

ALL INCLUSIVE

Kitchens International and Design Matters take on the task of creating an accessible kitchen that is both practical and stylish

Report: **Jayne Bartlett**

THE CLIENTS

Sylvia Holman works in Tunbridge Wells for the Borough Council and bought her flat a couple of years ago. As a wheelchair user, she needed a flat that was accessible. It took a while to find a suitable property but she eventually found a modern two-bedroom ground-floor apartment. Sporty and sociable, she enjoys kayaking and skiing and often has friends round for dinner parties and games nights.

THE BRIEF

Sylvia wishes to remodel her kitchen so that it is wheelchair-friendly. "I'd like to lower the sink, work surfaces and hob and be able to wheel under them," she explains. "I am also considering wall cupboards with a pull-down basket mechanism, fitted appliances and a serving hatch that will open up into the dining room. I'm flexible on the layout and would be interested to see what the designers come up with. I'm very design-conscious, so I don't want anything old-fashioned. Some bright colours would be nice – perhaps purple or red accents."

THE SPACE

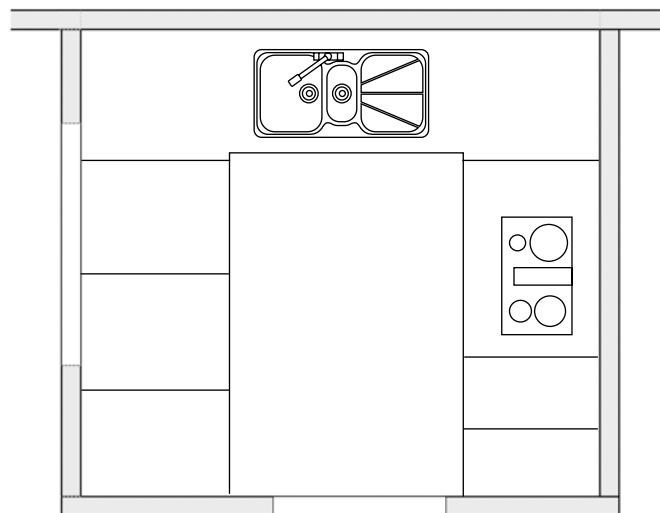


The kitchen measures 273 x 243cm. "It's a nice modern fitted kitchen," says Sylvia, "but it's not adapted for a wheelchair user. I'm able to reach worktop surfaces but have to twist to use the sink and gas hob and can't reach the top two storage shelves or top shelves of the fridge. The way the door to the kitchen currently opens is also very annoying, as the fridge-freezer is behind it. I'd like to keep a door to the kitchen, but any other ideas on how to do this would be great."

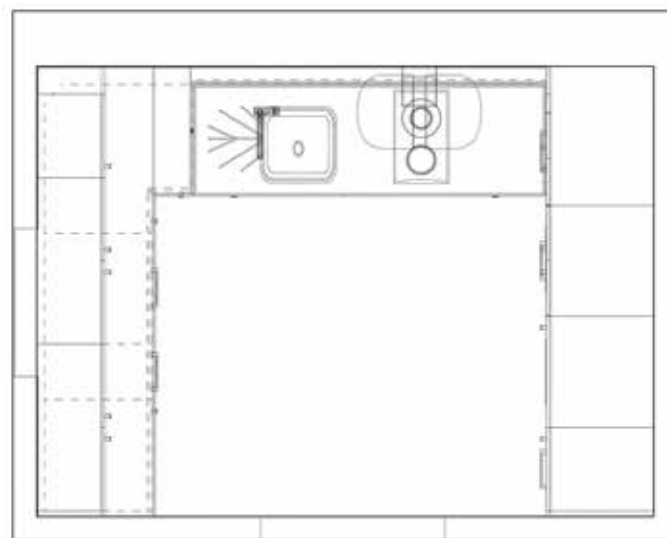
THE BUDGET

£15,000-£23,000 including installation

Solution one



Solution two



YOUR PROJECTS

Do you have a kitchen, bedroom or bathroom project in the pipeline? If you'd like to put it to our Drawing Board designers, email sophiebaylis@taylistmedia.com and tell us more.

Solution one



The specifications

Furniture	£4269
Worktops	£1891
6mm glass back panels	£1011
Sink and taps	£510
LED lighting	£120
Appliances	£3589
Mechanical hob worktop	£1521
Installation	£2862
Total	£15,773

CONTACTS

All items available from
Kitchens International.



The verdict

“Having that room for my legs under the ceramic hob and the sink, combined with motorised, height-adjustable surfaces will definitely make it much easier for me to use the kitchen,” says Sylvia. “The light-coloured unit doors and surfaces give an open feel to the kitchen and the splash of purple and choice of lighting definitely liven things up. Having lower cupboard space is useful and the carousel corner units are another good storage idea. One thing I was not sure about, though, is how I would access the cupboard above the oven. Overall, though, I would say it is a nice, fresh design with lots of good ideas in terms of gadgets and appliances to make cooking more accessible and enjoyable.”

The designer



Peter Kavanagh is a studio sales designer for leading independent kitchen designer and retailer Kitchens International. He is based at the company's head office in Broxburn, West Lothian.

Sylvia's passion for socialising and entertaining, combined with the requirement for a multi-user kitchen, has led to Peter Kavanagh's design, which combines a discerning balance of functionality and style. “I wanted to create a kitchen that is easy for Sylvia to use in her wheelchair while looking sleek and providing a more sociable link between the kitchen and the living room,” he explains. “Door designs are reconfigured with sliding doors for easier access and the Access Mobility Code of Practice has been adhered to with ample wheelchair turning space.”

