



# Character Area Overlay Design Advisory Guidelines



**Government of South Australia**  
Attorney-General's Department

# Character Area Overlay Design Advisory Guidelines

## INTRODUCTION

A Character Area Overlay identifies locations that display streetscape characteristics and development patterns that are of value to the local area. These characteristics and patterns are identified by the Character Area Statements. Desired Outcomes (DO) and Performance Outcomes (PO) for the Character Area Overlay seeks development visible from the public realm to be consistent with these characteristics.

These Design Advisory Guidelines are provided under Section 66(5) of the *Planning Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (the Act) and will assist applicants and designers to achieve these design outcomes.

### Character Area Overlay

Desired Outcome DOI: Valued streetscape characteristics and development patterns are reinforced through **contextually responsive development**, design and adaptive reuse that responds to the attributes expressed in the Character Area Statements.

**Contextually responsive development (contextual design response)** is consistent with the valued streetscape characteristics and development patterns expressed by the Character Area Statements.

**Design Advisory Guidelines** provide guidance to applicants and designers on key design considerations to help achieve an appropriate **contextually responsive development**. They identify a range of **common design attributes** that may be relevant when responding to DOI. They are applicable to new buildings, additions and alterations to existing places.

**Design Advisory Guidelines** are not intended to be a 'check list' to the design or assessment process, but rather support the Desired and Performance Outcomes of the Code. They are not additional policy.

**Design Advisory Guidelines** are supported by **Style Identification Advisory Guidelines**, that assist applicants and designers to identify places that display the valued streetscape characteristics and development patterns expressed by the Character Area Statements, and in turn the **common design attributes** that new development should (or additions and alterations) should contextually respond to.

## NEW DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A CHARACTER AREA OVERLAY

Development within a Character Area Overlay will require additional contextual design and assessment consideration. A detailed **Contextual Analysis** of the locality will be central to these processes and assist in achieving development outcomes that are consistent with that sought by the Overlay.

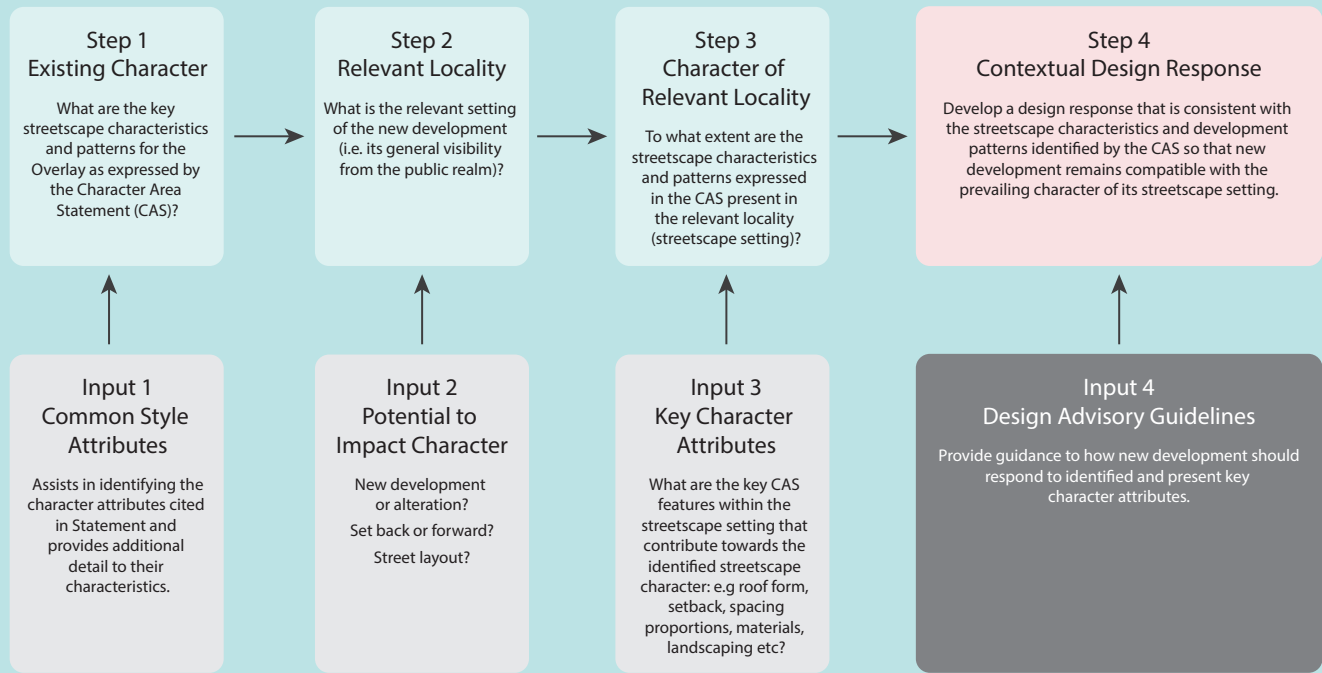
### CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

A detailed and considered **Contextual Analysis** will guide the design and assessment process, and the application of the **Design Advisory Guidelines** in order to achieve the outcomes sought by DOI. This analysis may include:

- The extent of relevant **streetscape setting** that needs to be considered in any **contextual design response**
- The extent to which places within the relevant **streetscape setting** display the streetscape characteristics and development patterns expressed by the Character Area Statements
- The extent to which the proposed development may impact on these streetscape characteristics and development patterns (informed by the **visual prominence** of the proposed development from the public realm)
- **Common design attributes** displayed by places within the **streetscape** setting that demonstrated the streetscape characteristics and development patterns expressed by the Character Area Statements, and
- The extent and manner by which the proposed development needs to respond to the prevailing context, and relative importance of the **common design attributes** to achieving an appropriate **contextual design response**.

It is the responsibility of the applicant, or their designer, to undertake this **Contextual Analysis**.

# Contextual Analysis (Character Area Overlays)



These considerations will influence the nature of any new development within a Character Area Overlay, and accordingly the applicant and/or their designers should undertake a **Contextual Analysis** during the very earliest stages of any development proposal in order to mitigate potential risks, costs and delays associated with misalignment of applicant and Overlay expectations.

