

Beckenham Loop Design Guide

This design guide is subject to review and updates pending Council decisions on suburban intensification, expected December 2025.

What is Beckenham Loop Character Area?

Beckenham Loop 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 Beckenham Loop, 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. 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 Beckenham 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 Beckenham Loop Character Area it is advised that you seek urban design and planning advice (pre application advice) from the Council early in the design process.

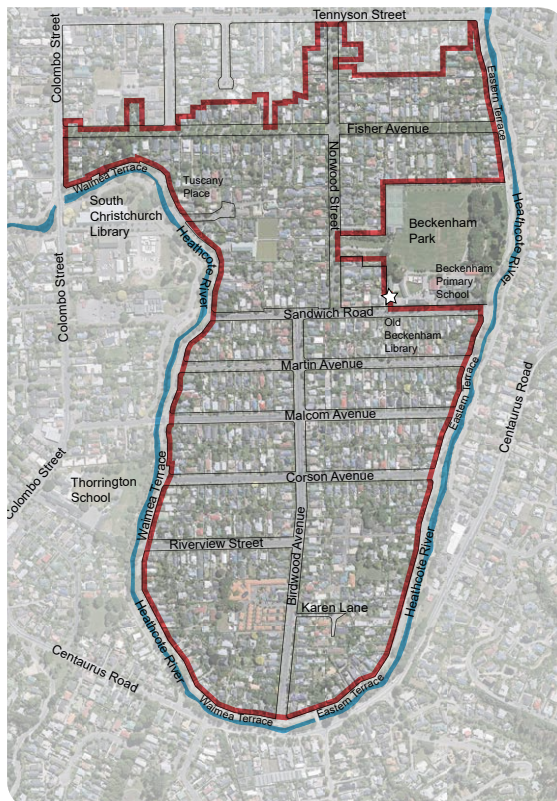
⁺ *Development proposals include changes to the existing site and building, or construction of a new building, for example.*

^{*} *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: Beckenham Loop

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

- A memorable geography with a regular street grid contained within a loop of the Heathcote River.
- Variation in character from the leafy wide residential streets to the meandering river edge.
- High levels of street amenity with established front gardens, generous street widths, mature street trees and grassed berms.
- Historic importance for Christchurch with number 65 Sandwich Road scheduled in the District Plan.
- A high proportion of original houses from early to mid 20th century, primarily consisting of single storey villas, wooden bungalows, some brick bungalows and Art Deco houses.
- New housing in the area is generally complementary to and reinforces the original character.



Map of Beckenham Loop Character Area

- The size, form and scale of houses, the roof profile and location of houses on sections are generally consistent.
- 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 Beckenham. 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.



An example of a transitional villa on Fisher Avenue

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 Beckenham Loop. It includes the street and block layout, the underlying landscape features, heritage associations and the overall visual coherence of the streets, gardens and houses.

Street and block layout

The original block, street and section layout of Beckenham Loop is generally intact with a street grid that runs east to west. Section widths at the street boundary are consistent which sets up a regular spacing and rhythm of houses and front gardens along the street.

Some subdivision has occurred with new houses located behind the original houses, separate driveways and associated fencing. This has resulted in a reduction in the widths of front and side gardens, vegetation and views of houses from the street, which has had negative impact on the character of Beckenham Loop.

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.

Landscape and natural features

The Heathcote River is a defining feature and important open space for this Character Area and hence properties that are located adjacent to the river should respond appropriately to it.

Design principles:

- Design to the contours of the landform to reinforce the underlying topography of the area.
- Orientate houses to overlook the Heathcote River and walkways along its bank.
- Provide stepped terraces or sloped gardens where houses are elevated above Eastern Terrace and Waimea Terrace to avoid high retaining walls facing the street, which impacts the pedestrian experience along the street.

