

**CHRISTCHURCH DISTRICT PLAN – SCHEDULED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 113  
*DWELLINGS AND SETTING – 86-88 CHESTER STREET EAST,  
CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL 2022**

**HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.*

The semi-detached townhouses at 86-88 Chester Street East are of social and historical significance as part of a development by architect, builder and landowner William Widdowson in the 1890s that remained in the ownership of his family for nearly 70 years and has remained in use for accommodation purposes until today. The townhouses are two dwellings from a development of eight very similar dwellings, of which four remain following the earthquakes of 2010 – 2011. Widdowson immigrated to Christchurch in the 1850s and undertook the development c. 1892. He was employed for a time by the Provincial Government of Canterbury as an Inspector of Works, as well as time on the North Canterbury Board of Education. Certificates of Title show he purchased the easternmost property of the four sites in 1879 and the further three sections in 1890. Widdowson lived at the property adjacent to the sections he developed from 1880 to 1914 and died a year later in 1915. The Victorian townhouses remained in the ownership of Widdowson's family until 1961. They continue to be used as private dwellings today. Both buildings were damaged by the 2010/11 Canterbury earthquakes and were subsequently repaired.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.*

The Chester Street East townhouses have cultural significance as they represent a pattern of residential development in late 19<sup>th</sup> century inner city Christchurch, and the way of life of inner city residents at this time. Residential development in the area east of Madras Street up to Fitzgerald Avenue included a number of single storey Victorian and Edwardian era duplexes.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.*

86-88 Chester Street East is of architectural and aesthetic significance because the two storey semi-detached houses are comparatively unusual in terms of residential development for the time in Christchurch and the matching form with 98-100 Chester Street East. The only comparable development was the group of two semi-detached two storey dwellings in Churchill Street which were constructed around three years later, and were simpler in form. However, these, along with two sets of the Chester Street dwellings, have been demolished following the Canterbury earthquakes leaving 86-88 and 98-100 Chester Street East as the only developments of this time and type. The Chester Street dwellings are designed in a plain Victorian Italianate style. An early plan shows that all the townhouses were identical in their footprint apart from 86 Chester Street East. This corner site differs by having two principal façades on the Madras Street and Chester Street East junction. The other dwellings have only one principal façade on Chester Street East and each section was separated by brick and plaster fire walls.

The main façades are symmetrical. The rounded bays with capped roofs, finials and eave brackets relate to the influence of American pattern book architecture of this date particularly that of San Francisco. 86 Chester Street East has semicircular bays on the north facade and square bays with gables on the west facade. The near identical form and scale of these semi-detached townhouses to the remaining pair at 98-100 Chester Street East affords aesthetic significance to these dwellings.

The whole interior of 86 Chester Street East has heritage significance including the layout and spaces, structure and linings, fixtures, hardware, materials and finishes. The interior retains many of the original internal features of the period including ceiling roses, and timber joinery such as feature staircase, doors, skirtings and tongue and groove panelling. The interior evidences the historical layout and detailing, design skills, and aesthetics, as well as illustrating a past way of life, and adaptation over time for modern requirements.

## **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

*Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.*

86-88 Chester Street East have technological and craftsmanship significance for what they may reveal about the use of materials of the time and for detailing such as leadlight fanlights,

eaves corbelling and the iron lacework on the verandah. The dwellings were originally built with internal brick and plaster fire walls, an important safety feature for neighbouring timber dwellings.

## **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.*

The setting for 86-88 Chester Street East consists of the immediate land parcel for both dwellings and is a long narrow area of land for the building. With the loss of two of the Chester Street East townhouses some of the contextual significance of 86-88 Chester Street East has been lost. However, the dwellings still have contextual significance for their streetscape in conjunction with the near identical semi-detached Victorian townhouses at 98-100 Chester Street East with the degree of consistency and scale being significant. The site of 86-88 Chester Street East on the corner of Madras Street is also relatively prominent and adds to its landmark significance. Grouped townhouses were uncommon in Christchurch during the late colonial era and despite the loss of two of the buildings their heritage value remains. A row of brick terrace townhouses, Blackheath, still remains in Sydenham. The townhouses are in proximity to listed items including the Edmond's Clock Tower, undergoing repairs following the Canterbury earthquakes, and telephone kiosk, as well as the avenue of Poplars along the Avon River between Madras and Manchester Streets.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.*

The buildings and settings are of archaeological significance as they have potential to hold evidence of human activity on the site, including construction methods and materials, and including evidence which pre-dates 1900.

## **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

86-88 Chester Street East, including the whole interior of 86 Chester Street East and setting, are of heritage significance to Christchurch including Banks Peninsula. The semi-detached townhouses at 86-88 Chester Street East are of social and historical significance as part of a development by architect, builder and landowner William Widdowson in the 1890s that remained in the ownership of his family for nearly 70 years and has remained in use as dwellings until today. The Chester Street East townhouses have cultural significance as they represent a pattern of residential development in late 19<sup>th</sup> century inner city Christchurch, and the way of life of inner city residents at this time. 86-88 Chester Street East is of architectural and aesthetic significance because the two storey semi-detached houses are comparatively unusual in terms of residential development for the time in Christchurch and for the matching form with 98 -100 Chester Street East. The dwellings have technological and craftsmanship significance for what they can reveal for their use of materials of the time, and for detailing such as leadlight fanlights, eaves corbelling and the iron lacework on the verandah. They

have contextual significance for their streetscape in conjunction with the near identical semi-detached Victorian townhouses at 98-100 Chester Street East with the degree of consistency and scale being significant. The site of 86-88 Chester Street East on the corner of Madras Street is also relatively prominent and adds to its landmark significance. The buildings and settings are of archaeological significance as they have potential to hold evidence of human activity on the site, including construction methods and materials, and including evidence which pre-dates 1900.

#### **REFERENCES:**

Christchurch City Council, *Heritage File, 86-100 Chester Street East*  
Christchurch City Council, *Christchurch City Plan – Listed Heritage Item and Setting. Heritage Assessment – Statement of Significance. Semi-Detached Victoria Town Houses – 86-100 Chester Street East* - 2011

**REPORT DATED:** 19/11/2014

**REPORT UPDATED:** 26 DECEMBER 2021

PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

PLEASE USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL HERITAGE FILES.