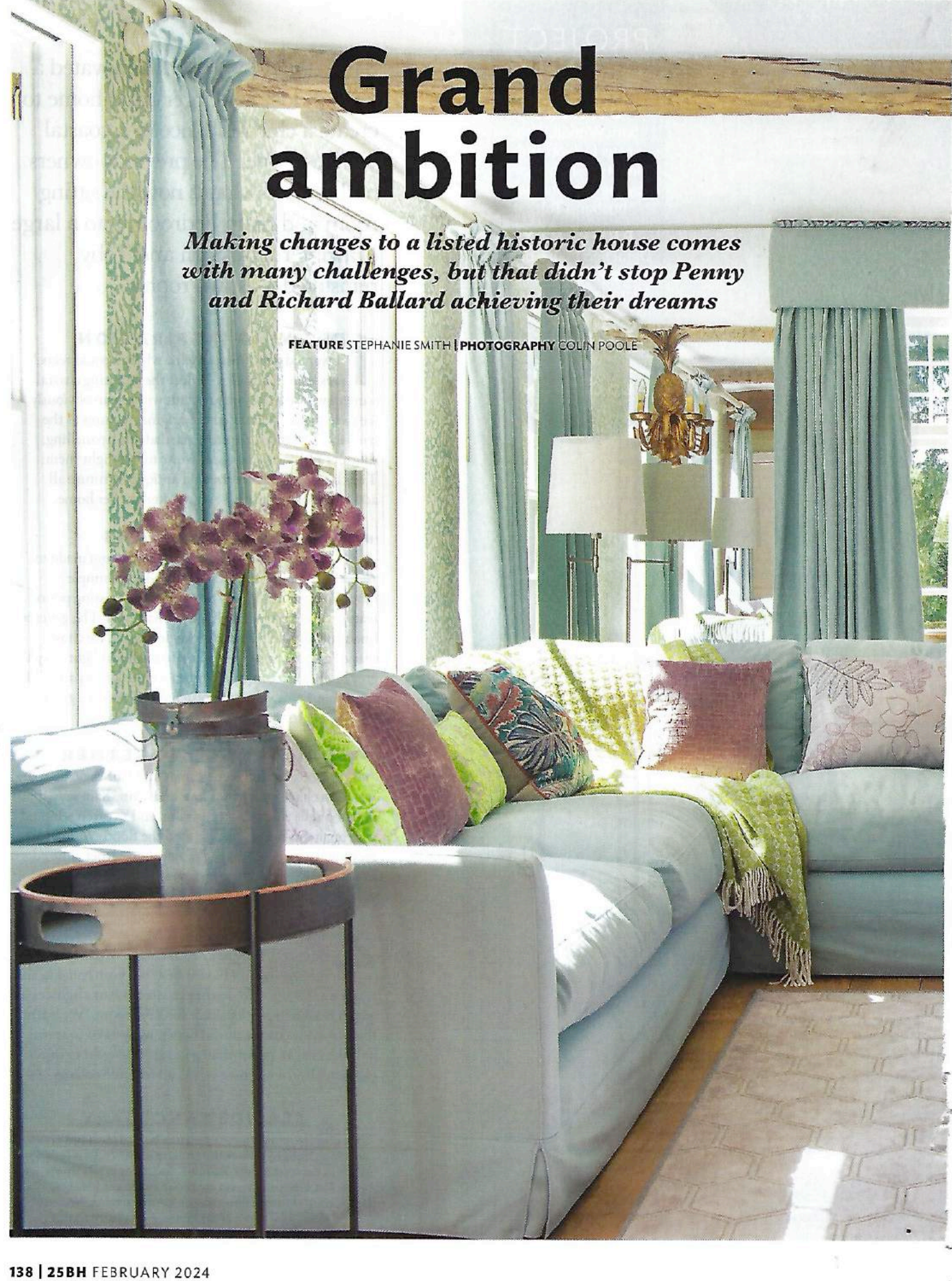


Grand ambition

Making changes to a listed historic house comes with many challenges, but that didn't stop Penny and Richard Ballard achieving their dreams

