



Old pa site makes for a challenging build

By Emily Tilley

When the site of the old Point Howard Fire Station went up for sale, the small building platform and steep bank meant few were interested. However, local designer Cameron Moore saw it as a challenge.

Long before the site was home to the fire station, which occupied 3 Howard Road from 1950 until it was demolished in 2012, it had been the site of the Ngamatau Pa.

Strategically placed for defence, the elevated Pa site would have afforded Maori a wide-sweeping view of Wellington Harbour.

It is this uninterrupted view out to Cook Strait that attracted Cameron.

His vision was to create a compact house that would have minimal impact on the site, yet still feel spacious and make the most of the views.

His solution to the site size was to build out, rather than up - that meant designing a house that would literally hang over the cliff.

The secret to the success of his plan lies unseen beneath the floor.

Cantilevered five metres over the cliff edge, five, 460mm deep steel beams run the length of the house. These are secured by eight metre rock anchors that angle deep into the rock towards the road, fixing the house into the hill.

That is not to mention the 24 piles that sink 4.8 metres deep.

"So if the bank gives way overtime, it would have to come halfway back through the house before compromising anything," Cameron says. "It's pretty strong ... it shouldn't go anywhere."

Even making the most of the site, the size of the home is still modest - just 129 sqm including the internal garage.

However, using minimalist modern styling, Cameron's personal favourite, and full height glazing, a sense of space is created.

Almost every part of the house - from the exterior walls and front door, to the interior fixtures and fittings - is either black or white.

"I'm not a fan of colour," Cameron says. "You get the colours from outside."

Those natural colours bounce around in the numerous reflective surfaces Cameron has deliberately used in his design, from the black

glass front door to the mirror-encased ceiling-mounted range hood.

Cameron moved into the house just before Christmas. "Living here is awesome... it's perfect for me," he says.

The young designer, who set up his own design business Moore Design and Draughting in 2011, is now entering the house in the Residential Compact New Home category of the ADNZ Resene Architectural Design Awards.



Cameron Moore's cliff top house.