

Ōtautahi Christchurch Public Spaces **Outdoor Dining Guide**

September 2025

ccc.govt.nz/public-spaces



About this guide

Outdoor dining brings liveliness to our central city, suburbs, and townships. For outdoor dining to work well for everyone, especially in public spaces, we have a few things we need café, bar, and restaurant owners and managers to pay attention to.

You must have an outdoor dining licence if you plan to have customers eating or drinking on the footpath or public space outside your cafe or restaurant. This guide aims to help you understand what's okay – and what's not okay – when using public space for outdoor dining.

Please read our [webpage \(ccc.govt.nz/public-spaces\)](https://ccc.govt.nz/public-spaces) and this guide before you apply for an outdoor dining licence.

We're here to help

We want your application to be successful, so if you have questions, need more information, or want some help, please let us know. You can call us on 03 941 8999 or email us at outdoor.dining@ccc.govt.nz

Ōtautahi Christchurch Public Spaces

Outdoor Dining Guide

Our policy

We want your outdoor dining area to enhance your business. At the same time, we need to remember that outdoor public spaces (footpaths, laneways, and streets) are there for everyone's benefit. We own and manage these spaces on behalf of all ratepayers.

Our **Outdoor Dining in Public Places Policy** (ccc.govt.nz/outdoor-dining-in-public-places-policy) guides our licensing decisions throughout Christchurch and the Banks Peninsula.

In making these decisions, we need to balance the needs of your business with the needs and interests of the wider community and the environment.

Main points

Our policy aims to ensure public space used for outdoor dining:

- Embraces and enhances street life
- Prioritises and maintains a clear pedestrian pathway past your outdoor dining space
- Is not visually or physically cluttered
- Is accessible for pedestrians of all ages and abilities
- Uses furniture suitable for the outdoors
- Is kept clean and tidy
- Encourages smokefree and vape-free dining

Quick guide to applying for your Outdoor Dining Licence

We need the following documents when you apply for an outdoor dining licence.

- ☐ A **“dimensioned”** and **“to scale”** site plan
- ☐ Photos of the area you want to use for outdoor dining. Photos must show the front of your property, neighbouring properties, and nearby street features (e.g. trees, cycle parking, rubbish bins, parking signs, poles, and service lids or covers).
- ☐ Photographs and/or design specifications and/or brochures of the physical items to be set up in your outdoor dining area (such as screens, bollards, seating, tables, umbrellas etc)
- ☐ Your public liability insurance certificate

The rest of this guide provides you with details to help make your outdoor dining space a success.



Layout

If you want to extend your business onto the footpath, your outdoor dining area must be directly in front of your business.

The way you set up your outdoor dining area should fit the shape of the public space. A good layout makes it easier for you and your staff to manage and keep tidy, while also making the area more appealing and successful.



Things to consider include:

- **Nearby features** – Look for features beyond your boundary (such as art works, poles, signs, trees) and ensure there's enough space for people to easily pass around your space.
- **Clear pedestrian pathway** – The clear pedestrian pathway must run consistently along the whole street block. When planning your site, take into account any verandas or canopies that provide shelter for pedestrians.
- **Furniture** – You can use low screens, umbrellas, or planters to help define your licensed area and to help provide weather protection for your customers (shelter from sun, wind, and rain).
- **Visual appearance** – Keep your area simple and uncluttered so it reflects positively on your business. To maintain the openness of the street, you must not enclose more than 50% of your space (excluding the building frontage).
- **Access to utilities** – Utilities such as water, gas, electricity, and telecommunications have lids or covers that must be accessible at all times.
- **Pavement markers** – Outdoor seating areas may need to be marked. If this is required you will need to pay for the cost of installing, maintaining and removing the markers.

Accessibility

People of all ages and abilities, including those using wheelchairs or other mobility aids, need to be able to safely and easily negotiate your outdoor dining area.