The practical access to appliances is critical to Sylvia so Peter has come up with an ingenious way of positioning them. The side-opening oven is fitted into a custom-built tall housing unit at a convenient height for Sylvia to reach, yet still allows for a fridge with a freezer compartment underneath. “I have also replaced Sylvia's current dishwasher with a fully integrated slimline version from Siemens, which takes 10 place settings,” adds Peter. “Most importantly it is located to the left of the sink, allowing the door to be opened and the contents to be easily accessed from the side. The 80cm (360”) ‘crockery/pannier’ carousel and the 50cm cutlery drawer set are fully accessible when the dishwasher is open, letting Sylvia unload and load more efficiently.”

Peter has also chosen a 60cm-wide induction hob to replace the gas hob, providing a safer and cleaner

alternative. More importantly, Peter has incorporated a motorised adjustable worktop here where, at the touch of a button, the worktop will lower to a height suitable for Sylvia. A similar concept is proposed for the double wall unit between the sink and the hob, and, budget allowing, this will add a further practical and desirable feature to the design.

“I carefully considered how best to position the sink and have suggested that the one-and-a-half-bowl sink is sunk into the furniture bridge, allowing greater wheelchair access,” explains Peter. “The sink and spray head tap are located closer to the front edge of the work surface to provide even more functionality.”

A lot of thought has gone into the design of the cabinets. Leicht Pinta units in Mohair have been selected as they are highly user-friendly, with each corner base unit supplied with internal carousels to create maximum storage and access. Similarly, fully extendable drawers provide greater ease of use. Even the wall units are lower than normal to satisfy Sylvia's needs, while extra practical storage in the form of shelving is situated between the units and worktop either side of the hob. To give a stylish addition to the kitchen, under-wall glass and LED lighting provide a stunning but practical backdrop to the natural tones.

Kitchens International 01506 862780 or
www.kitchensinternational.co.uk

“I wanted to create a kitchen that is easy for Sylvia to use in her wheelchair while looking sleek and providing a more sociable link between the kitchen and the living room.”

PETER KAVANAGH
KITCHENS INTERNATIONAL

Solution two

The designer



Adam Thomas of Design Matters is head consultant for accessible kitchens at the Olympic Village and created a new concept for affordable housing. Adam also has his own range of accessible kitchen furniture.

Adam began by discussing Sylvia's priorities and asking about her impairment and lifestyle. "It was soon clear that the only way to include everything was to make the space larger," he says. "We talked about removing a wall, but Sylvia wanted to retain a separate kitchen. Moving the wall by 600mm on the living room side presented the best solution, resulting in a spacious U-shaped kitchen with plenty of storage and a fully accessible cooking and food preparation zone. We also discussed budget and Sylvia agreed that it had to increase to incorporate everything on her list."

Starting on the right-hand side of the door, Adam has designed pan drawers with shelving above. Sylvia's existing fridge-freezer comes next, followed by pull-outs of varying depths and a Neff Slide&Hide oven with heat-resistant pull-out shelf beneath. "The oven is fitted with telescopic runners, enabling the shelves to extend fully without tipping, and the oven door slides into a void under the oven cavity for safer access," explains Adam. "Above the oven and microwave, the cupboards are fitted with twin door openers for easy one-handed access."

The integrated microwave is mounted above a Ropox height-adjustable work surface made of Corian, which can be raised for easy transfer of hot items, then lowered to a

suitable working height. The hob and custom-depth sink are combined on this surface so that any future change of wheelchair height can be accommodated. The work surface has a raised lip on all four sides to contain spills and a 'safety stop' on the underside. All the water and electricity supplies are safely concealed behind a modesty panel for safety.

"The stylish Falmec extractor can be mounted at a height to suit the client," adds Adam. "To the left, a corner carousel adds more useful storage, and a Fisher & Paykel DishDrawer dishwasher pulls out for easy access. Sylvia's existing washing machine has been included, and two large wall units with pull-down baskets complete the design."

The colour scheme is light and bright with a pale wood finish and cream gloss cabinet doors. "The glass splashback in raspberry red reflects Sylvia's outgoing personality and her love of entertaining," says Adam.

To overcome the awkwardness of opening a full-sized door into the kitchen, Adam recommends looking at pocket doors from a specialist supplier like Eclisse. "This kitchen ticks all the boxes and will give Sylvia the flexibility she needs in the future," he says. "It will also put the fun back into cooking and entertaining."

Design Matters 01628 531584 or www.dmkb.co.uk



"The glass splashback in raspberry red reflects Sylvia's outgoing personality and her love of entertaining."

ADAM THOMAS
DESIGN MATTERS

The specifications

Furniture	£7907
Appliances	£3582
Rise and fall Corian worktop	£2995
Rise and fall motor with safety stop	£1907
Laminate worktop with waterfall edge	£1293
Strengthened glass splashback	£1346
Installation	£3932
Total	£22,962

CONTACTS

ECLISSE 01476 565497 or
www.eclisse.co.uk

All other items available from
Design Matters.

The verdict

"This design is really fun – I especially like the shiny surfaces of the white gloss cupboards and raspberry red glass splashback," enthuses Sylvia. "There is everything I need in this kitchen and it's good that Adam has managed to incorporate some of my existing appliances. In terms of new appliances, the Neff Slide&Hide oven and DishDrawer dishwasher are good practical solutions and I also like the waterfall edge on the work surface – it should make cooking less messy! The big decision would be whether I want to reduce the size of my living/dining room to accommodate a larger kitchen. I can see that I might have to make some compromises to come up with the best solution."