The **Design Advisory Guidelines** have been developed to respond to key design attributes identified by the Overlay's Performance Outcomes. They provide a sound basis for any **Contextual Analysis** of an area within which a development is proposed.

## APPLICATION

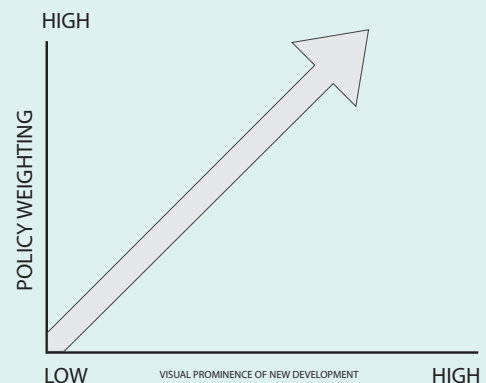
Every property within an Overlay will have its own unique qualities and attributes that will inform appropriate design outcomes and the relative weighting to be applied to the relevant Code policy, and **Design Advisory Guidelines**. These factors will inform the required design response to the valued streetscape character identified within the Overlay. Key factors influencing this weighted application include:

### Streetscape setting

The **streetscape setting** of a development will generally be the locations and areas within the public realm that the proposed development will have a meaningful visual impact on. This will typically be from the street but may extend to other public areas. Street width and layout, topography of the locality, and the scale and setout of the proposed development will influence how far the **streetscape setting** extends. Due to its ephemeral nature, landscaping will generally not be reason in itself to reduce the extent of a **streetscape setting**.

#### Visual Prominence

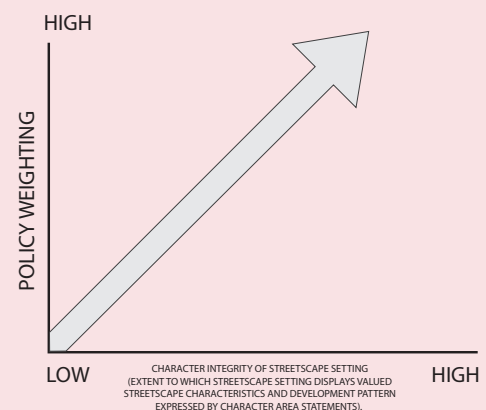
Highly prominent development, such as a new building set close to the street frontage, or on corner sites, may have a greater impact on the built form character of a locality than development set back from the prevailing building line, or (for the case of building additions) to the rear of a site. Development with a high **visual prominence** will need to be more **contextual design response** than would be required for proposals with low visibility the relevant **streetscape setting**.



#### Character Integrity of Locality

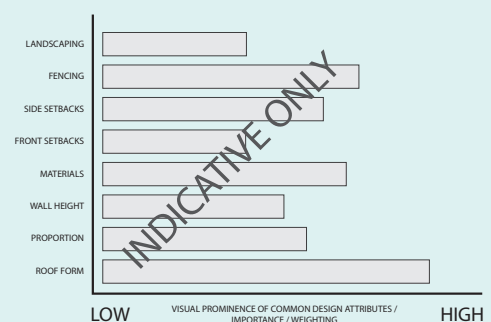
The concentration and integrity of places within the **streetscape setting** of a proposal that display the valued streetscape characteristics and development patterns as expressed by the Character Area Statements will inform the extent of **contextual design response** needed to achieve the outcomes sought by DOI.

Localities that display high levels of consistency and/or integrity in relation to the Character Area Statements will require a higher level design response to those areas of more disparate or diluted character.



#### Identification of key Common Design Attributes

What are the **common design attributes** that contribute towards the prevailing streetscape characteristics and development patterns of value as expressed by the Character Area Statements within the **Streetscape Setting** of the proposed development? Dominant attributes should be given greater weighting than less dominant attributes.



The weighting of these attributes will vary from location to location. For example, locations that display consistent front setbacks will likely weight this attribute higher than those with varied setbacks. A thorough and considered **contextual analysis** will therefore be critical to identifying and weighting these attributes so as to inform an appropriate design response.

