

Severn Design Guide

What is Severn Character Area?

Severn is identified in the Christchurch District Plan (District Plan) as a Character Area. It has qualities that make it distinctive and appealing resulting in an attractive and memorable area. The distinctiveness is created through the combination of the character of houses and their surroundings.

The purpose of the Character Area is to ensure the special qualities are identified, retained or enhanced, when people choose to make changes to or redevelop their property.

Over time, there have been some changes to houses and sections within Severn, that are not complementary to, and otherwise undermine, the still strongly recognisable character of the area. For example, the construction of garages in front gardens or the erection of high fences along the street boundary. These changes can affect the character values of the area for residents and visitors.

The role of the Design Guide

To provide an overview of the special qualities of Severn and a series of corresponding design principles, which give direction to the development or alteration to houses and sections.

The design principles support and supplement District Plan policies, rules and matters. Development proposals⁺ that require resource consent* are informed by the design principles in this guide, and consequently reviewed against the matters in the District Plan. This guide does not cover every contributing design detail. If you are considering making changes or rebuilding in the Severn Character Area it is advised that you seek urban design and planning advice (pre application advice) from the Council early in the design process.

⁺ *Development proposals include changes to the existing site and building, or construction of a new building, for example.*

^{*} *For further District Plan advice please contact Christchurch City Council on (03) 941 8999 and ask for a Duty Planner, or for design assistance ask for an Urban Designer.*

Area overview: Severn

Severn has city-wide significance as an intact residential neighbourhood with a strong sense of place and identity. The key elements that contribute to Severn's character are:

- High levels of street amenity with established front gardens, generous street widths, mature street trees and grassed berms.
- A high proportion of original houses from early to mid 20th century, primarily consisting of single-storey wooden bungalows.
- Generally an intact original subdivision with generous section sizes and a general spaciousness.
- New housing in the area is generally complementary to the old, reinforcing the original character.
- The size, form and scale of houses, the roof profile and location of houses on sections are generally consistent along streets.
- Houses in the area contribute to a sense of neighbourliness with low boundary fencing and unobstructed views to and from the houses and the street.
- Architectural detailing contributes to a richness in house design and consistency is established through the location, scale and proportion of windows and entrances.

Designing to the character of the area does not need to be about replicating original houses. Consider how key elements contribute to the character of Severn. How might they be incorporated into the design so that new houses and the surrounding landscape complement the existing? This will help ensure that the development reinforces the character of the area future generations can appreciate.



Map of Severn Character Area



Example of a bungalow on Mersey Street



Example of a bungalow on Severn Street



Mature tree avenue along Severn Street

Area context

This guidance relates to sections 14.15.23 and 8.6.1 of the District Plan.

The area's context is the neighbourhood environment that makes up Severn. It includes the street and block layout, the underlying landscape features, heritage associations and the overall visual coherence and unity of the streets, gardens and houses.

Street and block layout

The original block, street and section layout of Severn and the wider area has a street grid that runs northwest to southeast. Minimal further subdivision has occurred resulting in an area that is intact, with sections with established rear and side gardens. In general section widths at the street boundary are consistent, which sets up a regular spacing and pattern of houses, fencing and front gardens along the street.

Design principles:

- Reinforce existing orientation and layout of sections.
- Ensure section widths are consistent with the original subdivision and adjacent sections along the street.
- When subdividing, have a shared driveway with planting along its edge on the site boundary.

