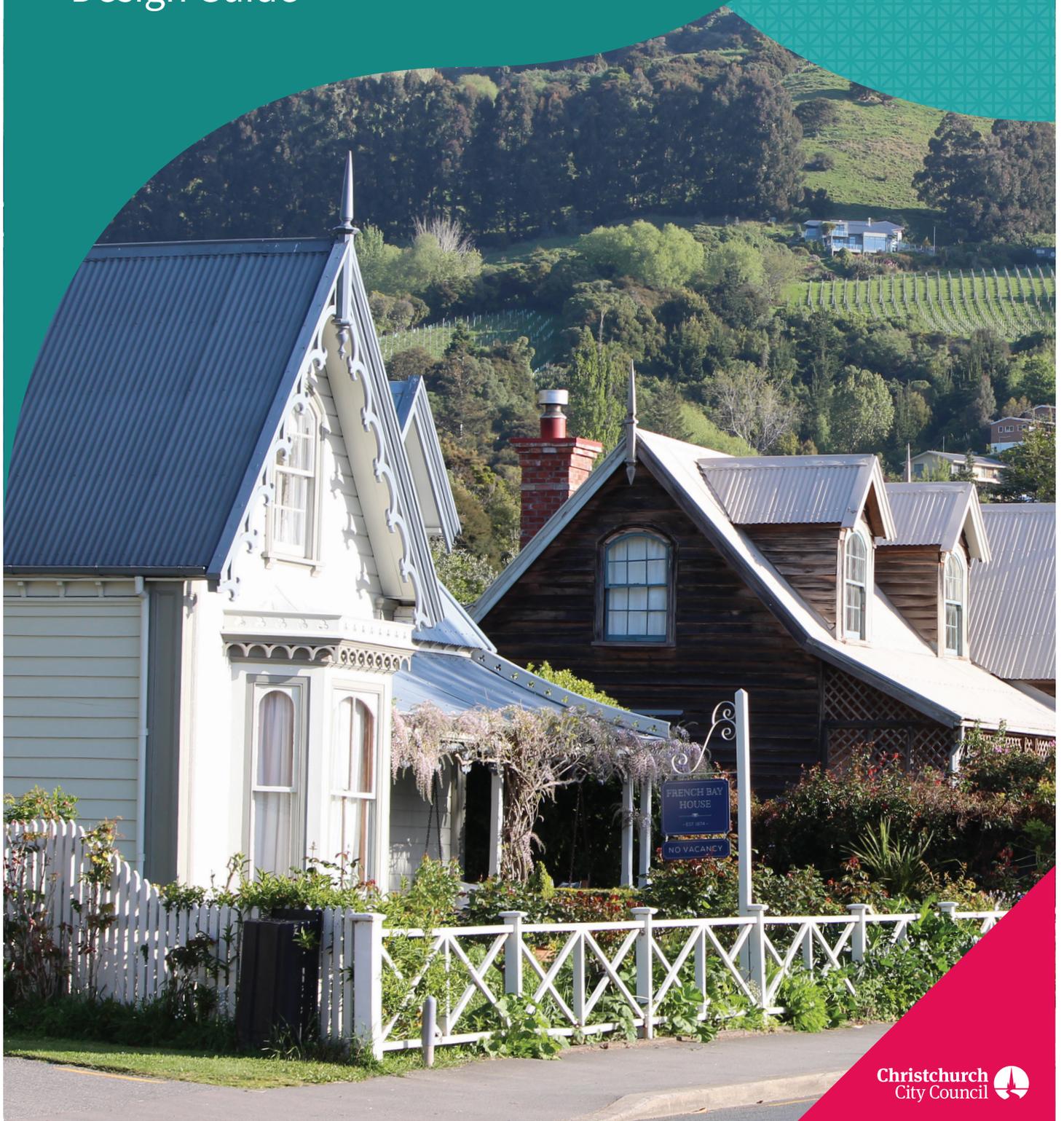


# Akaroa Residential Character Area

Design Guide



# Akaroa Residential Character Area Design Guide

## What are the Akaroa Character Areas?

Five residential areas in Akaroa are identified in the Christchurch District Plan (District Plan) as Character Areas.

A Character Area has special qualities that make it distinctive and appealing, resulting in an attractive and memorable area. The distinctiveness is created through the combination of character and heritage values of houses and their surroundings.

The purpose of a Character Area is to make sure that the special qualities are identified, retained or enhanced when people choose to change or redevelop their property. Changes that are not complementary to the character and heritage of Akaroa can affect the values of the area for residents and visitors.

## Akaroa's Significance

Akaroa has significance as a popular and distinctive seaside settlement of heritage importance. The town has developed in response to its geographical setting and cultural heritage giving it a strong sense of place and identity.

The Character Areas are mostly located within the Historic Area registered by Heritage New Zealand. The Historic Area has been recognised nationally as having a high percentage of historic buildings, which are of aesthetic and architectural importance in their own right and form an interrelated group of historic places. As such the Historic Area is a vital part of the historical and cultural heritage of New Zealand.

