

HOMES & GARDENS  
Suffolk restored



A fantastic Suffolk fusion for modern living and a tribute to traditional craftsmanship. Lindsay Want heads to Reydon to see Suffolk history in the making

# Long live Suffolk!





Views from the master bedroom across the marshes. Below; the house's traditional appearance and right; one of the bathrooms

**L**ong Farm is simply outstanding in a gentle, Suffolk sort of way. It rises up in red brick glory from the flattest fields of the Reydon salt marshes and stretches out under Suffolk skies like some contented cat in the sunshine. A new house which is so perfectly at home is a rare discovery, but this one seems almost as Suffolk as Blythburgh church, and as genuine and lovingly nurtured as Norman's veg grown down the lane and sold round the corner at Barbrooks store. Maybe that's because Long Farm is not trying to be anything other than itself.

There's no question of replica, rebuild or restoration here. But it has been undeniably shaped by Suffolk in the subtlest of ways – by the outdoor elements and regional architectural ones, by building materials and the skill and craftsmanship of local hands, and perhaps most importantly by the Suffolk family life to be lived here, now and for generations to come.

**The long and the short of it**

At 25 x 6 metres, Long Farm definitely lives up to its name. Inside, the full distance and depth of perspective is retained through progressive rooms and

full length corridor spaces, and those big gaps in the 'barn' wall, so striking from the outside, are breached by the most amazing marshland views rushing in to flood almost every room.

**Family focused on so many levels**

When Long Farm owner and architect, Lucy Marston first bought the rural plot back in 2009, she converted two sets of low-lying farm barns into studios so that family and friends could share a stay on site, whilst a horseshoe block of dilapidated housing was being demolished and plans for the modern home were coming together.





“An early concern was how best to orientate the property,” explains Lucy who freely admits that building her own house was all part of fulfilling the architect’s ultimate dream.

“With strong easterly winds, few trees for shelter and the next stop the North Sea, things can be more than a little bleak here at times, so it was tempting to make the house south-facing. Paradoxically though, I decided to open it up to make the most of the wonderful easterly marshland and sea views and create a wind break along the edge. The dynamic angle gives the house an interesting link to the barns. Most importantly though, it keeps the building within the family of homes situated here rather than setting it apart and giving it a more alien identity.” Family and Long Farm go hand in hand, or foot in welly, for sure. Sons George, eight, and Eddie, five, spend hours running rings around the place, thanks to the fantastic circulation spaces and very sociable nature of the house. With its separate interlinked rooms and smooth sliding doors, end-to-end and side-to-side corridors can come and go at will,



Above; Lucy and husband Robert and below; their sons George and Eddie

allowing vistas a-plenty and the opportunity to keep half an eye on young antics without being thrown into their world through the relentless nature of open plan living.

“My husband was a reluctant commissioner of a new house,” declares Lucy, “so we looked to what really appealed in old properties as a starter. We liked the idea of having a series of rooms for different activities and those intermediate spaces such as window sills and inglenooks which are both generous and quirky. We also enjoy attention to detail and really skilful use of everyday materials, and acknowledge that as the kitchen is the ultimate social space these days, the farmhouse table is our hub around which life happens.

“Of course, we wanted to build in sustainability too with efficient insulation and high performance windows a must in such a windbreak of a property. “There was always an intention that Long Farm should not only be of its place, but of its time too – the sort of period property which my grandchildren might choose to live in a hundred years on from now.”

A big ask by a long stretch

A virtuoso style build, demanding great technical abilities, traditional skills and extreme attention to detail – it sounds like a tall order.

“It might seem strange, but my confidence to consider doing a new house only came when local building contractor, Robert Norman, undertook the barn conversions and proved that building projects could be enjoyable after all!” says Lucy. “I needed an accommodating builder I could trust. I had watched Robert get the very best out of his team of superb Suffolk craftsmen in our neighbours’ award-winning innovative new build, Bavent House. I knew that if my ideas would mould to suit, the project would be a real success, so the drawing board beckoned.”



### Rising to the challenge

The shape of Long Farm may look simple enough, but the exceptional combination of space separated into a run of different rooms means that the cross-walls don’t meet the outside walls.” In terms of structural steelwork, the building has more engineering than any normal house,” explains builder, Robert Norman. “It’s what gives it that extra dimension. “Co-ordinating the way that the timber-frame and brick casing came together at the many openings was both demanding and rewarding.”

