



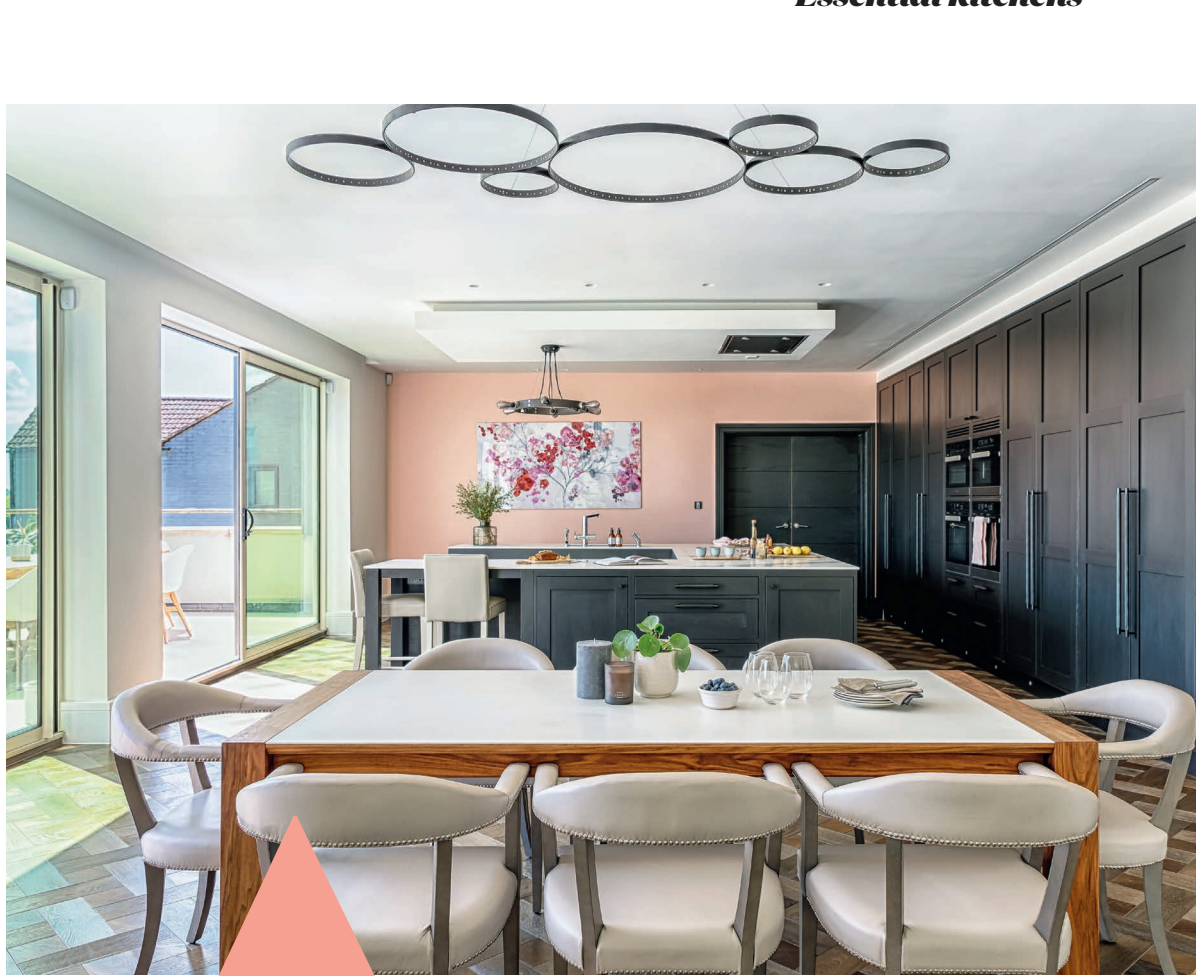
# Room with a view

Nejwa and James Briggs built their house from scratch – and designed an inviting family kitchen to make the most of the stunning views

PHOTOS *Lind & Cumings Design Photography* | WORDS *Amelia Thorpe*

**FAR SIGHT**  
The layout of the kitchen allows the family to enjoy the surrounding landscape





**A**s the winter sunshine sparkled on the meandering river, far down in the valley below, Nejwa and James Briggs couldn't quite believe their luck in finding a house in such a beautiful setting in rural Buckinghamshire. 'The views are fantastic,' says Nejwa. 'We can see for miles.'

The house itself, however, was less than fantastic. 'Over the years, it had been extended several times,' explains Nejwa, 'creating a higgledy-piggledy arrangement of rooms. But because the setting was so amazing, we decided to buy it anyway and then set about its refurbishment.'

Moving out of London, and with their first baby on the way, yoga teacher Nejwa and investment manager James initially thought they would change the façade and make some interior alterations. But local planners thought otherwise. Eventually, the couple found themselves having to knock down the house and completely re-build it, a process that took the best part of five long years. 'But I loved it,' confirms Nejwa. 'It gave us so much time to think about every detail and what we wanted to achieve.'

While the family lived in a rented property nearby, the three-storey, six-bedroom house – designed by Dominic Morse and Jen Poulding of Morse Webb Architects – began to take shape. One of the couple's key priorities was to create an open-plan kitchen/dining/living space chiefly designed for family life with their children, Tabitha, now 6, and Thomas, 4. The room boasts vast glass doors, affording maximum opportunity to enjoy the views. 'The sense of light and space encouraged us to be brave and to choose black kitchen cabinets and a dark wood floor. We felt the room could take it and that they would add impact,' says Nejwa.

