

# Ask the designer

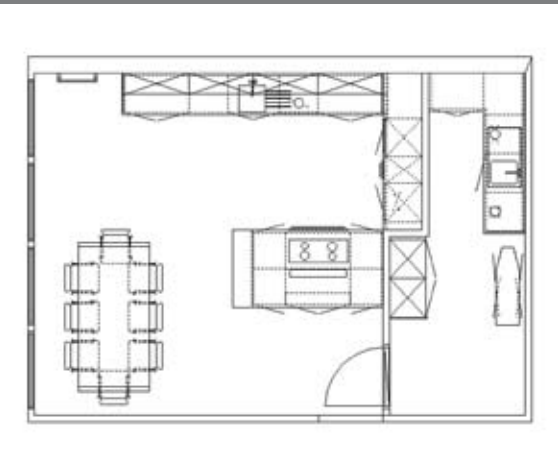
If you plan to update your kitchen, why not consult kitchen designer **Aileen Thomson** first for some design advice?



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I am in the process of designing and building a new family house in Edinburgh, which will be an 'Earthship' house partially embedded in the ground, with a roof covered in grass, giving a very high thermal mass requiring minimal heating and can be powered by renewable energy. It will have a very low energy demand. With these high eco credentials in mind I want a kitchen that is as eco-friendly as possible and blends in well with the design of the rest of the 'green' features in the house. The house will be naturally lit by an almost entirely glazed west wall and roof lights and all heating will be generated through renewable sources. What would you suggest? *Alex Sharp, Edinburgh*



Designing for an eco house with lovely open spaces gives great potential for a truly wonderful kitchen. Our first consideration is to maintain the feeling of open space and light, and to design a kitchen that flows freely and is proportional to the rest of the room space. With one whole wall glass and plenty roof lights there is a huge amount of natural light and we want to make maximum the use of this.

In keeping with the fact that the house is located on an Urban Wildlife Site, which means it shares the site with badgers, bats and other wildlife, the look must be as natural as possible. Warm, natural colours therefore harmonize with the general surroundings and are complemented by the

organic, seasonal colours of the outdoors while still retaining a contemporary design.

A U-shaped design of kitchen is chosen to give good storage along one internal wall with the sink. An island/peninsula provides a great breakfast bar and hob, as well as providing food preparation surfaces, while maximizing the views from the wall of windows. A wall mounted television is unobtrusive yet provides entertainment when required. Looking out towards the great views is a large dining table which is perfect for family meals and entertaining.

There is such a strong eco theme running through this whole house, due to the high performance construction and thermal

qualities of the build, that the kitchen must follow in line with this. Where possible we maintain the low energy eco-friendly theme and have chosen a Siemens low noise dishwasher which is A+++ rated, a Siemens Induction Hob, which is 40% faster than cooking with gas and 35% more energy efficient and a Siemens Cool Concept fridge/freezer which again is A++ rated. Two ovens are stacked one above each other on the back wall – one single and one combi oven which provides flexible family cooking.

The worksurfaces are ECO made by Cosentino and are made from 75% recycled materials (porcelain, glass and ash.) Not only are they very attractive but they are also scratch resistant and very hard wearing.



The U-shaped design gives excellent storage without disrupting the openness of the room



The dining table has excellent views out over Edinburgh



A wall mounted TV is above the peninsula



The peninsula provides cooking and a breakfast bar

Downdraft extraction provides the perfect solution to eliminating kitchen odours and steam while not interfering with the transition feel of open-plan kitchen living .

LED recessed task lighting is suggested, with a colour matching light shelf installed to the underside of the wall units. An LED track is fitted above the wall units to enhance the nighttime effect and atmosphere. The lamp life of these LED lights is 30,000 hours and 1.65W consumption, which maintains the low energy theme.

Leading off the kitchen is a purpose built utility room, built into the hillside. Here out-of-sight washing, ironing and storage

is obtained without interfering with the open flow of the front rooms.

Increasingly we are receiving requests for such developments and often there will be a series of eco houses build together, all with very low carbon emissions. Although the very nature of contemporary kitchens and the plethora of appliances are not necessarily environmentally friendly, there are more and more appliances and kitchen materials coming onto the market for the eco-conscious home. With future government legislation forcing the pace of change towards high performance sustainable housing it is essential that kitchen design and product choices match the aspirations of eco conscious clients. ●

## DESIGN TIPS

- Induction hobs are now the best type of hobs. They are more energy efficient, easy to use, safer and simpler to control than gas.
- For the eco-conscious choose a worksurface made from recycled materials as they are both kind to the environment and are very hard wearing.