



LEFT: Knole sofa from Liberty, London, 020 7573 9645. White leather rocking armchairs with coordinated foot stool and Arched retro lamp all from Ligne Roset at The Granary, Norwich, 01603 623220. Bonnie Prince Charles 17th century oil from gallery in Camden Passage, London. Retro glass coffee table This Is Furniture London, 0845 644 6675. Remote-control convector wall-fire by Gazco, Exeter, 01392 261900. Georgian tea caddies from various antique fairs. Union Jack cushion, Debenhams, Norwich, 0844 561 6161. Coffee table sculpture from 1920s Italy. Hide rug from Jarrold, Norwich, 01603 660661. Television and concealed computerised audio-visual system, both from Bang & Olufsen, Norwich, 01603 767375. Black and white vases original Jean Cocteau circa 1952. 17th century oil of St Francis of Assisi from a London auction house.

## Ultra-modern country living

Last November we took a look at **Robert Greenfield and Michael Bell's** Riverside Cottage and now Tony Hall reveals their latest project – a stunning modern conversion on the banks of the River Stiffkey in north Norfolk. WORDS AND PICTURES BY TONY HALL

*Having spent the* previous five years building up a multi-award-winning bed and breakfast business in the north Norfolk country village of Thursford, what do you do next? For Robert Greenfield and his partner Michael Bell the answer came quite easily.

"We decided we had exhausted the possibilities of Holly Lodge," explains Michael, "and wanted to explore other projects so decided to sell while we were at the top. We had taken the business as far as we could."

Stiffkey had always been their favourite north Norfolk village since they moved here from London seven years ago and they began looking for properties there right back in November 2004.

"We first found a hunting lodge we

liked," Robert explains, "but there were problems. Then we found a cottage in Stiffkey with a nice position and the river at the bottom of the garden, but it was just too small. So we kept looking and finally noticed a house in the local property pages which was just on the market."

The chalet-style bungalow was not the sort of property they would have usually gone for, but as it was in their favourite village they went off to have a look.

"Of course as soon as we discovered its exact location, again with the river at the bottom of the garden, we were bowled away," says Michael.

"Tucked off the main coast road, down a loke, the biggest surprise was the stunning views to the rear. Rolling hills

more reminiscent of Devon than Norfolk, and not another building in sight. The other plus was a flint cottage in the grounds which we could rent for holiday lets, something we had also wanted to do, which had equally wonderful views. We both said immediately that the potential was enormous."

Perhaps the biggest departure for Robert and Michael, however, was their plans for the property. The style of the bed and breakfast had been opulent and period, but their plans here at Stiffkey were decidedly 21st century, cutting edge modern, a complete departure from the past. "We wanted to create a blank canvas, not too trendy, but one which would evolve over our time living here," recalls Robert. "The