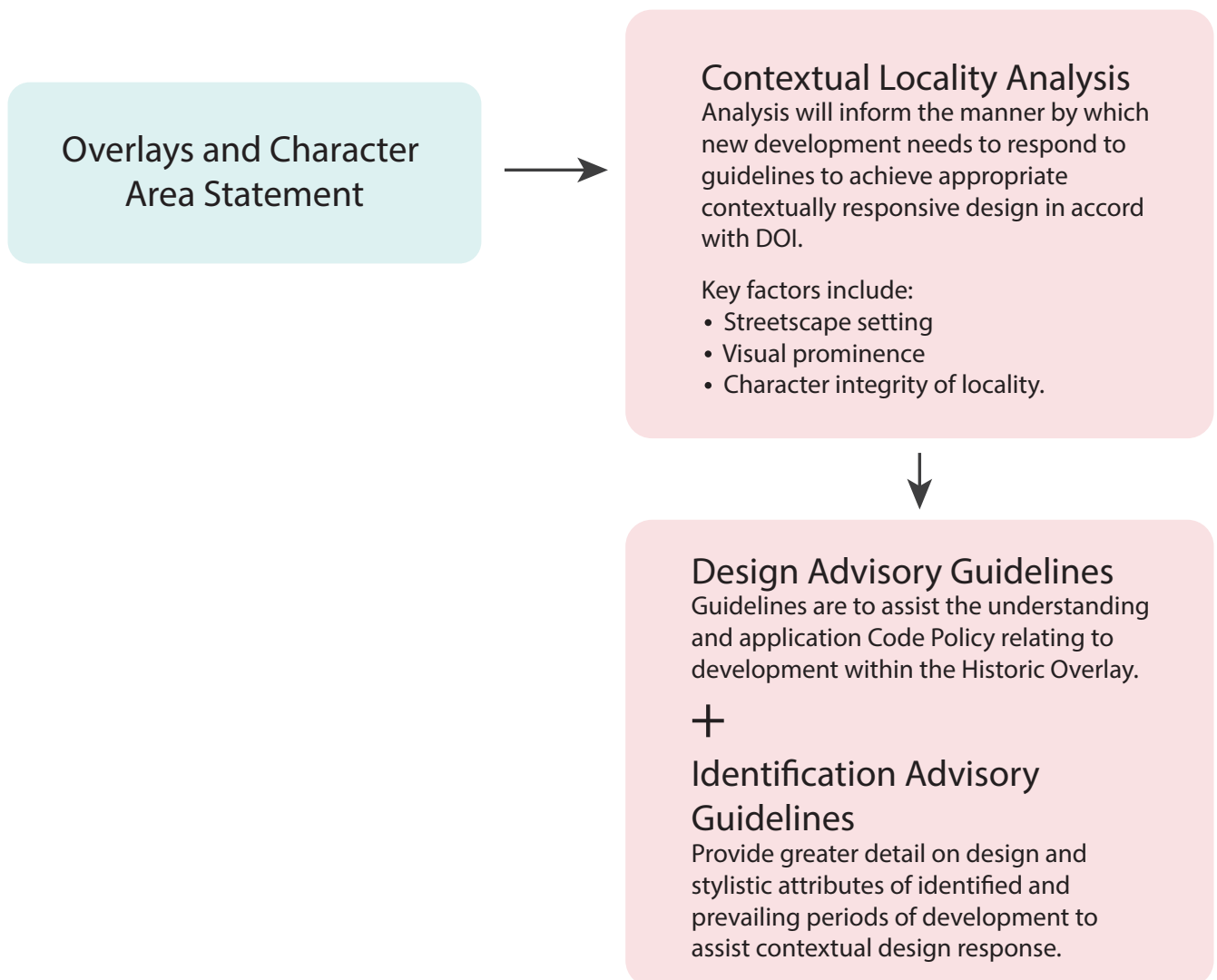
## Extent of Response

It is anticipated that development within a Character Area Overlay will require a more considered **contextual design response** than other localities. Undertaking a **Contextual Analysis** in the earliest stages of the any development proposal is therefore highly recommended as it will assist with identifying the extent and nature of **common design features** that are relevant to any **contextual design response**.

It may not be necessary to respond to all **common design attributes** to achieve an appropriate **contextual design response** provided an overall consistency with the prevailing streetscape characteristics and development patterns of identified value.

This additional **contextual design response** sought by Character Area Overlay is also likely to result in:

- Exterior design aesthetics being given greater weighting in the planning assessment process
- Greater restrictions and limitations over the exterior appearance of a proposed development
- No single 'common design approach'. Every Character Area Overlay, and even locations within, are all different and will likely require a unique design response, and
- Greater collaborative input from the Local Council and (where available) their Local Heritage Advisor.



# CAO TABLE I | DESIGN ADVISORY GUIDELINES

**Note:** All diagrams included in the CAO Table I are indicative only, and for the purposes of illustrating a principle, rather than a specific design solution. Development applications will be assessed against a broad range of relevant Desired and Performance Outcomes within the Code, in addition to those discussed below. Compliance with the below does not necessarily result in an appropriate outcome when assessed against all other relevant provisions.

Common Design Attribute	Appropriate Design Response
Relevant Code Reference	<p>DOI Valued streetscape characteristics and development patterns are reinforced through contextually responsive development, design and adaptive reuse that responds to the attributes expressed by the Character Area Statements.</p> <p>PO1.I All development is undertaken having consideration to the valued attributes expressed in the Character Area Statement.</p> <p>PO3.I Additions and alterations do not adversely impact on the streetscape character.</p>
Discussion	<p>Development within a Character Area Overlay should be consistent, and not adversely impact on the prevailing streetscape character of value, as identified with the Character Area Statements. The <b>Style Identification Advisory Guideline</b> will assist applicants and designers to identify these attributes within the <b>streetscape setting</b> of a proposal.</p> <p>A <b>contextual analysis</b> of the <b>streetscape setting</b> will inform an appropriate <b>contextual design response</b>, and assessment process. This analysis will identify key <b>common design attributes</b> necessary to achieve the development outcomes sought by DOI. This <b>contextual analysis</b> should be undertaken during the earliest stages of project planning and design.</p> <p>The design response, and the extent to which it establishes this design relationship, will be informed both by the <b>visual prominence</b> of the proposed works within the streetscape, and the extent to which the key attributes as expressed by the Character Area Statements are consistently represented within the broader <b>streetscape setting</b>.</p> <p>Localities of highly consistent streetscape character of identified value will require a design response that is more closely aligned to the <b>common design attributes</b> noted below, than localities of less consistent or disparate character.</p> <p>Development that has a low <b>visual prominence</b> will require a lesser contextual design response.</p> <p>A contemporary architectural design response to the Common Design Attributes is encouraged. Highly derivative reproductions of historic styles are discouraged in new development.</p>
Key Considerations	<p><b>Contextual analysis</b> at earliest stages of project planning and design. Visual prominence of proposal. Key attributes of Character Area Statements present in streetscape setting.</p>

Common Design Attribute	Form
Relevant Code Reference	<p>PO2.2 Development is consistent with the prevailing building and wall heights in the character area.</p> <p>PO2.3 Design and architectural detailing of street-facing buildings (including but not limited to roof pitch and form, openings, chimneys and verandahs) are consistent with the prevailing characteristics in the character area.</p>
Discussion	<p>Development should be consistent, and not adversely impact on the prevailing streetscape character of value, as identified with the Character Area Statements. The <b>Style Identification Advisory Guidelines</b> will assist applicants and designers to identify these attributes within the <b>streetscape setting</b> of a proposal.</p> <p>Development can do this by establishing a visual compatibility with the identified streetscape character within the <b>streetscape setting</b>.</p>
Key Considerations	<p>Massing, proportion, visual scale, articulation, composition of elements, shadowing. Also refer roof form, proportion of elements, wall height.</p>

## Common Design Attribute

### Relevant Code Reference

## Roof Form

- PO2.1 The form of new buildings and structures that are visible from the public realm are consistent with the valued streetscape characteristics of the character area.
- PO2.3 Design and architectural detailing of street-facing buildings (including but not limited to roof pitch and form, openings, chimneys and verandahs) are consistent with the prevailing characteristics in the character area.