## What is the role of the Design Guide?

The role of the design guide is to provide an overview of the special qualities of the Akaroa Character Areas and to set out a series of corresponding design principles. This gives direction to developing or altering houses and sections. It is noted that this design guide does not cover every contributing design detail.

The design principles support and supplement District Plan policies, rules and matters. The design principles in this guide will help inform the assessment of development proposals+ that require resource consent\*, along with the matters of discretion contained in the District Plan.

If you are considering making changes or rebuilding in an Akaroa 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 demolition or changes to the existing building, changes to the sections or construction of a new building, for example.

\* This guidance relates to sections 14.15.23 and 8.7.8 of the District Plan that outlines land use and subdivision rules and matters of discretion, in regard to resource consent. 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.



Akaroa's setting has highly influenced the settlement pattern



*Informal, narrow streets, planting and views to the harbour contribute to the character setting*

## Area overview

The key elements that contribute to Akaroa's residential Character Areas are:

- A memorable topography of valleys and knolls, located around a series of bays.
- Views out to the sea and across the valleys from public and private vantage points, and views from the harbour of the whole settlement.
- An informal and visually interesting streetscape.
- Cottage gardens that set off the house, or heavily planted frontages within larger sites.
- Variation in site size from one house to the next.
- Occasional very large properties in generous gardens.
- A large number of buildings from the late 19th Century to the early 20th Century, many of which are of historic significance recognised by Heritage New Zealand listings and the District Plan schedule.
- Buildings that sit harmoniously in the wider townscape.
- One or two storey standalone buildings, many of which have similarities in style, materials and colours to each other but with differences from one property to the next.
- Interspersed housing from different eras.



Map of Akaroa's residential Character Areas



*Intact cluster of 19th Century heritage houses on Rue Jolie*

## Response to context

The context of the Character Areas are the built and natural environments that makes up Akaroa. This includes the topography and landscape setting, views to and from the area, the street and block layout, heritage associations and the overall visual coherence of the streets, gardens and houses.

### Heritage associations

Akaroa has a high number of 19th Century colonial character buildings that vary in size and design but display similar styles, forms and materials.

Respecting and complementing these valued buildings will help retain the special character that makes Akaroa attractive as a place to live and visit. This is done through sympathetic scale, size, finish and design details for new buildings and alterations to existing ones.

Design principles:

- Seek opportunities to retain all, or parts, of the character buildings, including outbuildings.
- Ensure heritage values of adjacent or nearby properties are retained, respecting their status, visibility, and access to sunlight.
- Consider the overall qualities of original buildings, such as building form, roof profile, materials, window placements, verandas and how these qualities might inform the design of new houses.

### Responding to the landform and landscape setting

The Character Areas are located on flat land or gently undulating valleys. Additional design challenges arise where a site is on sloping terrain. Due to the lie of the land and the harbour setting, some sites within the Character Areas can be seen from many angles, either from public places (including from the harbour) or from other properties.

Trees and shrubs are an important component of the landscape setting of the Character Areas, helping sit the houses into the landscape.

Design principles:

- Align buildings to the contours of the slope to avoid extensive levelling or raising the land.
- Step larger buildings up or down the slope, or set them into the slope.
- Retain existing mature trees and vegetation within gardens.
- When designing a new house, extension or alteration to an existing house, study the house from all possible vantage points and envisage how, when finished, it might look from those points.
- Carefully site and screen utility structures such as bin enclosures and water tanks.



*Housing of differing eras displaying common characteristics – building scale, form and street setback*

## Site design

### Balance of house and garden size

House size is generally proportional to garden size, although there are older, smaller properties with larger gardens. Houses are predominantly standalone with gardens and planting on all sides of the property.

Design principles:

- Allow sufficient space around buildings to avoid houses appearing to be amalgamated with adjacent houses.
- Consider a smaller house on a larger site.
- Seek opportunities for tree planting and choose species that will not block views as they mature.
- Use steeper parts of the site for planting and amenity.

### House setbacks and orientation

Houses within the Character Areas have an inconsistent setback from the street. They range from being located close to the front boundary to being located towards the rear of the site. This provides a varied interplay between buildings and the street and a constantly changing street view when moving along it. House sites are generally rectangular with irregularities where responding to the landform. Most properties are aligned parallel to the street in front of them. This helps to define the public space and avoids looking directly across neighbours' gardens.

Design principles:

- When deciding where to locate the house on the site, take into account the location of adjoining houses, the land contours, views, orientation and the impact of the new development on neighbours.
- In some locations a consistent setback is part of the character of the street. In other locations the setback varying from one site to the next is an important characteristic.
- New, contrasting facades may overwhelm historic buildings, therefore generous setbacks may be desirable where historic buildings are nearby.
- Orientate the house towards the street, locating the primary entrance on the street elevation.
- Provide sufficient space adjacent to the street for garden planting (at least 3m).



