Sites, context and housing types

Selecting a site and housing typolog(ies) are key decisions within the development process. Both come with design and access opportunities and constraints which are important considerations for testing site layout and informing development potential and yield.

Thorough **site and context analysis** at the start of the design process helps to highlight opportunities and risks early, and ensures constraints are adequately addressed, particularly if they result in District Plan non-compliances. Ōtautahi Christchurch also has some distinct characteristics, such as typically flat land and low winter sun angles, which create unique circumstances and may influence typology selection and site layout.

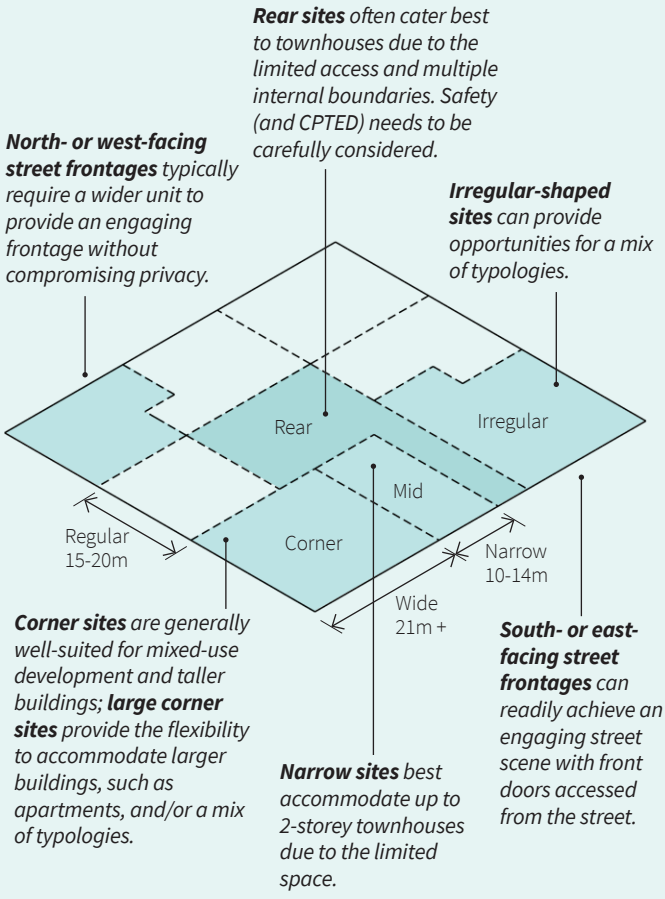
Selecting a development site

Typical development site types can be categorised by their:

- **Position within the block** (corner/end, mid-block or rear-lot with pan-handle access)
- **Street frontage extent** (narrow 10-14m, standard 15-20m or wide 21m+)
- **Size** (very small up to 500m^2, small 500-1,000m^2, medium 1,000-2,500m^2, or large* 2,500m^2+)
- **Shape** (regular or irregular)
- **Street frontage orientation** (north/west or south/east)

Particular attributes may mean sites are more appropriate for certain residential typologies, noting that most land appropriate for multi-unit residential tends to be flat within Ōtautahi.

*(*Note: 14A.11.1 Principle 1: Site layout refers to 'larger development sites' as 'exceeding 4,000m2' for the purpose of ensuring public through routes.)*



High-level guidance for typical development site types (subject to detailed site and context analysis)

Site and context analysis

Completing a site and context analysis supports the site selection and design process, in particular for achieving a well-considered site layout. Potential building placement will be guided by the features and conditions identified which may affect the choice of residential typology and, therefore, development potential.

It includes identifying:

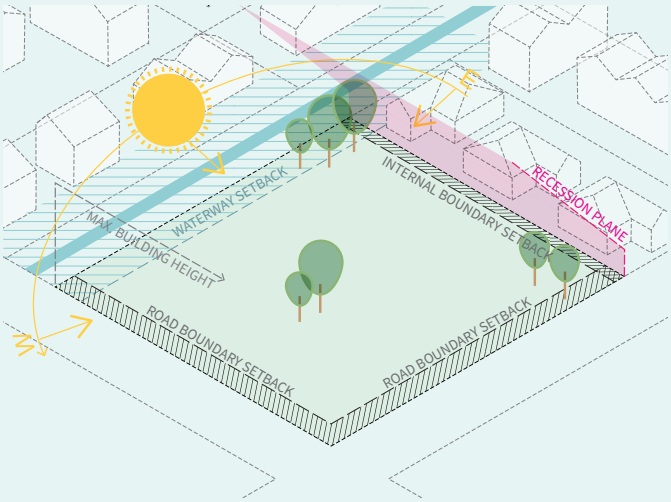
- District Plan zoning and surrounding land uses
- Existing site conditions and/or features, such as buildings, access, orientation, mature trees/vegetation, services, easements (including from waterways), topography, etc
- Neighbouring buildings and local character
- Heritage and/or cultural context and features
- Key views towards and from the site (e.g. for taller buildings or elevated sites)
- District Plan zone built form standards (e.g. setbacks, minimum/maximum height, recession planes, etc).