FEATURE STEPHANIE SMITH | PHOTOGRAPHY COLIN POOLE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

A three-storey, detached 17th-century Grade II-listed farmhouse

ROOMS Sitting room, snug, kitchen, dining room, seven bedrooms, eight bathrooms, garden room and games room

LOCATION Suffolk



SITTING ROOM

'Greens and blues have been deliberately introduced into the scheme to reflect the countryside outside,' says Penny. Paris velvet sofa; Manipur Amethyst rug, both Designers Guild. The Swyft linen sofa, John Lewis & Partners, is similar. Coffee table, One.World. Hand-painted wallpaper, Rapture & Wright

**'A MAJOR RENOVATION IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE SUSTAINABLE -
HERE THERE IS A WOODCHIP BIOMASS BOILER'**



DINING AREA

This open-plan space has a table big enough to seat 10. 'Our family sometimes stays, so it's nice to be able to eat together in this tranquil atmosphere,' says Penny. French-style chairs; Chic Antique. Walls in Dix Blue and Green Blue, Farrow & Ball

Although they'd owned their historic house for many years, Penny and Richard Ballard became aware three years ago that the property needed a major overhaul. The couple, both former solicitors with four grown-up children and six grandchildren, had taken their eye off the ball when it came to the interior decoration.

'The Farmhouse is part of the larger Nether Hall estate, and it used to be the farmhouse for the largest of the five farms that served the estate,' says Penny. 'It

suddenly began to look very dated. We knew we had to do something to change the layout and make it more attractive for our family and friends to come and stay, plus we were interested in renting it out to let other people enjoy it as well.'

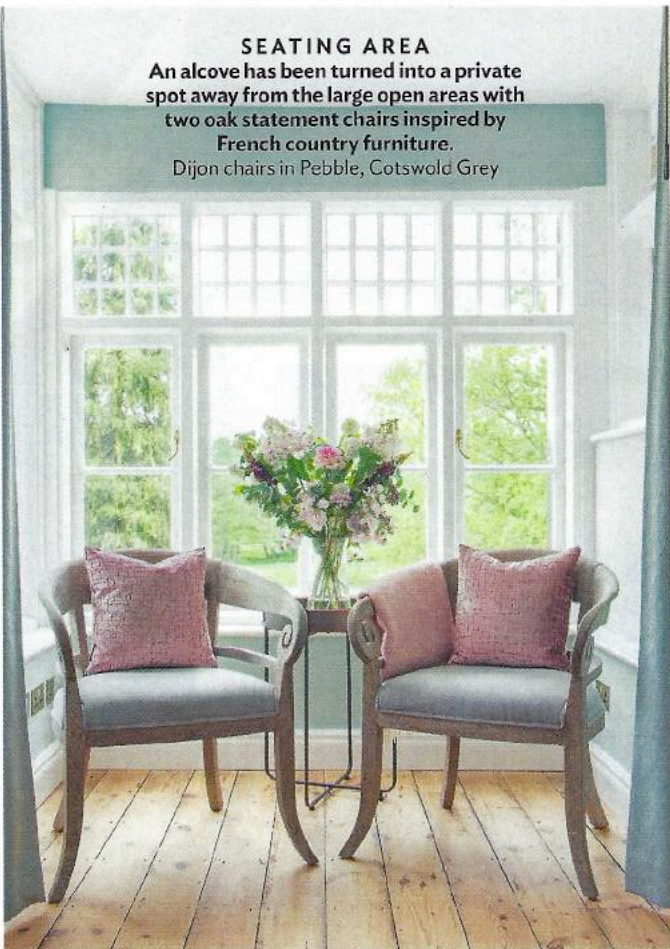
Because of the listed building status, the renovation of the historic farmhouse had to be carefully approached. A real lack of bathrooms compared to the number of bedrooms was a big issue and plans were agreed which would redress the balance. 'We turned it from a ten-bedroom house

with just two bathrooms, to a property with seven bedrooms, each with an en-suite bathroom, plus one extra downstairs,' says Penny. 'It was a two-year project, with a six-week shutdown during lockdown, and under the eye of the conservation officer.'

