

EXTENSIONS | SELF-BUILDS | HOME IMPROVEMENT | CONVE

SPECIAL
AWARDS
ISSUE

HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING

Britain's Best Selling Self-build Magazine

AVOID PLOT PITFALLS

Ultimate Checklist
for Buying Land

Britain's Best Self-builds & Renovations Revealed

This Year's Award Winners
and What You Can Learn

BUDGET SELF-BUILD SECRETS

EXTENDING A VICTORIAN HOME

EXPERT
ADVICE

- Hiring an Architect
- Bathroom Innovations
- Build Cost Guide
- Choosing Gates
- Barn Conversion
- Dealing with Builders

Cover Story:

Natural Beauty

HOME OF THE YEAR: A REMARKABLE HOUSE REPLACES A TIRED OLD BUNGALOW



January 2013 | £4.25

The Winners...

Best Eco Home & Readers' Choice: Gareth & Lisa Maxwell, Essex

ARCHITECT: RDA



Gareth and Lisa Maxwell's first family home is a highly airtight, energy-efficient self-build. Designed around pleasing views over fields and a light, open interior floorplan, the home is contemporary living at its best. The couple's project is one of the

first examples in the UK of self-builders buying fully serviced plots, complete with general planning permission, from a housing developer. The project is sure to be viewed as a pioneering example of custom building — and is, in itself, a quite brilliant home.



JAMES BRITAIN

Best Conversion: Chantry Farm Barn, Norfolk

ARCHITECT: HUDSON ARCHITECTS

This ambitious conversion of a pair of listed barns into a contemporary-style home in Norfolk is outstanding not just for the dramatic spaces created but its construction model of protecting the original structure.



Best Renovation: Dan & Jocelyn Ahmad, London

ARCHITECT:
COFFEY ARCHITECTS

Dan and Jocelyn Ahmad's Victorian detached home in North London is on a corner plot and, as a result, previous owners had struggled with orientation and how to use the garden. Engaging with acclaimed architect Phil Coffey, the Ahmads have reconfigured the layout, made the most of the original character and, critically, brought the garden into the heart of their lives with a bold, modern extension.



AND DON'T FORGET... TO ENTER YOUR PROJECT NEXT YEAR!

(LOOK OUT FOR DETAILS IN SPRING 2013)

less is more

The conversion of a pair of listed barns into a weekend retreat in Suffolk was not without its dramas, but the results are elegant, tranquil and well executed

BARN CONVERSION | SUFFOLK | NOV 07 - OCT 11 | SIZE: 325m² | BUILD COST: £765,000 (£2,353/m²)

Minimal interference – just enough to domesticate this fine old barn – has resulted in a brilliant family home

The Daily Telegraph
**HOMEBUILDING
& RENOVATING**
MAGAZINE
AWARDS 2012
IN ASSOCIATION WITH

engensa
The UK's leading Home Energy Company

BEST CONVERSION
CATEGORY SPONSORED BY


**SELF-BUILD
ZONE**



Kitchen

The use of mirrors both in window recesses and on internal gable ends is a clever solution to making the most of light in a building with limited window openings, particularly at first floor level. The limestone flooring is from Stone Age

Dining Space

Introducing 1m-high boxing around the perimeter walls was a clever solution to hiding the packed-in insulation, and creates a useful service duct



Homes

Kitchen

A single steel beam supports the landing that separates the two main bedroom areas. It effectively works as a self-supporting structure within the external walls of the old barn. The owners used an interior design firm, Espresso Design, for the interior scheme. Gloss kitchen units are from Euromobil, while the work surfaces are a mix of Corian and stainless steel. The pendant lights are from John Lewis



Exterior

The powder-coated aluminium windows are from Raynaers. The exterior timber is black, as is common with agricultural buildings in East Anglia. Note the clear roof tiles — to squeeze every last bit of light into the building. You can find similar at Klober (klober.co.uk)



The internal structure has been built to operate independently of the external walls, allowing future flexibility

The Suppliers

Architects Hudson Architects..... hudsonarchitects.co.uk 01603 766220
Quantity surveyor AMA..... ama-qs.co.uk 01263 735462
Contractors Masia..... 01494 677887
Polished plaster finish Armourcoat..... 01732 460668
Windows and screens Reynaers..... 0121 421 1999
Glazed internal doors Stewart Fraser..... 01233 625911
Fireplace MCZ..... mcz.it
Limestone flooring Stone Age..... 020 7384 9090
Timber flooring Wood Floor Designs..... 0845 543 8074
Interior design Espresso Design..... 020 7078 9912

Fireplace

One half of the barn is devoted to a cosier living space, with a mezzanine study behind the textured polished plaster fireplace (the fire is from MCZ)