### Discussion

Development should be compatible with prevailing roofing characteristics as identified by the Character Area Statements to the extent to which such attributes are prevalent within the **streetscape setting** of the proposed development. Roof form is regularly a key defining attribute of a streetscape. The **Style Identification Advisory Guidelines** will assist applicants and designers to identify these roof forms.



NEW DEVELOPMENT

Figure 1: Consistent roof form and prominent new development: In localities of high consistency new prominent developments should remain compatible with the prevailing roofscape qualities, including, eave / gutter heights, visual prominence, materials, pitch, eave overhang and alignment of common heights. It is not necessary to specifically replicate traditional roofs, but rather incorporate design attributes that establish a strong visual consistency with the prevailing character.



NEW DEVELOPMENT

Figure 2: Varied Roof Form and prominent new development: Varied forms, pitches and materials within the **streetscape setting** of new prominent development provides greater flexibility for a range of design outcomes, provided the proposal is not notably at odds with the prevailing Character (also refer Form).

### NEW ADDITION

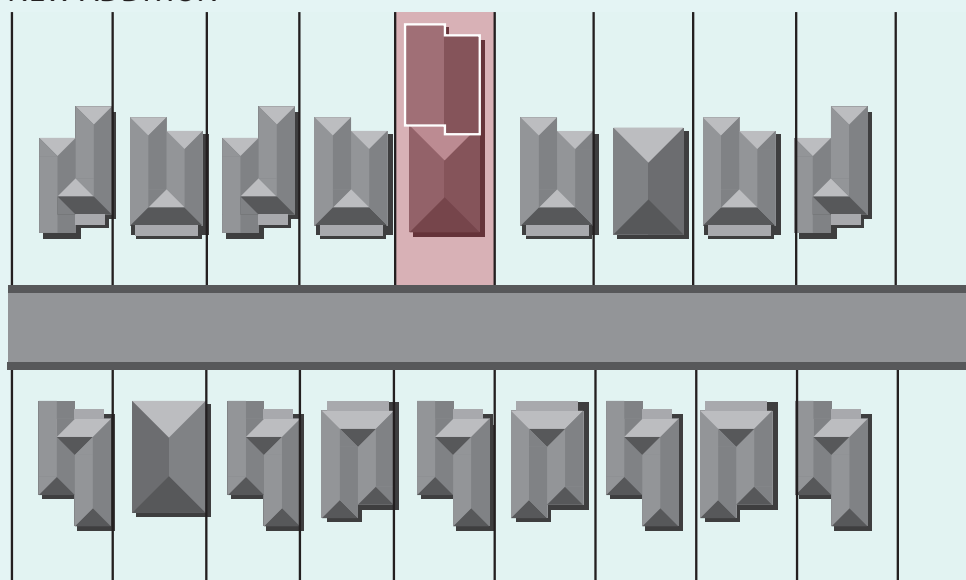


Figure 3: Low Visual Prominence: New development of a low visual prominence will have less impact on the existing streetscape character and therefore greater flexibility in design response, even in localities of high consistency.

### Key Considerations

Compatible alignments of predominant eave / gutter / ridge heights, vertical proportion, features (gables, hips), articulation, span, materiality, eave overhangs and pitches.



## Common Design Attribute

## Proportion of elements and overall form

### Relevant Code Reference

- PO2.1 The form of new buildings and structures that are visible from the public realm are consistent with the valued streetscape characteristics of the character area.
- PO2.3 Design and architectural detailing of street-facing buildings (including but not limited to roof pitch and form, openings, chimneys and verandahs) are consistent with the prevailing characteristics in the character area.

### Discussion

Valued streetscapes are often formed by structures that share common proportions, composition and heights of elements such as windows, roofs, verandah, and their arrangement within the overall form of the proposal. The **Style Identification Advisory Guidelines** will assist applicants and designers to identify places that display these attributes within the **streetscape setting** of a proposal.

Establishing a compatible relationship with the proportion and composition of these elements, or overall building form, can assist in achieving a **contextually responsive development** that addresses the valued streetscape characteristics within a **streetscape setting**. Key considerations include those **common design attributes** noted below.

The extent to which this type of response is required will vary depending on the consistency of the **streetscape setting**, the **visual prominence** of the development, and the extent to which other design responses are used to achieve visual compatibility with the surrounding public environs.

### Key Considerations

Overall proportion, composition and heights of elements such as windows, roof, verandah and their arrangement within the overall form.

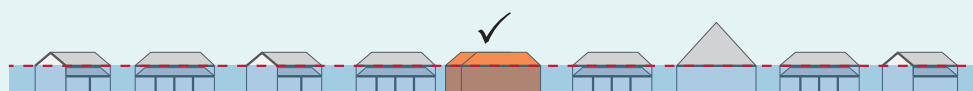
## Common Design Attribute

### Relevant Code Reference

PO2.2 Development is consistent with the prevailing building and wall heights in the character area.

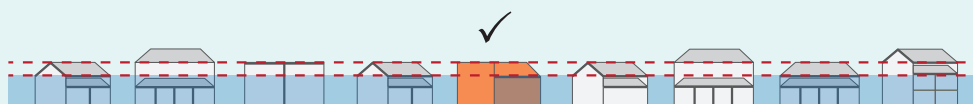
### Discussion

Development should respond positively to the wall height characteristics that form the valued streetscapes identified by the Character Area Statements, to the extent to which such attributes are prevalent within the **streetscape setting** of the proposed development. The **Style Identification Advisory Guidelines** will assist applicants and designers to identify relevant wall heights, and heights of key features within the **streetscape setting** of a proposal.



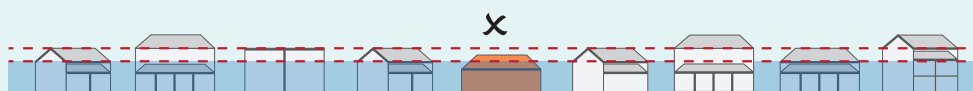
NEW DEVELOPMENT

**Figure 4:** Consistent wall heights and prominent new development. Within **streetscape settings** of high consistency, new development should establish a strong visual relationship with the prevailing wall height, as established by eaves, gables or parapets, as may be applicable.



