

Made to last

This new-build in Surrey has been designed with time and care to accommodate a growing family and plenty of house guests

Words: **Sharon Smith** Photography: **Oliver Gordon**



Left: Owners Nicci and Adrian Fairbank had moving walls/doors fitted downstairs that can be pulled across if they want to section off areas. "If we are having a dinner party and the kids are in the sitting room, or if we are in the sitting room and the kids are in the TV area, we can draw the doors across to cut off the noise," says Nicci.

Nicci craved an open-plan, streamlined look for the kitchen. "I wanted it to be minimalist, but there is a limit to minimalism when you have a big family," she laughs.



Left: The island unit comprises an integrated bin and dishwasher as well as generously proportioned drawers and cupboards.

Below: A second, smaller kitchen leading off from the main kitchen has a sink, dishwasher, freezers, oven and storage.



Nicci and Adrian Fairbank's house was a long time in the making. "We moved into a modern property in Cobham, Surrey, in 1999 and, although we really liked the area, I'd always wanted to design and build our own house," says Nicci. Thus, the couple started house hunting and in 2003 bought a 25-year-old, open-plan house in a leafy, peaceful plot. The idea was to demolish the property and build a new one in its place. They drew up plans for the new house and organised contractors, but after two years they pulled out of the process. "We'd spent quite a lot of money by then, but it felt all wrong and not what we wanted, so we had no choice but to stop," recalls Nicci.

When they decided to start again, however, they found Esher-based architect Richard Gardiner through a builder's recommendation. "By then we'd been planning the house for so long we knew exactly what we wanted," says Nicci, who runs her own fine art/graphics company, Stanley H Designs. The couple told Richard that they wanted to build a detached, six-bedroom, six-bathroom, open-plan family house, with an integrated swimming pool. "Richard helped us to turn it all into reality with his expertise and advice and was excellent to work with," says Nicci.

Work finally started on the house in 2007, with the family moving into rented accommodation for two years. "Due to our circumstances, we had to move back in earlier than expected. We came back on New Year's Eve 2009 before the new house was totally finished," says Nicci. The inconvenience of living in such conditions with a young family, though, were partially compensated by being on site, with Nicci closely involved in the design and in the sourcing of products. "I took great care and time over it all including the lighting and décor, as I wanted to get it spot-on," she says.

The pair did not want stylised or overly fussy décor because they felt it would not work with a growing family. Instead they opted for a simple, streamlined look with white walls and bespoke, built-in white furniture, allowing plenty of space for artwork and accessories to provide splashes of bold colour. The kitchen, situated at one end of the house, reflects this

with white-painted wooden units with integrated handles. Nicci wanted maximum storage to keep the room uncluttered, so there is extra storage in the central island, which also acts as a breakfast bar, demarcating the cooking and casual dining areas.

The room has glass doors opening onto the terrace at the back of the house, while internal doors can also be pulled across to screen off the family TV area, which in turn leads into a formal sitting room. A smaller kitchen leading adjacent to the main kitchen houses a second dishwasher and sink as well as another oven and cupboards, helping to keep the main kitchen tidy.

The ground floor's streamlined look is continued on the first floor with Nicci and Adrian using a grey and white colour scheme to keep the master bedroom looking understated yet stylish. Blue armchairs with orange cushions provide a nice pop of colour, whilst floor-to-ceiling windows offer up picturesque views of the back garden and the property's leafy surroundings. The room is kept tidy and uncluttered by a separate walk-in dressing room for clothes storage.

Nicci admits that she went to town for the room's ensuite bathroom. "I wanted it to be a luxurious space – practical but eye-catching – so I did buy top-notch fixtures and fittings," she says. Situated at the front of the house, it is a big room cleverly designed so that the impressive Agape bath and two basins create a focal point, whilst the WC and walk-in shower are hidden behind a feature wall clad in grey tiles. The choice of sanitaryware and brassware, meanwhile, complements the house perfectly with their sleek, clean lines and contemporary styling.

