

design & build





Commanding presence

With its symmetrical architecture and expansive outdoor living areas, this house is designed to maximise its ridge-top location



Preceding pages: Positioned on a ridge with 360° views, this new house is designed to make the most of the outlook and the sun. Sapphire Ridge, designed by Mark Brown of Solutions Architecture, features floor-to-ceiling glass doors and windows that open to a pool and terrace.

Above: The house has a formal symmetry enhanced by a circular driveway.

A house designed for entertaining on a grand scale can also provide for intimate family living – the two are not mutually exclusive, as this project illustrates. At 1500m², Sapphire Ridge in Whitford is large by anyone’s standards. But the provision of several private living spaces ensures it functions as a comfortable family home.

The home’s architectural designer, Mark Brown of Solutions Architecture, says the owners needed a house that would have separate living areas for themselves and their adult son. The house also needed to be suitable for entertaining, and for hosting small, high-end corporate conferences.

“It was important that the design would not date – it had to look just as appealing in 20 years,” Brown says. “The owners felt a highly contemporary design would not suit the country setting.”

Brown says he was also aware of the need for the house to have a commanding presence, as the property sits on a ridge with 360° views.

Consequently, the house has a symmetrical front facade with two gabled wings positioned either side of the main axis.

“This central line continues the formality established by the circular driveway,” says Brown. “It extends from the central front door, through a great

hall to a conservatory, and out to a pool and tennis court on the northern side. These central areas are cater to the formal entertainment requirements. Living quarters for the parents and son are in two wings. Each of these wings has its own front entrance, but is also connected to the formal areas, so there is an easy flow between rooms.”

The house incorporates a home theatre with tiered seating, a 250m² art gallery on the first floor, a library and a basement wine cellar, which can be seen through a glass floor. For ease of entertaining there is a separate caterer’s kitchen, and a formal dining room with a table that can seat twenty.

Both the formal and informal areas flow out to large terraces at ground level, and large balconies on the first floor. The upper decks feature greenheart, which came from the first shipment of this sustainable hardwood to New Zealand.

“Sustainable design was a key driver,” says Brown. “For energy efficiency we have installed solar-powered water heating and a higher level of insulation than required by the building code.”

For details, contact Solutions Architecture, PO Box 51-925, Pakuranga, phone (09) 576 7472, fax (09) 576 5962. Email: solutionsarchitecture@xtra.co.nz. Website: www.solutionsarchitecture.co.nz.

Above: While the formal entrance to the house is positioned in the centre, separate entrances are provided to the owners’ wing, at left, and the son’s quarters, which are on the top floor at right. Auckland-based designer Mark Brown is a member of Architectural Designers New Zealand (ADNZ).



Above: Stehr Brothers, the main contractor for the project, spent three months excavating the site and creating a near-level building site. The company undertakes a wide range of residential and commercial projects, both large and small scale.

Right: A portico provides a sheltered front entrance, which is positioned directly below the 250m² art gallery.



The sheer size of the Whitford residence, its timber-framed construction and the need for a high standard of finish all added to the building complexity for the main contractor. Wok Stehr of Stehr Brothers says the large scale of the project also entailed a high degree of co-ordination with the numerous subcontractors on site.

“Everything was constructed on a grand scale,” Stehr says. “The excavation and retaining walls, for example, took three months to complete before work even started on the house. At 900m², the roofing was another challenge. And the timber framing, while quite straightforward in itself, was a major

undertaking due to the great amount of timber.”

Stehr says that as the house is in an exposed location, it was built to withstand strong winds. Consequently, it features 150mm x 50mm framing rather than the standard 100mm.

Designer Mark Brown says much of the builder’s expertise was utilised behind the scenes. Curved walls, large glazed spans and concealed fixing for the extra-high skirting boards and decks all contributed to the project’s complexity.

Stehr Brothers, a member of the Certified Builders Association of New Zealand, has worked in the South and East Auckland area for the past 25 years.



The company has expertise in managing contracts ranging from \$100,000 to more than \$6 million.

“We have a very versatile workforce, with experience in all types of construction,” says Stehr. “Our team utilises both old-fashioned carpentry methods and the most recent advances in building techniques and equipment.”

Stehr says that as the company has its own excavation machinery and construction equipment, it is able to control projects, from start to finish.

For more information, contact Stehr Brothers Limited, 76 Kimptons Rd, Brookby, Auckland 2145, phone (09) 530 8267, fax (09) 530 8266.

Above: A high standard of craftsmanship was required for the construction, says designer Mark Brown. Much of the structural work was concealed to provide a seamless look. Stehr Brothers attributes much of the project’s success to the company’s strong working relationship with the clients, designer and subcontractors.