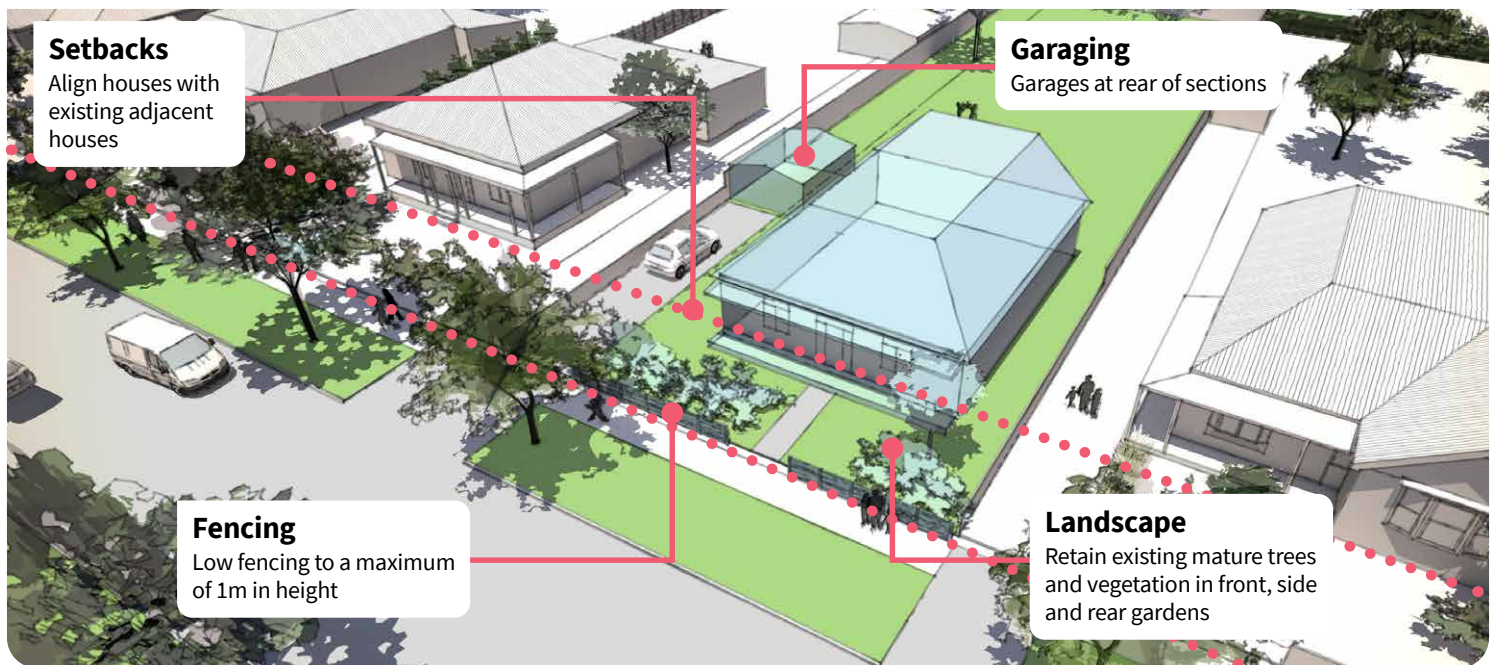
Vegetation and street amenity

Established vegetation including trees, shrubs, hedging and lawns within front gardens are a feature of Beckenham Loop.

Mature street trees on Fisher Avenue and Norwood Street in particular also contribute significantly to Beckenham Loop by creating micro-climates, shade and an attractive street appearance.

Design principles:

- Retain existing mature trees, hedges and vegetation within gardens.
- Locate driveways so that they do not interfere with street trees including their root systems.
- Allow for future tree planting and retain the regular spacing of street trees along the street.



Setbacks

Align houses with existing adjacent houses

Garaging

Garages at rear of sections

Fencing

Low fencing to a maximum of 1m in height

Landscape

Retain existing mature trees and vegetation in front, side and rear gardens

Site design

Balance of house and garden size

A feature of Beckenham Loop 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 including mature trees.

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 that primarily consists of trees and shrubs.
- Allow sufficient space between houses so that separation distances are consistent in the Character Area, vegetation is retained in side gardens and views remain to the rear of sections.

House setbacks and orientation

Houses within Beckenham Loop are located with consistent setbacks along streets and orientated to face the street. New houses and alterations to existing houses should reaffirm this building edge, which contributes to the engaging pedestrian environment 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 the street.
- Building additions should be to the rear, rather than the front of houses, to retain existing street setbacks.

Street boundaries

Fences in Beckenham Loop are generally low or non-existent allowing good visual connection between houses and streets, contributing to an inclusive social and safe neighbourhood.