The family/guest bathroom feels equally as modern but uses fresh splashes of lime green to tie in with the décor of the bedroom it serves. The rest of the house was finally finished in late 2011. "It was a wonderful moment," admits Nicci, "especially as it took so long to achieve." The couple are thrilled with the final result and the house has also been a huge hit with their children, Olivia, 19, Tommy, 18, Charlie, 15 and Maddie, 11. "We finally have the perfect family home I had envisaged all those years ago!" says Nicci. **KBB**



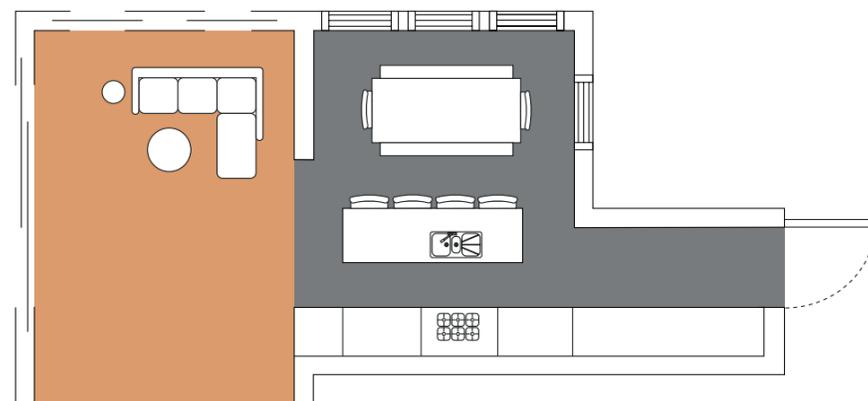
Q&A

Architect Richard Gardiner says...

What advice would you give clients on finding contractors?
 Selecting a contractor for your project is the second most important decision after the selection of the architect. Firstly you have to be able to get along with the contractor on a personal basis and trust in their ability to manage the project and to appoint good tradesmen. The contractor has to be able to achieve a high standard of work, but most of all they have to care about what they do and take pride in their work. Always take references and look at projects they have done before.

Any tips for people embarking on a similar project?
 Spend as much time as possible planning and make sure you appoint an architect who doesn't just leave the details for the contractor to resolve. Also try not to become too focused on copying ideas that have been seen elsewhere as they may be inappropriate for your project. Keep an open mind.

Any major U-turns on the project?
 There were a few prior to my involvement, but this only amounted to the decision by the clients that it was not sensible to extend and alter the original house. Once they had taken the decision to start again and build from scratch, with the exception of the swimming pool building, it moved forward quite well.



Above: Nicci chose wooden units painted white and a white Corian worktop for a clean, fresh look. She teamed them with a dark grey tiled floor and a grey glass splashback to prevent the space becoming too clinical.

Top right: The wooden dining table and bench enjoy views of the large and secluded garden. The dining area is separated from the cooking area by the island, which also serves as a breakfast bar.

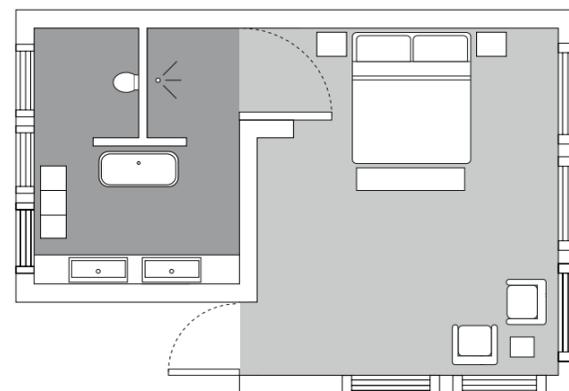


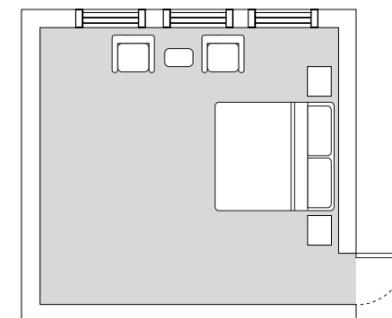
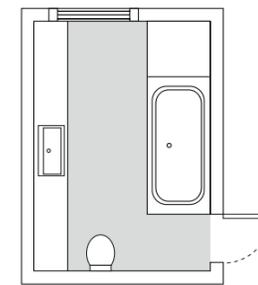
Left: The room enjoys views over the back garden and beyond to leafy Surrey. "One of the best things in the room are the electric blinds and curtains," says Nicci. "It would take me ages to draw them by hand."

Below: A splash of colour in the set of red stools ensures the ensuite has interest and doesn't become too sterile. It also provides a visual link to the kitchen-living area where a red sofa brightens up the grey and white scheme.

Opposite page: The couple wanted a calm, peaceful bedroom so once again chose a grey and white colour scheme.

"I wanted it to be a luxurious space - practical but eye-catching - so I did buy top-notch fixtures and fittings."





Above: The guest bedroom features fresh green textiles to soften the monochrome scheme and complement the foliage visible through its large windows.