Above: Seen from above or below, the roofing is a major feature of the Whitford house. More than 900m² of Gerard Senator shingles in Charcoal were supplied for the project.

Right: Gerard Senator shingles come with various trim options and colour co-ordinate with most standard building products.



Weathertight construction is a priority for everyone in the building industry these days. Not surprisingly, it was a particular concern for designer Mark Brown when it came to specifying the roofing for the Whitford house.

“It was essential that the roofing be durable and weathertight, especially in light of the exposed location,” he says. “Gerard Senator shingles were chosen to fulfil this brief – the company’s 50-year pro rata weatherproof warranty was a huge plus.”

Brown says the roofing choice was also critical in terms of the look of the house. With more than 900m² of roofing, it was essential that the tiles

complement the multi-gabled architecture, which is a significant visual feature. The Gerard Senator shingles in Charcoal have a textural finish that not only works well with the design and the plastered exterior, but also suits the country setting.

“The roofing was not altogether straightforward, however,” says Brown. “The pitch of the roof above the conservatory is less than the required 15°. To overcome this problem, we worked in close consultation with the designers in Gerard Roof’s technical department, who were able to provide a watertight solution.”

The cost effectiveness of Gerard roofing is



another reason it is frequently specified for both large and small projects. Because the roofing is lightweight, there is no need for additional structural strengthening.

As with all Gerard roofing products, Gerard Senator shingles come with matching trim and accessories. The 50-year pro rata weatherproof warranty covers all areas, including coastal locations.

There are more than 90 Gerard Certified roofing companies throughout New Zealand. To find your nearest dealer, or to receive a brochure, contact Gerard Roofs, phone 0800 244 766. Or visit the website: www.gerardroofs.co.nz.

Above: The traditional look of Gerard Senator shingles complements the gabled architecture. The light weight of Gerard roofing products makes them a cost-effective choice, as extra structural work is not required to carry a heavy load. Designer Mark Brown says the roofing’s 50-year warranty was another reason Gerard Senator shingles were specified .



With its expansive glazing, the Whitford house required a variety of customised joinery solutions. Nebulite Auckland supplied residential powder-coated aluminium joinery from both the Pacific Suite and the robust Atlantic Suite, which features commercial-grade framing.

Managing director David Headland says the exposed nature of the site influenced the joinery selection and its design.

"The wind loading and the size and weight of the glass were critical factors. The huge 3.5m² panes of glass on the second floor were engineered to accommodate a glass deflection of 30mm."

The extra-large spans required for the bifold doors on the north side of the house also influenced the joinery design. The aluminium framing of the bifolds incorporates stiffening bars to ensure high performance. Internal bifolds, which open from the main entertaining areas, feature a custom-designed flush sill that provides a seamless transition.

Nebulite also supplied the 16mm-thick glass floor above the wine cellar.

For more details, contact Nebulite Auckland, 87 Lady Ruby Dr, East Tamaki, Auckland 2141, phone (09) 271 2980. Email: davidh@nebulite.net. Website: www.nebulite.net.

Facing page: Nebulite Auckland supplied all the custom-designed powdercoated aluminium doors and windows, which feature the colour Woodwind. The joinery includes extra-large 3.5m-square panes of glass on the second floor.

Above: Large internal and external bifold doors open up the house to the outdoor living area.



Above: Retaining walls follow the contours of the site. The Keystone segmented retaining wall system from W Stevenson & Sons was specified for its ease of construction and aesthetics. More than xxxxm of Keystone retaining walls were built on the xxha site. Keystone blocks are available in three colours, including Ironsand as shown, and come with either a rock face or straight face.

To maximise the country setting and provide a flat building site, the ground was levelled prior to building. The earthworks removed the top 4m of ground and terraced the site to follow the contours of the land.

Designer Mark Brown says there were several reasons for specifying the Keystone segmented retaining wall system from W Stevenson & Sons.

“The Keystone blocks provided the neat, textural look we were after,” he says. “Ease of construction was another plus. The blocks can be laid in curves, which made it easy to follow the curves of the land.”

Keystone retaining walls are constructed from individual, dry-stacked blocks with fibreglass pins. The walls rest of a compacted sub-base or levelling pad and no mortar is required. The system offers extensive design flexibility. In addition to curves, the blocks can be used to form corners, slopes, steps and terraces.

W Stevenson & Sons offers a free Engineering Design Service to advise on retaining walls.

For more details, contact W Stevenson & Sons, Private Bag 9400, South Auckland Mail Centre, Manukau 2240, phone (09) 921 8400, fax (09) 921 8401. Website: www.stevensons.co.nz.



The outdoor living areas of the Whitford house are just as well equipped for entertaining as the inside. And central to the design is a large infinity pool, which was built by Advanced Pools & Spa.