NEW DEVELOPMENT

**Figure 5:** Varied wall heights and prominent new development. Varied wall heights within a locality provides greater flexibility for a range of design outcomes, provided the proposal is not notably at odds with the prevailing Character (also refer Form). Key alignments (such as eave heights) should still draw reference from prevailing historic built form within the **streetscape setting**.



NEW DEVELOPMENT

**Figure 6:** Prominent new development that is low or squat within streetscapes that have traditionally high eaves (even where varied) are generally undesirable.

### Key Considerations

Alignments of heights to predominant features such as verandahs, eaves, gables or parapets (as may be applicable).

# Common Design Attribute

## Relevant Code Reference

# Materials

- PO2.3 Design and architectural detailing of street-facing buildings (including but not limited to roof pitch and form, openings, chimneys and verandahs) are consistent with the prevailing characteristics in the character area.
- PO2.5 Materials are either consistent with or complement those within the character area.

## Discussion

The extent to which construction materials are a **common design attribute** within a valued streetscape will vary between Character Areas. In some instances specific materials may be prevalent, such as galvanised iron corrugated roofing, or the use of red brick. In other areas there may be a consistency in the visual and physical qualities of materials used, such as natural stones, masonry units, hand finished render, or decorative timberwork.

The **Style Identification Advisory Guidelines** will assist applicants and designers to identify places within the **streetscape setting** of a proposal that are consistent with the historic themes described in the Historic Area Statements. New development should use materials that are either consistent with or complement those seen on these places where they prevail in its **streetscape setting**.

Development should complement the material qualities and characteristics as identified by the Character Area Statements to the extent to which such attributes are prevalent within the streetscape setting of the proposed development.

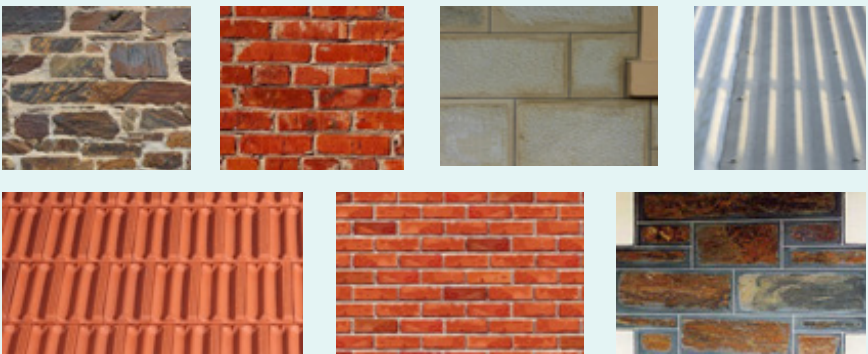


Figure 7: Common traditional materials

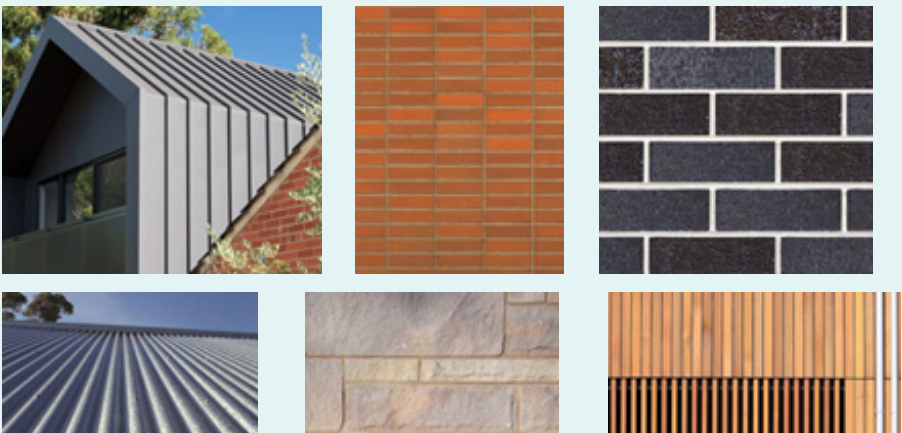


Figure 8: Potential contemporary options

## Key Considerations

Colour and overall textural qualities, and arrangement of materials to achieve visual articulation comparable to the identified characteristics of the surrounding environs.

Common Design Attribute

Relevant Code Reference

Discussion

Key Considerations

Front Setbacks

PO2.4 Development is consistent with the prevailing front and side boundary setback pattern in the character area.

New development should maintain a consistency with the general front setback pattern of the **streetscape setting** so as not be visually at odds with the prevailing character. Areas of highly consistent setbacks will require a greater consistency than more disparate areas.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

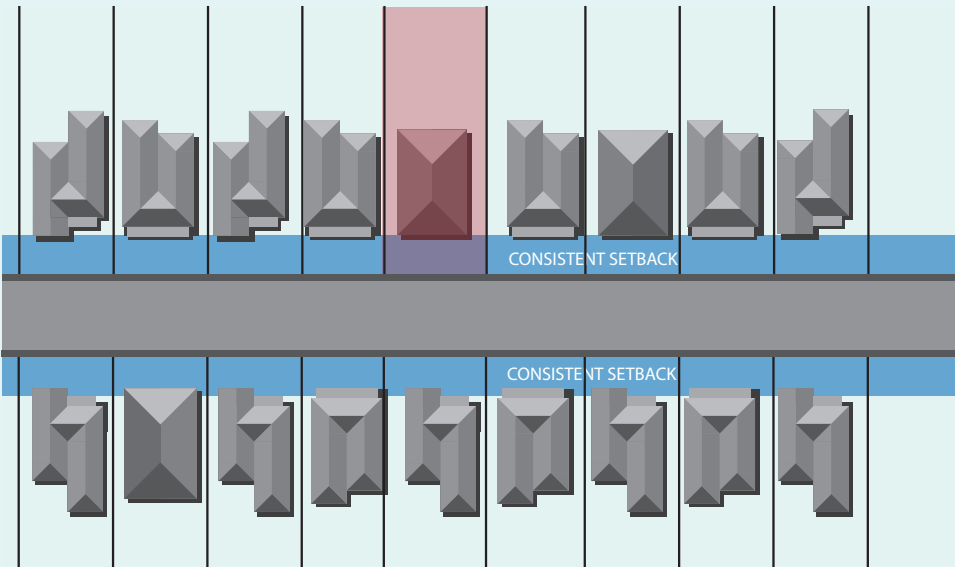


Figure 9: Consistent streetscape setback. Despite minor encroachments within the **streetscape setting**, there remains a prevailing consistency with setbacks within the street that new development should be consistent with.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