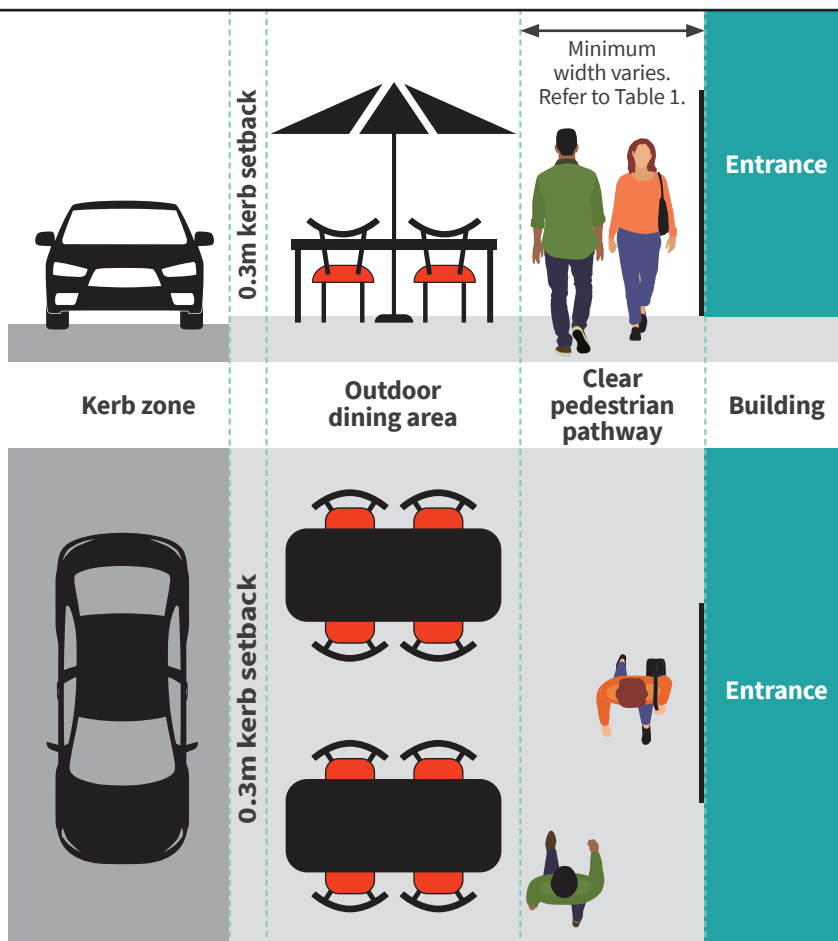
Things to consider include:

- **Clear pedestrian pathway** – You must maintain a clear walkway past your outdoor dining area. The minimum widths are:
 - 3.0 metres on main roads
 - 2.4 metres in busy central city areas
 - 2.0 metres in most other placesThe clear pedestrian pathway must be continuous along the whole street block.
- **Access to buildings** – Your outdoor dining area must not block access to building entrances, including any fire exits.
- **Adequate space** – You must provide adequate space within your area to allow for easy movement and chair use.
- **Facilities for blind or vision impaired people** – Make sure all furniture used for outdoor dining is clear of tactile pavers, delineator strips, or other surface markers. These features are essential navigation cues for people who are blind or have low vision, and blocking them creates safety risks.

Example 1

Outdoor dining next to the road

This example shows our preferred layout. It helps people with low vision navigate the street as the building edge provides them with continuous tactile cues.



Example 2

Outdoor dining next to the building

This example is not preferred practice and may be permitted in specific situations.

