

Tilted Heart

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A bold roof line signals a new era for retirement village design, from seclusion to inclusion. On the edge of Hamilton, a shimmering angular form rises above Tamahere Drive.

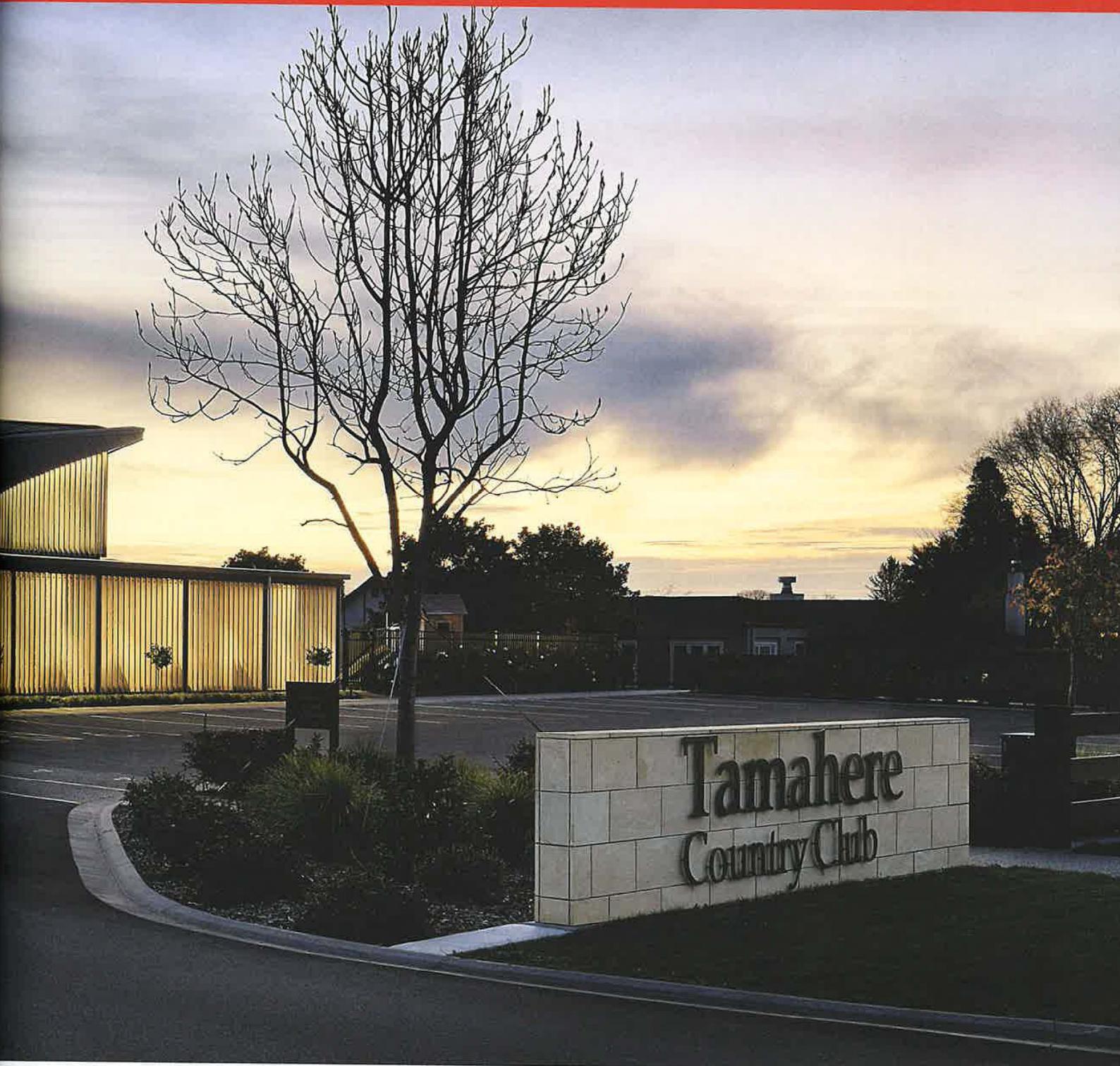
The Tamahere Country Club Cafe, designed by Lee Turner of Turner Road Architecture, is no ordinary retirement village facility. With its bold "tilt" roof line, scale-like aluminium cladding, and sculptural silhouette, it immediately signals something different: this is not a place hidden away for the elderly, but a social heart that connects residents, families and the wider community.

On entry a beautiful schist bridge spans a serene waterway, which defines the tone, adding a sense of occasion as people arrive at the village. The water and cascading fountains create a sense of

flow and animation. Structured landscaping wraps the cafe, while expansive picture windows frame nature views. Indoors, planting softens the spaces, ensuring a constant dialogue with the natural world.