*The size and location of houses on sites within the character area, showing both similarities and differences*



*Low front boundary fences in a variety of materials, all with small planted front gardens*

### **Street amenity**

A variety of street boundary treatments occur in the Character Areas. However the treatments mostly allow good visibility between the houses and streets and provide an attractive street edge. A longstanding characteristic of Akaroa has been the ability to look into and enjoy street-side gardens.

Design principles:

- Ensure gardens are of sufficient size to accommodate mature tree and garden planting, in particular for front and side gardens.
- Ensure views to and from houses are maintained and not obstructed by fencing or vegetation.
- Design front fencing to a maximum height of 1m.
- Consider traditional picket or wire fences or planted boundaries, ensuring trees and shrubs do not obstruct or litter the footpath.
- Where the boundary runs down a slope, or the site is elevated above the road, consider stepped retaining walls, terracing the land or planted slopes to avoid high walls.

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



*Garage set to the rear of the site, with garage doors divided into bays and gravel driveway planted at the edges, reducing the overall visual impact of driveway and garaging*

## Access, parking and garaging

Vehicle garaging, parking and manoeuvring space is generally unobtrusive, with garaging separate to and less obvious than the house. On-site car parking may be restricted to a parking space rather than a garage or carport.

Design principles:

- Locate garages further back from the road boundary than the house.
- Avoid large span garage doors by visually dividing into bays or separating into smaller garages.
- Coordinate the form, materials and colour between the house and garage design.
- Design driveways to be discreet and consider courtyards for dual garden/car parking use. Break up large areas of hard surface with paving designs or strategic planting beds.
- Consider permeable surfaces to assist storm water management.
- Consider using carports and occasional parking on grassed areas, particularly for holiday homes.
- Ensure front gardens are not compromised by vehicle parking areas.
- Use the land slope to accommodate garages and storage underneath the house.
- Screen garages and parking areas from public view with judicious planting.

## Building design

### Scale, bulk and form

The size and height of a house are key factors in determining what impact the building will have on its immediate surroundings. Although houses within the Character Areas vary in size, a common characteristic is that they are domestic in scale, even when large in size.

On Akaroa's older buildings, roofs are generally a relatively steep pitch, with gable ends. More recent buildings in the area exhibit a greater variety of roof forms, including hipped roofs.

Design principles:

- Design houses to be similar in scale and proportion to existing houses of one or two storeys.
- Keep the scale small by using a number of additive building forms rather than one large block.
- Larger, bulkier buildings can reflect the smaller scale of surrounding buildings through the use of design elements such as gables, steps in the plan of the building, the use of different roof shapes or dividing the building into visually separate units by using different treatments or colours for cladding.
- Large houses can be kept in scale when they are on large lots with generous garden planting.
- Avoid repetitive buildings, large expanses of the same design or finish, blank elevations and dominant roofs.
- Employ pitched or hipped roofs consistent with existing buildings in the area.
- The use of roofs pitched at 25 degrees and steeper, is encouraged. This may mean dividing a large roof into smaller modules.

Roofs of shallow pitch, flat, mono-pitch and barrel shaped can be successfully absorbed in the townscape providing they are smaller adjuncts to the main roof form.



*A larger house broken into a series of smaller forms and separate pitched roofs*



*Above and right: Character/heritage buildings typical of the area*



## Architectural detailing

Historically weatherboard has predominated in Akaroa. Roofs are traditionally corrugated iron with timber door and window frames. Brick and other forms of masonry construction are not common in the Character Areas. Verandas and lean-tos feature throughout the area. Generally windows have a vertical orientation. Dormer windows feature widely. Large expanses of glazing are out of character and can be very visually dominant in some locations.

Character houses are predominantly white with grey roofs. Where walls are painted in darker colours, window and door frames, decorative features and fences are painted white to pick up on the neighbourhood's character. Due to Akaroa's topography and setting, bright and strong colours can be very prominent and jarring, especially if there are large expanses of the same colour.

Design principles:

- Maintain the richness and texture of detailing in older properties through retaining original features.
- Ensure additions and alteration to existing houses are compatible with the overall proportion and detailing of the original house.
- The use of traditional materials, such as weatherboard cladding and corrugated metal roofing is encouraged.
- Pay attention to the sizes, symmetry and proportions of window openings and their placement, or grouping, including in relation to neighbouring buildings.
- Recess windows into the wall and accentuate this depth with a surrounding trim or facing.
- If aluminium joinery is proposed choose profiles that mimic the depth and surrounds that wooden joinery provides.

It is important to choose the colour for new buildings and extensions very carefully to ensure that they harmonise with the townscape. The colour of walls, roofs and fences should not visually dominate historic buildings or the streetscape. Painted or coloured surfaces are more appropriate than stained timber finishes.



*Contemporary houses displaying some of the characteristics found in the more traditional and heritage buildings*