THORNDON CHARACTER AREA DESIGN GUIDE – TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	Page 2
2.0	Intention of the Design Guide	3
3.0	Analysis	4
	• General	4
	• Heritage	4
	• Townscape	4
	• Building form and detail	6
4.0	Objectives	8
	• General	8
	• Heritage	8
	• Townscape	8
	• Building form and detail	9
5.0	Guidelines	10
	General Requirements	10
	• Building Type and location	10
	• Extensions to pre – 1930's buildings	10
	Siting	10
	• Relationship to the District Plan rules	10
	• Setbacks from street frontages	11
	• Spacing between buildings	11
	Building form	12
	• Massing	12
	• Primary form	12
	• Additive composition	12
	• Multi unit buildings	12
	• Roof form and detail	13
	• Building height	13
	• Building width	14
	Building detail	14
	• Proportion of openings of walls	14
	• Windows	15
	• Location and treatment of entryways	15
	• Shopfronts	15
	• Surface materials, finish and texture	16
	Siteworks	17
	• Carparking and garaging	17
	• Fencing	17
	• Maintenance of existing land forms	17
	• Streetedge treatment	18

1.0 Introduction

As a substantially complete remnant of the original fabric of the city, the Thorndon Character Area is of considerable historical significance. Much of the building dates from the founding of the City as we know it by European settlers in the mid-nineteenth century and remains as a direct link with that past. Most of the buildings in the area are modest workers' cottages and include some small dwellings built for the colonial militia. This grouping of colonial cottages and gardens offers unique evidence of the social structures of times past. The area is accented by some highly idiosyncratic and unusual buildings dating from the turn of the century - notably "The Wedge" and "The Moorings" of Glenbervie Terrace. Furthermore, the group of dwellings at 296 to 306 Tinakori Road is a notable remnant of the tall narrow building that once characterised high-density inner-city housing in Wellington.

The area has survived the ravages of time and the trauma of motorway development relatively intact, and stands as the living reminder of a rich history. It is of significant relevance to the Wellington region and to New Zealand as a whole.

Because of the historical significance of this part of Thorndon it is Council's view that all new building should be controlled to protect its special character.

2.0 Intention of the Design Guide

As specified in the District Plan rules, all new building development within the Thorndon character area is a Controlled Activity, in terms of the design and appearance and siting of buildings. This Design Guide provides the standards or criteria against which controlled elements are assessed.

Applicants are required to demonstrate (through the detailed design of new development) a commitment to maintaining and extending the present and intended character of the Thorndon Character Area. Provided that this intention is supported and the design guidelines are followed, designers have a degree of flexibility in the preparation of development proposals.

No precise formula exists for ensuring the skilful and innovative design of buildings. The provisions of this Design Guide require that particular character elements be respected. Applicants must demonstrate that the provisions of this Design Guide have been acknowledged and interpreted and the objectives satisfied.

Cottage in Ascot Street

3.0 Analysis

General

The area features a high concentration of small buildings on small sites. With the notable exception of unusual buildings such as the Western Park Tavern and Premier House, buildings have an average total floor area of around 135m^2 on an average lot size of around 210m^2. Given a building footprint area of around 85m^2, site coverage averages 43%. A significant proportion of occupied lots (more than one-quarter) are less than 150m^2 in area.

Use is mixed and includes a concentration of primarily retail uses on both Tinakori Road frontages towards the south end of the area, with exclusively residential use elsewhere. Eighty percent of all residential accommodation is in single-unit dwellings.

Heritage

Many of the original buildings remain, the great majority of which are over 90 years old. About three-quarters of the buildings were built before 1900, and the majority of buildings that give the area its heritage character were built before 1930.

While many of the individual buildings are not of any particular merit, collectively these buildings form a section of townscape with unique qualities. These qualities include a consistent, densely packed fine grain of generally very small buildings, and the fact that so many of the area's original buildings still stand. Several landmark individual buildings, such as "The Wedge" and "The Moorings" on Glenbervie Terrace and the groupings of tall narrow buildings at 296 to 306 Tinakori Road and immediately adjacent on the corner of Tinakori Road and Upton Terrace, are also of note.

Townscape

The area gains its character from the diversity of buildings and detail within a framework of harmony and consistency. Notable buildings that contrast for reasons of scale, size or unusual shape act as local landmarks, and, along with the mass of more ordinary buildings in which they sit, establish a distinct identity. Character in this case is dependent on differences as well as similarity.

