

*this picture* Grey cladding gives the house a distinctly New England feel. The boards were cut to be wider than the standard size to achieve the desired look



# BEAUTIFUL COMPROMISE

*A flexible approach helped Lykke Larsen triumph over a tired and dated house in Surrey to create her dream home, showcasing the best of Danish design*

**Words** Duncan Hayes **Photography** Andreas Mikkell/Dinesen ([dinesen.com](http://dinesen.com))





## AT A GLANCE

**Name** Lykke Larsen (and her husband and three children)  
**Age** 43  
**Location** Surrey  
**Property** Twenties detached brick house  
**Bedrooms** 5 **Bathrooms** 5  
**Project started** 2011  
**Project finished** 2012  
**Size of house** 697sqm (including annex)

When the time came to have a change of pace, Lykke Larsen started looking for her perfect house in Surrey – but she struggled to find anything that ticked all her boxes. Having renovated homes in the past, she had a strong vision of the house she wanted for her family, which would bring together the best of British and Danish design. ‘I have quite a unique style,’ she says. ‘I wanted a contemporary, light-filled home with lots of open space, but it had to feel homely as well.’

During her search, Lykke found the perfect site with a large, but unlovely, house. ‘We fell for the land straight away – it felt secluded thanks to the generous plot and the fact that it was surrounded by mature trees,’ she says. But although the Twenties brick house was packed with potential, it fell well short of her ideal. ‘The upstairs layout was unacceptable, and to create the space we would have to convert the loft and reconfigure the ground floor.’ At this point, Lykke accepted it would never be her dream property, but also realised that she and the family could make it a happy home. ‘At first, we didn’t plan to change much, but my expectations evolved,’ she says. ‘My husband and I decided that, where possible, we’d extend our budget if it meant achieving something that brought things more in line with our vision.’

It was this flexibility that helped transform the house. Chris Lee at Nuff Design, who the family had already worked with, was enlisted to inject some much-needed design inspiration. ‘I work very collaboratively with a client and look at a property as a whole, considering the exterior, interior and the landscaping,’ Lee says. With help from local architect John Western they flew through planning, as they weren’t adding much to the physical size of the property.

Lykke undertook the project management herself, with Lee close at hand. Transforming the exterior was one of the major challenges. While discussing the options, Lykke was struck by the appeal of cladding. ‘People say that the house →



*this picture* White panelling strikes a traditional note in the living room, but the style is resolutely modern thanks to Douglas fir flooring from Dinesen



*this picture* The Boffi kitchen is dominated by an island with a free-hanging Gaggenau extractor



*this picture* Lykke has used a neutral palette, punctuated with colour from her extensive collection of art



*this picture* A rotating stove adds to the cosy feel. It can face the kitchen or, as pictured here, the dining room





**above and right**  
Stairs lead down to a wine cellar. Both the stairs and the shelves are made from the same Dinesen boards used throughout the house. The wooden staircase is paired with dark split-face granite tiles and a glazed balustrade, while the stair lighting adds to the contemporary feel

has a New England feel to it,' she says, 'but actually, cladding is part of the vernacular in Surrey, and this is what first drew us to it.' Lykke didn't want to create a pastiche of a period house, however, so she chose oversized, grey-stained boards, rather than the traditional black, to give it a modern twist. The cladding also provided the perfect solution to the heat loss that's typical of an early-twentieth-century home, meaning they could fit insulation between the two layers of the building and bring it up to current Building Regulation standards for new-build walls.

