

Difficulty level: C1 / advanced

This page will let you practise for the Certificate in Advanced English exam (from Cambridge English). This is the format of the seventh part of the reading and use of English section.

You are going to read a magazine article. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract.

Choose from the paragraphs A-G the one which fits each gap (1-6). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

A Russell and his wife had lived for several years in the picturesque village of Lymm where the crumbling 130-year old tower stood. The grade II listed building was one of several hundred surviving water towers which were built in the 1800s to improve public health across Britain. This particular tower was currently being used by three mobile phone companies to anchor their telephone masts. Russell regularly walked along the footpath beside the tower, and when it went up for auction in 1997, he impulsively put in a bid for £138,000.

B But finally it all paid off. The end result is both contemporary and luxurious. The original tower houses a 'winter' living room on the ground floor. Above it is a master bedroom with an en suite bathroom on a mezzanine. Above that, there is an office, guest room and a room for the telecom equipment. Atop it all is a roof garden with views stretching as far as Manchester and Liverpool.

C Work finally began when planning permission was granted in 2002. But before the new structure could be built, substantial work had to be done to the existing tower. The stonework was cracked and the turret was damaged. Two skilled stonemasons worked for six months on its restoration. It was then sandblasted, the water tank was removed, and huge steel frames were put into place to support the new floors. Only then could foundations be laid for the extension.

D Over 60 companies were involved in the construction, and Russell gave up work to act as project manager. There were problems at almost every stage. If something could go wrong, it inevitably would. Spirits plummeted and costs spiralled, and Russell and Jannette could do little but look on as their savings dwindled.

E Russell and Jannette had just finished renovating a 1920s farmhouse nearby. This was done in a much more traditional style. By the time they'd finished with it, the once-roofless property had the typical Aga, log-burning stove, rugs, country pine furniture, dried flowers and knick-knacks. Chintzy in comparison to the modernist design they attached to the water tower. Since the work on the tower, they have become a real converts to minimalism.

F Colour is added to this stark interior by the creative use of lighting, which was designed by Kate Wilkins, responsible for the lighting scheme at the Tate Modern Art Gallery. The lighting is subtle, mostly made up of simply concealed fluorescent strips or cold-cathode tubes. The innovative approach to lighting design won them the prestigious Lighting Design Award.

G Fate, however, had other ideas. Russell and Jannette had to battle town planners and local opposition to get their dream on the road. Five years along, work still hadn't started and the couple were losing heart. All this changed, however, when they met the architect Julian Baker, who drew up plans for a contemporary design blending old and new. His inspirational ideas gave them the impetus they needed to kick-start their project.

Renovating the Lymm Water Tower

After eight years of grit and determination, Russell and Jannette Harris have succeeded in transforming a derelict water tower into a spacious family home, and in doing so, won the 2005 Homebuilding and renovation awards. However, the road to success was relentless, as what began as a whim turned into an insurmountable challenge, and there were times when they thought they might never move in.

1. ▾

Finding themselves the owners of the dilapidated structure, the couple then had to decide what to do with it. Their early visions for the project were fairly modest; they originally considered wrapping the structure in timber cladding and fitting a copper roof, or keeping the tower as a folly and building a cottage in the grounds. As time progressed, the couple decided that they could use this opportunity to create something far more ambitious.

2. ▾

Julian's masterplan involved wrapping a glass-and-steel extension around the tower, creating living spaces on various levels. Massive windows would give floor-to-ceiling views of the countryside, strategically placed so that the morning sun would shine into the kitchen and set on the dining area. The summer lounge, facing due south, would catch the daytime rays.

3. ▾

Work also had to be done to hide the unsightly selection of antennae on the roof of the old tower. These could not be removed, as they were essential part of funding the conversion. So they were rehoused in an extension to the existing stone turret, concealing them from sight.

4. ▾

Thankfully, they were able to reclaim something towards these costs from the income generated by the radio masts. They also reaped some money by making a television programme about the project. But with costs soaring to £450,000 and beyond, the family was forced to cut down on personal spending. They stopped taking family holidays, traded in their car and lived in cheap rented accommodation.

5. ▾

The extension meanwhile, which accommodates the main living space, is a tribute to minimalism. There are no pictures. The house is like a work of art in itself, with its sweeping views of the countryside. White is the dominant colour, and everywhere there are sleek, curved lines. Even the light switches and plug sockets are discreetly hidden.

6. ▾

With a total cost of over £500,000, plus eight years of hard slog, Russell is unsure whether he would advise other self-builders to put themselves through the trouble. At times, he wished he had never bought the tower. But when he sits in the roof-top hot tub with 360 degree views over the countryside, he admits that it was worth the effort. And now that the Lymm Water Tower has been valued at £1.75m by a local agent, the Harrises can surely feel satisfied with their achievement.