

# Perfectly formed

WITH CAREFUL PLANNING AND AN EYE FOR DESIGN, RIKKE AND IAIN MITCHELL WERE ABLE TO FASHION A FAMILY-FRIENDLY SCHEME OUT OF A LACKLUSTRE SPACE

Feature **ANDREA DEAN** Photography **RICHARD GADSBY**

## Optional extras

Bold furniture and accessories, including industrial-style black metal chairs and matching powder-coated pendant lights, add interest and contrast to the relaxed dining area





### *Project profile*

**THE OWNERS** Rikke Mitchell, who owns Nordic Sky Interior design ([nordiesky.co.uk](http://nordiesky.co.uk)), her husband Iain, who's a commercial director for a property company, and their children Isla, 4, and Erik, 2

**THEIR HOME** A Gothic-style former lodge house and chapel in Beckenham, Kent

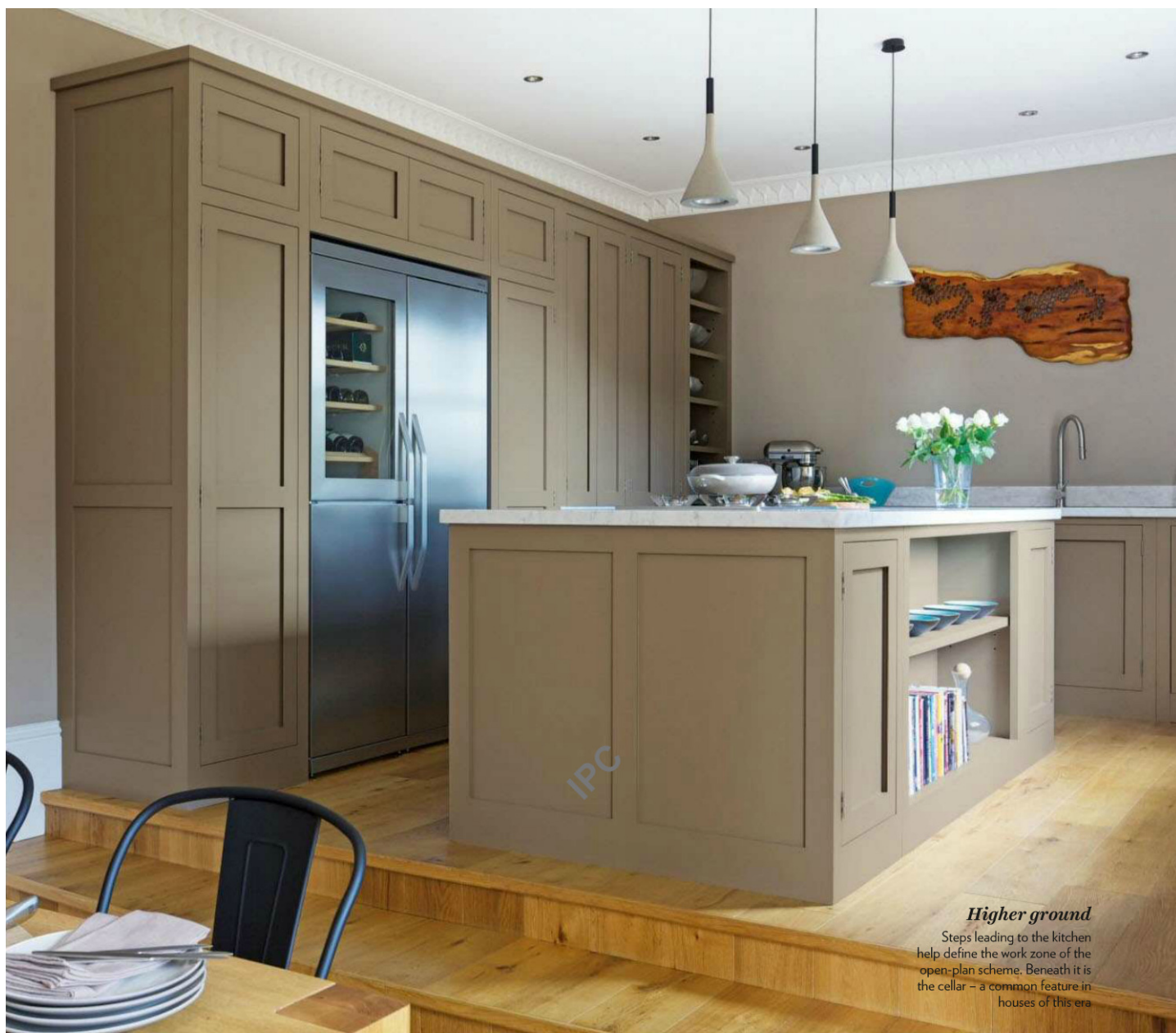
**THE PROJECT** A complete kitchen refurbishment

**ROOM SIZE** 8 x 5m

**DESIGNER** Tim Higham of Higham Furniture

**CABINETRY** Bespoke handleless Shaker-style units, £22,000, Higham Furniture

**BUDGET** Around £40,000



### *Higher ground*

Steps leading to the kitchen help define the work zone of the open-plan scheme. Beneath it is the cellar – a common feature in houses of this era

**T**aking on a period property has its challenges, as Rikke and Iain Mitchell discovered when they bought their 200-year-old house.

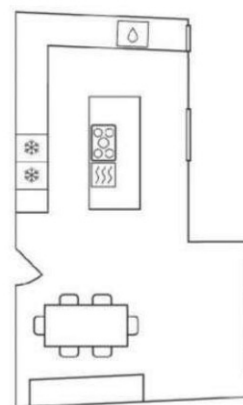
Problems such as dry rot and damp had to be dealt with before they could even think about tackling the makeshift kitchen the previous owners had installed before selling. 'We wanted to create an open layout with a nice big island and plenty of storage,' says Rikke. 'And good-quality solid-wood units that would last for years.'