Characteristic skyline

The visual intricacy of the area arises from the additive form of buildings which are based on a characteristically small primary building form. This extent of the primary form is expressed in the roof of the building if not always on the facades.

The skyline expresses the intricacy, small scale and fine grain of the buildings. It is articulated with protruding gables and to a lesser extent dormer windows, finials and towers. The overall form of the skyline follows the rugged natural topography of the area. The roofscape is visually significant as the area is overlooked by other nearby residents.

The public space structure is characterised by enclosure with building fronts generally very close to or right on the street edge. Enclosure in the retail area of Tinakori Road is further emphasised by the verandahs that shelter the footpaths. The narrowness of Ascot Street and Glenbervie Terrace is a significant feature of the townscape. Residential properties fronting Tinakori Road usually incorporate a small front garden, whereas retail buildings are built to the street edge.

Plan view of the Retail Centre on Tinakori Road

The street edges are characterised by a general consistency of building scale and narrow building frontages. The characteristic building frontage width is 4.5m to 10m in residential areas. This is deviated from only by the Western Park Tavern which by its special public function and contrasting horizontal bulk, acts as a focus and makes a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area.

Shop fronts are varied, but are given visual unity by a consistent narrow frontage, the use of verandahs, intricacy of door detail and shop front glazing, and subtle painted signs. Verandahs are discontinuous and not all shop fronts have them.

The large flat area to the front of Premier House is uncharacteristically empty, devoid of visual features and cut off from the street by a long high, visually impermeable boundary fence. Its current state of development does not make a visual contribution to either the appearance of the street or the nationally significant private facility of Premier House.

Picket fencing or other open vertical boarded fencing is characteristic of the area. This fencing is low, provides a partial visual screen and is often painted white.

The area is bisected and bounded by roads carrying a heavy traffic load. Other minor streets within the area do not allow through vehicle access, although pedestrian through traffic is possible. Because of small lot sizes, the positioning of dwellings at street edges and often pedestrian-only access, on-site carparking is provided at an average of one space per two residential units.

On-site carparking is either non-existent or integrated unobtrusively into, next to or behind dwellings.

Building Form and Detail

Buildings are generally additive in character, based around the typical one- or two-storeyed primary form with an area of around 40 or 70m^2. Smaller gable-roofed extensions, lean-tos, verandahs, bay or dormer windows are added to these primary forms. Primary forms, each under a distinctly separate roof, are often combined to give an overall effect of visual intricacy and diversity although their actual forms, materials and details are very similar.

The dimensions and area of these rectangular forms are notably consistent. Nearly a third of all buildings are built around a primary form of about 40m^2 plan area in the proportions of about 5m x 8m, and just under half the buildings are based on a primary form with plan area of about 70m^2, generally with plan proportions of about 7m x 10m, but also in the proportions of around 5m x 14m. The rest of the buildings (close to a quarter) are based on primary forms with a variety of plan areas in a variety of shapes.

The majority (56%) of buildings are two-storeyed, and on Tinakori Road the proportion rises to about two-thirds. Fewer than one-third of the character area's buildings are single storey, the majority of these buildings being in areas other than Tinakori Road, and in particular in Ascot Street.

A variety of roof forms is evident. The following types are common:

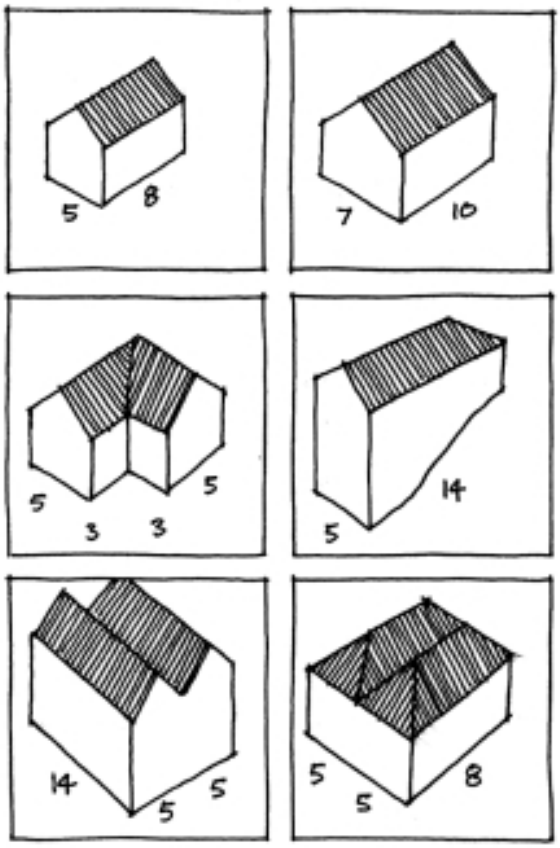
- gable roof with a pitch 40-45° on narrow (5m wide) facades
- gable roof with a pitch of around 45° or alternatively of around 30° to narrow secondary elements such as dormer windows and entrance porches
- hip roofs, generally around 30° pitch.

