

New heights

A converted barn in the Oxford countryside is stripped back to its original shell to reveal breathtaking proportions and gorgeous oak structures

Report: Felicity Barthwick | Selected photography: Lyndon Douglas





Making the move from city to country is usually a rather big step, but for Larissa and Justin Hardy, who have four young children, the decision was easy. Their tall, narrow London house simply didn't offer enough space internally or externally, so when they came across an old converted barn in Oxford, they knew they had found the perfect spot to raise a family.

"Discovering this property was a dream come true," enthuses Larissa. "The house itself is around 5000sq ft with an enormous garden, which leads through a little gate to the village green – thus creating an extended garden for the children." The interior, however, was very old fashioned and didn't make the most of its generous proportions, as all the high ceilings were concealed.

Hence, the couple welcomed the idea of redesigning it to accommodate their lifestyle and, following a recommendation from a

friend, they enlisted the help of architect David Nossiter in stripping the barn back to its original oak structure and starting afresh. "As well as exposing all the beautiful wooden beams and columns, which the previous owners had covered over, we reconfigured the ground floor into a contemporary open-plan design, but in such a way that it doesn't look out of place amid its rural setting," he recalls.

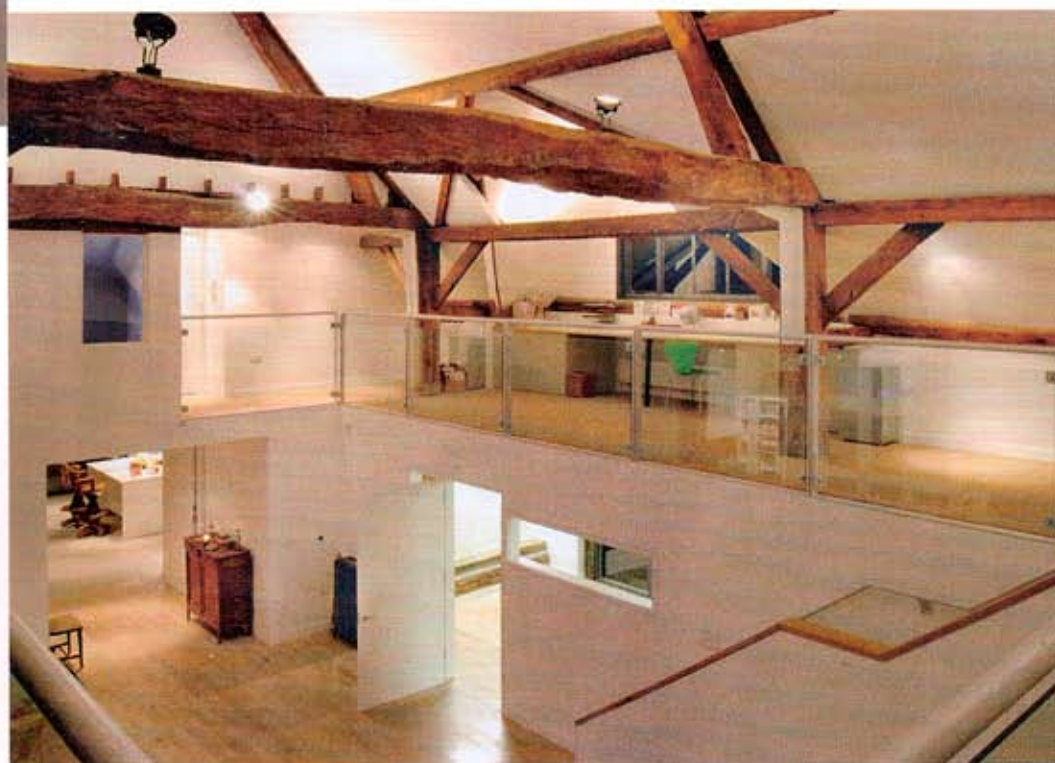
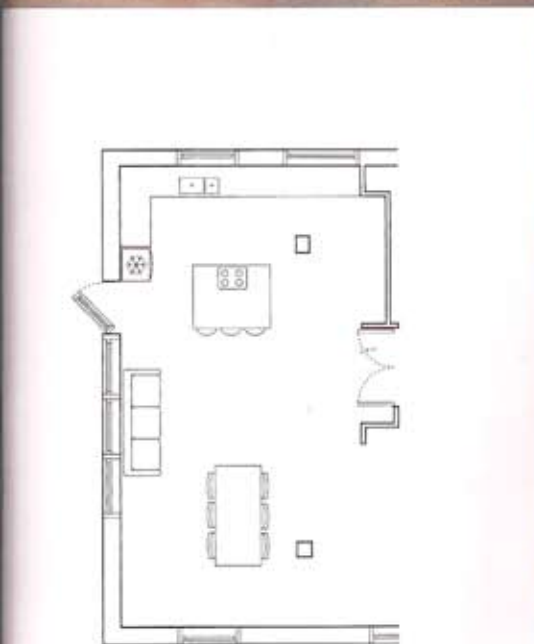
As a result, the house now comprises a central reception-living area, which stretches up eight metres to the apex of the pitched roof, allowing guests to experience its sheer strength and scale. To one side of the reception space sits a vast kitchen, dining, living room and adjoining playroom, with an equally large master bedroom-bathroom suite and second bedroom directly above. The other side of the house, meanwhile, accommodates the remaining four bedrooms, a couple of bathrooms, utility room and study.