Retirement villages have traditionally been secure, private, and often invisible to outsiders. But the Sanderson Group approached Turner Road with a different brief: create a cafe that would serve residents while also drawing in the public. They wanted a destination; a landmark that would stand apart from the village and welcome people in.

"The tilt was our response," says Lee. "We wanted a form that had presence that you notice and are curious about as you approach.



But once inside, the cafe had to feel warm, comfortable and inclusive. It's about drama on the outside, intimacy on the inside." ▶

The cafe's dynamic roof line is its defining feature. Rather than a flat or gabled roof, Lee designed an angular ridge that soars upwards, creating a sense of lift and movement. The geometry extends through the interior, shaping ceilings, glazing and walls into an experience that feels alive. "We wanted visitors to feel that spark of excitement on arrival – like they're stepping into somewhere special."

Delivering the tilt was no small feat. Every junction of steel, timber and cladding had to be carefully coordinated so the exterior and interior would flow seamlessly. The tilt and angled roof line demanded precision from the construction team and engineers.

"It was technically complex, but the result was absolutely worth it. It's a form that defines the cafe and makes it instantly recognisable."

Cladding the exterior are shimmering aluminium tiles, which catch and reflect light like scales. Their sequin-like sparkle brings a touch of "something special" to the form, yet these tiles are more than just show ponies. Made from 87 percent recycled material and produced using renewable energy, they combine environmental responsibility with long-lasting durability and low maintenance – proving that sparkle and substance can go hand-in-hand.

As a counterpoint to the bold roof line, sustainably grown cedar louvres soften the cafe's northern and western glazing. These vertical fins optimise sunlight while providing effective shading,

tempering solar gain without blocking views. By night these fins, subject to feature lighting, glow softly, creating a warm atmosphere. They also define the outdoor seating area, creating a visual screen that preserves openness and airflow while giving the terrace a sense of enclosure. Glazing and natural timber ensure the bold form remains approachable.

Inside, a language of angled lines mirrors the tilt of the roof and the scale-like cladding outside. This geometry becomes rhythmic: the cafe counter has inset clay tile criss-cross detail, while one floor-to-ceiling glazed wall is overlaid with a timber lattice-like structure forming feature shelving, reinforcing the exterior motif. Herringbone flooring extends the theme, layering another subtle expression of pattern and rhythm into the space.

Timber-like acoustic panels line ceilings and walls, ensuring comfort in what could otherwise be a noisy space. Not only do they absorb sound but also support sustainability goals. For residents, many sensitive to background noise, this attention to acoustics transforms the cafe into a place where conversation feels easy.

Terracotta pendant lights glow above a rust-toned marble-look feature wall, adding richness to the neutral colour palette. Cedar-lined ceilings extend seamlessly through to the alfresco dining area, drawing the eye outside and dissolving the boundary between interior and exterior.

At 235sqm indoors and another 120sqm outdoors, the cafe offers generous space. The design balances scale with intimacy, offering vibrant communal areas and quieter corners. Large stacking doors open wide to encourage natural cross-ventilation, linking interior and exterior spaces effortlessly. The terrace itself is sheltered by adjustable louvres and equipped with integrated heating, making it a year-round "room" rather than just a seasonal space.

Residents use it daily for coffee catch-ups, meals and celebrations. The cafe has also quickly become a destination for Cambridge locals. Families gather for picnics on the north lawn, children play in a dedicated area, and the cafe hums with the kind of inter-generational energy rarely associated with retirement living.





"It's not just for residents," says Lee. "That was the whole point. It's about building connection between the village and the community. Architecture has a role to play in reducing isolation, and this cafe shows what's possible."

Accessibility was non-negotiable. Level entries, generous circulation routes, and carefully considered sight lines ensure the cafe works for everyone. Performance was equally critical: passive ventilation strategies reduce reliance on mechanical systems, thermally broken joinery and high insulation levels maintain comfort, and sustainably sourced materials reduce environmental impact.

The Tamahere Country Club Cafe is more than a landmark — it's a signal of a broader shift. Lee Turner has proved that architecture has the power to redefine what these spaces mean.

"We think this kind of integration — where a retirement village facility also becomes a destination for locals — is a model for the future. It reduces isolation, builds community ties, and elevates the overall experience of retirement living.

"It's been special hearing residents and locals talk about how much they enjoy the cafe. At the end of the day, that's the real success: not just creating a striking building, but a place where people connect, feel welcome, and want to return." 



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