

# Francis Design Guide

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

## What is Francis Character Area?

Francis 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 Francis, 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 Francis 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<sup>+</sup> 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 Francis Character Area it is advised that you seek urban design and planning advice (pre application advice) from the Council early in the design process

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

<sup>\*</sup> *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.*



Map of Francis Character Area

## Area overview: Francis

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

- High levels of street amenity with established gardens that are richly planted and contain lawns, shrubs and trees.
- Generous street widths with mature street trees and grassed berms and an intact original subdivision with generous section sizes.
- A high proportion of original houses from early to mid 20th century, primarily consisting of single-storey wooden villas and bungalows.
- 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 Francis. 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.





Example of a villa on Francis Street



Street trees on Francis Street



Example of a bungalow on Francis 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 Francis. 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 Francis is generally intact with a street grid that runs northwest to southeast. Section widths at the street boundary are consistent, which sets up a regular spacing and pattern 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 of front and side gardens and a disruption of the spacing and pattern of houses along the street which has had negative impact on the character of Francis.

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, share a driveway, retain side gardens and a single boundary fence.

### Vegetation and street amenity

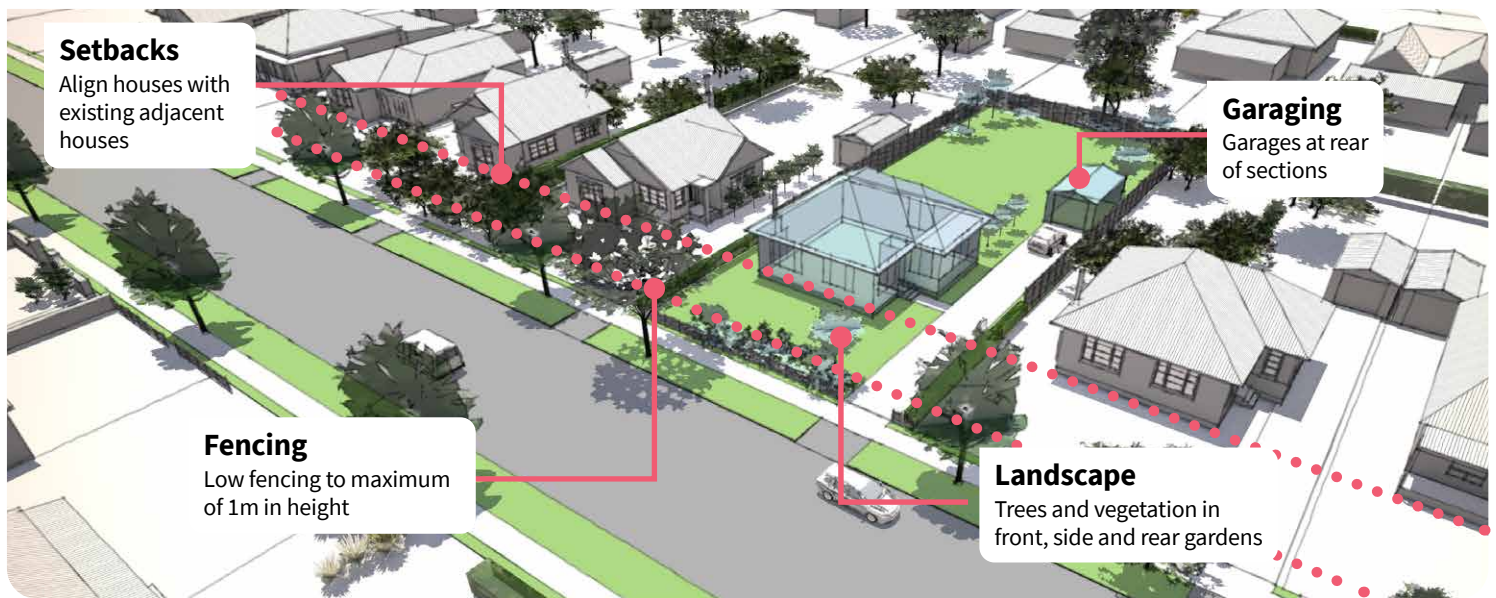
Established vegetation including trees, shrubs, hedging and lawns within front gardens are a feature of Francis.

Mature street trees also contribute significantly to the Character Area by creating micro-climates, shade and an attractive street appearance.

Design principles:

- Retain existing mature trees 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 avoid changing the regular spacing of street trees.





## Site design

### Balance of house and garden size

A feature of Francis is the consistent balance between house and garden size. The area has a general sense of spaciousness 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, vegetation is retained in side gardens and views towards the rear of sections are possible.

### House setbacks and orientation

Houses within Francis 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 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.
- Ensure setbacks are not compromised by additions to existing houses.