The main family areas and master bedroom were deliberately positioned on this side of the house as it offers the best views across the garden and village green, which are highlighted by floor-to-ceiling glass panels across both levels. "One of the key concepts for this project was to connect the house with the garden and surrounding countryside and, by redesigning it like this, the Hardys are now very much a part of the land around them," explains David, "especially in summer when they can slide the glass doors back and open up an entire side of the house."

With the oak beams providing such a striking and dominant visual feature, the couple decided to keep the rest of the interior relatively pared down. The kitchen, for example, is very clean and contemporary with handleless white-gloss units from Leicht teamed with Okite composite worktops and pale porcelain flooring. However, a vibrant green splashback and some colourful Arne ▶



Above: The generous proportions of the original barn are celebrated with fluid open-plan spaces and ceilings that reach to the apex of the roof **Below:** Architect David Nossiter has completely opened up and reconfigured the interior, creating an ideal layout for family living. "Because it's all open, the children can ride around the entire ground floor on their scooters – it's great," enthuses Larissa, "especially after living in a tall, thin townhouse spread across several levels" **Left:** The open-plan kitchen-diner is the hub of this home providing plenty of space for the couple to entertain and for the children to play both indoors and out



Jacobsen Series 7 dining chairs inject some colour into the scheme, while the oak dining table and large, comfy sofa evoke a warm, welcoming feel.

"One thing I really like about the dining area are the two walls of shelving, which are all mismatched lengths and sizes to give them character," says Larissa. "We have draped some small lights along the back of them so that, in the evenings, we can turn off the lights in the kitchen and just have these on, which creates a really nice, cosy ambience."

As with the colour scheme, the layout of the kitchen was largely dictated by the oak beams – especially a thick structural pillar in the corner, which influenced the size and position of the island. "We really wanted an island that could accommodate three or four barstools so the children can sit up here and do their homework whilst I cook," says Larissa. Moreover, as the kitchen flows into an adjacent playroom, she can keep an eye on them from here when they're playing.

A run of low-level units directly opposite the island offers copious amounts of storage as well as housing two Blanco sinks and dishwashers to keep the surfaces clear of dishes at all times. Further storage is provided by floor-to-ceiling units on either side, with those on the left housing double Küppersbusch ovens and the longer run on the right incorporating a larder.

Directly above the large, warm kitchen-living space is an equally inviting open-plan bedroom-bathroom suite where a high sloping ceiling and sweeping views across the landscape provide immediate wow factor. The aim in here, explains Larissa, was to create a really calm, serene place away from the children where they could relax, which they have achieved beautifully by marrying fresh white walls with soft, creamy carpet and an elegant chandelier hanging from the eaves.

Scattered cushions in luxurious fabrics and colours add to the sumptuous feel, while furniture, which has been kept to a minimum, is predominantly made from wood to complement the beams. The

only storage consists of two small mahogany chests of drawers, as the dressing room, which runs behind the bed, offers plenty of space for the couple's clothes. On the other side of the vast room, a small partition wall demarcates the bathroom zone, thus concealing the enormous bath, yet still maintains a modern, open-plan feel.

"We have had open-plan sleeping-bathing spaces in our previous homes and just really liked it, plus it allows us to enjoy the beautiful views from the bath," explains Larissa. "David did a really amazing job in here because there is a huge oak beam right where we wanted the bathroom to go, and our brief included a double shower, double basins, storage space and as large a bath as possible."

Indeed, David has skilfully accommodated all these elements into a practical, attractive layout that works perfectly with the architecture. A vanity unit swathed in luxurious grey polished granite takes centre stage, clearly dividing the space into bathing on one side, where the couple can enjoy the views, and a WC and shower on the other where it's more intimate. He also deliberately built all storage beneath the vanity unit and about a metre above it, enabling them to look straight through to the end of the room to the full-height windows when standing at the basins.