In addition:

- flat roofs occur only over bay windows
- mono-pitch roofs are used over lean-tos, additions and verandahs and, in combination with a parapet, over retail commercial buildings fronting the street
- eaves or barge overhangs are characteristically non-existent or minimal, generally in the range of 0-300mm.

The topmost floor of two-storey houses with steeply pitched gable roofs is commonly integrated into that roof space.

Two materials predominate: corrugated iron for roofs (91% of all buildings) and painted horizontal weatherboards, generally plain or rusticated, for walls (84% of all buildings). Eighty-one percent of all buildings have both a corrugated iron roof and painted weatherboard wall cladding. Horizontal corrugated iron is used as a side wall cladding on a few dwellings and the Western Park Tavern is entirely faced with it.



Typical primary forms and combinations

Buildings exhibit a richness of facade detailing characteristic of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods during which most were constructed. This detailing includes the subdivision of window sashes (usually double hung, less commonly fan light and casement), wide window facings, brackets or exposed rafters at soffits, cover boards at corners, all seen on a base of horizontal lines created by painted rusticated weatherboard.

With the exception of ground floor shop fronts and some narrow frontages with bay windows, the maximum and characteristic proportion of window to wall is between 1:3 and 1:5. The visual weight of large bay and shop front windows is relieved by segmentation into small panes. Windows are proportioned to give a characteristic vertical emphasis.

Roof Edging Detailing

4.0 Objectives

General

O1 To maintain and enhance the existing physical character of the area in recognition of its history, physical qualities and perceived value to the local community.

Heritage

O1 To perpetuate the unique historical quality of the area and maintain the unity and consistency of its visual character.

O2 To promote conservation of the historical features (including notable single buildings, groups of ordinary buildings and public spaces) that give this area its identity.

O3 To encourage the continued retention of all existing pre-1930s buildings which establish the visual character of the area and which are collectively of historical significance.

Townscape

O1 To ensure that those distinctive characteristics of townscape - such as scale and grain of development, intimacy and enclosure of public space that distinguish this area from others are maintained and enhanced.

O2 To maintain the predominant line of the street wall and the degree of spatial enclosure afforded by this wall.

O3 To retain the existing pedestrian-only character of parts of the area.

O4 To maintain the existing pattern of building setbacks and frequency of carparking provision at residential site frontages.

O5 To ensure that the current mix of uses and type of use that is critical to determining the character of the area is maintained.

O6 To discourage development which would need more on-street visitor parking and significantly alter the vehicle use characteristics of the area.

Building Form and Detail

O1 To ensure that new development is visually in harmony with the existing character of the area, in keeping with the historical context, complementing and enhancing rather than contrasting with existing patterns.

O2 To encourage the recognition of the existing historical character and maintenance of this in additions and alterations to buildings.

5.0 Guidelines

General Requirements

G1 ***Building type and location***

All new building should be of a type that is consistent with location and historical character.

Two-storey buildings with ground floor retail frontages may be located in suburban centre areas fronting Tinakori Road.

Residential-type buildings must be located in all other parts of the area.

Other building types are acceptable only if these significantly raise the level of visual and physical amenity of the area, are of public significance and are designed with positive recognition of the historical context.

G2 ***Extensions to pre-1930s buildings***

Extensions or modifications to existing pre- 1930s buildings should not detract from their character.

To this end, extensions and additions should use the additive forms characteristic of the area and the period in which the particular building was constructed. That is, generally hip, gable and lean-to roofs in characteristic arrangements and bay and dormer windows should be used.