### Street boundaries

Original houses in Francis contained low or no fencing along the street boundary. Much of this openness remains today. Low or no fences allow good visual connection between houses and streets, contributing to an inclusive and safe neighbourhood.

However the erection of high fencing along the street boundary more recently in Francis restricts visual connection to houses, undermining the quality of the street environment. Redevelopment of existing sections should aim to achieve an openness along streets.

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.

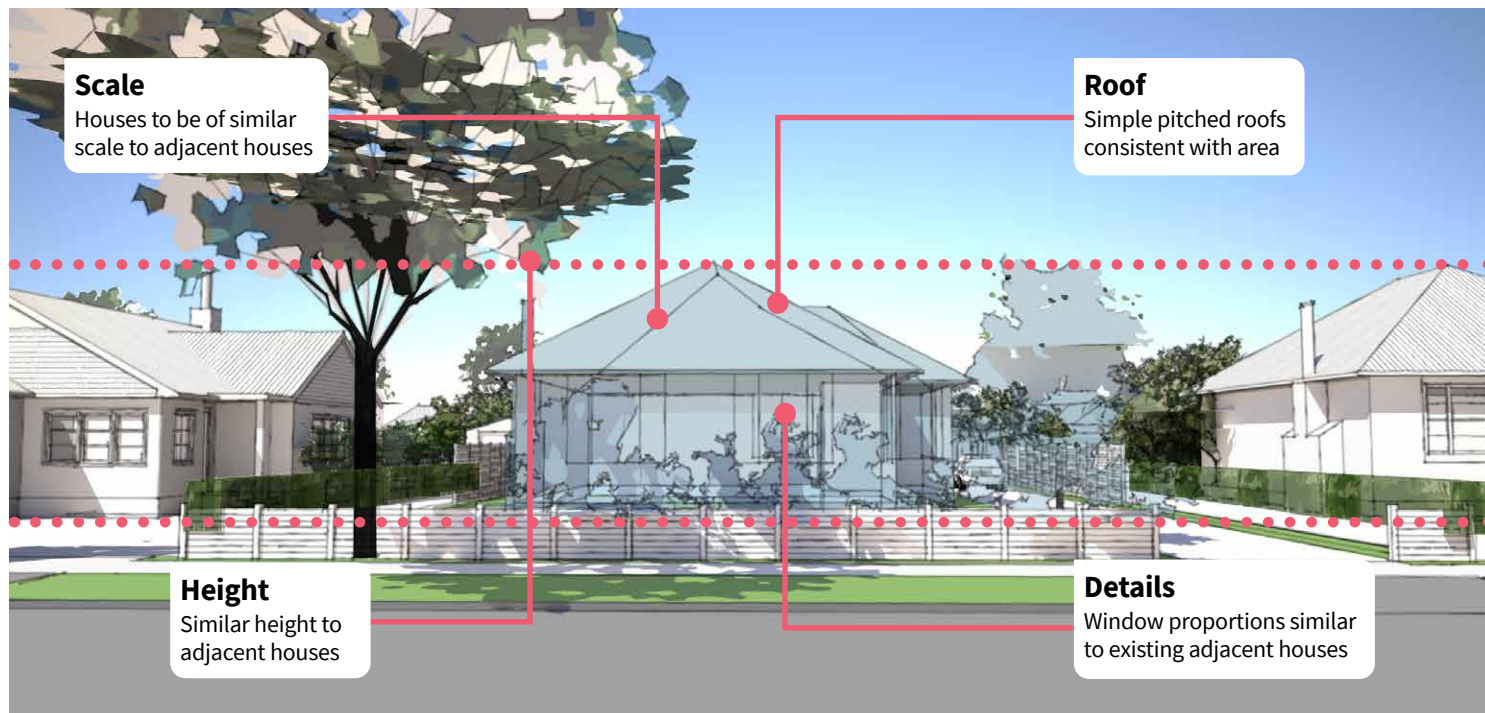
*For further guidance refer to Building a Fence Design Guide available on the Christchurch City Council website.*

### Access parking and garaging

Vehicle garaging and parking in Francis 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, reducing opportunities for planting and 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.
- 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 it is perceived from the street and by neighbours, and how successfully it fits with the character of the neighbourhood.

Houses in Francis are generally single storey stand-alone buildings with modest footprints and low-pitched hip and gable roofs.

Design principles:

- New houses should be single storey, consistent with the height of existing houses in the Character Area. If two storey, build predominantly within the roof.
- 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 and building to avoid intruding into the 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 Francis have a range of architectural detailing including those consistent with early 20th century wooden villas and bungalows. Detailing such as weatherboard cladding and corrugated iron or tile roofing, bay and box windows, and occasional shingle detailing on gable ends. A variety of detailed entry features, verandas and porches are also a 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.
- New houses should reflect existing houses in terms of the proportions and overall style of the window, entrance space and doorway, façade and roof edge details and materials.

