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SEPTEMBER 2010

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When Chris and Kathy Hand began searching for a house to accommodate their three energetic children and two pets, they hoped to find something large, light and modern that would provide a contrast to the dark, old-fashioned Tudor cottage they were living in. They were keen to remain in Oxfordshire so the children didn't have to change schools, but with the area more renowned for its traditional (albeit charming) architecture they realised it might prove difficult to find a home that would fulfil their vision.

Perseverance eventually paid off though, when they came across a large new-build in the early stages of completion. "This property immediately caught our eye because there weren't many large houses being built in the area and it was still at a stage where we could put our own stamp on the design, which was an attractive prospect," recalls Kathy. In true contemporary fashion, the L-shaped building comprises an open-plan kitchen, dining and living area where all three zones link effortlessly together and floor-to-ceiling glass is employed where possible to maximise views of a stunning garden bordered by mature trees.

The developer had already specified a Bulthaup kitchen as he felt that the company's contemporary, streamlined designs would complement the house's architecture perfectly. Fortunately, Chris and Kathy love their new kitchen and were involved in the project early enough to liaise with the designer, Marcus Watkins of Kitchen Architecture, and tailor certain elements to their lifestyle.

"The house has a very sociable layout and a great connection with the garden so I was keen to maintain this within the kitchen," recalls Marcus. "The key concept behind the island was that the person using it is always facing out towards the living and dining areas with a view through the glass doors to the garden so they don't feel disconnected from the rest of the house. However, functionality was equally important so I have ensured that everything is positioned ergonomically and related items are always close at hand – the dishwasher is set up off the floor with a drawer below for cleaning tabs, whilst to the right, directly below the roller shutter, I have included drawers for crockery and cutlery, all of which allow for easy unloading."

The tambour door slides open to reveal a second workspace ideal for preparing drinks or snacks as this is where the toaster and kettle are kept and there are several shelves for holding mugs. For added convenience, the Gaggenau coffee machine has also been built in beside this work area, while an oven, steam oven and warming drawer in matching



# Into the light

A new-build property boasting large, open spaces offered the perfect solution for a couple wanting a modern family home – within a traditional, rural setting

Report: Felicity Barlow



The key principles dictating the layout of this kitchen were functionality and sociability. Thus, all appliances are accompanied by drawers for storing relevant utensils, whilst food prep and cooking is carried out at the island – facing towards the surrounding seating areas and garden





**Above:** A sizeable island provides plenty of room for preparing food and features a flush-fitting induction hob with magnetic control knobs that can be removed and stored away to keep the surface looking neat and streamlined

**Left:** The furniture in the adjoining living area was carefully selected to complement the kitchen palette with luxurious grey sofas from Andrew Martin harmonising with the cabinetry and the warm, organic hues of the coffee table offsetting the breakfast bar and pale porcelain flooring

aluminium finishes are vertically configured to the left. Further to the left are a tall larder and two fridge-freezers that are concealed behind dark grey aluminium cabinetry for a sleek, clean look.

"We chose these units because they are contemporary and stylish but also very practical as they don't show up fingerprints," recalls Kathy. "We then echoed the grey in the furniture for the surrounding living and dining areas as, by sticking to this palette, the garden colours come crashing through the windows in fantastic contrast – the green really pops out against the grey. Also, because we have a white island we wanted a different colour for the units to avoid creating an over-clinical effect."

The island is fashioned from a white Bulthaup laminate with aluminium edging, which was again dictated by its clean, modern aesthetic and practical, easy-clean finish. As with the rest of the kitchen, convenience has also been considered with equal measure and two sinks are positioned across from the dishwasher. The induction hob, which sits flush with the surface, resides above a drawer containing pots and pans. There is even a dedicated drawer for herbs and spices built alongside the hob so that Chris and Kathy can quickly access these when cooking without having to move.

The island offers ample storage with cupboards extending along the full length of the other side as well as a casual eating area in the form of a cantilevered breakfast bar. Merging with the ▶



**Above:** An open-plan layout provides a large and sociable space ideal for family living. It also maximises natural light and affords views of the gorgeous garden from the kitchen, living and dining areas via full-height glass doors. A skylight above the island brings in natural light above the kitchen zone.