Luckily, a large part of the open-plan layout downstairs was already in place. 'Major alterations had been carried out by the previous owners in the 1980s when obtaining listed building consent for alterations was easier than it is now,' says Penny. 'The wall between the sitting and

SEATING AREA

An alcove has been turned into a private spot away from the large open areas with two oak statement chairs inspired by French country furniture. Dijon chairs in Pebble, Cotswold Grey



KITCHEN

Shaker units have been given a luxury touch with glass and chrome handles.

Fairford units in Dove Grey, Howdens.

Quartz worktops, The Worktop Warehouse. Handles, Graham and Green



BEDROOM

As many of the bedrooms have a feminine slant, the one at the top of the house uses grey wall panelling and accessories to change things up.

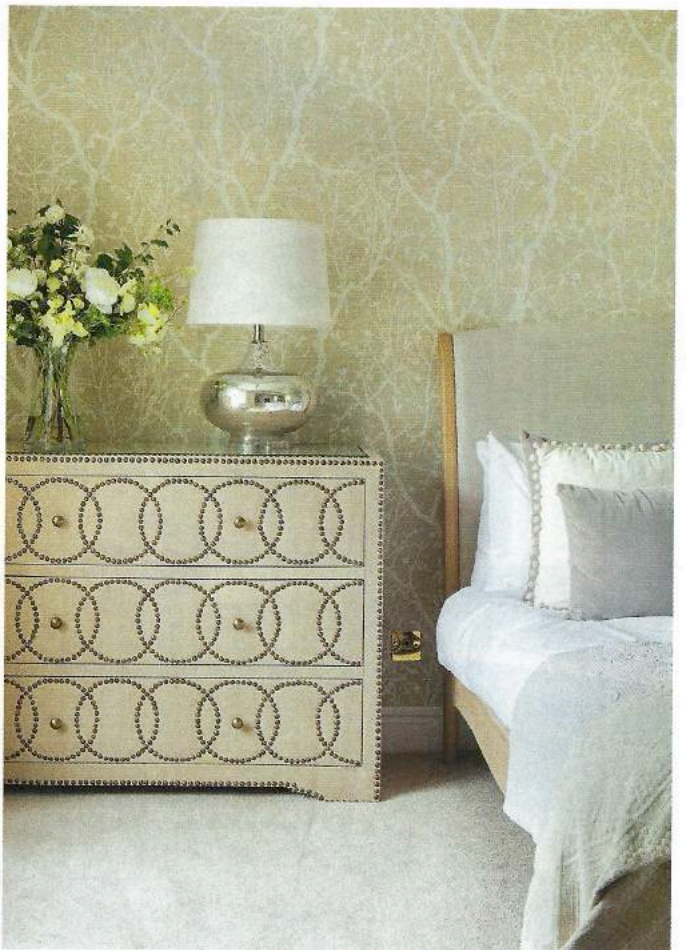
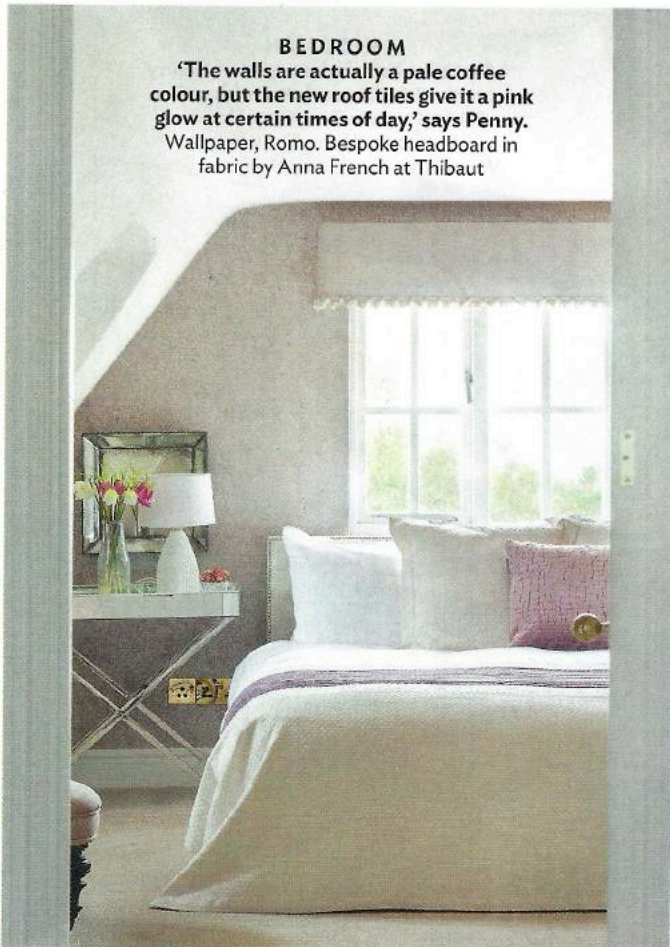
Panelling in Grey Steel 1; walls in Dove Grey, both Dulux. Chrome side lamps, Dunelm