The U-shaped island, developed in discussion with senior designer Rhiannon Phenix of Sola Kitchens, is one of Nejwa's favourite features of the room. 'The island is a great solution to getting on with chores and cooking while keeping an eye on the children at the table,' she says. And her other favourites? 'I love the industrial-style handles from Buster + Punch, which Rhiannon recommended. And I love the clever storage solutions – there really is a place for everything.'

'Putting so much effort into getting the house right for our family has really paid off,' concludes Nejwa. 'And, of course, that view continues to amaze us.'

EKBB

**FRIENDS UNITED**

Above The dining table is extendable, making it ideal for larger gatherings

**ISLAND LIFE**

Left Bar chairs at the island provide extra seating for the couple, if the table is occupied with children. A pink-painted wall adds a pop of personality and warmth to the scheme





**MEAL DEAL**  
Largely enclosed by the island, the table offers a cosy eating area for the couple and their young children

‘The sense of light and space encouraged us to be brave in choosing black kitchen cabinets’



## Essential kitchens

### INSIDE OUT

Left On warm days, the terrace acts as an extension of the kitchen-dining space

### GOING STRAIGHT

Below Sharp lines dominate the room, offering extra definition and scale



### KITCHEN PROFILE

Frillen in-frame cabinetry in Black Stained Oak creates a dramatic backdrop in this light-filled kitchen. Worktops in Neolith Estatuario look like Carrara marble, yet have ultra-durable characteristics, and offer crisp contrast against the black furniture. Finishing touches include black metal knurled handles and contemporary pendant lights.

### SCREEN TIME

The pop-up shelf rises from the surface of the island at the push of a button. It provides access to oils and condiments while screening those at the table from hot pans







#### POCKET DOORS

Left Doors open and slide into side pockets to afford unobstructed access to the contents of the breakfast cupboard, with its solid birch shelves and drawers

#### HIGH WATER

Middle left The sink zone includes a boiling water tap and mixer tap with filtration, plus two dishwashers

#### DISCREETLY DARK

Bottom left The range of ovens are neatly accommodated in the elegant tall cabinets

#### DRINKS ZONE

Right Close to the dining table, a bar features glass display shelves set against a back-lit wall panel of lightweight faux onyx material Amberlite



## Q&A

### RHIANNON PHENIS

SENIOR DESIGNER, SOLA KITCHENS

**Can you tell us about the design of the cabinetry?** There's a classic-contemporary feel to the furniture because it combines traditional Shaker style with a modern, strong black finish. Made in Sweden, the natural grain of the oak shows through the black stain, which adds an element of warmth, while the industrial-style handles add a little extra edge to the design.

**How did you develop the island?** It's an unusual feature, but a very practical one. It is carefully 'zoned' so that Nejwa and James can prepare food, cook and wash up, while keeping an eye on the children at the bench seating around the table in the centre. This way, the children are out of the 'working' area of the room, and there's a pop-up shelf to screen them from the hob when it's in use. The shelf also provides storage for oils

and condiments, ready to hand when needed for cooking.

**How did you overcome the challenge with the extraction?** We didn't want to include a model that would obscure the all-important view, so this ceiling model is built into a specially designed bulk-head, which conceals the motor and ducting. It also includes built-in up-lighters, so that the feature appears to 'float' in the evening.

**And the run of tall cabinets?** While there's some storage built into the island, the tall run houses much more, including a larder, breakfast cupboard and glassware cabinet. It also accommodates the ovens and fully integrated fridge and freezer, all in one streamlined bank of furniture, so that everything is easily accessible.

#### ALTOGETHER NOW

The family kitchen table is surrounded by bench seating, which is ideal for young children







### WARMTH OF WOOD

Wood has been used throughout the new-build house, so Nejwa and James continued its use in the kitchen and dining areas

**‘Made in Sweden, the furniture combines traditional Shaker style with a modern, strong black finish’**

### PROJECT DETAILS

**ARCHITECT** Morsewebb Architects

**DESIGN** Sola Kitchens. A kitchen similar to this one will cost around £65,000

**APPLIANCES** Similar appliances: H7260 BP ovens, £1,399 each; DG7240 steam oven, £1,349; M7240 TC microwave oven, £1,149; K37222ID fridge, £1,199; FNS37402li freezer, £2,149; KWT 6422 iG wine conditioning unit, £2,899; G7360 SCVi fully integrated dishwashers, £1,399 each; all Miele. CI282101 induction hob, £POA, Gaggenau. Delux Slimline ceiling hood, £999, Luxair.

#### FIXTURES AND FURNISHINGS

Grohe Blue K7 Pure Starter kitchen mixer with filtration kit in Chrome, £1,000, Grohe. Similar boiling water tap, Nordic Square in polished chrome, £950, Quooker. BlancoAndano 500/180-U undermounted sink in stainless steel, £466, Blanco. Neolith Estatuario polished worktops, priced to order, Sola Kitchens. Pull bar handles, from £45 each, and furniture knobs, from £30 per pair; Hero Light [above island], from £799, Buster + Punch. Broderie parquet flooring in Gainsborough finish, £101m sq, Chevill Parquet. Amberlite faux onyx surface [in bar area], priced to order, Translucent Creations. Wall painted in Bongo Jazz 3 Easycare Kitchen + Matt paint, £33.32 for 2.5L, Dulux. For similar bar chairs, try Simone, £199 each, John Lewis. Naver Collection GM7710 extending dining table, £5,250, The Conran Shop. Andrew Martin has a selection of similar dining chairs. Ultra 8 suspension light [above dining table], £3,430, Le Deun Luminaires. For stockists and contact details, see page 136



### FINISHING TOUCHES

‘Putting so much effort into getting the house right has really paid off,’ says Nejwa