Flat roofs over extensions are not characteristic of the area and their use over building elements other than bay windows is generally not acceptable.

The predominant materials and characteristic details of the existing building should be carried through into any extensions.

Siting

G1 ***Relationship to the District Plan rules***

The requirements for the siting of residential buildings are included in rule 5.1.3 of the District Plan. Although there is no minimum yard requirement in the Inner residential area which includes the Thorndon Character Area development must abide by the provisions of this Design Guide with regard to setbacks from street frontages and spacing between buildings.

Note that the provisions relating to building height and sunlight access in the District Plan's rule 5.1.3 do not apply in the Thorndon Character Area. These items are covered in clause 5.3.3 of this Design Guide.

G2 ***Setbacks from street frontages***

The positioning of building frontages relative to street edges should follow the precedent set by existing development in the immediate vicinity, where the predominant and common front yard dimensions, rather than the exceptional dimension will be taken as the determinant of precedent.

Where existing front yard depths vary, the front yard depth in any development should be within the existing limits and its dimension should maintain the visual quality and predominant degree of enclosure of the street.

Front yards or sites predominantly and visibly set aside for carparking are not acceptable. Existing sites that have been set aside for carparking or vehicle circulation are out of character with the historical pattern of development and set an unacceptable precedent.

Shopfronts in the existing retail areas of Tinakori Road will be built to the front boundary.

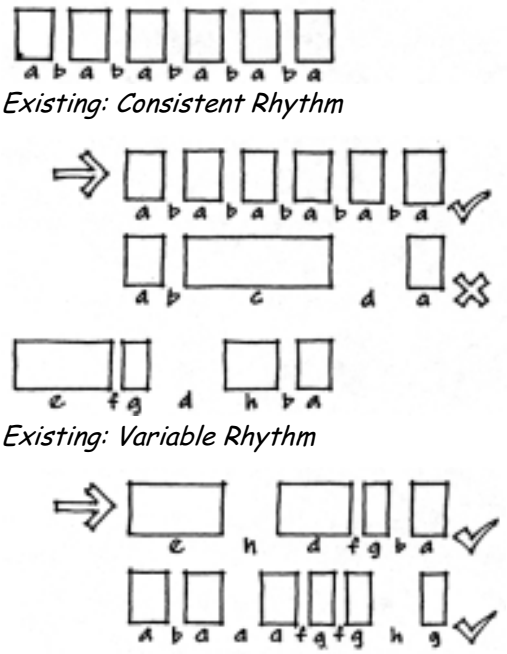
G3 ***Spacing between buildings***

Setbacks from side boundaries at building fronts should following the existing pattern of gaps between buildings in the immediate vicinity.

Where existing side yard widths are variable, the side yard depth in any development should be within the existing limits and should be such that the existing visual rhythm of the street wall is maintained.

Rear yards to dwellings should be of a sufficient size and positioned to maximise sun exposure, to achieve a degree of visual privacy and to relate to a living area of the dwelling.

Consideration should be given to the maintenance of light and sun to the windows of habitable rooms and outdoor living areas in adjacent dwellings.



Existing: Consistent Rhythm

Existing: Variable Rhythm

Indicative Street Wall Elevations: Maintaining the characteristic visual rhythm of the street wall

Building Form

Massing

G1 ***Primary Form***

Buildings of residential type located in residential areas will be additive in character based around a primary form or series of primary forms, each under a separate roof.

Primary forms will be of an area in the proportions characteristic to the area. Characteristic dimension and area requirements noted below are indicative only and may be modified by up to plus or minus 10%:

area 40m^2, in the proportions of 5m x 8m.

area 70m^2, in the proportions of 7m x 10m or 5m x 14m.

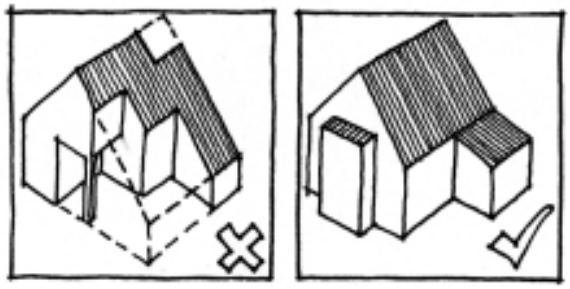
The maximum area of any primary form will be 80m^2.

Small-scale forms of lesser plan area may be used for outbuildings.

