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The image shows a contemporary kitchen with a central island. The island has a dark countertop and a stainless steel base. On the island, there are two stainless steel pots. The background features wood-grain cabinetry, a stainless steel range hood, and built-in appliances including a double oven, a refrigerator, and a water dispenser. The lighting is warm and focused on the kitchen area.

Grand opening

An open-plan scheme that effortlessly merges furniture with architecture has provided one couple with the perfect multifunctional space

Report: Jackie Daly Photography: Dianne Chung

OXFORDSHIRE HOME



Above: In line with the philosophy of the design, the built-in kitchen sits seamlessly within the architecture of the space with tall units in elm veneer lining flush to the wall. The island defines the function of the area and creates a place for cooking and eating. **Right:** The capacious multifunctional space is zoned for work, rest and play. As storage elements are built in to the walls, the room allows for a funky pool table, a large dining table, a TV space and a roomy sofa creating a lounging zone. **Below:** Anyone working at the island can socialise while family and guests enjoy the space, and also take in the views of the garden framed in vast panes of glass.





Most of us love the notion of indoor-outdoor living despite our inclement weather. And, as modern interior design dictates the opening up of the ground-floor space to create one multifunctional room, a perfect opportunity arises to blend interior and exterior schemes.

Rob Gelling and his wife Jen decided on such a design route when they extended the rear of their 1960s Oxfordshire home, seizing the chance to incorporate a full-length glazed panel and bi-fold doors at the back of the space, which create picture-perfect views of their beautifully groomed gardens.

"When we moved from London to the countryside, we wanted a village location but a modern lifestyle rather than the chocolate box ideal," Rob explains. "We have two young

daughters and needed our home to reflect the way we live – building the extension gave us that opportunity."

The resulting design is a capacious space dedicated to work, rest and play that is bright, light and utterly contemporary. However, Rob did have a major advantage when designing this room, and in particular the sleek kitchen that forms the hub of his home – he is the owner of Kitchen Architecture, builtbaup's largest retailer in Europe based in Oxford with a new showroom due to open in Putney just this month.

"It's a case of practicing what we preach – creating open-plan schemes and areas that are much more sociable," Rob professes. "We have been designing kitchens as living spaces since the late '80s and, since then, the walls have continued to come down to allow people to

live their modern lifestyle. In our own home we wanted family and friends to come together on an informal basis and as both my wife and I work full time, it was important to make the most of the short time we have to spend together each day."

Naturally, the couple chose one of builtbaup's most popular designs for the kitchen in their own home, the b3 – a range created with the ethos that furniture should blend with architecture. Therefore, the kitchen, like other zones in this space, melds with the backdrop with just the island defining its use. "We wanted something very light, clean and simple and this is a feature of the b3 collection," Rob continues. "It's easy to turn into blocks of furniture so you get a less fitted look in the room. Whenever we approach designing a kitchen for anyone, we look at the whole living space, the lifestyle. ▶



Practicality is important, but the main drive is sociability. Function follows form in people's choices and luckily what you can have with b3 is the ability to offer both."

While a neutral palette was employed throughout the interior to maximise the feel of light and space, the kitchen injects warmth with rich veneers of natural elm that stretch across the back of the space in the form of tall units residing flush within the walls. Essential appliances including a Gaggenau oven, steam oven, warming drawer and coffee machine are placed together in this area to keep the overall look streamlined, and are incorporated at ergonomic heights for convenience, while the tambour shutter unit beside disguises small appliances that can be pulled out for use when required.

"The first tall unit houses a fridge-freezer with ovens placed in a block alongside – a trademark of what we do," Rob says. "Then there's a raised dishwasher with coffee machine above it, and to the right a tambour unit with cutlery and crockery drawers below. What this means is that you can unload the dishwasher directly into the drawers or cups into the tea and coffee area without having to take a step."