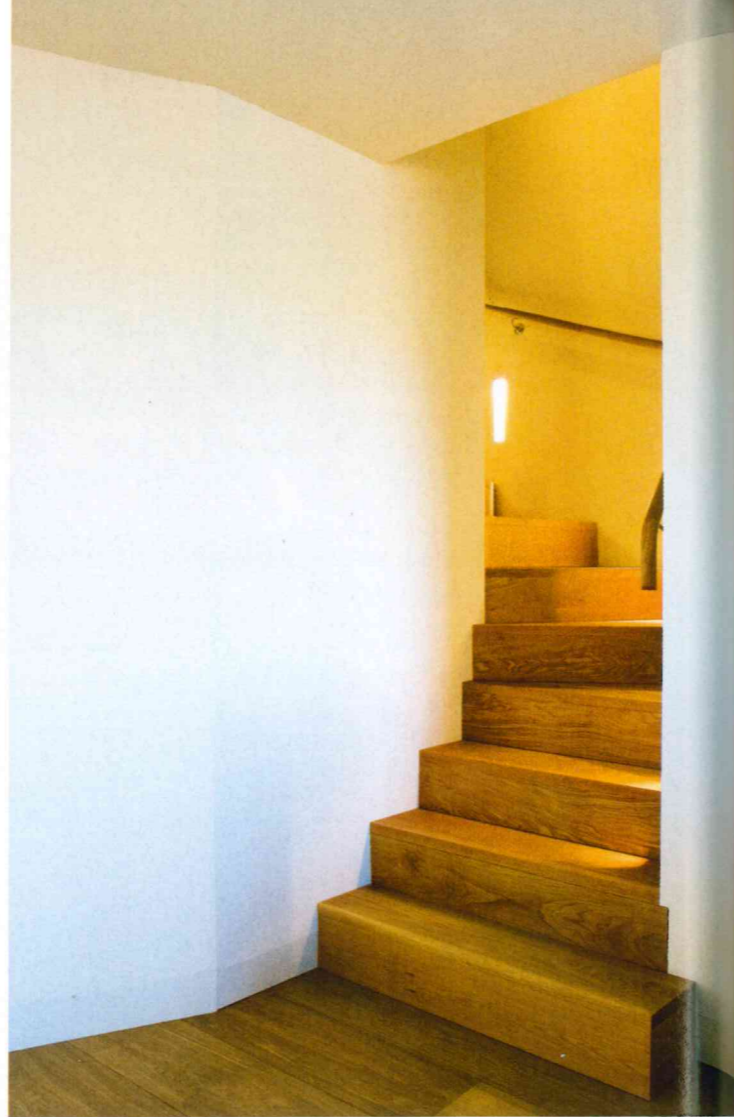
Entrance and Lobby

The entrance to the barn offers two living options — to the left is a more intimate relaxation space. New windows are kept to a minimum, and where specified they tend to be hidden by vertical louvre-style shields to minimise the impact on the external appearance but maximise light

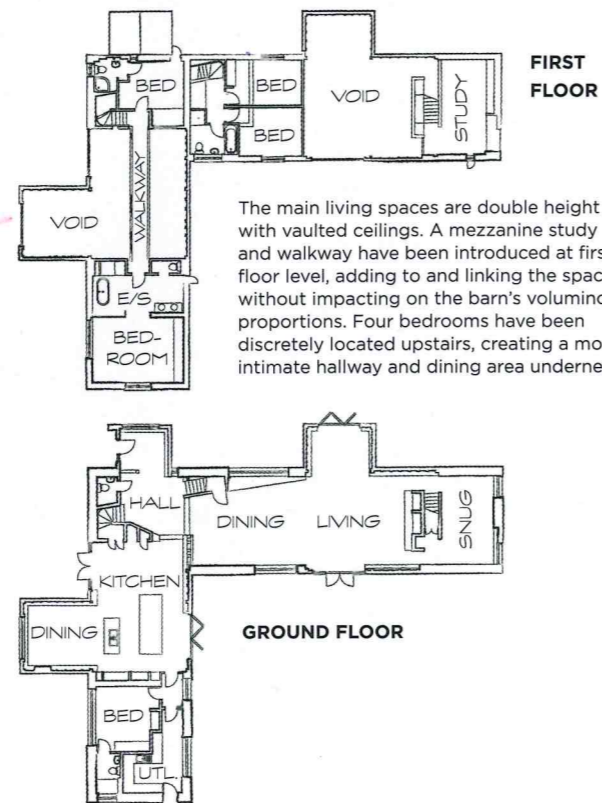


Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is open plan to its en suite. With minimal window openings, being generous with volume and light was a key design priority.