Design principles:

- Ensure consistent boundary treatments are maintained along the street and fence heights are 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.
- Use hedges rather than fences to create a softer boundary.

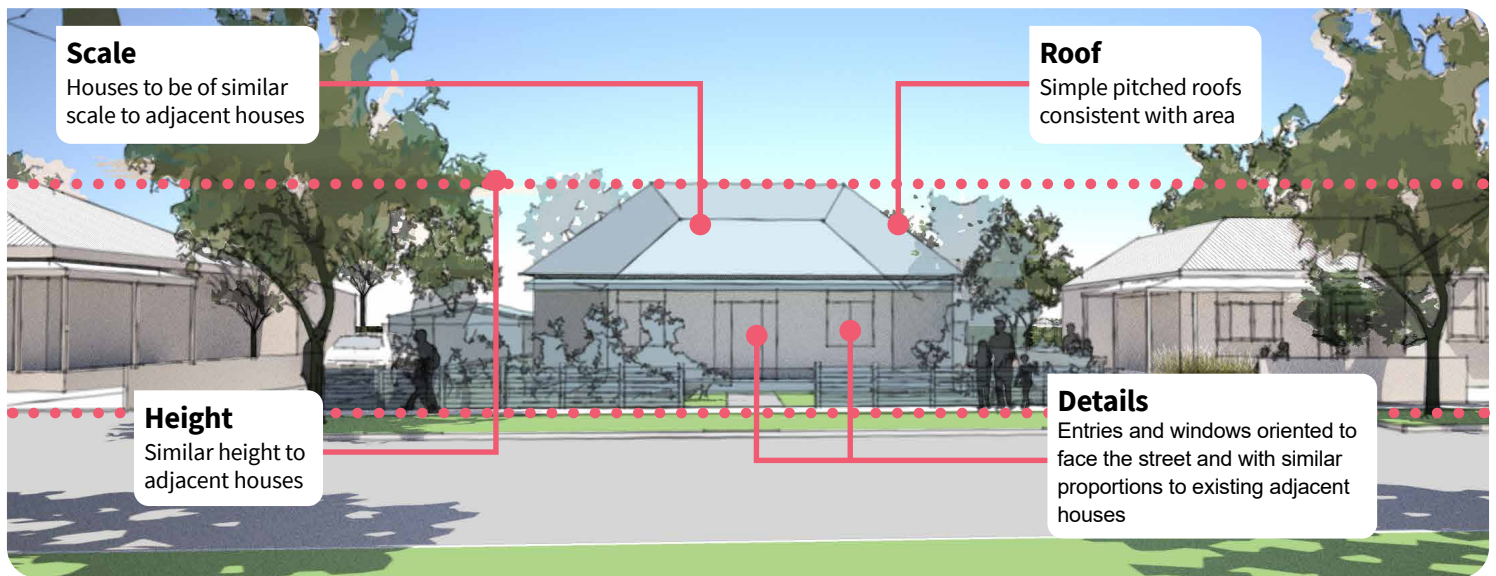
For further guidance refer to Building a Fence Design Guide available on the Christchurch City Council website.

Access parking and garaging

Vehicle garaging and parking in Beckenham Loop 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.

Design principles:

- Locate garages to the rear of sections 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.
- Do not locate parking between the house and the front boundary.
- Driveways should be discrete and not compromise outdoor living spaces.



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 the house is perceived from the street and by neighbours, and how successfully it fits with the character of the neighbourhood.

Houses in Beckenham Loop are generally one or two storey stand alone buildings with modest footprints and low-pitched hip and gable roofs.

Design principles:

- New houses should be a 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 the street setbacks.
- Ensure houses in the Character Area have 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 Beckenham Loop have a range of architectural detailing including those consistent with the 20th century villas, wooden bungalows, brick bungalows and Art Deco houses. Detailing such as timber weatherboard cladding and corrugated iron roofing, bay and bow windows, occasional shingle detailing on gable ends, a variety of detailed entry features, verandahs and porches feature throughout the area.

Design principles:

- Existing houses should be maintained to retain the richness and texture of detailing including attention to window, 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.



Ornate porch entry visible from the street



Contemporary brick bungalow with characteristic design features such as weatherboard gable ends

