

A family home connects to nature through a design that opens up to big, rural views.

When a young family beats a retreat from the city, the step into rural life is about simplicity. But this family also sought quality. Not long after returning from a cycling trip around Europe, the former Wellingtonians realised how little they needed to get by. Beyond the essentials, the rest becomes accessory to a cumbersome, less meaningful existence.

With their ability to work remotely, the couple began their search for a rural property. After a number of months, they found what they were looking for – a spur of land in Hikuai, about a 10-minute drive to Pauanui beach in the Coromandel. Rural views span an alluvial valley to the jagged Coromandel Range, and also overlook the Tairua River as it winds its way out to sea.

The owners are thorough researchers and after shortlisting architects, settled on Dorrington Atcheson Architects (DAA). They approached the Auckland-based practice with a detailed brief: lengthy phone and email conversations ensued until they could all finally connect on site. “The site and views are amazing,” says Sam Atcheson, of DAA. “The clients are very detailed people who do a lot of research, which is fantastic because they become really involved and engaged in the process.”

Though the views were the main driver of design, detailed conversations covered how the couple would

connect with the land, which included a lot of talk about vegetables. “Their vision involved fruit trees and vegetable gardens,” says Atcheson.

Gritty rural considerations aside, the result is a house that has a great deal of urbanity. DAA designed two rectangular structures loosely based on rural forms and placed them across the site following the views. The larch-clad living structure contains the kitchen, dining and living space, where nearly 10 metres of sliders (using the APL Architectural Series by Altherm) allow the family to fully engage with the expansive views. A covered deck extending the living room to the west is enclosed with large sliding barn doors.

Views have been given a more restrained treatment in the pavilion containing private spaces. The bedrooms, bathrooms, laundry and study are oriented towards The Pinnacles in one direction, and the Tairua River in the other. A series of full-height hinged doors and picture windows along the hallway offer snapshot views. In a child’s room, a large framed Metro Series sliding window with a bench seat has been designed as a flexi space, one that will be used differently over the years, from cubby space, to desk – and eventually a place to contemplate those endless rural views.

To see more of this project, visit altherm.co.nz/fullyengaged

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Photographs by
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Left: The rooftop house riffs on simplified rural building forms. Opposite: Sliders (using the APL Architectural Series by Altherm) wrap the living area, opening it up to expansive views. Below: The living area sits under the gable form of the home and opens out to a deck and sheltered lawn.

