

Site selection for Adobe Cottage

In this, the concluding article in the series, we take a look at how the shape and lay of the site has influenced the style and size of Adobe Cottage.

The initial appeal of this small steeply sloping east facing site was its openness to the early morning sun, and shielding from the roasting late afternoon summer sun or cold sou-westerly winter winds.

Many thanks must go to Bob and his team, who cleared much of the overgrowth and occasional tree for the house site, as his digger hoisted me aloft to discover the extensive views down the harbour. This coupled with the "discovery" of the large flame tree, which Tuis and other birds love, resulted in a complete redraw of the proposed home.

A distinct advantage of keeping an open mind around the design was to be able to redefine the must haves when redesigning, not only were the spectacular views compelling enough, wanting to build around the flame tree, and the realisation that the available footprint was much smaller than the initial site assessment suggested, culminating with large verandahs wrapping around the upper story of the cottage.

Yes there are substantial post and waling retaining walls around the uphill side of the cottage and extensive concrete foundations along the eastern downhill side. This added significantly to the build cost.

By skilful design utilising the gap between the neighbouring houses on either side and the steepness of the site, each home retains their privacy whilst maintaining full morning sun and the views of the forested hills and valleys, over the lower rooftop, by having their living areas to the east.

The living areas of adobe cottage are a series of verandahs and intimate courtyards.

The small adobe paved courtyard at the northern end of the lounge is a winter sun trap and wonderful barbecue area for small groups as it is shielded from the early evening chilling breezes or scorching late afternoon summer sun.

Likewise the eastern deck off the lounge extends the indoors/outdoors entertaining area of that room for much of the year.

Much relaxing time (especially so now that spring and summer are with us) is spent on the upstairs verandahs with views across to the forested hills and valley before sweeping on down the harbour to encompass the distant Whangarei Heads, lights of the refinery at Marsden Point and those nearby communities, the boating activity on the harbour or the arrival and departures of planes at our airport.

The outcome, after several years of "Do It Yourself" owner-build, is a cottage which nestles amongst the trees as though it has been there for many decades. We love being close to nature with birds singing, making nests or perching in the tree tops, just outside the bedroom french doors and verandah.

Another advantage of a compact cottage is the limited build budget was not burst, or household cleaning is not a mission, thus allowing us freedom to explore other recreational pursuits yet being able to host returning adult families with grand children at odd times.

To conclude may I implore you to dream a lot and have the courage to step outside the comfort of "regular" homes and create a home which is distinctly yours! I have enjoyed sharing some of the magic of our cottage that makes it so much fun - it is OUR HOME.

shalom.



birds eye view
of the cottage showing how it nestles amongst the trees
you also get an appreciation of the outlooks down the harbour



northern courtyard with adobe paving
an excellent spot for the BBQ



view of the upper verandah
which has extensive views down the harbour
and across the valley to the east



view along the eastern deck outside the lounge
showing the privacy achieved with mixed bushy planting