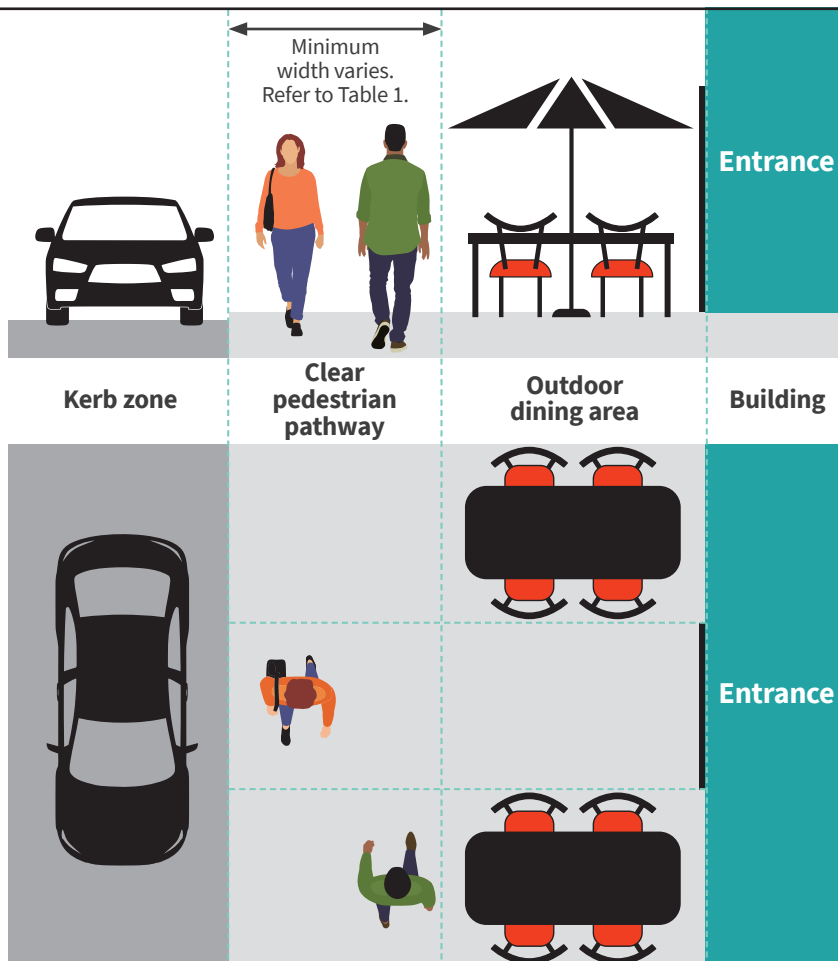


Table 1

Minimum clear pedestrian pathway widths

Location of outdoor dining area / road type	Minimum width of clear pedestrian pathway
Main road	3.0 metres
Busy central city area	2.4 metres
Most other areas	2.0 metres

Furniture

It's important to choose furniture that is designed for outdoor use. It needs to withstand sun, rain, and wind, and not create a health and safety hazard. Your furniture can reflect the individual style of your business.

Things to consider include:

- **Your boundary** – All furniture and other equipment must stay within your approved area. This includes planter boxes, barriers, menu stands, and umbrellas.
- **Permitted furniture** – Only items approved in your licence are allowed in your outdoor dining area. To change this, you need our written permission to amend your licence conditions.
- **Height of furniture** – The recommended maximum height for furniture and café barriers is 1.0 metre.
- **Movable** – All furniture must be movable to allow access to any utility service lids or covers within your outdoor dining area. Furniture must not be fixed to any part of the building or the pavement.
- **Seating orientation** – Seating should be oriented parallel with the footpath or road and must not impede on the clear pedestrian pathway.
- **Storage** – All furniture and equipment must be put away when your business is closed unless your licence specifically allows it. If your licence allows heavier items to stay out overnight, they must not interfere with street lighting levels on the footpath.
- **Heating** – Heating elements such as gas or electric heaters are allowed and must be operated in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. Blankets can be given to customers for extra warmth.
- **External lighting** – You may use external outdoor lighting, as long as it is installed to the manufacturer's specifications.
- **Durable materials** – Furniture must be suitable for continuous outdoor use and made of durable materials. Materials that we do not accept include cheap plastic or untreated wood.
- **Health and safety** – All furniture must be stable in all weather conditions and not present a health and safety hazard.
- **Visual appearance** – Individual furniture items should complement each other in appearance. Furniture must be kept clean and well maintained. If using planter boxes, plants must be kept healthy and well looked after.
- **Advertising on furniture** – Any logos or advertising must be specific to your site and integrated within your permitted furniture.
- **Separate advertising** – Each business is allowed one free-standing sign (sandwich board) placed on the kerb directly outside their shop. Sandwich boards are not permitted in outdoor seating areas.

For more information refer to our [Signboards in Public Places Policy](https://ccc.govt.nz/signboards-in-public-places-policy) (ccc.govt.nz/signboards-in-public-places-policy).



