

R I D G E
L I N E
R E T R E A T

WORDS
JOANNA
JEFFERIES

PHOTOGRAPHY
AMANDA
AITKEN



RIDGELINE RETREAT



P I V O T I N G

IS
KEY
TO
THE

L A N G U A G E
O F
T H I S
H O M E

THE
BUILDING
FOOTPRINT

S N A K E S

A L O N G
T H E
R I D G E

It's hard to believe that the beautiful home weaving along the ridge high up in the Maungakawa Ranges behind Cambridge was once a spec home. But the builder gave free reign to Turner Road Architecture's Lee Turner, whose design was informed by the ridgeline and the possibilities of capturing expansive views of the Waikato River.

To accommodate these two aims, the house forms a 'Y' shape, with an entrance at the junction between the living and master bedroom wings. Stepping into the entrance itself, you are greeted by a facing glass wall; it's a chance to immediately take in the impressive views, and a teaser for views offered throughout the house. Turner says the form of the house contrasts the impressive views it frames. "It was important to keep it very low profile because it's so prominent on the ridge."

Extensive use of cedar cladding further serves to easily site it in its rural environment. The unique contour of the land also dictated a split-level approach, meaning the living area steps down from the kitchen and bedroom spaces, demanding a high stud that allows the north-facing living room to drink in the light. The exchange of views for sunlight continues along the building, with the master bedroom and study also taking in views and light in their private spot at the end of one wing. A real showstopper is the master suite's shower which allows the user to stare out at the view through a strategically placed window. The weaving of the building also means the negative spaces created by the house's angles are put to excellent use. "The building footprint snakes along the ridge which gives you all these views and outdoor areas," says Turner.

Various nooks and spots in the sun make it an entertainer's haven, as well as sheltering outdoor living on the northern side from the sometimes gusty winds. On the other side of the exterior, in the entry courtyard, is a considered sense of privacy. Two long corridors, one leading to master and study, the other to the bedroom and services wing, allow the owners to peak out at arriving visitors through long, low, tinted windows without being seen. These windows also cleverly contain louvres, passively allowing cool breezes to flow from one side of the house to the other on hot summer days. The bedroom wing fans off of the left corridor; two bedrooms and a TV lounge adjoin it. These rooms too, allow long glimpses at the western views out to Pirongia.

At the end of the bedroom wing sits the laundry and storage areas, neatly tucked away from the bedrooms and living spaces. Also concealed at this end of the house, a double garage is pivoted at an angle to sit along the back of the ridge. Pivoting is key to the language of this home. Turner says it was crucial to let the flow of the building hug the existing land contours, to "keep [the form] continuous, but let it sit really well." The addition of a pool by the new owners completes the view and the hillside entertainer's dream.

This bespoke solution to a challenging site, which gives attention to the contour of the land coupled with the sensitive use of materials, means this home on the ridge feels less like a house and more like a retreat.





LEE
TURNER

DESIGN
EVOLUTION

WORDS
DEBORAH
NATION

PHOTOGRAPHY

TURNER ROAD
ARCHITECTURE

Making a career move from professional rugby to architecture might not seem the most obvious of transitions. But for Cambridge born-and-bred Lee Turner, his rugby career in Ireland was simply time out from architectural design.

He had studied architectural design at Waikato Polytechnic after school and worked for a firm in Cambridge before taking a couple of years out to play rugby. After finishing up rugby in Ireland he moved to England, where he worked for HOK International and Chapman Taylor over three years. When he returned to Cambridge, Lee opened his practice, Turner Road Architecture, and since then it has grown to a staff of four designers and two support staff.

He's very passionate about Elevate, involving pre-fabricated architecturally designed transportable homes. He tested the market with a three-bedroomed, 115m2 "highly spec'd" design, and it proved so popular he put the idea into production.

"I originally thought it would be for baches, which they do [sell to], but a big part of the market has been for retirees and second-home buyers."

Lee and his team have spent up to four years focused on this project, refining their systems, and they're now up to 16 transportable houses. The homes are actually built on site out the back of the office in Cambridge, which is ideal for his practical and hands-on approach. Pre-fabricated buildings is an area Lee is very passionate about and he feels there's plenty of scope to expand.

"I love design, so I think the idea is to come up with more models and I think we've still got lots to prove with Turner Road. Our architecture is evolving – I don't believe it's an age or experience thing – the ideas just keep on expanding."

The benefit of experience, however, means clients are now leaving design decisions up to Lee, giving him more freedom to flex his creative muscle. This means he, along with his team, who he says has contributed greatly to the aesthetics and success of Turner Road Architecture, have the freedom to forge new paths in architectural design.