

SOCIAL GATHERING

Now unrecognisable from its galley roots, radical alterations to this Edwardian property have resulted in a large and practical open-plan kitchen cum family room, which is ideal for the modern lifestyle



As working parents to two teenagers, the layout of separate formal dining room, traditional lounge and small kitchen simply didn't suit the lifestyle of John and Sarah Shortt, who live in this five-bedroom detached property in Reading. During a whole house refurbishment, the previous kitchen was reconfigured, with one side wall removed to open the room into a new single-storey extension, and the other side wall rebuilt with two large

windows instead of three small ones to let more light into the room.

"The old kitchen had insufficient work space and was always cramped when we were entertaining," says John. "This building work allowed us to connect the cooking and living zones, so that the kitchen was no longer separate from the areas the rest of the family occupied. We wanted room to prepare food and for the family to be together, a seating space for

guests, and the ability to cater for large groups easily."

The couple kept a notebook in the kitchen for several weeks before the build started so that they could write down the things that they liked and disliked most about the old space, as and when they thought of them. "For example, we needed lots of space for dried goods like rice and spices, and we wanted deep drawers next to the hob for bottles of oil," says John. ●●●





“We approached three designers with a list of ‘ingredients’ we wanted in the kitchen, and chose Michael Taplin at Elements Kitchens as he best understood what we needed from the space and refined it into a stylish and workable design,” John continues. “Little touches like lining up the edges of the island with the ends of runs of units make the design very pleasing to the eye, and although restrictions placed on the build by the Local Authority left us with one large end wall in which we weren’t allowed to put windows, Elements created a design that

put this area to good use. An appliance wardrobe here houses two ovens, a warming drawer and two fridge freezers, without being overwhelming in size as it is all recessed. Other clever elements include subtle plinth lights to give some ambient nighttime illumination, and a pop-up power point on the island. There is also a large Häfele four-compartment bin for waste, composting and recycling, and Michael suggested using a super-quiet dishwasher as the room is open-plan so that it wouldn’t be intrusive over the television or conversation.” ●●●





“The brief was to create a modern space that didn’t look too much like a kitchen,” explains Michael. “It is contemporary with clean lines, a mix of ‘Avant Beige’ hi-gloss and ‘Izari’ wenge wood doors by Second Nature with a pale ‘Moon White’ granite worktop. The island bridges the two areas, and we used more wood at the sofa end of the room for a less ‘kitcheny’ feel. It is now a very balanced space that blends well from kitchen to lounge, also complemented by the clients’ choice of wenge sideboard in the living area and by the wallpaper, which echoes the design of the pendant lamp used over the island.”

The central island is in fact one of the Shortts’ favourite features. “It gives plenty of space for cooking and preparation as well as seating for four people, and is topped in one single slab of 2.5x1.5m granite, chosen in person from the suppliers,” says John. “Being able to cater for large groups is now really easy, without the cook feeling isolated – we have had 20+ people over several times and guests can mingle, without being in the way. The kitchen is open and welcoming, and the children and their friends feel very much at home here. It’s a beautiful space, where the family now spends most of our time.” ●●●

Advice from the designer

“With the popularity of the open-plan, ‘sociable kitchen’, it’s important to make sure that you get the proportions right to maintain a feeling of space. Designs can easily become too crowded with sofas, tables, islands, dressers and the kitchen itself.”

Michael Taplin, Elements Kitchens



Details

Kitchen design by Michael Taplin at Elements Kitchens
0118 959 9919 | www.elementskitchens.co.uk

Neff B15M42N oven, U15E42N double oven, T26R66N five-burner gas hob, N22H40 warming drawer, K4204 built-in 50/50 fridge freezers x2 & S51T69X1 fully integrated dishwasher 0844 892 8926 | www.neff.co.uk

Elica Ring extractor 01252 351 111 | www.elica.co.uk

Caple Wi6123 dual-zone wine cabinet
0117 938 1900 | www.caple.co.uk

Perrin & Rowe Rubiq tap in chrome
01708 526 361 | www.triflowconcepts.com

Rangemaster undermounted stainless steel bowl sink
0870 789 5107 | www.rangemaster.co.uk

Habitat Newman sofa 0844 499 1111 | www.habitat.co.uk

Nova honed marble floor tiles from The Stone Gallery
01276 691 501 | www.thestonegallery.co.uk

Harlequin Identity Illuminate wallpaper
0845 123 6805 | www.harlequin.uk.com

Craig and Rose 1829 Alabaster paint
01383 740 011 | www.craigandrose.com

Grace leather barstools
0118 958 1356 | www.beadleandcrome.co.uk

Brushed aluminium Artichoke light
0116 266 9225 | www.bluesuntree.co.uk

Moon White granite worktop
0845 293 2781 | www.stone-circle.com

Jeldwen gatefold patio doors
0845 122 2890 | www.jeld-wen.co.uk