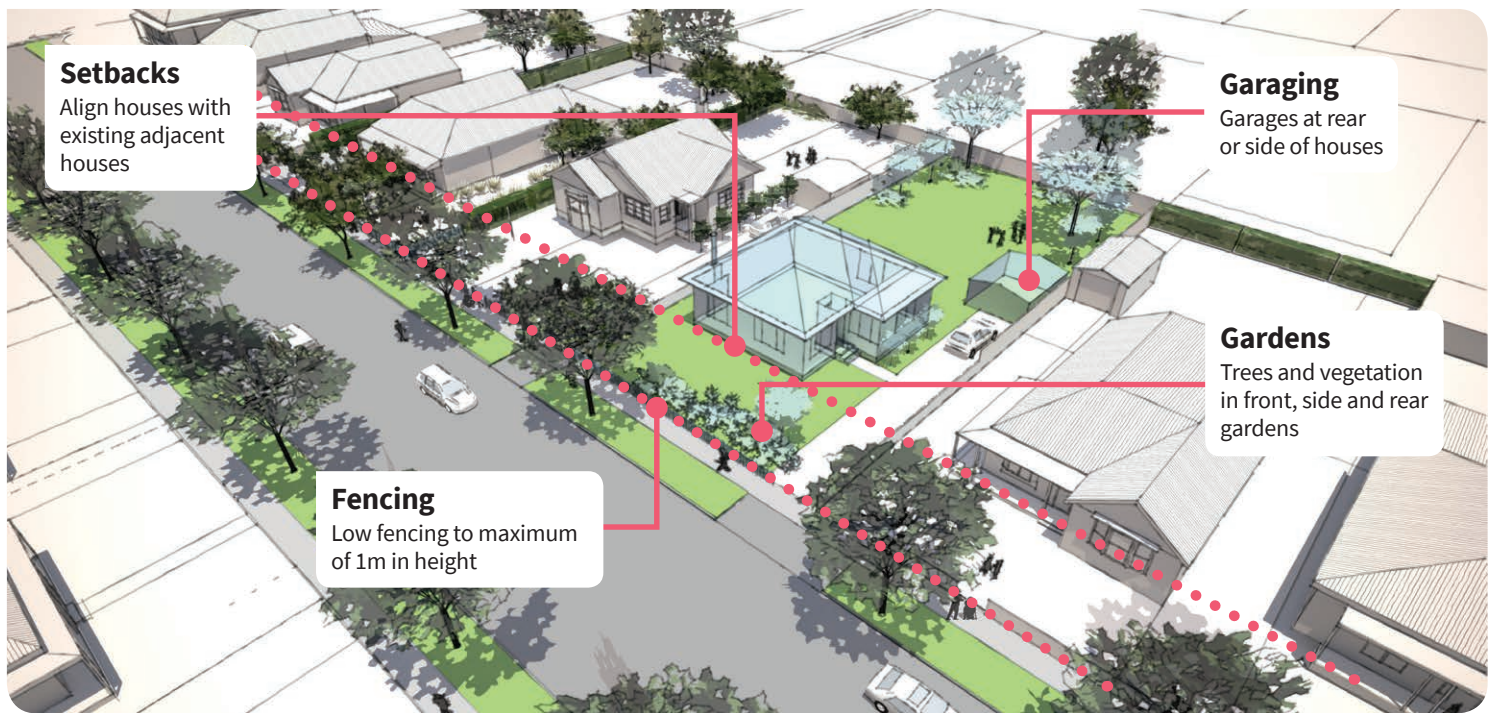
Vegetation and street amenity

Established vegetation including trees, shrubs, hedging and lawns within front, side and rear gardens are a feature of Severn.

Mature street trees contribute significantly to Severn by creating micro-climates, shade and an attractive street appearance.

Design principles:

- Retain existing mature trees and vegetation within gardens. However ensure vegetation does not screen views of houses from the street.
- Locate driveways so that they do not interfere with street trees including their root systems.



Setbacks

Align houses with existing adjacent houses

Garaging

Garages at rear or side of houses

Gardens

Trees and vegetation in front, side and rear gardens

Fencing

Low fencing to maximum of 1m in height

Site design

Balance of house and garden size

A feature of Severn is the consistent balance between house and garden size. The area has a general spaciousness when viewed from the street with modest house footprints, generous separation between houses and gardens that contain substantial vegetation.

Design principles:

- Maintain similar building footprint size with existing houses in the Character Area.
- Ensure gardens are of sufficient size to provide for mature trees and vegetation in particular within front and side boundaries.
- Allow a minimum of 3m planted zone to front boundaries which primarily consists of trees and shrubs.
- Allow sufficient space between houses so that separation distances are consistent in the Character Area, and vegetation is retained in side gardens and rear gardens.

House setbacks and orientation

Houses within Severn are located with consistent setbacks along streets and orientated to face the street. New houses should reaffirm this building edge which contributes to the engaging pedestrian experience within the Character Area.

Design principles:

- Align new houses with existing adjacent houses along the street.
- When some minor variation to street setback exists, align with the predominant adjacent group of houses.
- Orientate house entrances, windows and porches to face towards the street.
- Ensure setbacks are not compromised by additions to existing houses.

Street boundaries

Fences in Severn are mixed. Low picket fencing and stone walls allow good visual connection between houses and streets, contributing to an inclusive neighbourhood, which promotes safety. However taller fences have more recently been erected along the street boundary of some sections limiting views of houses, negatively impacting the character of the area.

Design principles:

- Ensure consistent boundary conditions are maintained along the street and fence heights are consistently 1m or less.
- Consider fencing materials that are complementary to the materials of the house.
- Ensure views to and from houses are maintained and not screened by fencing or vegetation.