Right: A simple basin and tap maintain the guest bathroom's clean, calm look.

Opposite page: A tile-clad partition wall acts as a backdrop to the freestanding bath whilst also concealing a WC and bidet on one side of the ensuite and a walk-in shower on the other.



SourceBook

DESIGN

Architect Richard Gardiner of Richard Gardiner Architects (020 8398 5600 or www.richardgardiner.co.uk)

Designer Nicci Fairbank of Stanley H Designs (07932 605087)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry White painted wood, Roundhouse (020 7297 6220 or www.roundhousedesign.co.uk)

Worktops White Corian, Roundhouse, as before

Flooring Dark grey porcelain tiles, Roundhouse, as before

Appliances Three ovens and gas hob, Miele (0330 160 6600 or www.miele.co.uk); Fridge, Gaggenau (0844 892 8988 or www.gaggenau.com/gb)

Taps Roundhouse, as before

Barstools For similar try the Calligaris range at OneDeko (020 7377 5900 or www.onedeko.co.uk)

Dining table and bench Solid oak, Bigfoot by e15, from Viaduct (020 7278 8456 or www.viaduct.co.uk)

Dining chairs Vitra SIM, from Viaduct, as before

Lighting (Ceiling lights) John Cullen (020 7371 5400 or www.johncullenlighting.co.uk); (Pendants above table) For similar try Tom Dixon range, Amara (0800 587 7645 or www.amara.com)

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

LIVING AREA

Sofa and ottomans B&B Italia (020 7591 8111 or www.bebitalia.com)

Rug For similar try The Rug Company (www.therugcompany.com)

Integrated cabinetry Painted wood, designed by Nicci Fairbank of Stanley H Designs, as before, built by Isis (01743 464080 or www.isis-furniture.co.uk)

Flooring Oak floorboards. For similar try Wood and Beyond (020 8209 2662 or www.woodandbeyond.com)

MASTER BEDROOM

Electric blinds Silent Gliss (01843 863571 or www.silentgliss.co.uk)

Curtains and bedhead Cathy Waddington of Idolum Design Resource (020 8255 4472 or www.idolumdesignresource.co.uk)

Bed and ottoman For similar try Time 4 Sleep (01484 500560 or www.time4sleep.co.uk)

Lampshade Anthropologie (020 7529 9800 or www.anthropologie.eu)

Bedside tables B&B Italia, as before

Leather chairs and cushions For similar try Heal's (020 7896 7451 or www.heals.co.uk)

Carpet For similar try Carpetright (0330 333 3444 or www.carpetright.co.uk)

MASTER ENSUITE

Vanity unit Bespoke design, Isis, as before

Brassware Bathroom Gallery (020 8398 8955 or www.bathroomgallery.co.uk)

Floor and walls Ceramic and mosaic tiles from Saloni Ceramica (www.saloni.com)



In the family/guest bathroom, Nicci and joinery company Isis designed the bespoke vanity unit to incorporate a seat. The inset shelves above the bath, meanwhile, are painted lime green to inject a splash of colour into the room and complement the guest room's décor.

Lighting John Cullen, as before

Sanitaryware For similar try West One Bathrooms (0333 011 3333 or www.westonebathrooms.co.uk and Bathroom Gallery, as before

Bath Agape, from West One Bathrooms, as before

Stools Porada (www.porada.it). For similar try Go Modern (020 7731 9540 or www.gomodern.co.uk)

Sculptures New Ashgate Gallery (01252 713208 or www.newashgate.org.uk)

FAMILY/GUEST BATHROOM

Floor and walls Ceramic tiles from Saloni Ceramica, as before

Vanity unit Designed by Nicci Fairbank of Stanley

H Designs, as before, built by Isis, as before

Brassware Bathroom Gallery, as before

Sanitaryware and bath Bathroom Gallery, as before

Blinds Silent Gliss, as before

GUEST BEDROOM

Bed For similar try Sleepland Beds (01244 823107 or www.sleeplandbeds.co.uk)

Chair and side tables For similar try a bespoke design by Hyde House (01284 330098 or www.hydehouse.co.uk)

Throw and cushions For similar try a bespoke design by Stitching House (01305 250782 or www.stitchinghouse.co.uk)

Carpet For similar try Carpetright, as before

Lamps For similar try John Lewis (0345 604 9049 or www.johnlewis.com)

COST

A similar kitchen would cost around £40,000, a similar master bedroom around £30,000, a similar master ensuite around £25,000 and a similar family bathroom would cost around £10,000

