

**The big change**  
 Reworking the first floor layout to create a sociable kitchen-diner, and converting the attic to add two extra bedrooms

# 'It's the perfect place to escape to'



Julie Reed transformed a dated property on the Suffolk coast into a lively home away from home

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Aldeburgh's cafés, pubs and shops are a big hit with the Reed family



Julie loves strolling along the shingle beach at Aldeburgh with her dogs



Julie transformed the exterior of the house by swapping the ugly concrete roof tiles for smart slate ones. The flint section, once a smokehouse, has also been overhauled and now forms the back entrance to the property. A decked area with steps down to the garden links the first floor living space with the outside

## Take the 60-second tour...

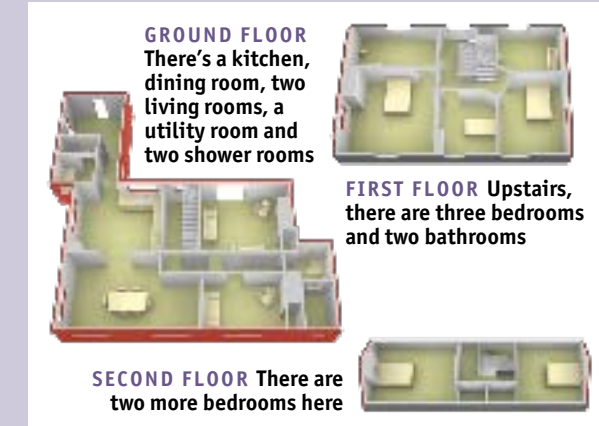
**Who lives here** Julie Reed spends her holidays here with children Robert, 26, Millie, 24, Clemmie, 17, and Freddie, 16, and their Jack Russells, Rosie and Jumble.

**The home** A five-bed cottage built in 1750, in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, bought in 2003. It is rented out when the family aren't staying (01728 638962; www.bestofsuffolk.co.uk).

**The look** Beach chic, with candy-coloured furnishings.

**Lessons learned** 'Use local craftsmen who understand the building,' says Julie.

Bought for	Spent around	Now worth
£290,000	£350,000	£875,000
Building work...£248,000	Bathrooms.....£7,500	
Architect & structural engineer fees.....£28,000	Decoration.....£34,500	
Kitchen & utility room.....£28,000	Fireplaces.....£4,000	
	<b>TOTAL.....£350,000</b>	



When Julie Reed saw a neglected property for sale on Aldeburgh High Street six years ago, she knew it could be the perfect holiday home – but her children weren't so sure. 'They were horrified when they saw the shabby house and didn't want to live in it,' she says. 'But I knew that as they got older, the coastal town with its beach, pubs and shops would be a great getaway for them.'

**What was the house like?**

It had been rented out for years and was very dated. It had a basic kitchen, no dining room and three bedrooms. However, it was a good price, it had a garden and I loved that it was on the bustling high street above two shops. I also thought Aldeburgh was a great location, only a two-hour drive away from our main home in Hertfordshire.

**What did you do first?**

I decided how we would use the space and asked an architect to draw up plans. My criteria included a kitchen-diner so I can



'The kitchen and dining room are linked by a wide doorway, creating a lovely, light-filled space where we all congregate'

play chef and host without feeling like I'm cut off from guests. I also wanted two living rooms as the children are such different ages, a drying room for when we come in from the beach, and two more bedrooms, which we got by converting the attic.

**Did you have any unforeseen problems?**

The project was far bigger than anything I'd ever taken on before. Luckily, I had an excellent builder, who co-managed the project with me. When his team stripped away the hardboard cladding on the →



Squeeze in more guests with benches instead of dining chairs



**ABOVE** Julie decided to reconfigure the living space on the first floor and create a large dining area leading off the kitchen. She went for a bespoke table and benches with quirky blue legs and added contemporary chairs to create a fresh, funky look  
Dining table and benches, Vale Designs. Roman blind fabric, Designers Guild. Chairs, Heal's

**LEFT** An extra-wide doorway links the kitchen with the dining room for an open feel – the sky-blue units match the dining furniture, bringing the two areas together

**RIGHT** Blue units, wooden worktops and bright fabric create a subtle seaside theme in the kitchen. 'I like the striped blinds as they remind me of deckchairs', says Julie  
Roman blind fabric, Designers Guild. Cake tin, Emma Bridgewater. Wire basket, Moo Moos



'I'm glad I went for a bespoke kitchen – it's added real quality to the room,' says Julie  
Kitchen, Vale Designs. Roman blind fabric, Designers Guild



Frame French windows with a narrow pelmet



‘I wanted it to look fun and unisex instead of being a clichéd seaside house – I think it’s stylish and comfortable’

walls it became clear that the building was unsound. A chimney had collapsed on the end gable and I had to employ a structural engineer. A steel core was put through the middle of the building, which set the project back by nine months and cost an extra £100,000. I had to sell our other holiday home in Thorpeness and increase our mortgage to fund the extra work.