BEDROOM

'The walls are actually a pale coffee colour, but the new roof tiles give it a pink glow at certain times of day,' says Penny.

Wallpaper, Romo. Bespoke headboard in fabric by Anna French at Thibaut



'ONE OF THE MOST TIME-CONSUMING PARTS OF THE RENOVATION WAS RESTORING BEAMS, BUT THEY ADD CHARACTER SO IT WAS WORTH IT'



MAIN BEDROOM

This room has a romantic feel, with soft neutrals and ornate mirrored wardrobes. 'A mirrored screen cut into three was put onto the doors by a joiner,' says Penny. All furniture, Coach House, Mirror, Graham and Green. Parkland wallpaper by Anna French at Thibaut

dining room had already been removed.' The kitchen was enlarged by obtaining consent to demolish a small utility area added in the 1980s and replace it with a larger extension. 'We've also added a garden room on the site of the original Victorian greenhouse and added underfloor heating.'

Environmentally friendly measures have been brought in all over the house to make it more sustainable and energy efficient. 'We changed from an oil-fired boiler to a woodchip biomass boiler and added new insulation in the walls, floors and ceilings,'

says Penny. 'We've looked at the finer details, too, such as reduced flush toilets.'

One of the hardest issues with the updating and renovation was dealing with the oak-timbered structure. 'We had to make sure that all the pipework for the bathrooms was unobtrusive, but also a significant number of beams and posts were found to be damaged by rot or completely missing,' says Penny. 'These were repaired or replaced by English oak timber from the estate.' The couple was also able to use their own oak to restore the original floor in the

sitting room, which had been replaced with concrete screed in the 1980s.

With the basics in hand, their secret weapon when it came to suggested layout and decor was interior designer Susie Stocks, who oversaw the whole project and brought colour and character into every room with statement pieces, tactile fabrics and unusual wallpapers. 'It feels a lot lighter and more spacious,' says Penny. 'We didn't always agree on everything, but Susie was right, and we love the way it looks now.'  susiestocksdesigns.co.uk; netherhallestate.com

BATHROOM

The veined marble tiles are used on both the walls and floor to create a dramatic statement in the main en-suite bathroom. Mimica marble-effect tiles, Mandarin Stone. Cabinet, Coach House. Round Venetian mirror, Graham and Green. The Verona bath, Victorian Plumbing, is similar

