

Top prize for Oakfield

Oakfield Developments has been named as the overall winner in this, the 30th year of *The Birmingham Post & Mail* House Design Awards.

The independent, Birmingham-based family firm took the top honour in the Special Development category with their "house on stilts", Whitehaven at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Their entry, the company's first, one-off prestige residential project impressed the judging team sufficiently to take the premier title of the competition, announced at last week's presentation ceremony at the ICC in Birmingham, even sponsors Knight Frank and the DBK Back Group.

Whitehaven was judged to have been an exciting example of what can be done, with huge sophistication, on a very difficult site.

Behind the individual design of this impressive, luxury home were two sets of architects commissioned by Oakfield - SMC Corstorphine & Wright of Warwick, who came up with the original concept, and Fowkes McIntyre of Nottingham, who completed the project.

The main problem with

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this apparently prime riverside plot was a history of flooding, but the Avon need hold no fear for the first or subsequent owners of Whitehaven, reached off the Tiddington Road.

This big, modern, white house stands on a series of stylish and hefty columns holding it right off the ground.

Statisticians may note that it is a clear metre above the highest-ever, 100-year record water levels, the worst ever seen in Stratford.

The housebuilder had determined to create a flagship scheme.

It chose the riverside site for its unobstructed views to the water and the boats and set about creating big, bright living spaces from which to enjoy it all fully.

The company, whose construction arm has been involved in some high profile,

non residential projects, including the NIA, admits that the scheme was an education.

"It was certainly not cheap to build," admitted company spokesman, quantity surveyor John Furey, son of the founder, Connell.

Oakfield lavished attention on the detail now expected at this pricing level: Whitehaven is newly on the market, available for £1.5 million.

There is a concealed home cinema system which retracts into the ceiling; there is a four-zone home entertainment package controlling sound systems and television; also, mood lighting controlled by computer and a Japanese hydrotherapy tub in the main bedroom suite.

Immediately most striking is the open-plan layout of the main living space, a

huge, professionally-equipped, state-of-the-art kitchen running into dining and sitting space, all flooded with natural light from floor to ceiling glazing.

Chris Cronin, architect and judging team member said of Whitehaven: "It sits proudly above the landscape rather than in it. Inside and out, it is very clean and crisp."

Fellow architect and judge, Martin Brown said: "The design shows a really creative use of the internal space."

"The layout is so unusual in the country where we tend to divide everything up into little spaces with doors on."

Mr Cronin added: "This house would look well in the Mediterranean - but for that matter, on the Avon in Warwickshire will do nicely."

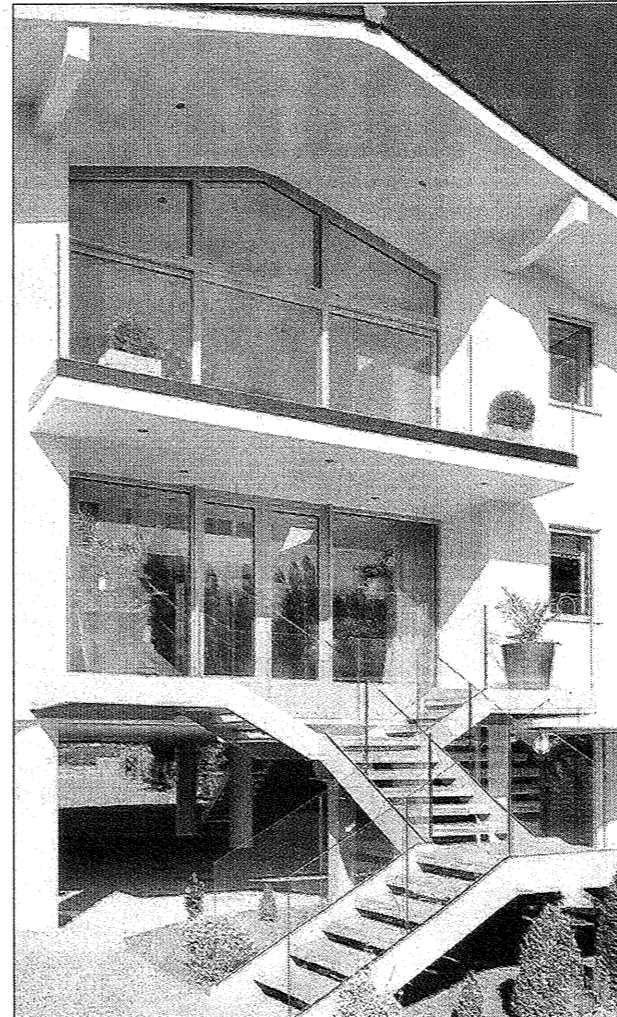
Luxury extras also include the Siematic kitchen with every Liele appliances, electronically-operated curtains, two huge balconies on the main, upper ground floor, two more upstairs for two of the bedrooms.

A big central gallery dominates the core of the house, a perfect showcase for some clever interior design, completed by Midland firm Cream & Browne.

Outside delights include the long expanse of level lawn, a 70-metre stretch down to the river, culminating in a wide, private, decked mooring with access to the Avon Ring navigations.

Half a mile away is all the culture and good shopping of central Stratford-upon-Avon.

Whitehaven looks like amassing a collection of



Whitehaven, off the Tiddington Road at Stratford-upon-Avon, Oakfield Developments' one-off project which won the special development category and was also named overall winner

industry awards. This summer, it also won honours in the National Homebuilder Design Awards scheme.

■ *The Birmingham Post & Mail* House Design Award was launched in a very different era for the industry, aimed at promoting good house design while rewarding a new drive for quality.

It is now among the longest-running competitions of its type in the country.

This year's judges included two architects, Chris Cronin and Martin Brown, of Birmingham City Council; chartered surveyor Mark Lenton, of City Property Management Services; Peter Watton, of the NHBC;

and Marsya Lennox, of *The Birmingham Post*.

There was another record entry for 2005 and a good number of new housebuilding names among the regular entrants and award winners.

Among current trends and departures from tradition noted by the judging team were examples of "upside down living" to suit particular sites; laundry cupboards or areas set away from kitchen living space and a consistently high quality of interior finishes, now expected across the price bands.

Entries for the 2006 awards will be invited in the spring for summer short-listing and judges' site visits.



John Furey, centre, of Oakfield Developments, celebrates winning the overall winners trophy in *The Birmingham Post & Mail* House Design Awards with Gill Lamprell, of Knight Frank, and Tim Downing, of DBK Back Group, sponsors



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House Design Awards
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Oakmore Developments
Apartment Winner

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Interior Design Winner

Chase Homes
Luxury Homes Winner

Prime Focus
Retirement Homes
Winner

Redrow Homes
Starter Homes Winner

Lingreen Properties
Town Houses Winner

Selbourne Homes
Urban
Regeneration/Brownfield
Development Winner

Oakfield Developments
Special Development

Kendrick Construction
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construction industry

Overall Winner
Oakfield Developments