immediately visible as an overall lift in polish, with no functional risk attached. | Low effort
Medium |
| 13 | Make cancellation visible and state the refund — BP-02
One link on the confirmation screen and in the email, plus the exact refund figure before the confirm step. Removes the asymmetry between how easy it is to commit and how hard it is to leave. | Low effort
Critical |
| 14 | Rewrite payment failure messages — BP-08
State the money position first — "no payment has been taken" — then the cause, then the next step. Copy only, and it resolves the most trust-destructive screen in the product. | Low effort
High |
| 15 | Show the all-in price before the point of commitment — BP-07
Removes the late loss that forces guests to re-make the entire decision under a countdown, and defuses the highest-abandonment-risk moment in the journey. | Medium effort
High |
| 16 | Add reassurance at the point of payment — BP-09
A security statement, card scheme marks and a one-line restatement of the cancellation policy above the pay button. Their absence is itself a signal, and guests read it. | Low effort
Medium |
| 17 | Neutralise the notification prompt and untick marketing consent — BP-03, BP-10
Equal-weight buttons, a concrete reason to accept, and consent unticked by default. Removes a reactance cost and a GDPR exposure in the same change. | Low effort
Medium |

WHAT THIS COSTS

Items 3 to 8 total roughly one to two weeks of combined design and engineering effort and clear six of the eight Critical findings. Items 1 and 2 need a proper design cycle because they touch checkout architecture and pricing display — scope them now, deliver them next. The design token consolidation (UI-08) should run alongside as enabling work, because it turns the remaining visual findings from component-by-component edits into single-line changes.

Combined NASA criticality matrix

The most critical findings from every discipline reviewed, on a single grid, plotted by frequency of encounter against severity of impact.