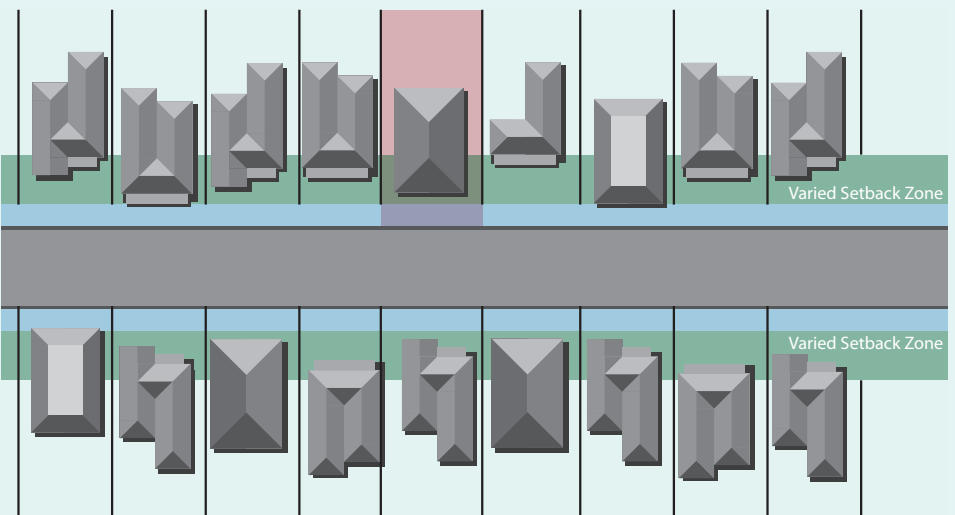


Figure 10: Varied streetscape setback: Streetscape setbacks more varied. New development to be generally consistent with prevailing range of setbacks, provided proposal is not visually at odds with the broader bulk and scale of the surrounding **streetscape setting**. Varied setbacks provides opportunities for a range of setbacks for new development (shown in green).

Affect of verandahs and façade articulation. Implications to landscaping.

## Common Design Attribute

### Relevant Code Reference

## Side Setbacks

PO2.4 Development is consistent with the prevailing front and side boundary setback pattern in the character area.

### Discussion

Side setback patterns (and in turn the width of buildings as they present to the street) can contribute towards the character of a **streetscape setting** where a high degree of consistency exists, as they establish an overall rhythm of built form.

New development should maintain this rhythm where it exists.

#### NEW DEVELOPMENT

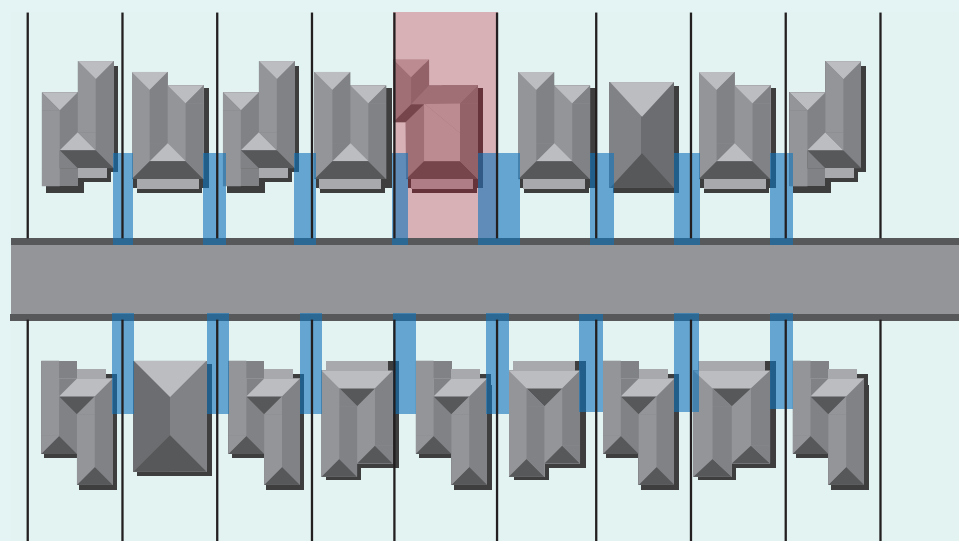


Figure 11: Consistent side setbacks. Side setbacks, and rhythm of built form within the **streetscape setting** retains a high consistence despite some minor variations. New development should retain this visual rhythm as viewed from the public realm.

