



THESE PAGES Architect Noel Lane tweaked the clients' brief to move their preferred site from one with a bird's eye view of the coastline to a vantage point with a much more intimate relationship to the Mahurangi inlet.

The great escape

From city bustle to paradise found, Noel Lane has helped realise one couple's dream of easing into early retirement

TEXT by Claire McCall PHOTOGRAPHY by Simon Devitt







Sometimes bigger is better – at least, that’s what one couple decided when they discovered this two-hectare coastal section north of Auckland. They were looking for a much smaller property until the spectacular views and abundant pohutukawa of the site convinced them otherwise.

The site is in a historically rich area of Mahurangi once known as Pukapuka. There are three pa sites in the vicinity and just south of here in the early 1800s, a shoreline community of sawyers and shipwrights toiled at the kauri spar station. Rural and coastal views stretch from Scotts Landing in the east to Dyers Creek out west. At night, the lights in homes across the water at Snells Beach twinkle alluringly.

The owners had never built their own home before and, after years of living in Wellington, felt out of touch with the Auckland design scene. They looked in books and magazines and contacted seven architects with a brief. They wanted their new home to blend with the environment, to be modern yet timeless. They wanted lots of outdoor space and big eaves for shelter and shade. They wanted someone to embrace these ideas but also to challenge them. They found that someone in Auckland architect Noel Lane. “He challenged us to the nth degree,” the owners say.

One of Lane’s first suggestions was to locate the two-level house closer to the water than the couple first envisaged. The owners had initially suggested a site higher up the hill, but Lane persuaded them to move the house down to the edge of a finger of land pointing out into the estuary, where their views would not be interrupted by neighbours. “They gained intimacy by locating the house down there,” Lane says. “It doesn’t occupy the space too dramatically.” Lane says they had to think carefully about how to fit the building to the landscape. The result is a home that is beautifully at one with its surroundings.

At the time, Lane was (and still is) in the thick of a much larger project: the \$65 million expansion of the Auckland Museum, due to open in December. As a futuristic new structure began to rise out of the museum’s rear courtyard, Lane welcomed the distraction of a project that was still challenging, but undeniably smaller in scale. “This project kept me sane,” he says. “The museum has been a fantastic 12-year job, but you need breaks like this from big jobs to clear your mind.” (He hastens to add that his office gives equal attention to each project, no matter what the scale.)

The home is a surprisingly discreet presence on the site, as Lane designed it to sit relatively low on its undulating section.

ABOVE Noel Lane says the home’s living areas can act “like a verandah”, opening onto three separate terraces. The cushions are by Rose Schwarz Design and the sofas are by Paradigm. The dining table and chairs are Barbara Barry for McGuire from Cavit & Co. The vases are by Peter Collis. The painting is by Rosemary Mortimer. **OPPOSITE** The entry foyer is a zone providing a neat separation between living and sleeping spaces. The wall hanging is an original Marimekko print.



THESE PAGES Bedding by White Linen complements a contemporary headboard by Paradigm and side tables from Rose & Heather. The armchairs are by Perfect Pieces.





Conceived in three main volumes, there is an elevated bedroom wing, a central axis which includes an entrance space and swimming pool, and the living areas overlooking the water. Lane says this area can be opened onto three different terraces, depending on the weather, to operate “like a verandah” in summer. The entry foyer provides a neat separation of living and sleeping spaces – requiring guests to traverse what Lane calls a “transition zone” when moving from one part of the house to another.

Early on in planning their new home, the owners decided it should double as boutique accommodation. Their brief to Lane required a floor plan that allowed the home to operate as a whole or as an upmarket bed-and-breakfast, now called Waipiata. Lane decided this didn’t require any special planning – he simply designed a home with an adult family in mind.

That part was easy, but the material palette was initially a sticking point. The owners previously lived in a 1950s weatherboard cottage with roses and cherry trees in the garden. The gigantic leap to concrete and glass did not come easily. Lane gave them a tour of the interiors he designed for the Auckland Museum’s original building to show that concrete didn’t have to be brutal. “It’s a house that’s minimalist in notion, but complex spatially,” he

says. “It was important to sculpt the home so it had a balance of solidity and openness. Concrete can be quite organic, especially when its permanence is teamed with the softness of timber and fragile nature of glass.”

Inside, the home is full of interesting textures. The lower level features floors made of fossil-flecked Portuguese limestone, as well as built-in furniture in walnut, including cabinetry in the kitchen and bookcases and display units in the living room.