While some factors constrain development, others provide opportunities for adding value (e.g. retaining mature trees can provide amenity from day one) or inspiring innovation (e.g. designing windows to access outlook and views, while avoiding overlooking).

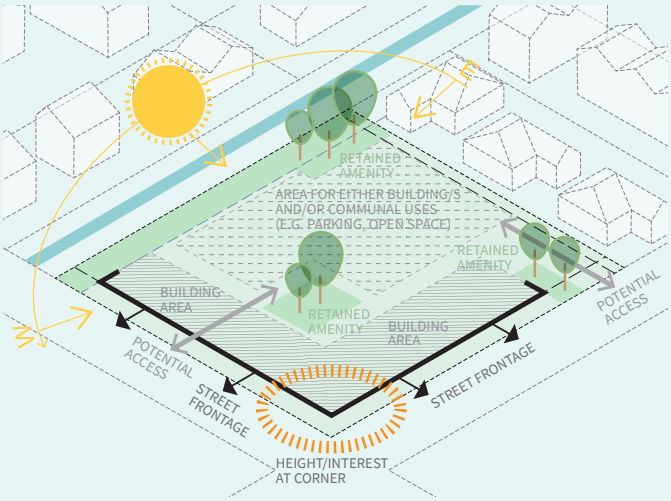
Constraints and opportunities

By effectively considering the constraints and opportunities that arise from a site and context analysis, it will help to inform site layout and building placement as the first step of the design process.

Illustrating the constraints and opportunities as diagrams is encouraged to support pre-application design conversations.



Indicative constraints diagram showing setback requirements, recession planes, maximum building height level and existing trees



Indicative opportunities diagram showing key frontages and potential locations for access, building placement (e.g. 'building areas') and communal areas including amenity

Multi-unit housing types

Medium- and high-density multi-unit housing types include townhouses and apartments, and their variations, including those listed in this section. Each has different spatial and design considerations, such as height and density, which will make them more suitable for specific sites and/or locations. Using a mix of typologies can have multiple benefits, like adaptability to different sites and facilitating a diverse resident population.

Townhouses

Semi-detached (2-3 storeys)

- Fits well in awkward or irregular-shaped sites and locations.
- Creates openness within development.

Terraced (or 'attached') (2-3 storeys)

- Compact typology using a repeated module which can be cost efficient to build.

Dual-key townhouse (2-3 storeys)

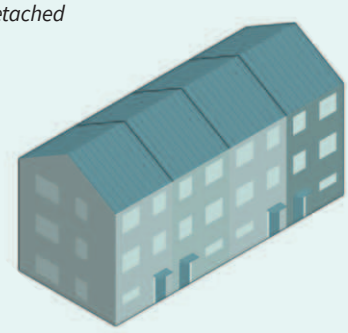
- Typically two units within one ownership.
- Can provide for multi-generational living or a means to generate rental income.
- Potential to incorporate shared facilities for space efficiency (e.g. storage, laundry, etc.).

Maisonette (3-4 storeys)

- A 2-storey unit within a larger building, primarily below another 2-storey unit; or, also a 2-storey unit with apartment(s) above or above ground floor non-residential uses.
- Ground floor 2-storey units have a front door directly from the street or shared accessway.
- Front doors to upper units are either accessed at the ground floor (with internal staircase) OR via communal staircase and external corridor/'breezeway'.
- Efficient way to achieve density which manages public and private interfaces well due to being able to locate bedrooms on upper stories like other townhouses.

Where parking is provided, the above townhouse typologies are typically serviced by private garages, 'on-lot' parking or communal surface parking.

Semi-detached



Terraced

Maisonette townhouses
(left: upper units accessed via ground floor front doors and internal stairs; right: upper units accessed via private front doors along a communal breezeway)

(Note: above diagrams are indicative representations only)

Apartments

Apartments are generally well suited to being located near centres where facilities, like shops, services, and public transport, are easily accessible and where, because of this easy access, there's less need for cars. Compatible non-residential uses can be incorporated into the ground floor, where the zone permits, with separate and distinct residential entrances. Corner sites are good locations for mixed-use development.

The overall mass and impact on surroundings must be carefully considered due to the scale of apartments, as well as managing the public and private interfaces at the ground level.