#### NEW DEVELOPMENT

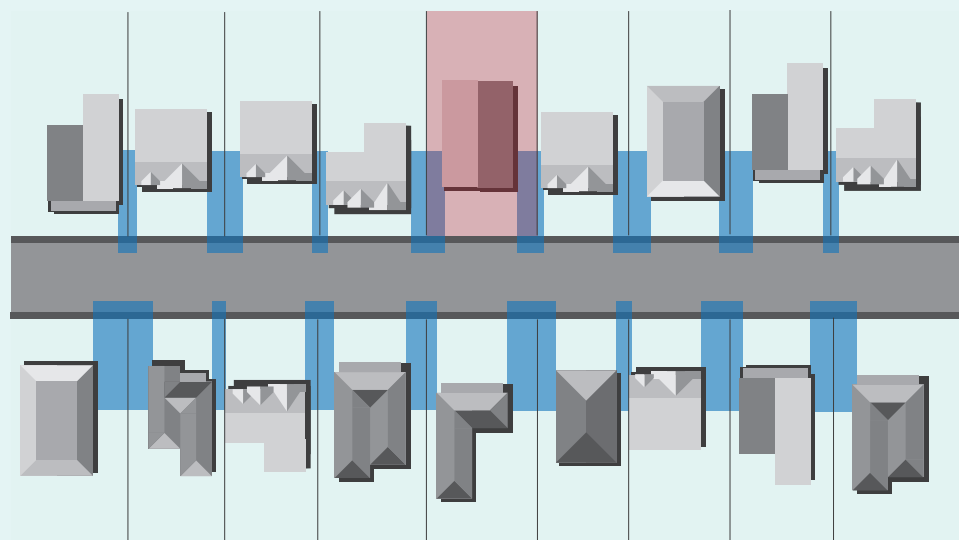


Figure 12: Varied side setbacks. Streetscape side setbacks more varied. New development to be generally consistent with prevailing range of side setbacks, provided proposal is not visually at odds with the boarder bulk and scale of surrounding **streetscape setting**. Varied side setbacks provides opportunities for a range of setbacks for new development.

### Key Considerations

Width of buildings as they present to the street, façade articulation.

**Common Design Attribute**

Relevant Code Reference

**Front Fencing**

PO4.4 Fencing and gates closer to a street boundary (other than a laneway) than the elevation of the associated building are consistent with the traditional period, style and form of the associated building.

Discussion

Front fencing from the era identified in the Character Area Statements should be retained and or restored where possible and practical.

New fencing should incorporate key design attributes of any prevailing historic fencing within the affected streetscape.

Reproduction of historic fencing styles not consistent with the Character Area Statements should be generally avoided.

Side fencing forward of the building elevation (other than a laneway) should be consistent with the broader historic character of the locality.

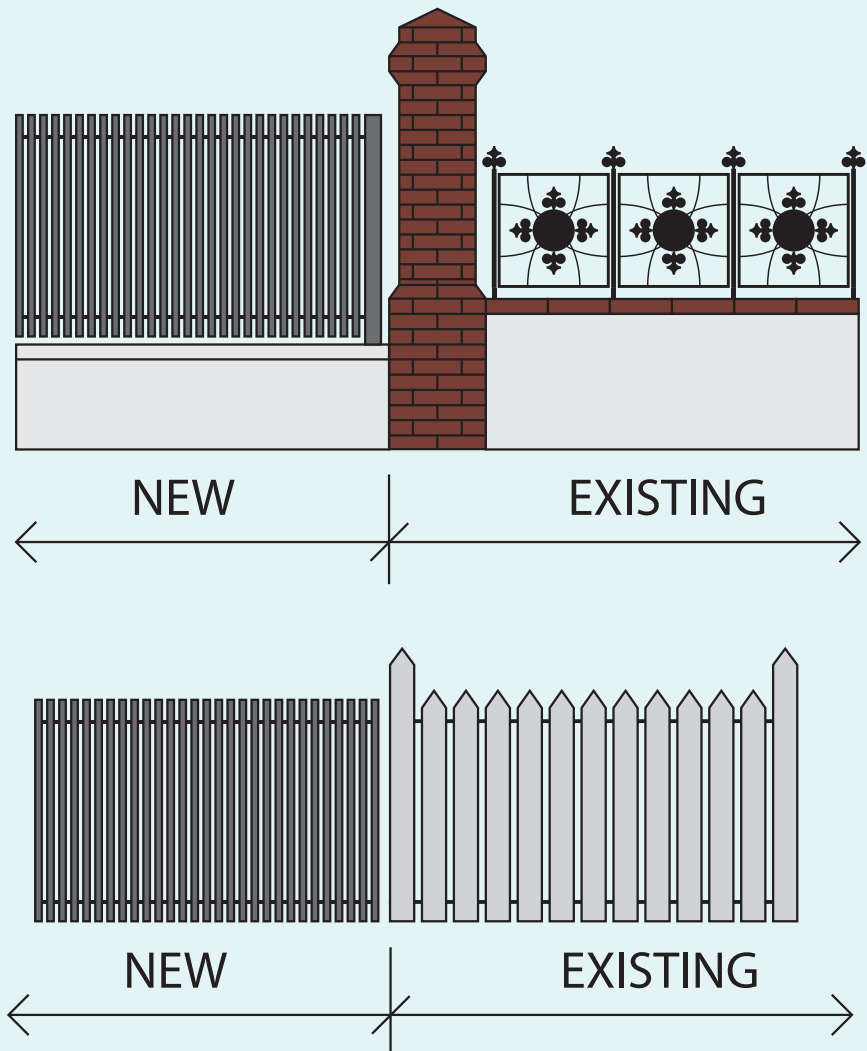


Figure 13: Examples of new fencing that incorporate key design attributes from historic fencing within the affected streetscape such as scale, proportion, visual permeability.

Key Considerations

Height, scale, materials, visual permeability, and proportion of elements.

## Common Design Attribute

### Relevant Code Reference

## Landscaping

PO6.2 Development maintains the valued landscape pattern and characteristics that contribute to the character area, except where they compromise safety, create nuisance, or impact adversely on existing buildings or infrastructure.

### Discussion

New development should maintain landscaped patterns and characteristics present in the valued streetscape identified in the Character Area Statements and represented in the **streetscape setting**.

The **Style Identification Advisory Guidelines** will assist applicants and designers to identify landscaping patterns and characteristics within the **streetscape setting** of a proposal that are consistent with the streetscape characteristics and development patterns described in the Character Area Statements.

In some localities this may be a rural or wilderness setting, in others it may be a more formal curated landscape.

### Key Considerations

Landscaping patterns and characteristics may also influence front and side setback patterns, particularly in localities where front, side or corner gardens prevail.

## Common Design Attribute

### Relevant Code Reference

## Carports and Garages

- PO4.1 Ancillary development, including carports, outbuildings and garages, complements the character of the area and associated building(s).
- PO4.2 Ancillary development, including carports, outbuildings and garages, is located behind the building line of the principal building(s).
- PO6.1 The width of driveways and other vehicle access ways are consistent with the prevalent width of existing driveways in the character area.

