



FROM TECH TO TIMBER: REDEFINING A RURAL HOME IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Tucked within a small holding in rural Bedfordshire (on land once home to the pig farm of a medieval manor) sits a pair of quietly confident new-build homes. While the original barns that stood here were relatively modern and unsuitable for conversion, their replacement offered something far more interesting: a chance to rethink how rural homes are designed for modern living.

For Laura Taylor, the project marked a personal shift—from a career in product marketing within the tech sector to a more tangible, human-centred form of design. “In my day job, everything is about systems, structure and logic,” she explains. “This was about applying that same thinking to how people actually live in a space.”

Rather than simply replicating a traditional barn conversion aesthetic, the approach was more considered. The homes were designed to sit comfortably within their setting—black timber cladding, simple forms, and a restrained material palette—but with a subtle modern edge that reflects how people live today.





The target market was clear from the outset: downsizers seeking a refined rural retreat, or younger couples drawn to something more characterful than a standard new-build. That clarity shaped every design decision.

Inside, the focus moves quickly beyond aesthetics. The open-plan kitchen, dining and living space is deliberately generous, but carefully zoned. A bespoke glazed room divider allows the space to flex - open when needed, but capable of creating intimacy and separation without sacrificing light.

“WE DIDN’T WANT IT TO FEEL LIKE ONE BIG ROOM ON A PLAN,” LAURA EXPLAINS. “IT NEEDED TO FEEL INTUITIVE WHEN YOU MOVE THROUGH IT.”



That thinking carries through into the more practical elements of the home. A separate utility room, with its own sink, acts as a transitional space for muddy boots, dogs and the realities of countryside living. It’s a small detail, but one that fundamentally changes how the home functions day to day.

Material choices were equally driven by performance as much as appearance. While timber flooring might have seemed the obvious choice, the integration of underfloor heating and an air source heat pump led to a more pragmatic solution: high-quality porcelain tiles with a wood-effect finish. The result delivers the visual warmth of timber, but with faster heat transfer and improved efficiency—an invisible upgrade that enhances comfort in everyday use.



There's also a subtle layering of comfort built into the scheme. An electric fire provides immediate warmth during transitional seasons—acknowledging the slower ambient response of modern heating systems, while a soft palette of muted greens and warm neutrals draws the surrounding landscape indoors.

The overall effect is calm, grounded and quietly sophisticated. Nothing feels overdesigned, yet everything has been considered.

For Laura, the project represents more than just a successful build. It's a demonstration of how design thinking—borrowed from an entirely different industry—can create homes that are not only beautiful, but genuinely better to live in.

“It's about designing for real life,” she says. “Not just how a space looks on day one, but how it works every single day after that.”



LAURA TAYLOR, FOUNDER OF LAURA TAYLOR INTERIORS, TRANSITIONED FROM PRODUCT MARKETING IN TECH TO RESIDENTIAL DESIGN, BRINGING A SYSTEMS-LED APPROACH TO HOW HOMES ARE LIVED IN.