Umbrellas and canopies

- **Freestanding umbrellas** – Freestanding umbrellas must have a single support and be securely weighted down. The lowest part of the underside of the umbrella must be at least 2.1 metres above the ground. All parts of the umbrella must be within your licenced area.
- **Canopies and verandas** – Canopies and verandas (retractable and/or glazed) must be fixed to the building façade. We do not accept any vertical supports fixed within public areas.
- **Durable materials** – Umbrellas and canopies must be suitable for continuous outdoor use. Use a complementary design and appearance for all umbrellas.
- **Heritage buildings** – You will need a resource consent if you want to fix a canopy or veranda to a heritage building.



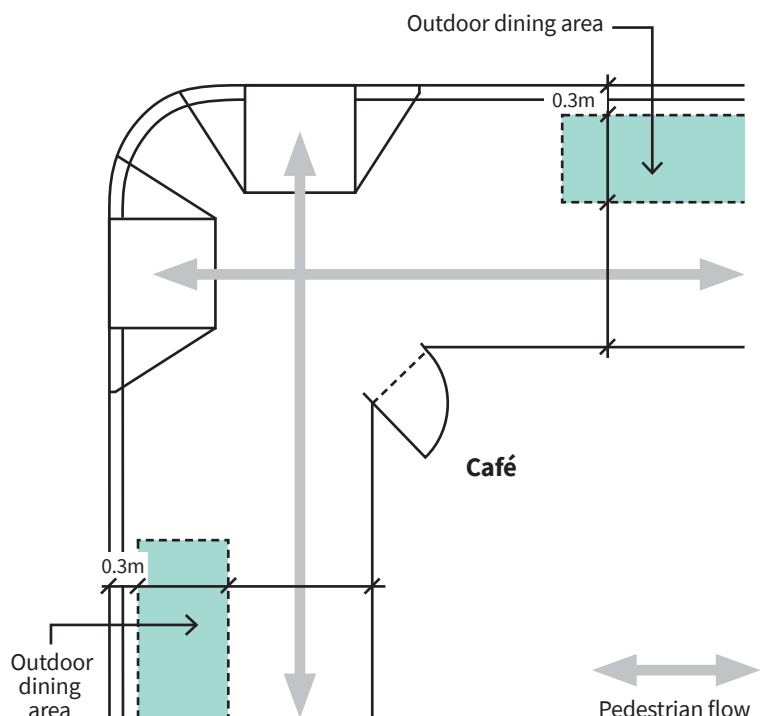
Transport and parking

Outdoor dining has the potential to restrict the delivery of goods to nearby properties, impede safe driving, restrict access to parked vehicles, or impact access to public transport services.

Being aware of your surrounding street environment from a transport perspective will help support people's movement around and through your space.

Things to consider:

- **Kerb setback** – If your outdoor dining area is next to the road, all furniture must be set back at least 0.3 metres from the kerb edge to keep your customers safe.
- **Access to facilities** – Your outdoor dining area must not block access to property entrances, vehicle driveways, public benches, rubbish bins, cycle stands, or public transport facilities. You must not block pedestrian crossings, cycleways, or the Christchurch Tramway.
- **Outdoor dining areas near intersections** – Outdoor dining areas will not be permitted on street corners with pedestrian crossings or near entry points of designated crossings.



Outdoor dining area close to street intersection showing alignment and clear pedestrian pathway



Clean and tidy

You must keep your outdoor dining area, and your street furniture, clean and tidy.

The area surrounding your outdoor dining area also reflects on your business so it's in your best interests to help look after it too.

You must operate your outdoor dining area to a similar standard that we'd expect from an indoor restaurant. This means that there should be no grease, food or drinks stains, or rubbish in the area covered by your licence.

Pick up litter and spillages whether they've come from your customers or not and sweep and scrub the footpath if needed.

Smokefree and vapefree

We have a Smokefree and Vapefree Public Places Policy and support the national Smokefree Aotearoa Action Plan 2025.

We encourage you to keep your outdoor dining area smokefree and vapefree.

For more information and free signage, please visit the **Fresh Air Project** website (freshairproject.org.nz).