G2 ***Additive composition***

A building may comprise a single primary form, with secondary forms such as verandahs, porches, dormer or bay windows and lean-tos applied in an additive manner consistent with the character of adjacent buildings.

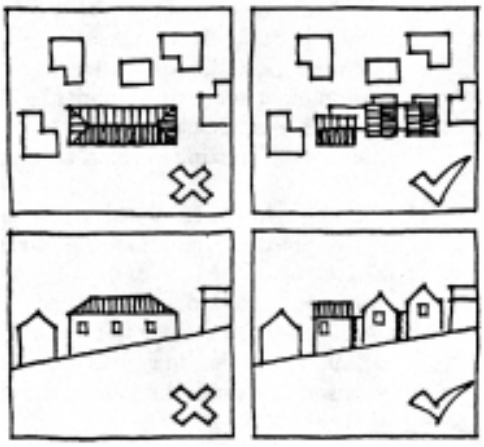
Primary forms may be combined to create buildings of a greater plan area, provided that each primary form is expressed in the roof of the building and on the facade.



Subtractive form *Additive form*

G3 ***Multi-unit buildings***

The massing of multi-unit buildings must be articulated in such a way as to reflect the historically established, intricate, small scale of development in the area. Primary forms will be separated by offsets or vertical slots or setbacks of a width representing the characteristic separation between (immediately adjacent) buildings. Facade offsets will be a minimum of 300mm and setbacks of sufficient depth to give visual separation between units and primary forms.



Massing of Multi Unit Housing

G4 Roof form and detail

Acceptable roof forms are as tabulated at right with a pitch tolerance of plus or minus 3° which may be applied only if the resultant roof is consistent with objectives O1 and O2 for building form and detail design.

The existing pattern and intricacy of roofscape is to be maintained by using the roof forms and details that are characteristic of the area. Each primary or secondary form that is a component of any building will be expressed with a separate roof.

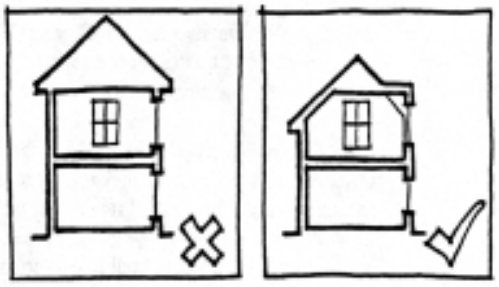
The rigid geometric alignment of multiple roof forms in a multi-unit development creates an appearance that is at variance with the general character of the area. Roof forms should be positioned relative to each other in a way which reflects both the unifying characteristics and the qualities of diversity and intricacy of the roofscape.

Where large-span steep (40-45°) gable roofs are used, it is desirable that the topmost floor is integrated into the roof with window forms and openings of a type and scale consistent with the local historic precedent for such elements.

Eaves and barge overhangs will generally, and over most parts of any building, be in the range of 0-300mm.

Acceptable Roof Forms

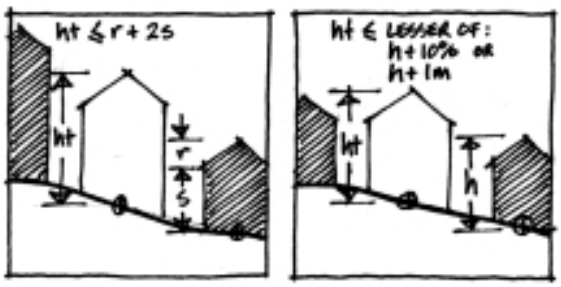
Form	Pitch	Application/limitation
Gable	30°	All applications 5m maximum span.
	40°-45°	All applications 7m maximum span.
Hip	30°	All applications.
Mono pitch	10° min	Lean-to secondary forms or retail/commercial type buildings, associated with parapets at street edges. Not to be used on dormer or roof windows.
Flat	0-3°	Bay windows and deck applications only.



G5 Building height

New buildings should not be too high or they will look out of scale in the character area. The height of new buildings or additions to buildings should relate to the predominant scale of buildings in the immediate area. Development should be of a height that is within the limits of the existing range of heights in the area.