### Discussion

The visual characteristics of garaging is often at odds with the valued streetscape characteristics and development patterns within Character Area Overlay. Garaging, and in particular double garaging, can result in large expanses of unarticulated façade that is often in stark contrast to the form, articulation, scale and materiality of historic building stock within an Overlay. Often the need to locate garaging off the primary street frontage, which at times can be very narrow, further increases their **visual prominence**.

The **visual prominence** of garaging and carports should be mitigated to avoid adverse impacts to the valued streetscape characteristics and development patterns within Character Area Overlay.

Carports and / or garages should not visually dominate the built form presentation of new development to the streetscape. In some localities this may include generally avoiding double garages.

Driveway crossings should be consistent with prevailing widths, and not unreasonably inhibit landscaping requirements sought under PO6.2.

### Key Considerations

Setbacks, articulation, colour and/or materials. Setting back garaging behind the line of the principle façade. Driveway widths, and impacts on landscaping.

## Common Design Attribute

### Relevant Code Reference

## Signage / Advertising

**PO4.3** Advertising and advertising hoardings are located and designed to complement the building, be unobtrusive, be below the parapet line, not conceal or obstruct significant architectural elements and detailing, or dominate the building or its setting.

### Discussion

The nature, permissible extent and design of signage within a Character Area Overlay will be informed by a range of Code policies, in addition to those expressed by the Overlay. Traditional signage / advertising took many forms, most of which was integrated into the overall design and form of the building. This included parapet, verandah and shopfront signage.

In main streets and commercial precincts signage can contribute to the valued streetscape characteristics, as expressed within the Character Area Statements. In locations where signage was not traditionally prevalent, such as residential areas, new signage should not detract from the identified historic character of the locality, or specific site / building.

Several factors may influence appropriate signage within an Historic Area Overlay:

- The prevailing character of traditional signage within the locality
- Whether the signage is proposed on a new development, or historic building stock that reflect the historic themes and character of an area.

### New Development

Development requiring advertising / signage should include incorporating traditional design elements consistent with the historic provision of signage within the locality. This may include parapet, verandahs or shopfronts of a traditional configuration.

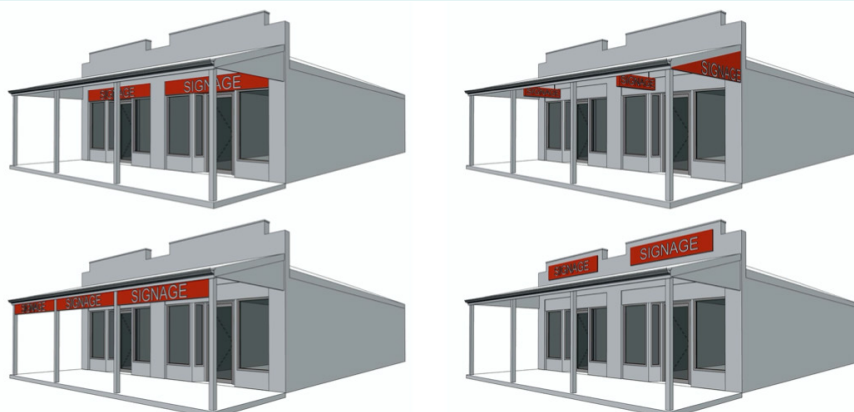
The provision of advertising / signage (where required) should be integrated into the overall design and form of the new development, taking cues from the surrounding historic character. New signage should sit below the parapet line, and should not dominate the locality.

### Existing Building Stock

New signage / advertising on existing buildings should complement both the valued streetscape character and form of traditional signage within the locality. The location of signage on a building should be integrated into the form and design of the building and consistent with that traditionally typical for that building type (e.g. parapet, verandah, shopfront).

Signage should not diminish the streetscape character contribution of buildings that are consistent with the Character Area Statements by visually dominating them, or concealing their significant architectural features or detailing.

Common signage designs that may be consistent within commercial areas of a Character Area Overlay include:



**Figure 14:** Common traditional signage types and locations (shown in red).

### Key Considerations

Uncluttered, clear, and consistent with scale of building and prevailing streetscape character.



# GLOSSARY

**Common design attributes:** Key design attributes and considerations that contribute to achieving a contextually responsive design.

**Contextual Analysis:** A detailed assessment prepared by the applicant or their designer in the initial stages of design and project planning that guides the application of the Design Advisory Guidelines.

**Contextually Responsive Design** (term used within Historic Area Overlay Desired Outcome 1): A design that complements and reinforces the prevailing historic character of an area, so that the boarder legibility of the historic themes and characteristics as expressed by the Historic Area Statements are preserved.

**Contextually Responsive Development** (term used within Character Area Overlay Desired Outcome 1): Development that is consistent with the prevailing valued streetscape characteristics and development patterns as expressed by the Character Area Statements.

**Design Advisory Guidelines:** provide guidance to applicants and designers on key design considerations to achieve an appropriate contextually responsive design. They identify a range of common design attributes that may be relevant when responding to DOI. They are applicable to new development, and additions and alterations to existing places

**Representative Buildings:** Representative buildings referenced in Historic Area Statements and Character Area Statements and mapped in the South Australian Planning and Property Atlas are buildings which display characteristics of importance to a particular area. The identification of representative buildings in a particular area is not intended to imply that other buildings in an historic area or character area are not of importance.

**Streetscape setting:** the locations and areas within the public realm that the proposed development will have a meaningful visual impact on. This will typically be from the street but may extend to other public areas. Street width and layout, topography of the locality, and the scale and setout of the proposed development will influence how far the streetscape setting extends.

**Style Identification Advisory Guidelines:** assist applicants and designers to identify those places that display the historic themes and characteristics expressed by the Historic and Character Area Statements.

**Visual prominence:** The extent to which the proposed development may impact on the character of a locality. Highly prominent development, such as a new building set close to the street frontage or on corner sites, may have a greater impact on the built form character of a locality than development set back from the prevailing building line, or (for the case of building additions) to the rear of a site.