



# Stroke OF GENIUS

A crisp white kitchen cloaked in Corian keeps this lower ground floor space feeling light and airy

Report: **Felicity Borthwick** Photography: **David Still**

**Previous pages, left (p132):** much nicer than having two pieces of glass.”  
 “This is the longest glass splashback we’ve ever done – about 3.8m long. The first attempt blew up as the standard toughness can’t cope with this length,” says designer Tim Higham. “We got there in the end though, and it does look

**Right (p133):** Having created such a vast, open-plan space the couple wanted large-format tiles to minimise joins and retain the room’s calm, uncluttered feel.



Corian has become a very fashionable material for modern-day kitchens, but it’s not often you see it used so extensively as it is in Catherine and Stephen Brien’s home. As well as flowing across the top of the enormous island, the luxurious material wraps itself around the island’s base and across the front of the cupboard doors and drawers.

“It is quite rare to see Corian being used for the cabinetry, but we tend to do this a lot as it’s so practical and creates such a lovely clean, seamless look,” explains Tim Higham of Higham Furniture, who designed the kitchen. “The material is so tactile too; you almost just want to stroke the cupboard doors, as strange as that might sound!” he laughs.

Higham Furniture regularly suggests just two finishes for its contemporary kitchens: Parapan for those who want a glossy finish and Corian for those after more of a matt look, like Catherine and Stephen. Corian was also the perfect choice for this particular kitchen as it’s located on the lower ground floor and has quite a low ceiling. Thus, enhancing the sense of light and space was key.

“We were basically in the process of integrating a basement ‘granny flat’ into the main house when we started looking for kitchens,” Catherine recalls. “We didn’t know exactly what we wanted or where the kitchen was going to go – at the front or back – but we knew we wanted something very clean and sleek. We gave Bulthaup as a reference to the sort of style we envisaged.”

“The couple were opening up their entire basement – taking out walls to create more of a through room rather than it being such a rabbit warren – but there was still only ▶



**Above:** The Briens opened up the entire basement to maximise the feeling of space and light, with nothing but a central staircase separating the kitchen from the living area and adjoining garden.

**Middle left:** Ensuring every bit of potential space has been utilised, storage for the couple’s glassware was built in beneath the window seat. Thus, the breakfast bar, wine storage unit and glasses are all conveniently grouped together.

**Far left:** This high-end Gaggenau hob was a perfect choice for Catherine and Stephen, who love to cook. Countertop appliances are all coordinated in stylish red for a splash of colour.

**Left:** Beautifully crafted wooden units are concealed behind sleek, white fascias.



**Below left:** The dining table has been positioned beside the island and enjoys views through to the living room and garden beyond. This open-plan design allows light from the back of the house to filter up towards the kitchen.

kitchen to keep it feeling bright and airy and to bounce around the light that spills through the front window.

**Right:** “The steam oven is brilliant – I never even knew it existed before we started looking at kitchens, but now we use it all the time,” enthuses Catherine.

**Below right:** White Corian dominates this lower ground floor



**Middle left:** These stylish, burgundy-coloured barstools are a perfect fit for this contemporary kitchen where red features as the key accent colour.

to bring some warmth and character to the minimalist white space. The simple glass pendant lights above, meanwhile, provide a decorative touch that’s in keeping with the kitchen’s pared-back aesthetic.

**Left:** An oak dining table and chairs have been introduced

natural light at the front and back so it was important to use something bright that would maximise the feeling of light,” Tim explains. “That’s why I suggested using Corian.”

The couple also sought a design that would offer plenty of storage and prep space “without taking over the room” aesthetically. Thus, by constructing the island’s work surface and cabinetry all from the same, seamless material, it gives this very simple, streamlined look that doesn’t impose itself on the adjacent living area, which is separated from the kitchen by just a staircase.

The worktop along the wall is also in white to match the rest of the scheme, but has been fashioned from granite, as the Briens wanted the most heat-resistant surface possible surrounding the hob. “It sounded like Corian would probably have been fine, but we love to cook, and we cook a lot, so we wanted something that we could just whack pans straight on without having to worry,” explains Catherine.

However, with so much white in place, the pair then worried that the kitchen might look a bit cold or clinical so they introduced some lovely honey-coloured oak to the scheme. The dining table and chairs – which sit alongside the island – are made of oak, as is the breakfast bar and the bench seat beneath the window. As is standard with all Higham kitchens, oak is also employed for the carcasses and internal shelving, which gives a lovely splash of warmth whenever the cupboards are opened up.

With the couple’s passion for cooking, top-end appliances were also high on their wish list. “We really wanted high-quality ovens and hobs and Stephen is into wine so he hoped to incorporate a wine storage unit into the scheme,” explains Catherine. A large Gaggenau oven, steam oven and hob have been integrated into the wall units, along with a Miele fridge, while a dishwasher, wine storage unit and undercounter freezer are housed neatly within the island.

As such, the couple are now perfectly equipped to indulge in all manner of culinary adventures. What’s more, with the large central island unit, they have all the prepping space they’ll ever need. “It’s such an efficient use of space; we love it. Tim and Higham Furniture were so pleasant to work with – I would recommend them to anyone,” Catherine concludes. KBB



**Above:** Catherine and Stephen requested plenty of drawers in their new kitchen as they offer easier access to the contents than low-level cupboards. “Using Corian allowed the island worktop to flow continuously down the side, which looks much cleaner

than having a side panel and joins,” explains Tim.

**Below:** Another benefit of Corian worktops is that sinks and draining board can be seamlessly moulded for a neat, streamlined look.

## SourceBook

### DESIGN

**Kitchen** Tim Higham of Higham Furniture (0800 047 0235 or [www.higham.co.uk](http://www.higham.co.uk))

### KITCHEN

**Cabinetry** Corian doors ([www.corian.co.uk](http://www.corian.co.uk)) with oak interiors, Higham Furniture, as before

**Worktops** (on island) Corian, as before, supplied by Higham Furniture, as before; (on hob run) Quartz Arenastone Bianco Puro granite, supplied by Sabre Stone (01483 268333 or [www.sabrestone.co.uk](http://www.sabrestone.co.uk))

**Flooring** White porcelain tiles. For similar try Porcelanosa (0800 915 4000 or [www.porcelanosa.com/uk](http://www.porcelanosa.com/uk))

**Appliances** Undercounter freezer, wine storage unit, dishwasher and fridge, all Miele (0845 365 6600 or [www.miele.co.uk](http://www.miele.co.uk)); Steam oven, oven and hob, all Gaggenau (0844 892 8988 or [www.gaggenau.com](http://www.gaggenau.com)); Extractor, Westin (01484 421585 or [www.westin.co.uk](http://www.westin.co.uk)), all supplied by Higham Furniture, as before

**Taps** Pro 3 boiling-water tap, Quooker ([www.quooker.co.uk](http://www.quooker.co.uk)) and Franke Basel tap ([www.franke.com](http://www.franke.com)), both supplied by Higham Furniture, as before

**Dining table and chairs** For similar try Dwell (0845 675 9090 or [www.dwell.co.uk](http://www.dwell.co.uk))

**Lights** (above dining table) Clear Glass Dome Light from Baileys Home & Garden (01989 561931 or [www.baileyshomeandgarden.com](http://www.baileyshomeandgarden.com))

**Armchair** Heal's (0870 024 0780 or [www.heals.co.uk](http://www.heals.co.uk))

**Barstools** For similar try Furniture In Fashion (01204 792700 or [www.furnitureinfashion.net](http://www.furnitureinfashion.net))

### COST

Kitchens from Higham Furniture start at £15,000 (cabinetry only)