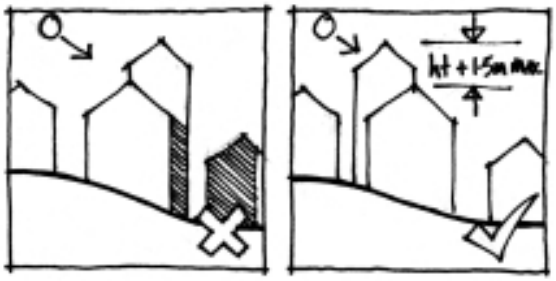
Buildings should be no more than one storey taller than the lower of the buildings on either side and no more than the lesser of 10% or 1m higher than the taller of the buildings either side. The interstorey height of the new building will be similar to that of adjacent development and the new building will not visually dominate or unreasonably shade the indoor or outdoor living areas of adjacent buildings.



Height Control Parameters

This limit may be exceeded by a further 1.5m by rooftop features and extensions such as a cupola or tower of no more than 8m^2 in area provided that this feature is of a form and character complementary to the character of both the building and adjacent buildings, is an integral design feature of the building, and does not overshadow adjacent buildings and property.

Any further retail or commercial development at the southern end of Tinakori Road should be a two-storey enclosed volume with a frontage of height similar to existing adjacent two-storey development.

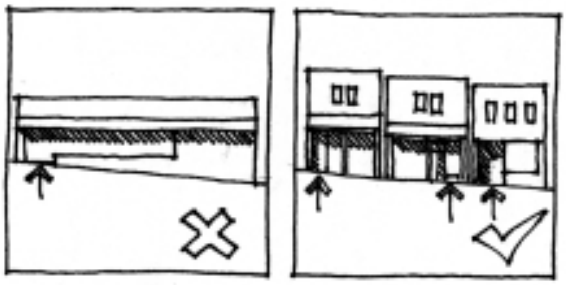


Locate Building to Avoid Overshadowing

G6 ***Building width***

Shopfronts to Tinakori Road will generally be no wider than around 7m. Each shopfront will include a publicly accessible door or other means of entry to the building.

All other buildings should express the width of the primary forms from which they are composed. This will recognise that the width range of typical building frontages is 4.5 to 10m. Any building with an overall width greater than 10m should be articulated in such a way as to present the appearance of a pair or group of independent buildings. The means of articulation, or separation of primary forms, will take into account the characteristic spacing of buildings (refer above).


Frontage Width of Buildings

Building Detail

G1 ***Proportion of openings in walls***

The proportion of opening to wall in the facades of any dwelling should generally not exceed one-third. This proportion may be exceeded in a facade if that facade is not clearly visible from any street or neighbouring property or if it is demonstrated that the opening proportions and detailing are in character with the existing buildings in the area and make a positive contribution to the aesthetic quality of the building.

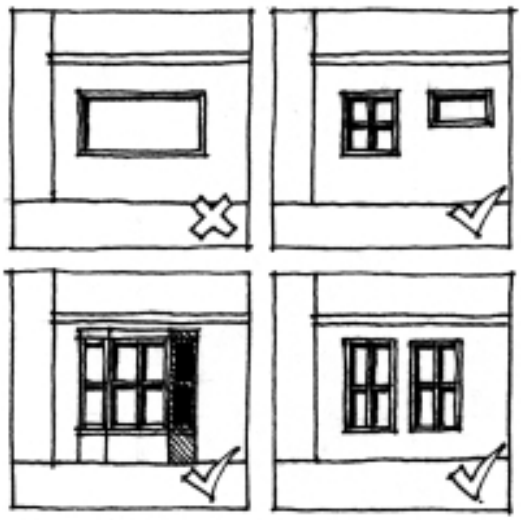
The proportion of opening to wall in the upper level facades above shop fronts should generally not exceed 20 percent.

G2 ***Windows***

Window openings should generally be vertical in proportion and in size and subdivision should follow the precedent set by existing buildings of similar age, type and style.

Large undivided panels of glazing should be avoided. Window openings and sashes should be subdivided with mullions or transoms and glazing bars in the proportions characteristic of the area.

Opening windows should be generally of the double-hung or casement type. Awning or hopper windows are not acceptable except as traditional fanlights.



Use Window Types, proportions and Subdivision Characteristic of the Existing Building or other Buildings in the Area

G3 ***Location and treatment of entryway***

Each shop front should be provided with an entrance directly off the street edge. This entrance should be recessed to provide a small entry porch.