Stripped back to its raw state and with new oak floorboards laid throughout, the room had plenty of potential. It was a decent size, with lots of windows, so the couple felt they didn't need to extend or make structural changes. Knowing

precisely what she wanted from her new kitchen, both functionally and aesthetically, Rikke contacted a number of kitchen companies and cabinetmakers. 'It was surprisingly difficult to find anyone who was happy to work with my plans rather than coming up with their own,' she says. 'Some tried to sell me units I didn't need, and one suggested blocking out one of the windows.'

Then Rikke came across Tim Higham of Higham Furniture via a magazine article, and his handleless Shaker-style cupboard doors were exactly what she'd been looking for. 'Tim had some great ideas, always listened to me, and is a great craftsman,' says Rikke. 'The final result is a warm, stylish, child-friendly kitchen, which perfectly complements the style of the house.'

### *The layout*







FROM TOP LEFT  
***Clever corner***

An internal rack system gets the maximum out of an awkward area

***Twice as nice***

Ceramic sinks echo the sleek marble worktop

***Cook station***

To save on legwork, prepping and cooking is confined to a single area

***Pulling power***

These solid-wood internal drawers look smart and make everyday crockery easy to access

***Behind closed doors***

'The warmth of the lacquered birch interiors adds an element of luxury,' says Rikke



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#### All areas covered

Rather than tiles, the couple opted for rustic oak flooring throughout, which adds richness of colour. It's also warmer underneath, and fragile objects are less likely to break if dropped.



## DESIGN SOLUTION *Rikke explains...*

### What was at the top of your wish list?

I had my heart set on an island with a hob, giving me a dedicated place to cook. A tall larder unit with a concealed worktop was a must, too. Everything's perfectly organised on the racks and shelves inside it, with room for the microwave underneath, yet when the doors are shut it looks like another cupboard.

### Talk us through the storage

There's loads! As well as the sideboard, a bank of units runs down the side wall and has open shelving, cupboards, drawers for large pans, crockery and glasses. The island offers further storage, along with a sweep of base units on the back wall by the sinks.

### Are there any clever design features?

My husband Iain and I are both tall, so the units are slightly higher than standard. Also, the doors are on ball-bearing hinges and open right out to 180 degrees, whereas most stop at slightly over 90 degrees. Tim advised us to incorporate a pull-out bin next to the sink, which I wasn't keen on at first. Now I realise it's very practical, because our children Isla and Erik can't get to it or put things that aren't rubbish into it, as toddlers tend to do.

### How did you choose the worktops?

The surfaces are from a local family-run stonemasons called Geology. They imported

a number of slabs for me to choose from and also had photos sent from suppliers in Italy for extra choice. They were really lovely to deal with and their service was fully bespoke. The worktop is double the normal thickness, and they supplied further marble for the top of the sideboard in the dining room.

### Why did you opt for these appliances?

Smeg is a reliable brand and I like the look of its products. Having two ovens is very handy, and I prefer the precision of a gas hob to induction. We looked at lots of fridge freezer options and, although an American-style model would have been the obvious choice, they tend to have curved doors and I wanted a more streamlined look. The one we chose was the perfect size and included a wine cooler. There's a downdraft extractor in the island, which is ingenious. It rises up and sinks back into the worktop afterwards, and the ducting is hidden behind the bookshelf below.

### What do you like best about your new and improved kitchen?

It's such a great success that it's hard picking out particular features. But I love running my hands along the smooth, cool marble worktop as I walk past. It's very tactile. I do it every time and so does everyone else! I also enjoy standing by the island cooking and looking out at the setting sun through the west-facing windows.

## The details

**CABINETRY** Bespoke Shaker-style handleless units in maple and lacquered birch, around £22,000, Higham Furniture. **Cabinetry paint**, Charleston Gray estate eggshell, £51 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

**SURFACES** 40mm honed Bianco Carrara marble worktops, £895sq m, Geology. **Wall paint**, Basswood matt emulsion, £35.50 for 2.5 litres, Fired Earth. Rustic brushed and oiled-oak flooring, £54.99sq m, Floor Studio

**APPLIANCES** Two built-in single ovens in polished stainless steel, £1,235 each; five-burner gas hob, £590, all Smeg from Appliances Direct. Freestanding microwave, £152, Panasonic. Downdraft extractor, £1,800, Caple. Side-by-side fridge freezer/wine cooler in stainless steel, £2,999, John Lewis

**SINKS AND TAP** Two Cisterna undermounted ceramic single-bowl sinks, £500 each, Villeroy & Boch. MGS Spin D monobloc mixer tap in matt stainless steel, £537, Buytapsonline.com

**FINISHING TOUCHES** For a dining table like this one try Oakfurnitureland.co.uk, from £600. Xavier Pauchard Tolix-style chairs, £75 each, Cult Furniture. Skandium sells Arne Jacobsen Egg chairs by Fritz Hansen, £3,638. Foscarini Aplomb suspension lights (above island), £292 each, David Village Lighting. Two Tom Dixon Beat Stout pendant lights, £675 each, The Conran Shop. Yew and laburnum wood wall sculpture, price on application, Tom Biddulph Woodturning. Wooden artwork (dining room), price on application, Wendell Wong

‘CABINETRY DETAILS SUCH AS HANDMADE JOINS

HIGHLIGHT THE QUALITY OF THIS KITCHEN’