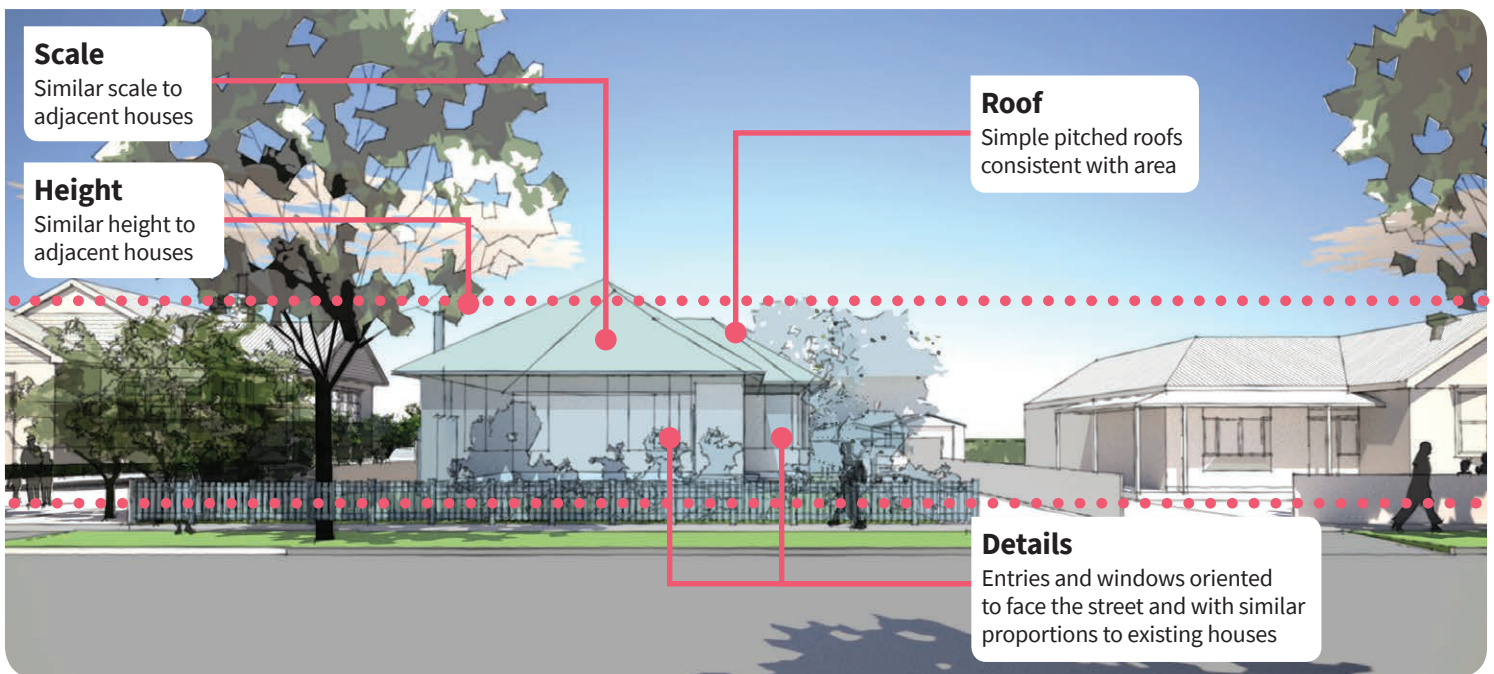
For further guidance refer to Building a Fence Design Guide available on the Christchurch City Council website.

Access parking and garaging

Vehicle garaging and parking in Severn is generally located to the side or rear of houses. This avoids garaging and parking in front gardens, which significantly undermines the character of the area by reducing the visibility of houses from the street.

Design principles:

- Locate garages to the rear of the section or at least behind the front edge of houses.
- Garages should be separate buildings to the main house.
- Coordinate garage and house design in terms of form, materials and colour.



Building design

Scale and form

The height of a house and its size are key factors in determining what impact the building will have on its immediate surroundings within the Character Area. This includes how it is perceived from the street and by neighbours, and how successfully it fits with the character of the neighbourhood.

Houses in Severn are generally single storey, standalone buildings with the notable exception of two storey houses on street corners. Houses are modest in size, scale and have a variety of low-pitched hip and gable roofs.

Design principles:

- New houses should be consistent height (and number of storeys) with existing houses in the Character Area and adjacent houses on the street.
- New houses should be similarly scaled and proportioned to existing houses and have similar sized footprints.
- When altering houses, extend towards the rear of the section to avoid intruding into street setbacks.
- Ensure houses in the Character Area have low-pitched gable or hip roofs that are consistent with adjacent houses.

Architectural detailing

Architectural detailing is often one of the most noticeable expressions of a Character Area. Details are eye-catching and the style or age of houses can be recognised from them.

Houses in Severn have a range of architectural detailing including those consistent with the early 20th century bungalows.

Detailing includes weatherboard cladding and corrugated iron roofing, bay and bow windows, occasional shingle detailing on gable ends and occasional lead-light windows. Detailed front and side entry features, verandas and porches also feature throughout the area.

Design principles:

- Existing houses should be maintained to retain the richness and texture of detailing including attention to windows, entrance and façade design.
- Additions and alterations to existing houses should be compatible with the overall proportions and detailing of the original house.
- Design new houses to reflect existing houses in terms of the proportions and overall style of the windows, entrance space and doorway, façade and roof edge details and materials.