It is a home that initially looks simple, but rewards closer inspection with notes of pleasing complexity. Novel pivoting forms are a feature of the design. Generous glass doors twist to open and link the downstairs rooms to the pool and terraces beyond. Huge slabs of concrete move on pivots to shelter outdoor terraces, and a massive concrete square on the north-facing terrace shields an outdoor table from the prevailing south-westerly when closed. Opened at sunset, it allows glorious gold-tinged views down to the glistening creek.

There are three double rooms available at Waipiata. Rates are from \$800 for two nights or from \$450 per night, including a gourmet breakfast and pre-dinner drinks. For information, visit www.waipiata.co.nz

ABOVE Timber panelling softens the kitchen where Gaggenau appliances share space with Gimlet barstools by Jorge Pensi and tapware by Dornbracht.

OPPOSITE Water and glass moderate the solidity of concrete and provide a point of connection with the neighbouring coastline.



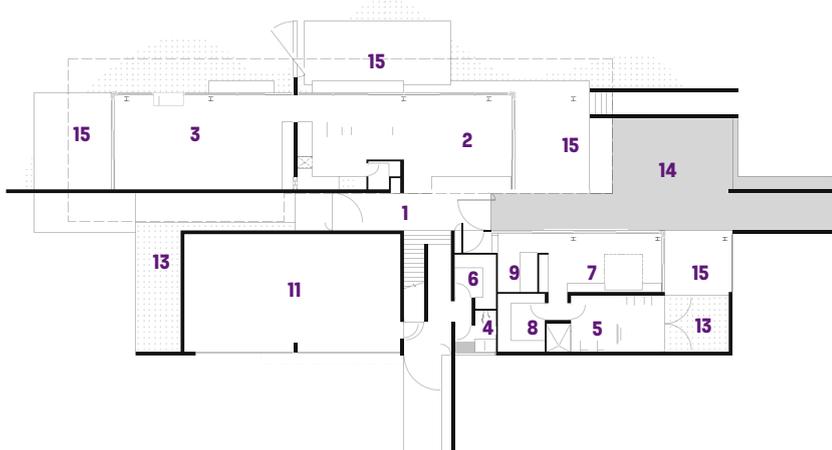


THESE PAGES As its name suggests, Waipiata is surrounded by water, in the man-made pools that hug the architecture and in the estuary nearby.

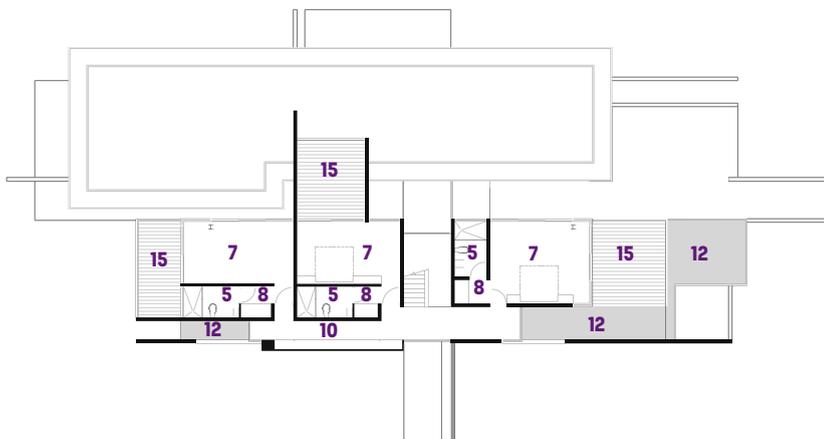




GROUND FLOOR



UPPER FLOOR



- 1 Entry
- 2 Kitchen/Family
- 3 Lounge
- 4 WC
- 5 Bathroom
- 6 Laundry
- 7 Bedroom
- 8 Dressing
- 9 Study
- 10 Library
- 11 Garage
- 12 Reflection pond
- 13 Garden
- 14 Pool
- 15 Terrace



TOP Slung low in the hillside, the house has flat roof planes that help it to sit more discreetly in the landscape.

ABOVE The bathroom features bidet and toilet by Philippe Starck 2 for Duravit, tapware by Vola, 'Bacino' basins by Duravit and 'Vaio' bath by Kaldewei; all available from Metrix.

RIGHT Architect Noel Lane.

BELOW A previous Noel Lane design, a guesthouse on a property at Brick Bay, north of Auckland.

