

# Heaton Design Guide

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

## What is Heaton Character Area?

Heaton 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 Heaton, that are not complementary to, and otherwise undermine, the still strongly recognisable character of the area. For example, infill housing with the loss of extensive 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 Heaton 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<sup>\*</sup> 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 or matters of importance.

If you are considering making changes or rebuilding in the Heaton 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 Heaton Character Area – Operative 2 December 2024

## Area overview: Heaton

Heaton has city-wide significance as an intact residential neighbourhood of historic importance to Christchurch, with a strong sense of place and identity. Heaton has historic values through its associations with architects such as the England Brothers, Samuel Hurst-Seagar and Cecil Wood. The key elements that contribute to the character of Heaton are:

- A distinct grouping of original houses from the early 20th century consisting of two-storey wooden houses in the Georgian Revival, English Domestic Revival and Arts and Crafts styles.
- Historic significance for Christchurch with three houses, 70, 74 and 98 Heaton Street, scheduled significant in the District Plan and listed by Heritage New Zealand as Historic Place Category II.
- High levels of street amenity with a richness in vegetation and mature trees, a generous street width, and mature trees on the northern side of the street surrounding Elmwood Park.
- Consistent location of houses, well set back from the street, with large established front gardens.
- Consistent large scale of houses.
- Generally an intact original subdivision with generous section sizes.
- Architectural detailing contributes to a richness in house design. Consistency is established through the location, scale and proportion of windows, porches and entrances and the steeply pitched roofs of houses.

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 Heaton. 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.





Examples of English Domestic Revival Houses on Heaton 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 Heaton. 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.

### Heritage associations

Heaton is an important area for its associations with some of the most renowned early Christchurch architects. Many of the houses date to the early 20th century with building style and physical form, including size, consistent with that era.

Respecting these heritage houses through sympathetic scale, size and location of new development will help to retain the special impression that the neighbourhood creates.

Design principles:

- Consider the overall qualities of original houses and how they might inform the design of new houses.
- Design houses and boundary fencing such that they do not overpower, cast shadow or box in adjacent original houses of heritage value.

### Street and block layout

The original block, street and section layout within and surrounding Heaton is generally intact with a street grid that runs east to west between Strowan Road and Papanui Road. Section widths at the street boundary are consistent, which sets up a regular spacing and rhythm of houses 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.
- Retain large sections.

### Vegetation and street amenity

Richly planted gardens with trees, shrubs, hedging, climbing plants and herbaceous low vegetation are a feature of Heaton.

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

Design Principles:

- Retain existing mature trees and vegetation within gardens, including within front yards.





### Setbacks

Align houses with existing adjacent houses

### Garaging

Garages at rear of sections

### Landscape

Trees and vegetation in front, side and rear gardens

## Site design

### Balance of house and garden size

A feature of Heaton is the consistent balance between house and garden size. The area has a general spaciousness when viewed from the street with large 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 tree and shrubs.
- Allow sufficient space between houses so that separation distances are consistent in the Character Area, vegetation is retained in side gardens and large scale trees can be located in rear yards.

### House setbacks and orientation

Houses within Heaton are located with deep setbacks from the street and are orientated to face the street, which contributes to engagement with the street.

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

Historically houses in Heaton provided a well vegetated street edge and a combination of masonry walls and timber fencing, with visual connection maintained between houses and streets. This contributed to the sense of neighbourliness, which promotes safety.

The erection of high fencing however along the street edge in Heaton has progressively restricted this visual connection, undermining the quality of the street environment.

Design principles:

- Ensure views to and from houses are maintained and not fully screened by fencing or vegetation. Ensure consistent boundary conditions are maintained along the street and fence heights are low.
- Try a combination of low fencing and well placed vegetation.
- Consider using fencing materials that are complementary to the materials of the house.

