

Seymour Avenue ('Sunnyside Estate') Heritage Precinct



View looking northwest, 21-25 Seymour Avenue (Mike Scott, 2019)

SA.1 Introduction

'Sunnyside Estate' was subdivided in 1911 and is therefore contemporary with the workers' dwellings settlement in the Elliott Street Heritage Precinct. The defining houses in the precinct date from the early 1910s through to the early 1920s and are in the transitional villa and California bungalow styles. Construction of houses in the eastern and southern parts of the subdivision largely preceded the development of the western side. The heritage precinct has a historic relationship with Warwick House and represents private residential development in early 20th century Nelson.

SA.2 History

'Sunnyside Estate' and Seymour Avenue were developed in the early 1910s and both are related, both historically and geographically, to Warwick House (64 Brougham Street, 'A' ranked built heritage item NRMP) and the residential development of The Brook.

Avenues are typically tree-lined streets and therefore the street plantings, including the scheduled Prestbury oak in the vicinity of 4 Seymour Avenue, are integral to the precinct's historic character. The Prestbury Oak (aka Seymour or Fell Oak) was planted by Henry Seymour (1796-1883) in 1842/43 and takes its name from the cottage Seymour built on the bank of the Brook Stream. Seymour offered the cottage for sale in 1858 after he had returned to England; the dwelling no longer survives. Seymour's daughter Fanny was married to Alfred Fell and the couple built the first stage of Warwick House. The Seymour/Fell property was later purchased by Nathaniel Edwards, whose executors subdivided the 'Sunnyside Estate' in 1911.



View of Seymour Avenue looking towards Brook Valley (1960, Nelson Provincial Museum)

Nelson Provincial Museum holds a suite of photographs showing the initial development of Seymour Avenue, principally along the east side and at the southern end where it connects with Brook Street. Transitional villas with picket fences were the first houses to 'populate' the newly formed street, followed by California bungalows. An official opening of the 'newly-formed avenue and bridge' over the Brook Stream, to which the citizens of Nelson were all invited, was held on 3 February 1912 (*Nelson Evening Mail* 12 February 1912, p. 6). Present on the occasion were CY Fell, grandson of Henry Seymour, and two sons of the late Nathaniel Edwards. The concrete bridge over the Brook Stream, to which the council had contributed some funds, was designed by Mr Littlejohn and built by Messrs Cates and Downes. Miss Cynthia Fell, Henry Seymour's great-great-granddaughter, cut the ribbon across the bridge at the opening ceremony.

Citizens are invited to attend the opening of Seymour Avenue and the bridge connecting with Brook-street, on Saturday afternoon, 3rd February, at 3 o'clock. Afternoon tea will be provided, and the Citizens' Band will play selections during the afternoon.

Nelson Evening Mail 31 January 1912, p. 4. PapersPast.

By August 1913 residents in the avenue included HE Parmenter, Elizabeth Parker, Arthur Rowe, Ellen Hayward and Mary Bromell. Mrs Bromell (nee Hacker) was said to be Nelson's oldest resident when she died at the age of 103 in July 1938. At the time of her death she

was still living in Seymour Avenue, having settled there with one of her daughters in 1913 after her husband Thomas's death in the same year. By February 1919, 26 houses had been built in the avenue.

Closer subdivision of the land in the immediate vicinity of Warwick House was undertaken in 1947; this created the eastern properties at 28, 30, 34, 40 and 42 Seymour Avenue. The Heritage Precinct was identified in 1995 and most of the houses within it retain a good level of authenticity.



View of Seymour Avenue from Brook Street. Warwick House is visible in the background (9858, Nelson Provincial Museum)

SA.3 Visual Characteristics

SA.3.1 Height

Houses are generally single storey; this enhances the openness of the street and establishes a particular scale relationship between the houses, the avenue's trees and the wider valley setting.

SA.3.2 Setback from the Street

There is a consistent building line with most houses built around 6 metres back from the road frontage. This creates visual continuity and a sense of connection between the houses. It is important that any new houses and additions to existing houses maintain this building line.

SA.3.3 Roof Form

Both hipped and gabled roof forms are present in the precinct and some hip-roofed dwellings have cross-gabled bays to accentuate window treatments and express the plan form. The integrity of the roof form from the street is an important feature of the precinct; skylights and solar panels should be positioned accordingly.