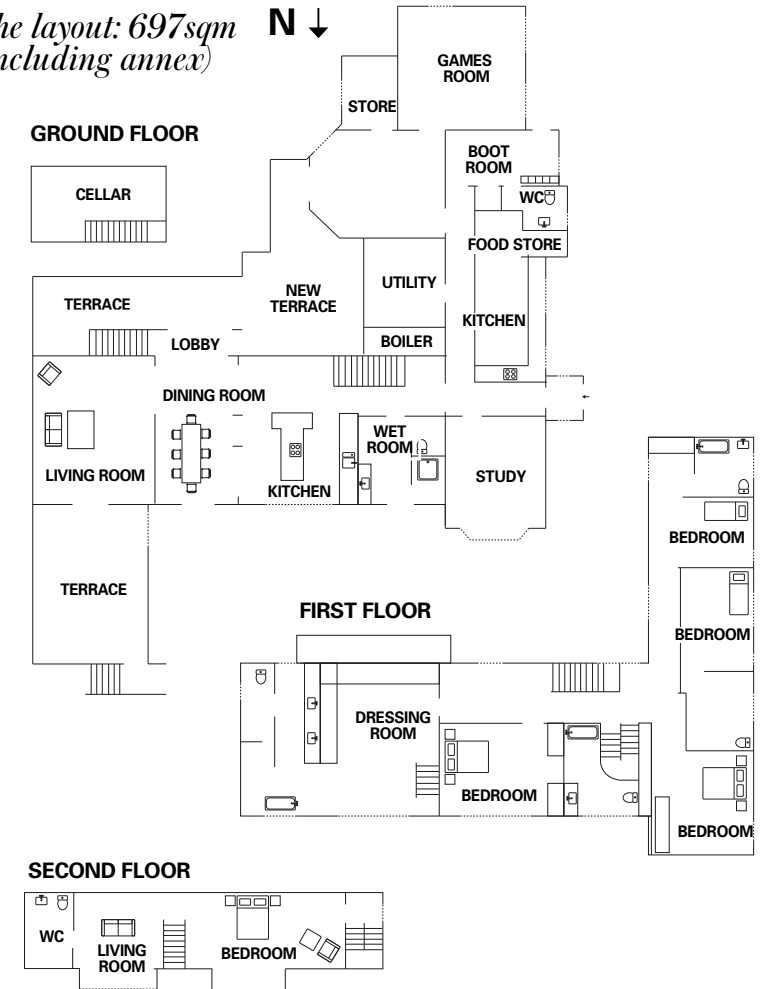
Inside, it was the ground floor that benefitted from the biggest transformation. There were too many rooms to meet Lykke's vision of open-plan living, so they decided to remove the walls and reinvent the layout. 'For me, a house has to lean towards the functionality of modern design, but it must retain a cosy feel – this is what turns it into family home rather than a corporate space,' Lykke says.

In keeping with this, rather than opting for steelwork to replace the walls, Lee suggested using massive structural green-oak beams – something Lykke was keen on. 'I love wood as a material, probably due to my Scandinavian roots,' she says. 'I always wanted a traditional beamed kitchen – although my husband prefers the clean lines of the ultra modern.' The green oak was a great solution, as it's a contemporary interpretation of a traditional building technique. It brings an earthy cosiness to the modern design, creating the cheery ambience that is so important to Lykke. Cleverly, it's also been used to create an oversized fire-surround and log store, which has been combined with a wood-burning stove. This can be rotated, depending on whether the focus is on the kitchen or the dining room. 'The space really fulfills my dream of a modern-yet-warm place,' says Lykke. 'In summer it is light and airy, and →

*'I love wood as a material – it's probably due to my Scandinavian roots'*



*The layout: 697sqm (including annex)*



**left** In pale natural and painted wood, the long central hallway has a cool and sophisticated feel. The Topkapi light by Barovier & Toso is similar to those in the dining room





*‘The dressing room is really practical – my husband’s early starts don’t disturb me’*

*this picture* There’s plenty of built-in storage in the dressing room, while a central island provides drawers and space for shoes

with the snow outside it’s so warm and cosy that it almost feels like you’re in a chalet in the mountains.’

With the benefit of hindsight, there is just one element of the build Lykke would change, and that would be to install insulation between the floors. Unfortunately, it wasn’t until the family lived in the space that they realised how much sound carries throughout the building. ‘It would have been easy to do,’ she says wistfully, ‘as the floors were all lifted at different times.’

Lykke took complete responsibility for the interiors – a process that gave her so much satisfaction that she set up her own interiors business, stocking Danish furniture and fittings that aren’t readily available in the UK. ‘So many people asked me how I’d sourced specific items that I decided to import pieces, becoming a sort of bridge between the UK and Denmark,’ she says. Throughout the property, she used 45cm-wide, 9m-long Douglas fir floorboards from Dinesen – a modern interpretation of conventional flooring that helps the rooms to flow into one another. In line with the property’s pale scheme, the boards are whitewashed; this subtle palette is fundamental to Lykke’s approach to interior design. ‘I love greys and neutrals as a base,’ she says. ‘They stand up well to crisp, white panelling and coving.’ The whole house is a symphony of grey, mostly subtle hues, with bold splashes of colour introduced in furniture, curtains and rugs.

A clever trick of Lykke’s – which anyone considering a project should borrow – was to make a book of possessions before the

project started. ‘I didn’t want to create a new house and fill it with new things, as this can make a space feel clinical,’ she says. ‘My philosophy is to use art to create a modern home.’ To facilitate this, she photographed and measured her key pieces before they went into storage, which meant that the rooms could be designed to house specific possessions. ‘This worked brilliantly,’ she says. ‘In the living room, for example, I lowered the height of the wood panelling to accommodate large paintings, while in the bathrooms we created tailored niches to house much-loved sculptures.’

