

## Elliott Street ('Winearls Settlement') Heritage Precinct



*South side of Elliott Street, Nelson (Ann McEwan, 2016)*

### ES.1 Introduction

The Elliott Street Heritage Precinct is Nelson's only Workers' Dwellings settlement. It represents the expansion of the workers' dwellings scheme to provincial centres in the 1910s, following its introduction by the Liberal government in the four main centres. The square-plan villas and California bungalows in the precinct are generally arrayed on the south and north sides of the street respectively. The houses create a streetscape that is unified by age, materials and style but nevertheless offers variety within each individual dwelling.

### ES.2 History

The houses in the Elliott Street Heritage Precinct date from 1913 to c.1941; all but four were built as part of the 'Winearls Settlement for Workers Homes', which was subdivided in July 1912. Tenders were called for road formation and construction of a pipe sewer in November of the same year. It appears likely the settlement was named after local Nelson MP Harry Atmore's mother Ellen (died 1908), whose maiden name was Winearls. Atmore (1870-1946) was elected in 1911 and served as MP for Nelson from 1911-14 and again from 1919 until his death in 1946. The Elliott Street subdivision was undertaken by central government under the Workers' Dwellings Act 1905, and its subsequent iterations, which was intended to provide good quality, rental housing for workers who met the eligibility

criteria. Later changes in government policy saw the houses sold by the state and acquired by their former tenants or other private individuals.

Houses in the precinct exhibit the characteristic features of the square-plan villa and California bungalow styles; with the earlier houses (1913-18) demonstrating the continuity of the villa style while the houses erected in the 1920s and 1930s reveal the emergence of the bungalow as the dominant interwar housing style for working and middle class homes. Of the 24 plots subdivided in 1912 for workers' dwellings, 23 retain their original houses, including two that address Trafalgar Street. A cluster of four bungalows on the northern side of Elliott Street (Nos. 1, 3, 7 & 9) was privately built after two small subdivisions were undertaken by Messrs Trathen and Harry Ruffell in the late 1920s. The house at 29 Elliott Street is said to have been built by Ben Trathen in c.1941.

The Workers' Dwellings Act 1905 was one of the key pieces of social welfare legislation enacted by Richard Seddon's Liberal government at the turn of the 20th century. It was intended to alleviate the housing crisis of the day. Concerns about ever-increasing rents and slum conditions, which increased the threat of large-scale epidemics, had encouraged the government to give local bodies the authority to build rental housing. When local councils declined to take up the opportunity in favour of building infrastructure, central government decided to step in.

#### **WORKERS' DWELLINGS ACT, 1910.**

##### **TENDERS FOR FILLING AND LEVELLING, ROAD FORM- ATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF PIPE SEWER, "WINEARLS" SETTLEMENT, NELSON.**

**T**ENDERS are invited, on forms to be provided, for the following works:—(1) For filling and levelling sections and road; (2) for formation of Elliott Street; (3) for construction of pipe sewer. Plans and specifications may be seen and forms of tender obtained at the office of the Crown Lands Commissioner, Nelson, during office hours. Tenders to be endorsed:—(1) Tender for filling settlement, Nelson; (2) Tender for road formation, Nelson; (3) Tender for pipe sewer, Nelson; and addressed to the Superintendent of Workers' Dwellings, Department of Labour, Wellington, to reach his office not later than the 20th December, 1912. A deposit of £10 must accompany each tender. The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

**J. LOMAS,**  
Superintendent Workers' Dwellings.

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*Colonist* 30 November 1912, p. 6. PapersPast.

As with all workers' dwellings erected throughout New Zealand, the Elliott Street houses were architecturally-designed to provide a modern, healthy and individualised home for eligible tenants. The early dwellings were most likely designed by Woburn Temple, who was the staff architect for the Department of Labour between 1907 and 1921. According to Michael Roche of Massey University, Temple was responsible for more than two dozen designs for workers' dwellings, of which nearly 650 houses were built. Nelson contractors erected the Elliott Street workers' dwellings following calls for tenders placed in local newspapers: JA Stringer & Son are credited with the first eight houses on the south side of Elliott Street in 1913-15 and BB Jones likely built the matching bungalows at 20 and 22 Elliott Street, as well as those at numbers 15, 17, 19, and 23.

Despite the bold ambition of the Workers' Dwellings scheme, it has typically been regarded as something of failure. The houses tended to pass quickly into private ownership as William Massey's Reform government privatised the scheme and used the 1906 State Advances Act to encourage home ownership over rental housing. Nevertheless, the workers' dwellings have come to be appreciated for their design and construction. They are also now seen as a precursor to the 1930s state housing scheme of the first Labour Government.

Residents advocated for the creation of the Elliott Street Heritage Precinct in 1993, recognising both its unique status as Nelson's only workers' dwellings subdivision and the close-knit neighbourhood spirit engendered by the compact arrangement of houses along the street.



Survey plan, dated July 1912, for the Winearls Settlement for Workers Homes (LINZ)

## ES.3 Visual Characteristics

### ES.3.1 Height and Roof Form

The single-storey height of the workers' dwellings is a defining feature of the precinct. Both hipped and gabled roof forms are present in the precinct, depending on whether the house is a villa or bungalow in style. The integrity of the roof form from the street is an important feature of the precinct; skylights and solar panels should be positioned with this mind.

### ES.3.2 Setback from the Street and Side Boundaries

The houses are generally close to the street, particularly on the south side of Elliott Street, and also to one another; this creates the appearance of a highly unified and consistent streetscape. The uniformity of setback helps to create a feeling of community within the street.

### ES.3.3 Materials and Detailing

Horizontal timber weatherboards and corrugated iron roofing are the materials authentic to the houses in the street; 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.

### ES.3.4 Windows and Doors

Depending on the 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 of the villas is typically on the principal elevation facing the street; it may be inset with or framed by glazing. Side entries are in keeping with the more informal plan form typical of the California bungalow. Timber-framed windows and doors are historically correct and maintain the integrity of the streetscape. Inappropriate replacement of windows and doors can detract from the authenticity 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.



*The colour scheme of this square-plan villa highlights its architectural features.*

### ES.3.5 Verandas and porches

The villas and bungalows in the precinct typically, but not exclusively, 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.

### ES.3.6 Fencing

The historic character of the street depends upon the openness of the houses to the public domain. Low fencing creates a demarcation from the roadway, while maintaining a sense of openness. High fences are therefore inappropriate within the precinct. Fencing materials should be sympathetic to the house concerned.

### ES.3.7 Garaging

Existing garages, where provided, are generally at the side or rear of the site. This allows the streetscape to maintain its authenticity. Off street car parking requirements should be flexible to avoid the need for garaging in the front yard.



*A California bungalow may retain some of the elements of a bay villa in its façade composition but change is apparent in the side entry and casement and fanlight type windows.*

## ES.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 Elliott Street are the defining elements of 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 is encouraged; and
- c) proposals consider the reinstatement of original façade elements, including, where applicable, verandas and entrance porches, when undertaking 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 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) proposals consider the reinstatement of original façade elements, including verandas and entrance porches, where applicable, when undertaking alterations.

### SA.4.3 New Buildings

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 keeping with the existing 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 penetrate the roof envelope when viewed from the street;
- e) proposals consider the inclusion of street front verandas and 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.

### SA.4.4 Garages

Garages are not permitted in the front yard. Garages in the side yard are appropriate where they complement the streetscape in form, detail and use of materials.

### SA.4.5 Fences

New fences on the street frontages a maximum 900mm in height from footpath level, constructed with vertical timber pickets or wrought iron are appropriate for the precinct.