Director Bruce Bothwell says the 10.5m x 5m pool has a sprayed-concrete construction with black Quartzzone walls that give the pool a tranquil, reflective quality. The decorative pebble bottom features river stone from Hawkes Bay.

“The pool is also equipped with underwater lighting and is heated by solar roofing panels. The Quartzzone, lighting, roofing panels and filtration system were supplied by Austral Distributors.”

Bothwell says Advanced Pools specialises in top-of-the-line concrete pools, which can be built to any size and shape. The company, which has been in operation for 40 years, has undertaken many high-end projects for commercial developments, including resort hotels and apartment complexes.

“At the same time, however, we also undertake residential projects on a much smaller scale.”

Although based in Auckland, the company works on projects throughout the North Island.

For details, contact Advanced Pools & Spa, 174 Clovelly Rd, Bucklands Beach, Auckland, phone (09) 534 3572, mob 0274 941 348, fax (09) 534 3572.

Above: The 10.5m x 5m sprayed-concrete pool was built by Auckland-based pool contractor Advanced Pools & Spa. The pool has a black Quartzzone interior and an infinity edge, which makes the water appear to merge with the horizon when viewed from inside. Advanced Pools specialises in high-end concrete pools for both large and small-scale projects.



Above: The quality of the craftsmanship of the Whitford residence is a reflection of the expertise that can be expected from members of the Certified Builders Association of New Zealand (CBANZ).

Right: Special features of this project included a glass floor from Nebulite Auckland, which provides a view into the basement wine cellar.



With any building project, no matter how large or small, there's a need for quality control. For the Whitford residence, that assurance was provided by the choice of a builder who is a member of the Certified Builders Association of New Zealand.

Stehr Brothers is a long-standing member of the association, which was established ten years ago to recognise and promote qualified builders.

CEO Derek Baxter says the association was also set up to give consumers the assurance that members are trade-qualified builders who adhere to strict guidelines for standards of workmanship and business practice.

"CBANZ members have undergone rigorous training and testing to become trade qualified. Part of this training includes principles of work ethics, such as acting with honesty, integrity and responsibility, and dealing fairly and equitably with clients and other industry professionals at all times," Baxter says.

Members join the association voluntarily, and must supply client and trade references to prove the calibre of their workmanship and business skills. For further reassurance in the quality of a builder's work, a homeowner can ask for a Home-first Builder's Guarantee.

Baxter says members of CBANZ are obliged to apply to Bultin New Zealand Ltd for a 10-year written guarantee when undertaking to build a new home.

"In a project where the certified builder is the head contractor, the guarantee covers materials and work completed by the certified builder and the subcontractors engaged by him, subject to the limitations in the guarantee agreement," he says.

For further details, contact Certified Builders Association, PO Box 13-405, Tauranga 3001, phone (07) 927 7720, freephone 0800 237 843. Website: www.certified.co.nz.

Above: With its large bifold doors and high ceiling, the formal living room is in keeping with the grand scale of the entertaining areas. For extra quality assurance, CBANZ members can provide homeowners with a guarantee that covers materials and workmanship.



Top and above: The grand staircase features wrought iron balustrades that have a distinctive antique patina. The balustrades were co-designed and manufactured by Classic Iron (Tauranga).

Above right: Hand-forged elements are a feature of the balustrading. Classic Iron also specialises in spiral staircases and exterior balustrading.

The traditional styling of the house is enhanced by the grand staircase, which features custom-designed and manufactured iron balustrades. Classic Iron (Tauranga) worked closely with the interior design team to finalise the design concept.

Director John Tarrant says the wrought-iron balustrades incorporate decorative bushes and newel balls, and feature an antique patina finish specially sourced for the company from Germany.

“This is a hand-applied paint finish that imparts a bronzed, coppery look. We were able to provide a similar finish to the grand chandelier and door handles, which helped tie the look together.”

Classic Iron also manufactured the wrought iron balustrades on the decks on the first floor. These feature a standard powdercoat finish, with an antique silvered mid-section. The balustrades were machined to create a hammered effect, which enhances the traditional look.

Classic Iron, which has been in business for more than 20 years, specialises in high-end custom ironwork, including hand-forged detailing.

For details, contact Classic Iron (Tauranga), 106 Birch Ave, Judea, Tauranga 3110, phone (07) 578 5613. Email: sales@classiciron.co.nz. Website: www.classiciron.co.nz.



Being able to streamline the supply of materials to a large project is always a plus. In the Whitford house, one gypsum plasterboard was used for walls and ceilings throughout the interior.