PLOT KEY

- U1** UI-01 · Text contrast fails AA

U3 UI-03 · Dark mode not designed

U5 UI-05 · Calendar targets too small

U6 UI-06 · No focus indicator

U8 UI-08 · Tokens not authoritative

U9 UI-09 · Colour-only availability

X2 UX-02 · Cancellation buried

X3 UX-03 · Forced account creation
- X4** UX-04 · Late full-price reveal

X5 UX-05 · No safe route back

X6 UX-06 · Eleven-field sign-up

P1 BP-01 · Manufactured urgency

P2 BP-02 · Asymmetric friction

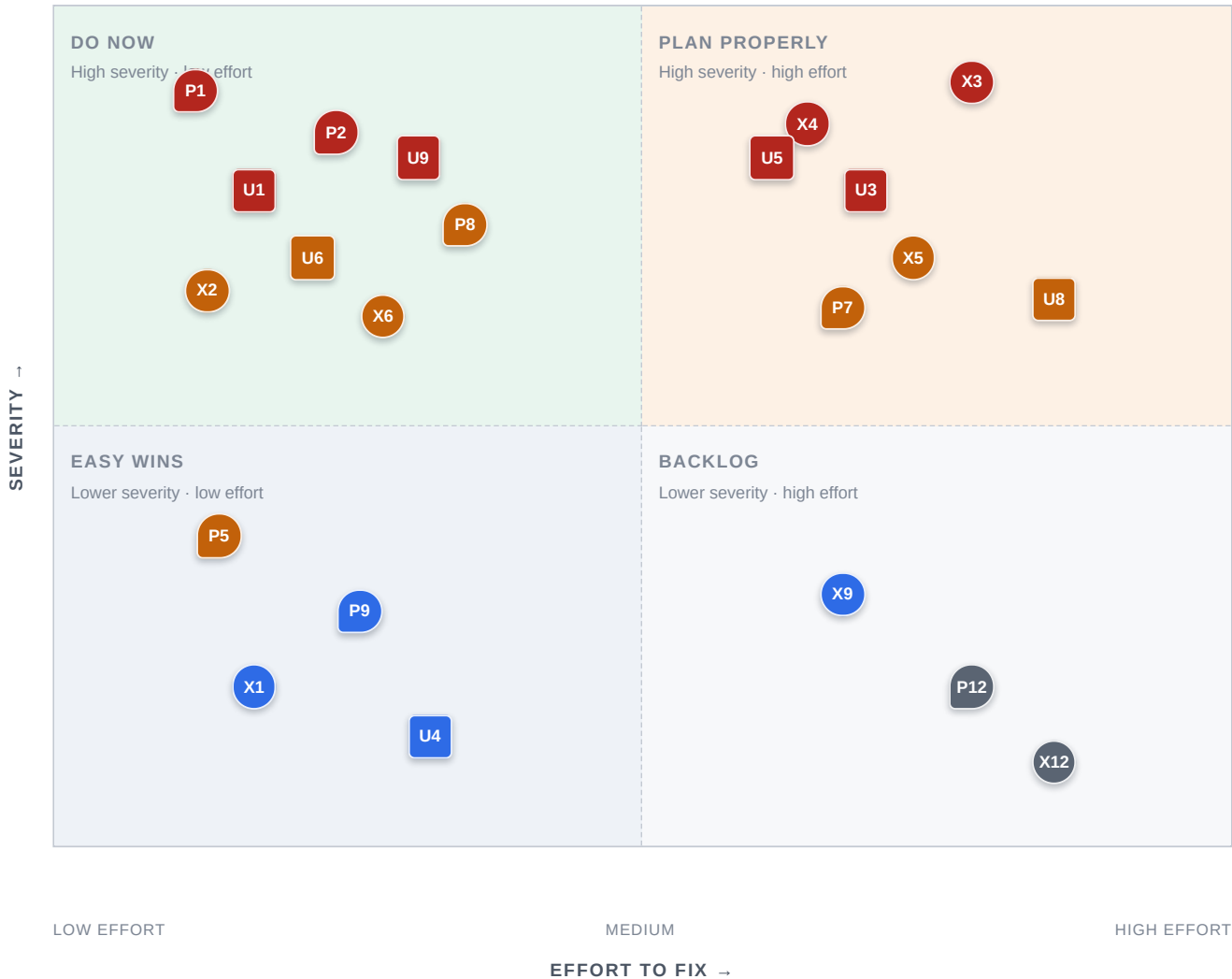
P5 BP-05 · Flat confirmation moment

P7 BP-07 · Re-decision under pressure

P8 BP-08 · Unclear payment failure

Combined Severity vs effort matrix

The unified view of highest impact for lowest effort across every discipline reviewed. This is the prioritisation picture for the delivery team.



THE COMMERCIAL READ

Eight findings sit in "do now", and six of the eight Critical items are among them. That is unusual and favourable: the majority of this product's most serious problems are copy changes, token changes and deletions rather than rebuilds. Only two items genuinely require a design cycle — checkout architecture and pricing display — and both should be scoped now and delivered next. If the leadership team takes one thing from this document, it is that the gap between the current product and a materially better one is roughly two weeks of focused work plus one properly scoped project.

11

Recommended next steps

A clear sequence for the leadership team, with what each stage delivers and what it depends on.

1

THIS WEEK

Decide on the urgency mechanics

This is a leadership decision, not a design one, and it blocks nothing else. Removing fabricated scarcity will likely reduce click-through from search to property and improve completion and repeat booking. Agree now which metrics you are optimising for, so the change is not reversed a fortnight later on the wrong evidence.

2

SPRINT 1 · ~1 WEEK

Clear the "do now" quadrant

The five accessibility fixes, the payment and validation error rewrite, visible cancellation with a stated refund, the four-field sign-up form, and the removal of fabricated urgency. Roughly one week of combined design and engineering; clears the majority of the Critical findings.

3

SPRINT 1, IN PARALLEL

Consolidate the design tokens

Enabling work rather than a visible improvement. Replace hard-coded values with token references and add a lint rule preventing literals. Every subsequent visual fix becomes a single-line change rather than a component-by-component edit.

4

SPRINT 2 · SCOPE

Design the checkout and pricing changes properly

All-in pricing from search onward, guest checkout with post-payment account creation, persistent flow state so guests can amend dates safely, and a pausable hold timer. These interact, so design them together rather than as four tickets.

5

SPRINT 3 · DELIVER

Build the new checkout and rebuild the confirmation

Deliver the scoped checkout work alongside the confirmation screen redesign, so the guest's first experience of the new flow ends well rather than ending on a reference number.

6

POST-DELIVERY

Validate with real users

This engagement was expert review, not user testing. Five moderated sessions on the new checkout would confirm the predictions here and are likely to surface two or three things no heuristic review can. Worth doing before the changes are considered finished.

7

ONGOING

Prevent the drift from returning

Most findings in the UI audit are symptoms of an unenforced design system rather than individual mistakes. A component library treated as the source of truth, plus contrast and target-size checks in the build pipeline, stops this audit needing to be repeated in eighteen months.

WHAT I WOULD DO FIRST, IF ONLY ONE THING WERE POSSIBLE

Show the real price in search results. It resolves the largest abandonment driver, removes a live compliance exposure, defuses the cognitive overload at checkout, and removes the product's most damaging trust problem — in one change, in one place.

Prepared by Kit Powell · KLP Design Solutions · kitpowell.com

Full detail in the companion documents: UI Audit Report, UX Audit Report, Behavioural Psychology Audit Report.