All dwellings greater than about 5m in width and with street frontage should be provided with a main entry in their street- facing facade. This main entry should be sheltered with a porch, verandah or other enclosure as characteristic of the area.

G4 ***Shopfronts***

Shopfronts should be generally no more than 7m wide and maintain the facade proportions of those built before 1920.

Verandahs should have a horizontal fascia.

Each verandah should be of similar (but not exactly equal) height to adjacent verandahs and supported by poles. The thickness of supporting poles and the spacing between poles should follow the precedent set by existing Victorian examples. Poles should be divided into a base, middle and top.

Flat or cantilever canopies (except for canvas type fabric awnings) are not acceptable. The underside of the verandah should remain unlined.

The average height of the base of any shopfront glazing should be not less than 600mm above pavement level and will be subdivided in a manner that relates to, or is consistent with, existing shopfronts. This may be multiple subdivision at high level above a single large shopfront window or subdivision of a large window into a number of more or less equal smaller panes.

Compositional Principles of a Typical Existing Shopfront

The thickness, profile and finish of joinery sections should be similar to existing shopfronts. Timber joinery is desirable. Anodised aluminium joinery or visually obtrusive metal security grilles to doors or shopfronts are not acceptable.

G5 Surface material, finish and texture

Buildings should be faced with materials and finishes that are drawn from the existing palette and which harmonise with the existing building fabric.

Roofing should be corrugated iron. Wall cladding should generally be paint-finished horizontally fixed timber boarding. This will be plain or rusticated weatherboard of the width and profile characteristic of the area.

Party walls may be reinforced brick masonry or reinforced concrete masonry where no block work is visible. If it is exposed, concrete block work will be rendered.

Roofs may contain glazing or be fully glazed in the case of conservatories or greenhouse structures. This glazing will be of a flat planar type; curved glazing is not acceptable.

Materials which may be used only on secondary building elements or with both discretion and regard for precedent include stucco, horizontally fixed corrugated iron as a wall cladding, and reinforced brick masonry.

Materials which may not be used include any sort of tiled roof (pressed metal, clay or concrete masonry), brick veneer, any sheet material or PVC wall cladding, clear-finished or unfinished weatherboarding of any timber species, any diagonally fixed weatherboarding other than to dormer windows, unpainted PVC rainwater systems, anodised aluminium joinery and expanses of brightly coloured concrete paving.

Other materials can be used where a significant local precedent exists and it is shown that the material is not clearly visible from any public space. Other materials may also be used where the overall architectural quality of design of a building is such that the use of the other materials would make a positive addition to the character of the area.

Siteworks

G1 Carparking and garaging

On-site carparking and garaging at site frontages will be considered where it does not alter the local pattern of frontage setback, and where the carparking is provided in a way that is visually unobtrusive. This can be achieved by:

- no more than around one-third of the width of any site frontage being occupied by covered carparking or fully enclosed garaging
- fixing a maximum width for garage doors of 2.4m
- designing all garages in accordance with the siting, form and detail criteria of this design guide and ensuring that they complement the main buildings on the site by being either fully integrated into that building or designed as a stand-alone auxiliary building
- where an existing street edge is faced by a retaining wall more than two metres high, garaging may be considered for up to two-thirds of the frontage width
- allowing on-site carparking in front of houses where this is landscaped and paved in such a way that the parked car is not the dominant element in the frontage. This may be achieved by partial screening with hard or soft landscaping elements and paving of a type that distinguishes the area from road surfaces.

G2 Fencing

Fencing at street edges should generally comprise vertical boarding or be of the picket type characteristic of the area. At street edges most of this fencing will be less than one metre high and comprise palings of a width and at a spacing that is similar to existing fences.

When a greater degree of privacy or territorial definition is required, this should be achieved by partial screening with planting or a timber lattice structure of a generally open nature which can be used in combination with a low fence.

G3 Maintenance of existing land forms

The existing underlying natural landforms should be maintained.

Levelling of sections is acceptable only where the levelled platform created does not exceed around $80m^2$ in area, does not present a retaining wall with

an average height of greater than 1.2m to any street, and does not alter the overall landform when viewed from adjacent areas.

G4 ***Street edge treatment***

The position of the edges of Ascot Terrace and Glenbervie Terrace is to be maintained. The treatment of the edges should follow the historical precedent within the local area. Extruded continuous concrete kerbing should not be introduced.