

A PERFECT FIT

A carefully designed bespoke kitchen will transform even the most irregular space

While the average-shaped kitchen will consist of four straight-ish walls and a series of cubes, not all rooms are so accommodating. Sometimes there is a degree of compromise, such as an L-shaped room or hard-to-access niche. Or structural alterations can often result in design challenges such as an awkwardly placed window, door, fireplace or pillar.

With careful management and expert advice, seemingly negative quirks can be turned to your advantage. Bespoke cabinetry comes into its own here, making the best use of space and working with unusual angles and curves, while neatly stepping around the trickier features. "It's important not to see a difficult space but, rather, to see the opportunity to create something unique," says Mike Connott of worktop fabricator North West Marble & Granite, 0161 945 3856, manchestermarble.co.uk.

DESIGN TRICKS

Colour can work wonders in disguising awkward areas. Judy Smith of Crown Paint, crownpaint.co.uk, says the best approach is to paint the shell of the room white, which will open up the space, then to apply concentrated colour to key focal points. "Choose the most attractive features in the room then paint these in contrasting shades to make them stand out. This will also pull the emphasis away from less attractive elements."

Another saviour is lighting, which can give a low ceiling a sense of height or put strange angles in the shadows. A lighting designer will be able to advise on everything from high-precision controls to the most suitable colour for bulbs. "In an awkwardly shaped kitchen, flexible lighting can be adjusted to control the direction and spread of light effectively," adds Peter Bowles of Davey Lighting, 01993 882251, davey-lighting.co.uk.

CASE STUDY INTERESTING ANGLE

OWNERS' BRIEF The new extension on Adrienne and Keith O'Hara's 19th-century cottage in Berkshire owes its unusual hexagonal shape to planning constraints and the imagination of their architect. "To meet planning approval, it has been sited in the footprint of a stable block. We could only get permission for a single-storey extension, so we decided to maximise the space inside by opening it up to the apex and exposing the oak beams," explains Adrienne. The architect suggested angling the window diagonally to capture the perfect view of the church nearby. Instead of a conventionally shaped rectangular extension, the architect "lost" the corners, leaving an interesting hexagonal design. "With bi-folding doors opposite the window, we also get a better view of the garden," adds Adrienne. For the kitchen area, the O'Haras wanted an uncluttered "modern-country" look that would suit the property's semi-rural location.

DESIGNER'S SOLUTION By centring the island with the feature window, Chris Budgen achieved a symmetrical vista from both the dining room and the garden entrance. "I then positioned the sink and range cooker at right angles, and moved outwards from these key points to create a balanced and practical layout," he says. The angles of the feature wall, however, put Chris's trigonometry skills to the test. "The cabinets go around the room at 45 degrees, which left us with a couple of voids either side of the sink. We filled them with waste and recycling bins so every inch is used."

The simple Shaker-style cabinets are painted in a soft Dove Grey and topped with Steel Grey granite with a "leathered" finish. They follow into the adjacent dining room in full-height form to provide plenty of storage. A bespoke extractor hood and the lines of the limestone flooring in randomly sized tiles help ensure this angle-filled room is calm and ordered.

FACT FILE

ARCHITECT Herbert J Stribling & Partners, 01753 852227, hjsribling.co.uk

DESIGNER Chris Budgen, Surrey Kitchens, 01932 355332, surreykitchens.co.uk

BUDGET £23,000 (cabinetry and worktops only)

SOURCES Neptune cabinets and granite worktops, Surrey Kitchens, as before. Sink, Villeroy & Boch, 020 8871 4028, villeroy-boch.com. Tap, Perrin & Rowe, 01708 526361, perrinandrowe.com. Range cooker, Falcon, 0870 789 5107, falconappliances.com. Wine cooler, Baumatic, 0118 933 6900, baumatic.co.uk.

Lights, Ikea, 0845 358 3363, ikea.com/gb. Bar stools, Dooley's Furniture, 0844 800 3968, dooleysfurniture.com. Limestone flooring, Artisans of Devides, 01380 720007, artisansofdevides.com. ▶