Walk-up apartments (3-4 storeys)

- Smaller-scale building with potentially less maintenance due to no lift being provided.
- Circulation can be internal or external (e.g. breezeway).
- High-density typology which fits well into existing low-rise neighbourhoods.

Medium-rise apartments (up to 22m tall/6 storeys)

- High-density typology which can support town centres at a comfortable scale.
- Can include 'maisonette' or two-storey unit(s) (e.g. at ground level or as 'penthouse' units).

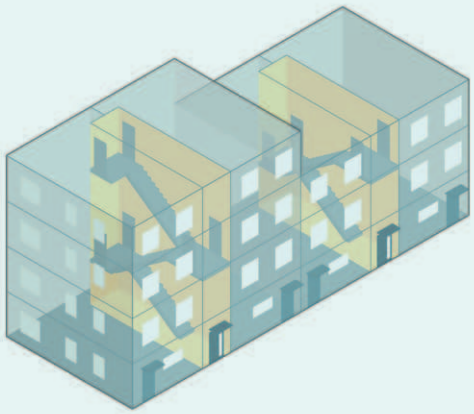
High-rise apartments (22m+ tall/above 6 storeys)

- High-quality design is necessary due to high potential impact on views and role as a landmark building.
- Can include 'maisonette' or two-storey unit(s) (e.g. at ground level or as 'penthouse' units).

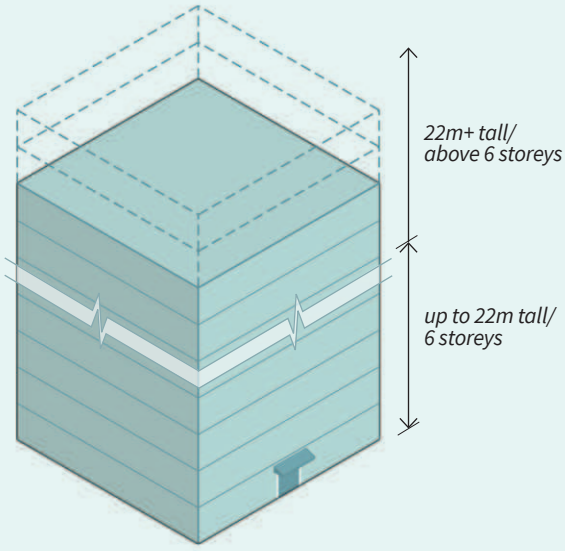
Dual-key apartments (typically 1 storey, in any of the above)

- Typically two units within one ownership.
- Can improve affordability due to the potential to incorporate private shared facilities (between two units) which maintains a high level of amenity, as well as space efficiency (e.g. storage, laundry, etc.).

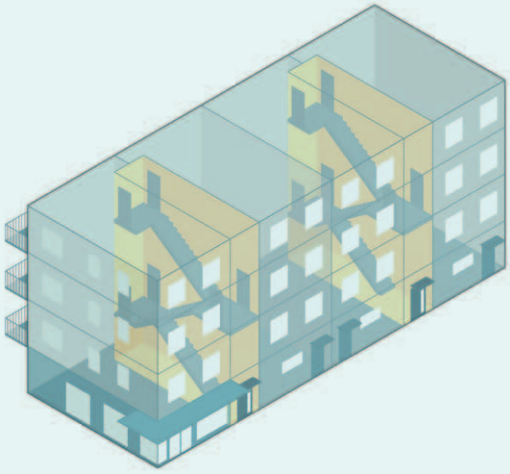
Where parking is provided, the above apartment typologies are typically serviced by either communal garages (e.g. podium or basement) or communal surface parking.



Walk-up apartments (showing internalised access to upper units)



Medium- or high-rise apartments



Walk-up apartments with non-residential uses on the ground floor corner, and separate and internalised access to upper units.

(Note: above diagrams are indicative representations only)

Multi-unit housing development examples

Semi-detached townhouses with paired front doors to create a welcoming entrance to both units.

Terraced townhouses benefit from thoughtful design detailing and use of materials to help break up long blocks of development.

3-storey townhouses and maisonettes which have side-by-side front doors, where the second door provides access to the upper 2-storey unit via internal stairs.

2.5-storey terraced townhouses with a mews house (single-storey unit over garages) located to the rear.

Walk-up apartments provide higher-density living within a comfortable building height for low-rise centres and neighbourhoods.

Medium-rise apartments with a good level of design consideration and architectural detail to ensure it achieves a human scale.

High-rise apartments require high-quality design due to their scale, effects on views, and potential to become landmark features, depending on their location and surrounding context.

These mixed-use apartments include commercial uses on the ground floor corner, adjacent to ground floor residential units, which provide active edges to the corner.