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ideas come from magazines, tastes, trends and what we have seen and liked."

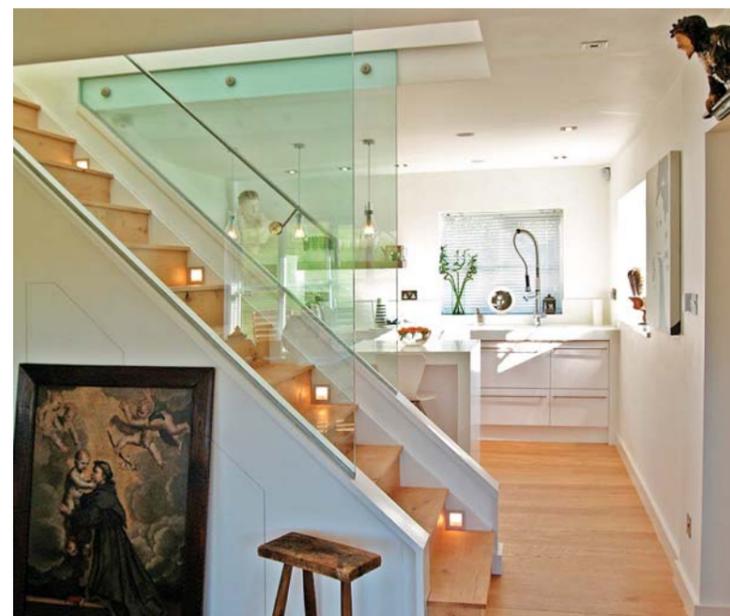
Although the property had been built as stables and barn in 1880 to the big house across the road, the look over the years was far more second half of the 20th century than earlier. Robert, who had developed property in London before their move to Norfolk, started making plans, fine tuning their ideas and then looking to find a good builder. Coincidentally, the man they chose was Sid Lubock, a local builder with an excellent reputation, who had done work over the years for the previous owners. "We wanted to completely open up a major section of the downstairs," says Robert. "This involved knocking down the wall between it and the staircase, and likewise on the other side of the stairs, plus taking away the internal walls to both living and dining rooms and hall, forming one large void. We were fortunate that there was a loft void above the major section of the living area which we opened up, giving us height to the apex. Sid the builder thought the ideas were outrageous, but we really clicked and he and his fantastic team have done famously."

The guys were really organised and, following the purchase in April 2005, Sid and his team started in August. Robert and Michael moved in during October, a fantastic achievement. "We lived in the cottage next door during all the building work," says Michael, "which was the correct decision so we could keep a daily eye on proceedings and were around for quick decisions – however it did get a bit frenetic as at times we had 20 workmen on site!"

Entering now from the entrance lobby, the vision is strictly modern: glass, chrome, clean lines, white walls

*Stair wall of glass by
Contract Glass,
Norwich, 01603
763076.*

*Stair lights, and
overhead coloured
led lighting from
Elec-Tech, Norwich,
01603 879575.*



ABOVE: Kitchen and sculptural shower tap supplied by Simply Kitchens, East Rudham, 01485 528111. All interior walls in Dulux absolute white, www.dulux.co.uk Three drop retro glass pendant lights, The Conran Shop, London, 0844 848 4000. Worktops in white Corian by Dupont, www.corian.co.uk Bar stools by Habitat, Norwich, 0844 499 1131.

RIGHT: Audrey Hepburn canvas, Ikea, www.ikea.com

and internal doors in natural tulip wood, with square architectural, satin stainless steel handles. The concept throughout is very geometric. Ahead, rising from the void, is the glass-sided staircase, with the designer kitchen to the right.

"It's contemporary, but also with a bit of 50s retro," comments Robert. It's all sharp lines, with a centre island unit and appliances discreetly hidden away. Attention to detail is evident everywhere: in the subtle chrome handles highlighting the shiny finish to the unit fronts, the Corian worktop with chrome saucepan stands, the floor lighting and the professional dish washer tap. A very neat touch is the rubbish disposal which has a lid flush with the Corian top. Beyond is a large utility room which also houses the big American style fridge/freezer. Both Robert and Michael are keen cooks and they love the proximity of this kitchen to the general entertaining spaces.

"The whole area really flows together,

as we intended," says Michael, "so an evening is not interrupted by being enclosed in the kitchen cooking. I think the kitchen is one of our favourite areas, as it's very social, easy care and great to eat or read at the centre island."

One of the highlights of this stunning conversion is undoubtedly the living area, to the right of the open plan stairs. To the left hand end is the full height sitting area, with a chrome and glass recessed, picture-style, working gas log fire. The sofa Robert bought from Liberty in London several years ago, but the chairs and curved stool (both cutting edge but again with a 50s retro feel) are by Ligne Roset from Clement Joscelyne, as is the architectural light and the glass coffee table is from This is Furniture, in North London.

"This time around," says Robert, "we wanted to mix some of our prize and period possessions with the ultra-modern, to give interest and variety. Both