Other important things to know

Display – You must display your licence and approved site plan in the licensed area, or in the business's window, so that it is visible at all times.

Food registration – Outdoor dining licences will be granted only to businesses that have a current food registration.

Hours of use – The outdoor dining area must not be used outside the hours of operation of your business.

Licence conditions – When issued, the licence is personal to you as the licensee. Extra conditions specific to your business may be negotiated during the application process. If you want to make changes to your outdoor dining licence (such as more space, different furniture, more tables, or a change in layout) you need our approval.

Licence term – The maximum term of an outdoor dining licence can be up to three years.

Noise – You must ensure your business meets the requirements of the Christchurch District Plan and that you comply with obligations under section 16 of the Resource Management Act 1991, e.g. that noise levels don't exceed reasonable levels.

Non-transferrable – Outdoor dining licences are non-transferrable. If you sell your business, the new owner will need to apply for a licence.

Other licences and permits – You may also need other licences, such as an Alcohol Licence, to operate your outdoor dining area in the way you want.

Public liability insurance – You must have public liability insurance to cover your outdoor dining activities. The public liability insurance must remain in place for the duration of the licence.

Toilets – Toilet accommodation on the premises should be sufficient for the increase in seating.

Transfer of ownership – If you sell your business, the new owner will need to apply for a new licence.

Tips for designing an outdoor dining space

The following information will help create a successful outdoor dining area and must be shown on your site plan.

1. Location of your outdoor dining space

The area must be directly in front of your business and not encroach onto neighbouring property.

Clearly show the width and length of your outdoor dining area including the space needed for any screens, planter boxes, or umbrellas.

2. Accessibility

Make sure that your space is accessible for people of all ages and abilities.

Your outdoor dining area must not block access to building entrances, including any fire exits.

For outdoor dining areas longer than 10 metres, provide a 1.0 metre break in the centre of the area.

If your outdoor dining area is next to the outdoor dining area of another business, there must be a 1.0 metre break between the two areas.

3. Clear pedestrian pathway

You must maintain a clear walkway past your outdoor dining area. The minimum widths are 3.0 metres on main roads, 2.4 metres in busy central city areas, and 2.0 metres in most other places.

The clear pedestrian pathway must run consistently along the whole street block.

4. Kerb setback

Make sure there is at least 0.3 metres of space between your outdoor dining area and the kerb.

5. General information

All site plans must be “dimensioned” and “to scale”. Appropriate scales are 1:50 / 1:100 / 1:200.

Include your business name, address, business days and your hours of operation on your site plan.

6. Nearby street furniture

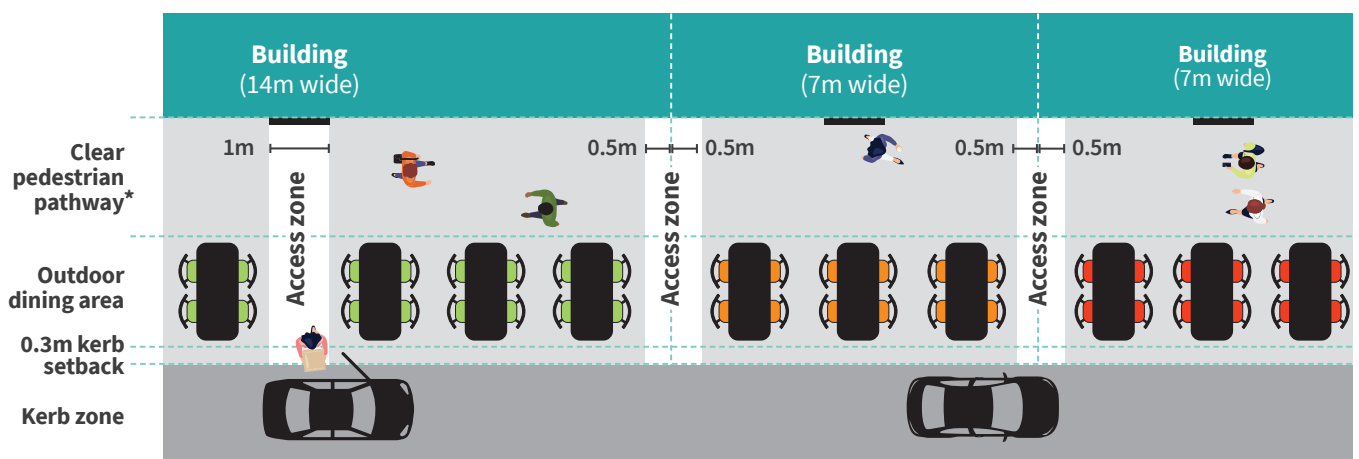
Make sure that your outdoor dining area fits nicely with nearby street furniture such as trees, cycle parking, seats, rubbish bins, parking signs, and light or power poles.