Conventionally, the sink with Quooker boiling tap has been placed below a window atop graphite laminate units featuring an aluminium edge for a strong, masculine look. This aesthetic is carried through to the facing island that benefits from an 80cm flush-fitting induction hob creating the perfect prep-cook space directly facing the sink – an ideal working triangle, in fact.

The island's presence in the space is emphasised by a gorgeous slab of elm veneer that rests cantilevered on the island surface to create a breakfast bar that's wonderful for casual dining, while the extractor above hints at the island's functionality.

"You don't have less stuff when living a minimal lifestyle, just more storage"

The island's secondary purpose is to create visual boundaries between this work zone and areas of rest and relaxation. To one side, facing the patio doors, is a comfortable lounging

area, where a huge chocolate-coloured sofa rests beside a contemporary fireplace, while looking from the viewpoint of the cook working at the hob, areas for formal dining and leisure are in sight. Here, a sleek glass-topped dining table, selected from bulthaup's Duktus range, sits beside a modern pool table – this one, novel element bringing fun as well as a splash of contemporary colour into the space.

"We both lived and worked in London for 13 years, so when we moved to Oxford I insisted if there wasn't a village pub with a pool table, we would have to have one at home," Rob smiles. "And, as we tend to have a lot more people coming out to stay with us, it's a great way to entertain."

As in the kitchen, the furniture that serves these areas of activity nestles seamlessly within the architecture and the storage complementing the dining table is b3, picking up on the graphite and veneer combination utilised in the kitchen to harmonise the overall scheme. "There's lots of storage along there and a place for the kids' toys," Rob elaborates. "You don't have less stuff when living a minimal lifestyle, just more storage."



Left: The main appliances – including the Gaggenau oven, steam oven, warming drawer and coffee maker – are incorporated flush into tall units along one wall, while an 80cm induction hob rests on the island counter. The only functional element to emerge from the architecture is the extractor sited above the hob. **Above:** The creation of floor-to-ceiling bi-fold patio doors allows the interior scheme to blend effortlessly with the exterior gardens. Throughout flooring is kept neutral to ensure continuity indoors and out. **Right:** A cantilevered slab of elm rests on the island bringing warmth against strong, graphite-finished units and creating a lovely spot for casual eating. **Below:** The clever use of zoning in the space ensures that spectacular views can be seen from both the living and dining areas. The addition of double Velux windows in the ceiling floods the space with natural light, while ceiling spots and downlighters create a cosy atmosphere by night.



DESIGN

Kitchen Design Rob Gelling, Kitchen Architecture Ltd (01865 426 990 or www.kitchenarchitecture.co.uk)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry b3, bulthaup, Kitchen Architecture Ltd, as before

Appliances Ovent, steam oven, coffee maker, warming drawer, induction hob, Gaggenau (0870 125 4500 or www.gaggenau.com);

Dishwasher and fridge-freezer with icemaker, Miele (01235 554455 or www.miele.co.uk)

Taps Kitchen tap, KWC (020 8675 9335 or www.kwc.com); Boiling tap, Quooker (020 7923 3355 or www.quooker.co.uk)

Flooring For similar try Porcelanosa (0800 915 4000 or www.porcelanosa.co.uk)

Dining table Duktus, bulthaup, as before

Pool table Bristol Pool Tables (0117 957 5599 or www.bristolpoolandsnooker.com)

Fireplace For similar try Platonic Fireplaces (020 8891 5904 or www.platonicfireplaces.co.uk)

Sofa For similar try Dwell (0845 675 9090 or www.dwell.co.uk)

Reclining chair Dwell, as before

COST

A similar ground-floor renovation would cost around £100,000



Large-format tiles extend across the entire floor space and are used to create cohesion between inside and outside, where level decking extends into elevated patios featuring raised flowerbeds that have an architectural feel echoing the structure in the house.

"Again, this stems from making the living spaces more sociable. Integrating the garden into the design ensures inside feels much bigger," Rob concludes. "When we have a good summer, the doors are left open from eight in the morning till ten at night. The whole space is very light and friendly and our daughters in particular love it." **KBB**