**Below:** The cantilevered breakfast bar sits perpendicular with the island to form an impressive L-shaped structure that follows the shape of the room. An appliance bank at the back of the space houses ergonomically positioned appliances, which sits next to a tambour unit that rolls up to reveal a prep area with smaller appliances such as the kettle and toaster.

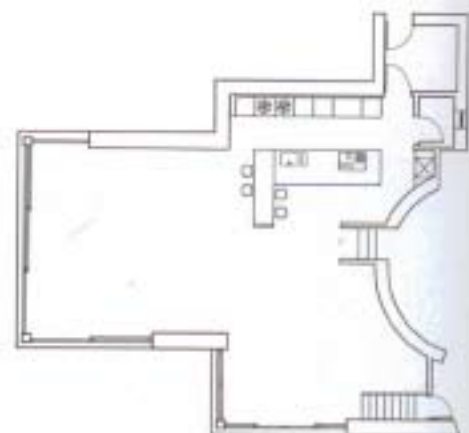


island to create an impressive L-shaped structure that echoes the contours of the room, its light oak veneer brings a warming element to the space and enhances its sociable feel.

"I designed the breakfast bar so that it lines up perfectly with the wall leading into the main entrance hall and ensured it was nice and deep so that Chris and Kathy can comfortably sit and read the papers or the children can spread out with their homework while their parents cook," elaborates Marcus. Moreover, by elevating the bar and extending it over the island, there is plenty of room for the entire family to gather here.

Although plenty of natural light pours into the room through large glass doors and a skylight above the bank of tall units, lighting was also carefully considered and is integral to the room's overall look and functionality. "Rather than blanketing the room with light, I wanted to create pools of light where the Hands will need it most so that the room doesn't feel too stark by night," says Marcus. "So while there is strong, functional lighting over the main work areas, the space still offers a contrast of lighter and darker areas to create some atmosphere."

Thanks to the practical layout and cohesive styling throughout, the kitchen, living and dining zones now blend beautifully together, as well as with the garden, to provide Chris and Kathy with the sociable, modern space they craved. "To me the kitchen has always been the centre of family life and the hub of everything that goes on within the household," Kathy enthuses. "I love the way that everything works – I move so quickly and easily around the work space and it's a beautiful, relaxing place to be."



## SourceBook

### DESIGN

Marcus Watkins of Kitchen Architecture  
(01865 426990 or [www.kitchenarchitecture.co.uk](http://www.kitchenarchitecture.co.uk))

### KITCHEN

**Cabinetry** Dark grey aluminium with aluminium edge, Bulthaup from Kitchen Architecture, as before  
**Island and worktop** Laminate with aluminium edge in Kaolin white, Bulthaup from Kitchen Architecture, as before  
**Breakfast bar** Oak, Bulthaup from Kitchen Architecture, as before  
**Appliances** Coffee machine, ovens, induction hob and extractor, aluminium finish, Gaggenau (0844 892 8988 or [www.gaggenau.com](http://www.gaggenau.com)); Fridge-freezers and dishwasher,

Miele (0845 365 6600 or [www.miele.co.uk](http://www.miele.co.uk))

**Flooring** Porcelain tile. For similar try Porcelanosa (0800 915 4000 or [www.porcelanosa.co.uk](http://www.porcelanosa.co.uk))

**Sofas and coffee table** Andrew Martin (020 7225 5100 or [www.andrewmartin.co.uk](http://www.andrewmartin.co.uk))

**Dining table and chairs** Prelway (020 7584 8223 or [www.prelwayinteriors.com](http://www.prelwayinteriors.com))

**Barstools** Griggs & Mackay (0118 946 1440 or [www.griggsandmackay.com](http://www.griggsandmackay.com))

### COSTS

A similar kitchen would cost around £60,000

Horizontal bar handles finish the cabinetry at the back of the island prep area. "I love the way this kitchen functions – all the cupboards make it very easy to tidy at a moment's notice and I move very quickly and easily around the working space," says Kathy. "I wanted a reliable, well made kitchen and that's exactly what we now have"

