

FEATURE

A Suffolk landmark has been transformed into the ultimate high-rise holiday let, as editor Barry Peters discovers



The Windmill Suffolk began life as a windmill before becoming a water tower and was then transformed by Steve and Natalie Roberts. (Picture: English Heritage)

Views from the top take you out across the Suffolk fields.

Pair's windmill conversion will blow you away

When Steve and Natalie Roberts attended Bury's Christmas Fayre in 2007, they went away from Suffolk with more than they bargained for. Among the day's baubles and tinsel, they spotted an advert in our paper for a home – with a derelict windmill attached.

And that's where their labour of love began.

Their 'project' began life in 1891 and was first a windmill perched high on a ridge just two miles outside Lavenham.

When its life as a windmill was over, the structure became a water tower for many years – and then along came Steve and Natalie and mum Jean.



The past two years have seen the 1891 structure transformed and put on the market now as an up-market holiday let for couples.

The property has also caught the eye of the RICS, having made the final six in the battle to be named top in the East of England Tourism and Leisure category. The awards are announced in early May.

Steve, 42, a quantity surveyor, masterminded the building work while Natalie, also 42, and with a background in recruitment and training, looked after the interior finishes. Both are delighted with the finished article.

But it didn't happen without a few problems along the way.

"The biggest headache was that everything has to be rounded, so everything is bespoke, right down to the curved TV," said Natalie. "That's probably why it came in at more than double the original budget."

The windmill has already caught the eyes of a number of buildings awards judges and continues to turn heads on the windy road from the A134 into Lavenham.

"It's sometimes difficult to believe it is ours," said Natalie. "When I'm up at the top in the pod, I'm only 30 seconds away from my home but think I must be on holiday somewhere."

"We wanted to do something amazing," said Steve. "The roof structure is made from a material from Finland and a roof that shape had never been covered in zinc before – so that's a world first."

Now the couple are opening up the windmill in what they call their 'forever home' as a luxurious adults-only boutique bolthole.

But be warned – even though there's a wine fridge on the top floor, don't forget the corkscrew... as the kitchen is on the ground floor.

More details can be found via www.thewindmillsuffolk.com



Steve and Natalie are most proud with the 'pod' at the very top of the structure.



Exposed brickwork in the bathroom adds to the unique charm.



The accommodation has been furnished to a high standard for guests.