**Did you have to make any compromises?** My mantra was to stay true to the project and not cut corners. When the renovation costs started to escalate it would have been easy to cut back on the bespoke kitchen or the final finishes. But I’m pleased that I didn’t drop the standard of finish and that details such as the skirting and architraves haven’t been compromised.

**What has been the most successful part of the project?** Just completing it was a huge achievement! All of the internal structure of the house has been rebuilt, but I particularly like how

the layout of the kitchen and dining area has transformed the property. We enlarged the kitchen by knocking through to a utility room and small hallway, then turned the old living room into the dining room. The two rooms are linked by an extra-wide doorway, creating a lovely, light-filled space where we all congregate.

**Tell us about the décor...** I’d planned to paint the rooms in a palette of blues, but when I saw the finished space with the wooden flooring laid, I decided →



**ABOVE** The main living room is on the first floor and leads out to a decked area, with steps down onto a patio. ‘It’s given us another dimension to the house and it’s a lovely suntrap in the early evening,’ says Julie. Sofa, Sofa Workshop. Chair and table, both IKEA. Curtain fabric, Designers Guild. Footstool, Burnett & Company. Gull picture, Thompsons Gallery

**LEFT** The second living room is at the front of the house. Although the house is often rented out, there are personal touches everywhere. ‘The children say it feels like their permanent home because there are so many reminders around them,’ says Julie

**RIGHT** ‘At carnival time we all go out onto the balcony and get a bird’s-eye view of the procession,’ says Julie. ‘We can also check out the queue for the famous fish and chip shop and pop out when the coast is clear!’

With two living rooms, the children can watch TV or hang out with friends whenever they like





The pretty main bedroom, on the second floor, is decorated in pastel pinks and white. A plain pine dressing table has been updated with a lick of mint-green paint. Bed, Dyvig Metalwork Design. Bedspread, Accessorize. Blind fabric, Designers Guild

FEATURE CAMILLA SHARMAN STYLING SIAN WILLIAMS PHOTOGRAPHS NIKKI CRISP PERSONA-ID

to stick to white and add colour with fabrics and paintings. I wanted it to look fun and unisex instead of being a clichéd seaside house, and I think now it's a stylish and comfortable family home.

**Did you change it for the rental market?**

Renting it out has made it a more viable investment but I didn't want it to look unloved, so there are lots of family pictures and personal possessions. The house had to be easy to maintain, so there's gravel in the garden to clean the sand from our shoes, the doorways have mats set flush within the flooring, and there's a utility room for wet clothes and shoes, all before you enter the main living area.

**Has it all been worthwhile?**

Yes – at first I felt overwhelmed by the project, but now I can sit back and enjoy the house. At the end of the renovation work someone asked the builder if the house was for sale – it made me so proud that I'd turned a near-derelict property into something desirable. When the children have finished school, I plan to move to this house full time, as it really feels like our family home. ❄



**ABOVE** The dark wood bed in Robert's attic bedroom was left behind by the previous owners of the family's old holiday home in Thorpeness. 'It fits in beautifully with the exposed beams that the attic conversion has revealed,' says Julie



**ABOVE** Julie fitted simple white suites in both the first-floor bathrooms. 'With two shower rooms and two bathrooms I wanted to be sure that there is lots of hot water when we come in from the beach, so I installed two hot water tanks,' she says

Ideal

£162



**Kartell Bourgie lamp (H78cm), Graham & Green**

£395



**Loopy coffee table (H42cm x W120cm x D34cm), Purves & Purves**

£65



**Pair of wooden sandpipers, Grey Heron**

£24



**Pair of wooden birds, Live Laugh Love**

Great deal

£89



**Prado coffee table (H36cm x W100cm x D45cm), Tesco Direct**

£65



**Wave lamp (H33cm), Dwell**

**De'Longhi Garda electric stove (H57.5cm x W50cm x D32cm), Argos**

£127



**Julie's living room**  
White with splashes of summery pink and blue

**Valor Arden solid-fuel stove (H53.7cm x W40.5cm x D34.5cm), B&Q**

£399

**Blue Ticking mug, Caroline Zoob**

£14.95

**Blue Chophouse Stripes mug, Terence Conran range, John Lewis**

£5.75

£890

**Daisy two-seater sofa in Raspberry linen cotton (H90cm x W170cm x D94cm), Sofa.com**

£467

**Charlie small sofa in Fuchsia viscose/polyester mix (H85cm x W170cm x D95cm), Sofa Workshop**

FEATURE CLARE STEEL MAIN PHOTOGRAPH NIKKI CRISP

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