Floorplans



Rural Idyll
The listed barn, in a pretty Suffolk village, was in fact two barns joined together



Chantry Farm Barn is a slick operation in both design and process terms. The conversion of two Grade II listed 17th and 18th century timber barns in Suffolk into a single family home, it is a masterclass in all those things that good conversions should be: full of dramatic, up-to-the-rafters spaces and contrasting cosier areas; filled with light thanks to the innovative use of limited openings; and with a sense of integrity and truth to the original building — everything that bad conversions, with their dormer windows and suspended ceilings and boxy layouts, fall down on. If you're going to take on a building of this history and this character, then you'd better be prepared to retain its key elements.

Yet it is not just the design of this place that should serve as something to aim for. This is a top-end project, one for a pair of London lawyers who could afford to hire one of the UK's leading residential design firms, Hudson Architects, and a team of experts who could bring in the project to the £765,000 build budget (working out at around £2,000/m² — not bad for a high-spec conversion project). Wisely the clients appointed a firm called Andrew Morton Associates, who offer a quantity surveying service that, according to Robin Bertram from Hudson Architects, is common to many projects of this sort. AMA managed the building process on the client's behalf, not only controlling costs but administering tenders, liaising with the builder and so on. Clearly, given the seamless construction process, a wise choice.

As it turned out, they were worth more than their weight in gold in terms of keeping a close eye on the details of the contract. Andrew Morton explains: "For instance, the specification of the floor slab was changed from limecrete to concrete. The contractor's valuation was £17,515 and our valuation £5,639 — i.e. a difference of £11,876. The contractor had used an incorrect basis for calculating the change. In other variations the contractor had included costs twice for the same change and had forgotten to give credit where works had been omitted. If we had not been involved these things would not have been picked up. In total I think we saved in the region of £30,000 but our greater value was in the support we gave to the clients and architect to ensure that the clients' position was protected."

Equally, in this case the contractor went insolvent, which meant having someone close to hand proved essential. As Andrew says: "Our role in this case involved advising the clients and architect concerning the correct procedure under the contract. We were also involved prior to the insolvency in highlighting the risks of employing the particular contractor and flagging up the warning signs when it was clear that the contractor was in financial difficulties." See page 104 for more on using a quantity surveyor.

The barns already had planning permission for conversion when the clients took them on, engaging Hudson (whom they found through recommendation) to produce a more impressive scheme. "There had been a previous design proposal which was defeated by the sheer scale of the barn and the listed building requirement to keep

a sense of the existing internal volume of the barn. This also couldn't accommodate the rooms the clients were looking for," says Robin Bertram. "The owners wanted something exciting and innovative rather than a 'standard' barn conversion. They had a clear idea that they wanted a contemporary interior, so we developed this with them and worked with it to contrast the more agricultural exterior and historic fabric and to make best use of the fantastic setting and volume the barns offered." The resulting L-shaped scheme offers generous bedrooms linked by a first floor walkway overlooking the main kitchen/living space. The other section of the property contains a second living area built around a wonderful polished plaster fireplace, with guest bedrooms upstairs.

As you might expect, a property of this sort requires an intelligent approach to construction techniques. For a start, the builders used a traditional method of brick underpinning, which effectively involves building a new brick wall underneath the existing, rather than the modern method which involves concrete and hydraulic jacks. Yet these traditional skills, which help to serve the purpose of maintaining the integrity of the 400-year-old structure, have been used in tandem with more contemporary techniques to allow modern living — for instance, a huge steel beam which allows the first floor walkway to require no central support. Indeed, the internal structure has been built to operate independently of the external walls, allowing future flexibility.

Given a traditional Suffolk black timber treatment, the minimal window openings and restored roof structure (punctuated with occasional glazed rooflights) mean that this conversion, externally at least, bridges that fine line between house and agricultural building. In some glimpses you can indeed barely tell that it has been converted.

So, there you have it. For anyone taking on an old building with a bit of character, this is a fine example of what can be achieved with good design and a professional approach to the construction process. Minimal interference — just enough to domesticate this fine old barn — has resulted in a brilliant family home. Less is most certainly more in this instance. ■

Why it Won

Despite this being a project of generous scale (although the build cost of £2,353/m² is top, it's not beyond expectation for a high-spec barn conversion with minimal input from the owners in the day-to-day running of the project) there is much to admire for anyone taking on the difficult task of turning an old building into a new home. By interfering as little as structurally possible

with the existing building (a discipline central to any successful conversion), the charm of the original structure has been highlighted rather than designed out; big, vaulted ceilings contrast neatly with cosier spaces, but this house is all about open, dramatic vistas. In addition to being full of light despite the constraints imposed by its listed status, it's also remarkably peaceful.

WORDS: JASON ORME
PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES BRITAIN



Read More
For more on using quantity surveyors, turn the page