

THE PROPERTY EXPERT



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Bring the family together with **OPEN PLAN LIVING**

THE WAY WE live in our homes has changed dramatically over the years. Most families have two working parents, and when they come home from work neither of them want to be stuck in the kitchen all alone cooking dinner while the rest of the family is somewhere else in the house.

The cooks want the walls to come down, making the modern,

open plan home incredibly popular creating more light and space – with the kitchen, living and dining areas all open, and bi-fold doors to the garden. These doors are a great way to bring the garden into the home and also extend your living space into the outdoors.

But what if you want to create privacy or cosiness in your open plan space? You can have it both ways by fitting pocket doors. These are sliding doors that retract into the wall cavity, so you can bring them out to split a larger room into two – perhaps for warmth in winter, or to create a pop-up play area for kids when mum and dad want a bit of peace and quiet!

But changing and adapting your home to open plan living must be done the right way. Most structural renovation work will need to comply with building regulations if it involves installing bi-fold doors and knocking down walls, but that will depend on the size and location of the property. Don't try to go it alone, because you will struggle to sell your home if those

regulations aren't in place.

The best first step is to talk to a qualified structural engineer to discuss your vision for open plan living. They will give you practical advice, tell you what you can and cannot do, and create a design that will meet with building regulations. This won't cost a fortune; a design will start at just £300.

Cooks not only prefer an open plan home, they also want a fabulous kitchen to cook in! Kitchen styles have fallen into two styles in recent years. Many people favour the flush look – minimalist, practical, featuring a lot of grey and white, with high gloss doors, clean lines and stainless steel. The other popular style is Shaker, which is timeless, with natural oak or timber finishes; very simple and beautiful.

It's all about flexibility, and creating the best of all possible modern worlds. ■

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A renovated property in Woodbridge – extending the living space into the outdoors (left) Open plan living ideal for cooks (right)