A bay villa with hipped roof and cross gabled bays (Andrea Warn, 2019)

SA.3.4 Materials and Detailing

Horizontal timber weatherboards and corrugated iron roofing are the materials authentic to the houses in the avenue and their scale and texture make a defining contribution to the character of the historic streetscape. Timber detailing, in the form of decorative gable ends, eaves brackets, veranda posts and friezes, enlivens the surface of the principal elevation of the original houses. Strong emphasis must be placed on the use of materials and detailing that is sympathetic to the original design.

SA.3.5 Windows and Doors

Depending on the age and style of the house, double-hung sash or casement and fanlight type windows are authentic to the houses in the precinct. The main entrance door is typically on the principal elevation facing the street; it may be a solid panelled door or feature glazing, either inset or framing the door. Timber-framed windows and doors are authentic and maintain the integrity of the streetscape. Inappropriate replacement of windows and doors can detract from the integrity of an individual house and compromise the overall appearance of the historic streetscape. The fenestration of new houses should be designed in sympathy with the typical size, scale and materials of the existing housing.

SA.3.6 Verandas and porches

The transitional villas and California bungalows in the precinct typically have verandas or entrance porches facing the street. These are an important feature of villa and bungalow

design, providing a transition space between the public street and private home. Development should maintain the appearance and detailing of verandas and entrance porches, where these are authentic to the building.



A transitional villa with double-hung sash windows and main entry off a porch facing the street (Andrea Warn, 2016)

SA.3.7 Fencing

The historic character of the street depends in large measure upon the openness of the houses to the public domain. Historically-authentic, low-scale fencing creates a sense of demarcation from the roadway, while maintaining visual contact between the avenue and the houses' principal elevations. High fences are therefore inappropriate within the precinct. Fencing materials should be sympathetic to the individual house concerned; historic photographs can provide a useful reference for fence design and location.



The consistent height, materials, set back and low fencing of the houses in the avenue contributes to its historic character (Andrea Warn, 2016).

SA.3.8 Garaging

Existing garaging is generally at the rear of the site. This should be maintained and new garages should also be to the rear of the site wherever possible.

SA.4 Performance Guidelines

Applications for resource consent will be evaluated for their alignment with the following guidelines.

SA.4.1 Scheduled Heritage Buildings

The scheduled heritage buildings in Seymour Avenue are the defining built elements within the precinct. Proposals relating to scheduled heritage buildings are appropriate where:

- a) Group A and B buildings are retained in all but exceptional circumstances, with demolition or removal a last resort
- b) additions or alterations continue the use of timber weatherboards, corrugated metal roofing, timber joinery and detailing, in keeping with the original dwelling; and
- c) proposals consider the reinstatement of original external finishes and features, including windows, verandas and entrance porches, when undertaking additions and/or alterations.

SA.4.2 Non-scheduled Buildings

Non-scheduled buildings within the precinct contribute to its overall character. It is important that alterations and additions which impact on the streetscape are in keeping with the historic character of the precinct but do not try to replicate the appearance of the original houses. Proposals relating to non-scheduled buildings are appropriate where:

- a) materials used complement and enhance the historic character of the precinct; and
- b) the size, scale and proportion of new roof forms, doors and windows, as well as verandas or porches, are in sympathy with the authentic detailing of the scheduled houses in the precinct.

SA.4.3 New Dwellings

New dwellings within a heritage precinct, whether due to removal of an existing dwelling and replacement, or construction of a second dwelling, also have the potential to adversely affect the character of the precinct, unless done in a sympathetic manner. Proposals for new dwellings are appropriate where:

- a) the new building is designed in such a way as to maintain and enhance the historic character of the streetscape;
- b) the form and scale of new work is in sympathy with the existing scheduled houses when viewed from the street;
- c) materials used complement and enhance the historic character of the precinct;
- d) the building is generally single storey although lofts within the roof space may be acceptable where they do not break through the roof envelope when viewed from the street;
- e) proposals consider the inclusion of street front verandas and entrance porches
- f) roof lines are in sympathy with the form of existing houses; and
- g) the setback of new houses from the street boundary is consistent with that of neighbouring scheduled houses.

SA4.4 Accessory Buildings

Accessory buildings are appropriate where:

- a) they are designed to be complementary to the streetscape in form, detail and use of materials when viewed from the street;
- b) they are not constructed in the front yard (except garages where physical and legal access to the rear or side of the site is not possible).

SA4.5 Fences

Painted timber pickets, decorative wire or wrought iron are appropriate materials for new fences on the road boundary of each property.