

Escape plan

An architect remodels a rural retreat
for her family and friends to share

Report: Heather Wade Photography: Rachael Smith Styling: Katie Sellers



HOMES : BERKSHIRE

Seeking a haven away from the turmoil of the capital, Barbara Weiss and her husband Alan Leibowitz revisited the historic market town of Hungerford, where they came across a turn-of-the-century detached property with the potential to make the perfect family bolt hole. Located in a secluded area of outstanding natural beauty, three miles from the town and with just one immediate neighbour, the setting was idyllic but the interior told a different story.

"When we bought it, the previously rented house was dreary, unbelievably damp and depressing with low ceilings and exposed pipes," recalls Barbara, who as an architect had a clear idea of what could be achieved. In contrast, she wanted a home that was bright and spacious, exploited the breathtaking views and was easy to maintain given the fact that their primary base would remain in London.

Work began to open up the rooms, replace the windows and raise the ceilings on the first floor into the roof pitch. Barbara reworked the room layouts to bring clarity and symmetry to the footprint of the house, balancing an open-plan kitchen-diner with a living room and guest bedroom on the ground floor and a master suite with a children's den and bedroom on the first floor.

The most involved structural changes were made to create the large kitchen-diner by removing the load-bearing wall and chimney breast separating the existing kitchen from a small living area. "Standing on the ground floor, we could see right up to the eaves through the hole that was left by the chimney stack," says Barbara.

When the dust settled, the kitchen could begin to take shape according to Barbara's designs. "I wanted it to be functional, user friendly and easy to maintain," she says. ►

Right: Open shelving adds interest and provides a practical storage solution for a household that entertains frequently, causing a high turnover of crockery and glassware

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Q&A: ARCHITECT/ HOMEOWNER

Describe your home's style?

"We wanted to reinterpret the traditional look, though it's not typically English. I'd define the style as somewhere between vernacular and timeless modern."

Where is your favourite place in the house?

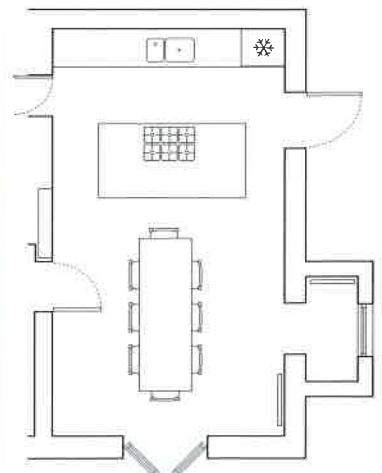
"I love the kitchen for its natural light. The French doors also make the most of the wonderful views over the herbaceous border and the fields in the estates beyond."

Did the entire project run smoothly?

"Yes. I had worked with the consultants before and the local contractors were recommended to us by an architect friend. I have nothing but praise for them. As we weren't living on site, I made the trip monthly and one of my colleagues made frequent visits to the house and relayed progress along with photos. There were no surprises."

What advice do you have for someone embarking on a similar project?

"Don't even consider living in the house during the work. And get a good architect for the best design and detailing, besides keeping the project on track."



HOMES : BERKSHIRE

COST

A similar kitchen would cost between £15,000 and £20,000

CONTACTS

DESIGN

Architect Barbara Weiss Architects (020 7609 1867 or www.barbaraweissarchitects.com)

Contractor Acorn Builders Pewsey (01672 564141)

KITCHEN

Unit carcasses Ikea (0845 355 1144 or www.ikea.co.uk)

Undermounted sink GEC Anderson (01442 826999 or www.gecanderson.co.uk)

Healthcare mixer tap Armitage Shanks (0870 129 6023 or www.armitage-shanks.co.uk)

Fridge-freezer Indesit (0870 010 4309 or www.indesit.co.uk)

Oven Siemens (0870 840 3300 or www.siemensappliances.co.uk)

Hob Britannia (01253 471111 or www.britannialiving.co.uk)

Extractor Zanussi-Electrolux (0870 572 7727 or www.zanussi-electrolux.co.uk)

Dishwasher Bosch (0870 727 0446 or www.boschappliances.co.uk)

Table and chairs Ikea, as before

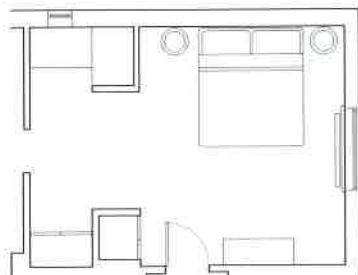
Pendant lights Original BTC (01993 882251 or www.originalbtc.com)

Paint Farrow & Ball (01202 876141 or www.farrow-ball.com)

BEDROOM

Wall lights Bestlite (www.bestlite.dk) at Best & Lloyd (0121 455 6400 or www.bestandlloyd.co.uk)

A simple desk area is slotted between the bedroom and ensuite. A window has been inserted to provide natural light and a delightful view across the countryside. The couple found the antique chair at an auction – for similar try After Noah (020 7351 2610 or www.afternoah.com)



Practical whitewashed softwood flooring has been used throughout, giving the scheme cohesion.