Standard 10mm plasterboard from Elephant Plasterboard fitted the bill for a number of reasons, not least because it was a way to simplify the construction, says designer Mark Brown.

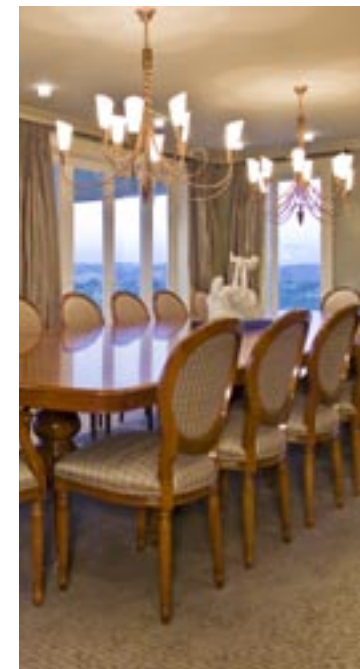
“As the house is exposed to the elements, strength was another major consideration,” he says. “Elephant Plasterboard was chosen for its high bracing characteristics. The 10mm board has a higher bracing than conventional plasterboard of

the same thickness. This meant it was a particularly cost-effective option.”

Brown says the extra strength was also required for the ceilings, many of which span large rooms.

Other benefits of the Elephant Plasterboard include the high quality of the paint finish, the good acoustic properties, and the 30-minute fire rating, which is 10 minutes longer than the rating for conventional 10mm plasterboard.

For more details, contact Elephant Plasterboard New Zealand, freephone 0800 ELEPHANT (353 742). Email: info@elephantpb.co.nz. Or visit the website: www.elephantpb.co.nz.



Above left: The use of 10mm Standard Elephant Plasterboard for walls and ceilings throughout the house ensured a high-quality paint finish. The formal family dining room features a stepped ceiling.

Top and above: Elephant Plasterboard was also specified for its high bracing characteristics, especially as the ceilings span large areas.



Above: All the cabinetry in the Whitford house was custom manufactured by Tauranga-based Project Kitchens. The main kitchen features a mix of American cherrywood and lacquered units. This kitchen also features Shaker-style panel doors, a tongue-and-groove front to the peninsula, a Stone Italia Balmoral granite benchtop and a large scullery with solid cherrywood shelving.

Custom manufacturing and installing cabinetry for a project the size of the Whitford residence requires plenty of expertise and skilled project management. The team at Project Kitchens took the workload in its stride, however.

The Tauranga-based company was contracted to build and install all the cabinetry throughout the house. The work included three kitchens, a kitchenette, bar, library, study, five bathrooms, walk-in wardrobes, dining room fittings and entertainment centres in family rooms.

Director Terry Mathieson says Project Kitchens specialises in high-end custom-made cabinetry,

and is regularly commissioned to undertake work on projects outside of the Bay of Plenty.

“Large jobs can be particularly cost effective for clients, due to our lower overheads. And, as we also offer a project management service, we can remove a lot of the stress associated with building a new home.”

Cabinetry in this house includes lacquered, Melteca and American cherrywood units.

For more information, contact Project Kitchens, 7a Barberry St, Judea, Tauranga 3110, phone (07) 578 0404, fax (07) 578 0415. Email: info@projectkitchens.co.nz. Website: www.projectkitchens.co.nz.



The sense of luxury that defines the formal areas of the Whitford house extends to the bathrooms. Ensuites and powder rooms feature top-of-the-line fixtures and fittings supplied by Mico Bathrooms.

The master ensuite, shown above, is equipped to resort-hotel standard, and is designed to provide a relaxing retreat for the owners. An 18-jet Englefield Evora hydrotherapy spa bath is paired with a Fonte Evo wall-mounted spout and mixer.

Twin Duravit Happy D handbasins have matching shrouds that enhance the bathroom’s spacious look. The basins also feature Fonte Evo mixers.

Other products supplied by Mico Bathrooms

include Duravit toilet suites, Tira and Hydrotherm heated towel rails, and Grohe and Hansgrohe shower fittings.

Mico Bathrooms showrooms not only supply a full complement of bathroom products, they also provide advice, design and trade referrals. The company’s professional consultants can guide you through the extensive product range to ensure you make the right choice for your project.

For details of your nearest Mico Bathrooms showroom, or to receive a complimentary copy of The Bathroom Book, freephone 0800 448 844. Website: www.mico.co.nz.

Above: Bathroom fixtures and fittings were supplied by Mico Bathrooms. The master ensuite incorporates an 18-jet Englefield Evora hydrotherapy spa bath and matching Duravit Happy D handbasins. To help you source the right products for your home, Mico Bathrooms has produced The Bathroom Book – a comprehensive guide featuring the latest bathroom technology.