Vibrant green tiles at the foot of the bath add a splash of colour and link the room visually with the kitchen, while a small storage niche provides room for soap and other bathing paraphernalia. "I have actually put a little Buddha in this recess and propped a sea-themed painting against the other wall so at both ends we have something peaceful to look at," says Larissa. Combined with the decadently large bath, garden views and gorgeous grey stone on the vanity unit, the space possesses a very soothing feel.

It appears the Hardys now have their dream home, perfectly suited to hectic family life. The ground floor offers plenty of space for the children to play in both inside and out, while upstairs the bedroom-bathroom suite forms a haven of tranquillity where the couple can unwind and appreciate their idyllic surroundings. **KBB**

Below: Large sliding glass doors extend along one side of the master bedroom to maximise views out across the garden and village green beyond, with a mid-height glass panel built just inside the door to ensure safety when open. **Opposite page:** Following the same design ethos as the kitchen, the bedroom scheme is relatively simple to ensure the architecture remains the focus. However, the few pieces that do adorn the space include an elegant chandelier and scattered cushions in sumptuous fabrics, thus creating a luxurious, sanctuary-like feel.





DESIGN

Architect David Nossiter Architects
(020 7708 5186 or www.davidnossiter.com)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry Classic FS Frosty White, Leicht
(www.leicht.de) from Pentangle Kitchens
(020 7729 7171 or www.pentanglefurniture.co.uk)

Worktops Okite composite, Prismo

Blanco, Pentangle Kitchens, as before

Splashback Emalit classic coloured glass, Saint-Gobain (01322 425900 or www.sggprivalite.com)

Flooring Corinto Verde ceramic tiles,
The Ceramic Tile Company (01494 474736
or www.ceramictile.co.uk)

Taps Kitchen mixer with pull-out spout, Grohe
(0871 200 3414 or www.grohe.co.uk)

Appliances Oven, combi oven, induction
hob, extractor, two dishwashers and
fridge, all Küppersbusch (01235 861916
or www.kuppersbuschuk.co.uk)

Undermounted sinks Blanco (020 8450 9100
or www.blanco.co.uk)

Sofa Habitat (0844 499 1111
or www.habitat.co.uk)

Cushions The Conran Shop (0844 848 4000
or www.conranshop.co.uk)

Dining table For similar try Barncrest
(01326 375982 or www.barncrest.co.uk)

Dining chairs Series 7 by Arne Jacobsen,
available from Utility Design (0151 708 4192
or www.utilitydesign.co.uk)

BEDROOM

Bed For similar try Ikea (0845 358 3364
or www.ikea.co.uk)

Cushions on bed Ikea, as before

Throw The White Company (0845 678 8150
or www.thewhitecompany.com)

Chandelier Antique market in France. For similar
try Christopher Wray (020 7751 8656
or www.christopher-wray.com)

Chests of drawers Mahogany. For similar
try Natural Bed Company (0114 272 1984
or www.naturalbedcompany.co.uk)

Carpet 100% wool berber, Period Flooring
(01737 823053 or www.periodflooring.com)

Curtains For similar try Terence Timms
(0845 250 3562 or www.curtainslondon.co.uk)

BATHROOM

Bath Kaldewei (020 8337 1441
or www.kaldewei.com)

Brassware Grohe, as before

Green tiles The Ceramic Tile Company, as before

Vanity unit Moisture-resistant MDF with fine-
roller finish, bespoke by contractor to architect's
design, John R Luck Ltd (07970 544536)

Vanity top Polished granite, Totem Stone
(01494 862003 or www.totemstone.co.uk)

Basins, shower tray and screen
Headington Bathrooms (01865 762591
or www.headingtonbathrooms.co.uk)

WC Ideal Standard (0800 590311
or www.ideal-standard.co.uk)

Flooring Corinto Verde ceramic tiles,
The Ceramic Tile Company, as before

COST

A similar kitchen would cost around £20,000,
while a similar bedroom would cost around
£5000 and the bathroom around £10,000



Above: "A small partition wall at the end of the bath provides some separation and protection from the bedroom space, yet still maintains an open-plan feel," explains David. "Also, because it's quite long, it draws your eye down to the end of the room where large windows reveal the beautiful garden below and village green beyond" **Below:** A gorgeous grey-brown polished granite flows across the top of the vanity unit, spilling down the side and over the back towards the bath for a clean, luxurious aesthetic. Plenty of storage, meanwhile, is available in the handleless white units below and open shelving above, allowing the couple to personalise the space with elegant accessories