Upstairs, the master suite is spread over two floors, as there wasn’t enough space for a bedroom, dressing room and en suite on the same level. To get round this, the dressing room and en suite are on the floor below, with their own staircase, while the master bedroom and a WC are in the loft. ‘Initially I wasn’t happy with this,’ Lykke says, ‘but actually it’s really practical – it means that my husband’s early starts don’t ever disturb me in the bedroom.’

‘When we started this project, I felt that we’d compromised, and that the house would dictate what we could and couldn’t do. As it has evolved, however, we’ve been able to create a family home that truly reflects our style and the way we live.’ GD



*right and far right* Lykke’s trademark neutral palette continues in the children’s bedrooms. Designer Chris Lee crafted the built-in bed to incorporate stairs and shelving



*this picture* Oversized slabs of honed marble divide the shower and WC from the rest of the bathroom



*this picture* Ample shoe racks line the reverse of the dressing-room island. The chairs are PK22 by Poul Kjaerholm for Fritz Hansen





*left* To avoid simply creating a pastiche of a period property, Lykke chose grey-stained cladding to give it a more contemporary feel



*above* The rear of the property opens on to an expansive terrace with several seating areas and a large swimming pool

## Suppliers

**PROJECT TEAM** **Architect** Chris Lee at Nuff Design (020 8891 4145; nuff-design.co.uk) **Planning assistance** John Western at Lucas Hickman Smith (01953 607 343; lucashickmansmith.co.uk) **Structural engineer** Rob Stodart (01372 846 424; scottwade.co.uk) **Interior design** Lykke Larsen (lykkelarsenliving.co.uk) **STRUCTURE** **Cladding** OakCraft (01425 402 507; oakcraft.co.uk) **Internal doors, woodwork and windows** Riverside Joinery (020 8947 6996; riversidejoinerylondon.co.uk) **FIXTURES & FITTINGS** **Wood-burning stove** Diligence (01364 644 790; diligenceinternational.com) **Dining-room wallpaper** de Gournay (020 7352 9988; degournay.com) **Dining-room and hall lights** Barovier & Toso – try Mayfair Design Studio (020 7499 7133; mayfairdesignstudio.com) **Hall spotlights** XAL (020 3174 0177; xal.com) **Kitchen** Boffi (020 7590 8910; boffiuk.com) **Extractor** Gaggenau (0344 892 8988; gaggenau.com) **Flooring** Dinesen extra-wide Douglas fir (020 3630 0196; dinesen.com)

**Wardrobes** Poliform (020 7368 7600; poliformuk.com) **Kitchen worktops, sink and taps** Boffi (as before) **Paint** Cornforth white or skimming stone on walls and pavilion gray on woodwork, Farrow & Ball (01202 876 141; farrow-ball.com) **Bathroom flooring and wall tiles** (excluding marble) Mandarin stone (01600 715 444; mandarinstone.com) **Bathroom fittings** Original Bathrooms (020 8940 7554; original-bathrooms.co.uk) **Dressing-room wallpaper** Spring Branches by Wallpaper Café (+45 3965 6630; tapet-cafe.dk) **FURNITURE & SOFT FURNISHINGS** **Dining table** Rosmosegaard (+45 4830 1715; rosmosegaard.dk) **Dining chairs** Tamiko by Philippe Hurel (020 7373 1133; philippe-hurel.com) **Kitchen bar stool** Lem by La Palma at John Lewis (0345 604 9049; johnlewis.co.uk) **Living-room rug** Design Centre Chelsea Harbour (020 7225 9166; dcch.co.uk) **Coffee table** Republic of Fritz Hansen (020 7637 5534; fritzhansen.com) **Garden furniture** Cane-line (+45 6615 4560; cane-line.co.uk)

## STYLE FINDER

Combine traditional furniture with luxurious finishes for Lykke's look  
**Compiled by Emily Seymour**



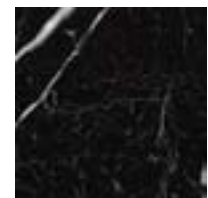
▲ **Vintage style** Topkapi ceiling lamp in glass (H26.5xDiameter45cm), £1,068, Barovier & Toso at Chaplins (020 8421 1779; chaplins.co.uk)



▲ **Sleek table** Noah eight-seater table in oak (H75xW185xD90cm), £899, Bethan Gray for John Lewis (0345 604 9049; johnlewis.com)



▲ **High back** Montana armchair in wood and linen in purple (H102xW64xD62cm), £315, Wayfair (0800 169 0423; wayfair.co.uk)



▲ **Luxe tile** Nero Mariquinha polished marble tile (H60xW60cm), £192 per sqm, Lapidica (0800 012 2220; lapidica.com)



▲ **Statement tub** Mayfair bath in stone in white (H62xW176xD100cm), £6,162, Fired Earth (0845 293 8798; firedearth.com)