7. Transport and parking

Be aware of any nearby transport infrastructure such as bus shelters, pedestrian crossings, tram tracks or driveways.

8. Access to utilities

Utilities such as water, gas, electricity, and telecommunications have lids or covers that must remain accessible at all times. Furniture must be easily movable so Utility Operators can respond quickly in the event of an emergency.

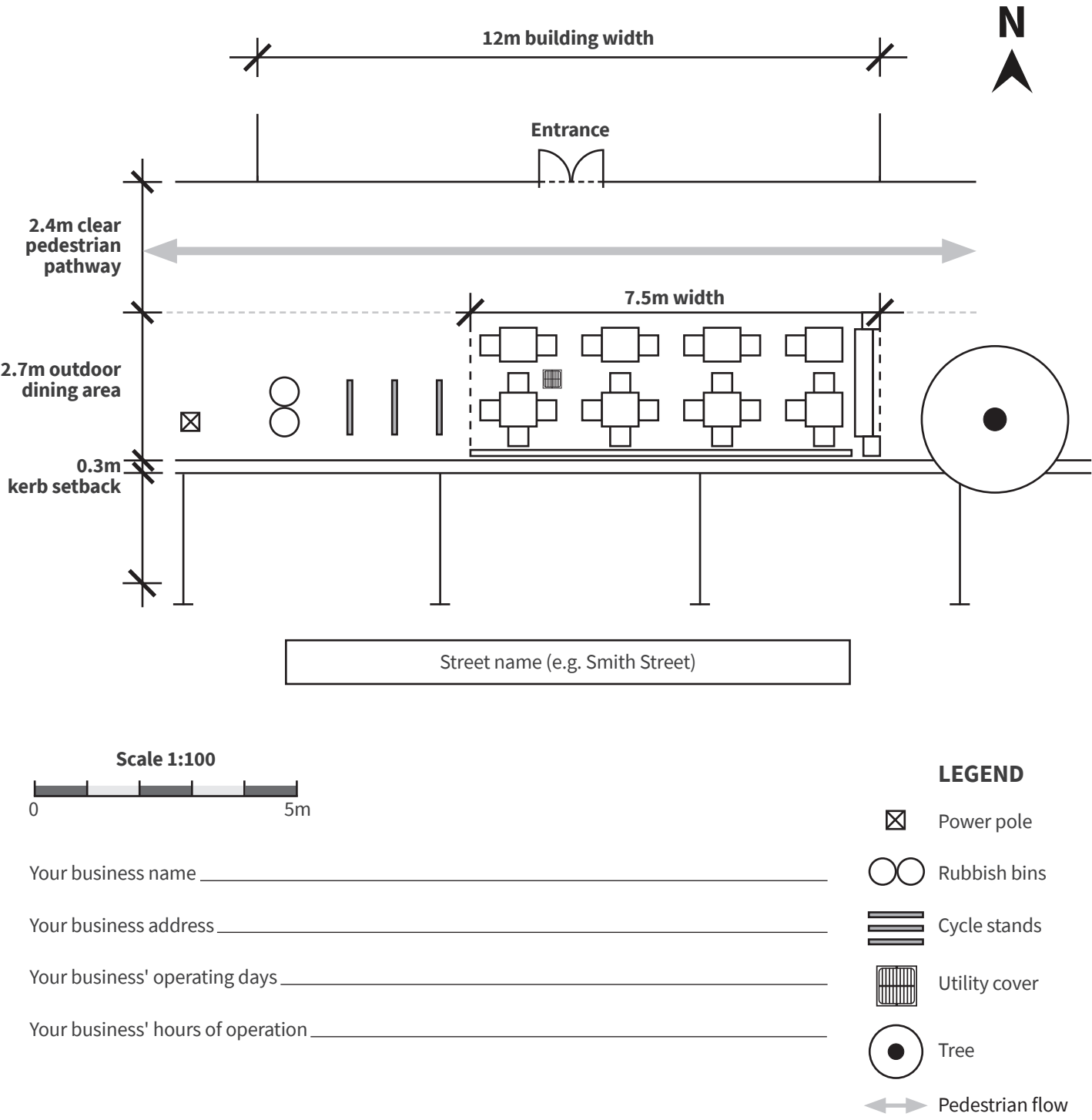


* Minimum width depends on the location of the outdoor dining area and the type of road

Site plan example

You must provide us with a **"dimensioned"** and **"to scale"** site plan when you apply for your outdoor dining licence. You also need to include general business information on your site plan. The sketch below shows what a good example looks like.

Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand Basemaps (linz.govt.nz/products-services/data/linz-basemaps) are a good starting point to help create a dimensioned and to scale site plan for your outdoor dining area.



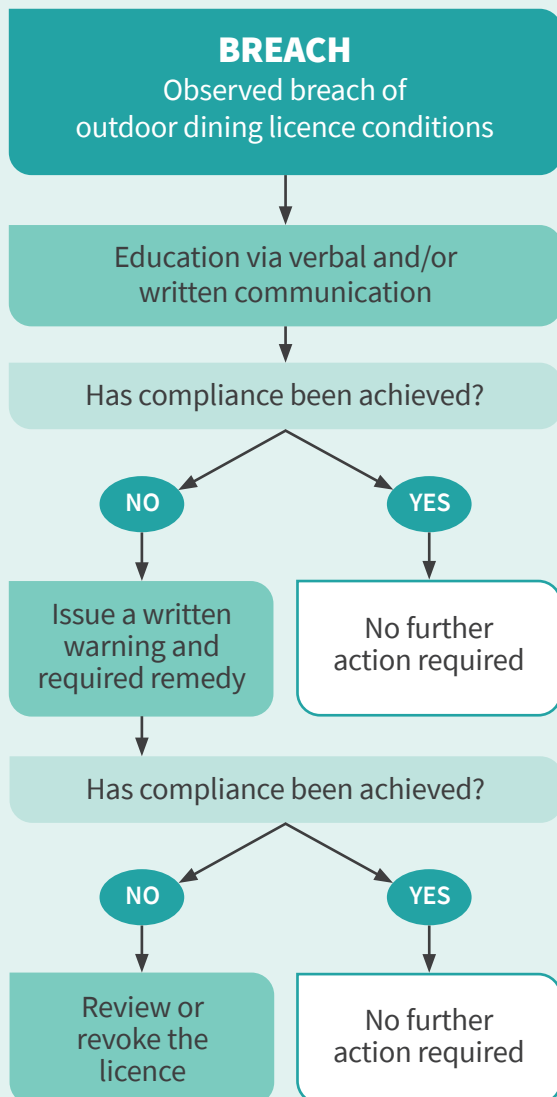
Monitoring and compliance

You and your employees are responsible for managing your outdoor dining space in accordance with the terms and conditions of your licence, our policy, and this outdoor dining guide.

It's important that you meet all the terms and conditions of your licence. If you don't, we may intervene and charge you in full for any costs we've incurred.

Monitoring and compliance steps

- (a) Verbally notify the licensee of the issue;
- (b) Issue a written warning and required remedy; or
- (c) Review or revoke the licence and take any other steps to prevent the outdoor dining activity in a public place.



Fees and conditions

When approved, you will enter into a licence with us and pay fees and charges to allow your business to occupy public space (a legal road).

The annual fee for your outdoor dining area is based on the total outdoor dining area and the location of the premises.

The rates can change each financial year, and the latest schedule is available on the [Council website](http://ccc.govt.nz/fees-streets-and-transport) (ccc.govt.nz/fees-streets-and-transport).