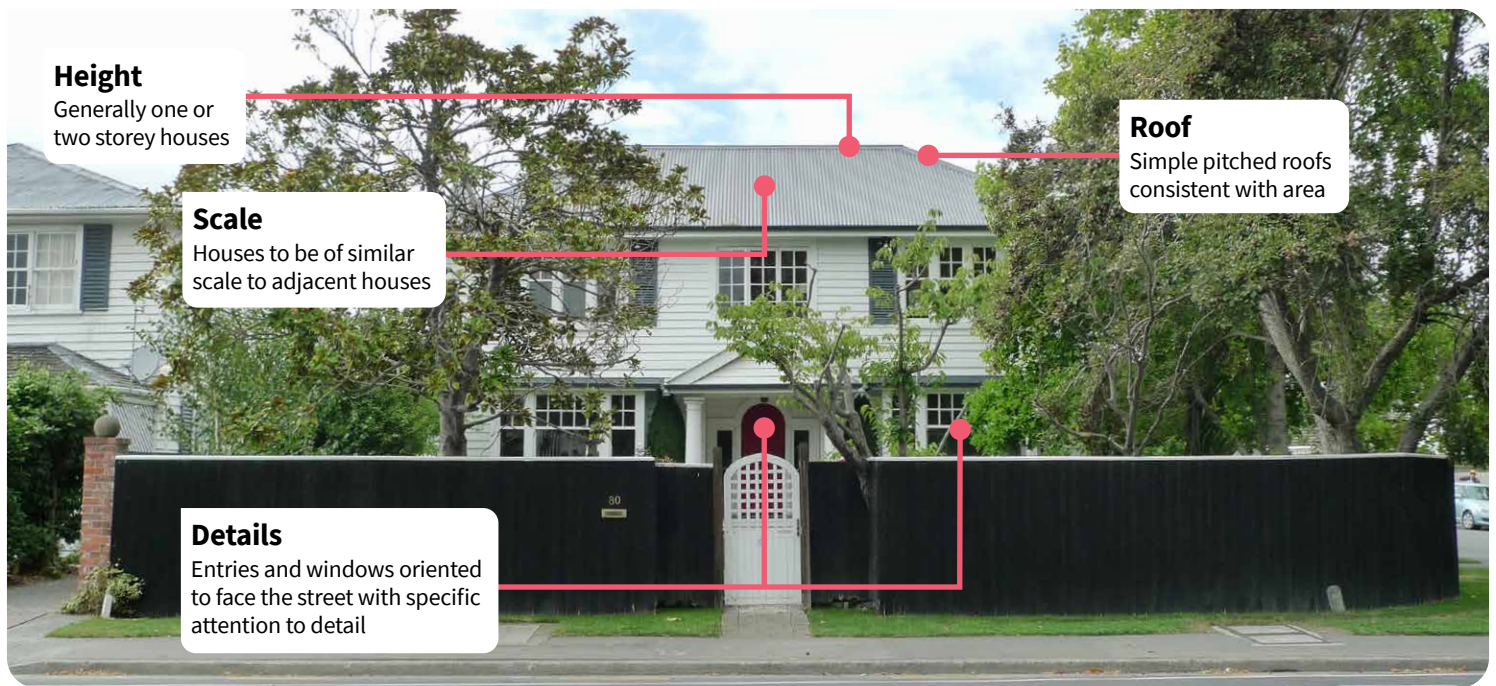
*For further guidance refer to Building a Fence Design Guide available on the Christchurch City Council website.*

### Access parking and garaging

Vehicle garaging and parking in Heaton is generally located to the rear of houses. This avoids garaging and parking in front gardens, which significantly undermines the character of the area, reducing the extent of front yard vegetation and the visibility of houses from the street.

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.
- Provide separate pedestrian entries, gates and paths from the street.



### Height

Generally one or two storey houses

### Scale

Houses to be of similar scale to adjacent houses

### Roof

Simple pitched roofs consistent with area

### Details

Entries and windows oriented to face the street with specific attention to detail

## Building design

### Scale and form

The height of the 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 Heaton are generally large two storey stand-alone buildings with multiple steeply pitched hip and gable roofs.

Design principles:

- New houses should be two storeys with heights that are consistent with 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.



*Weatherboard cladding, box windows, and shingle gable ends illustrated are characteristic features of English Domestic Revival*

### 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 Heaton have a range of architectural detailing including those consistent with the early 20th century Georgian Revival, English Domestic Revival and Arts and Crafts styles. Detailing includes: timber weatherboard cladding and iron or slate tile roofing, bay and box windows, a mixture of small and medium sized window panes within overall large frames, various styled dormer windows, window shutters and occasional shingle detailing on gable ends. Entrance canopies, a variety of detailed entry features, verandas and porches also feature throughout the area.

Design principles:

- Existing houses should be retained.
- 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 houses.
- 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.

