

Area 1 Albert Street Conservation Area

Landform

This conservation area comprises all the houses fronting Albert Street from Elswick Lane to Flood Street. Land here falls gently to the northwest from the Norton Street ridge and from Parramatta Road.

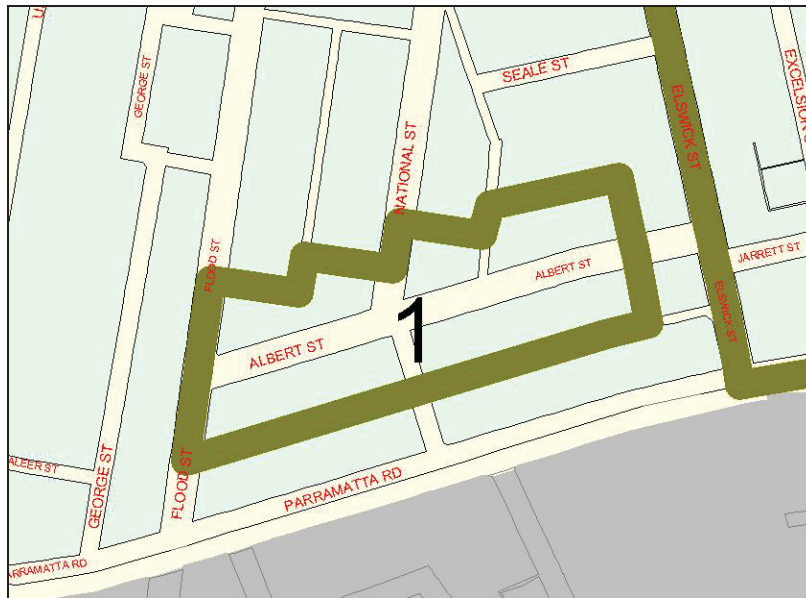


Figure 1.1 Albert Street Conservation Area Map.

History

The conservation area comprises parts of two estates: Flood Street to Ivory Lane was part of the Flood Estate, and Ivory Lane to Elswick Street was part of the Elswick Heights Estate. The boundaries of the very early grants from which these estates were later subdivided can be seen in the layout of the roads.

In 1890, the Flood Estate was subdivided by the National Permanent Benefit Building Land and Investment Society into a number of streets, following the requirements of the Width of Streets and Lanes Act of 1881. All streets were one chain (66ft) wide, with 20ft frontage allotments and 20ft-wide rear lanes for night soil collection, and to accommodate the coming sewerage reticulation. The society aimed to enable 'working men and others of limited means to become possessors of their own freeholds on which to build their own homes'. Attractions were the nearby Petersham railway station, the Marion Street tram, and the horse-drawn omnibus along Parramatta Road. The onset of the 1890s Depression compounded by the big drought, affected the June 1891 sale so that very few allotments were taken up. The unsold portions of the estate, ie all but lots 10 and 21 in Albert Street, were purchased by the Intercolonial Investment Land and Building Co Ltd in 1901. Advertised as a 'model suburb' with gas, water and sewerage now available (since 1897) it achieved moderate sales.

Shortly after the 1901 sale the Elswick Heights Estate began selling, taking up the odd-shaped allotments at the eastern end of the Flood Estate and using them

to continue the pattern of subdivision along Albert Street through to Elswick Street.

All allotments in the Flood Estate had covenants requiring a building of no less than 200 pounds in value. Materials were not specified, but the introduction of steam kilns meant that from the 1890s factory-made bricks were good and cheap. Although by 1901 Sydney and Australia were emerging from the 1890s Depression, work was still scarce and labour still cheap: these modest but solidly built brick houses were therefore within the reach of tradesmen and skilled workers and most were owner-occupied. The result is a regular suburban development belonging almost exclusively to the period 1903-1914 with mostly single-fronted houses of regular size responding to the original allotment width, built of face brick and with limited plastered adornment. Almost every one of those houses remains today along with a few individual examples from the 1920s.

During the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, property values deteriorated and places within easy access of transport routes, markets and employees were often invaded by small industries, evident in the two-storey building at the Flood and Albert Street corner.

Sources

Solling, M and Reynolds, P 1997, 'Leichhardt: on the margins of the city', *Leichhardt Historical Journal*, Vol. 22, Allen and Unwin.

Significant Characteristics

- Street of generous one chain width.
- Back lanes of 20ft width.
- Kerbing uninterrupted by driveways, with four exceptions.
- Brush box and tea-tree planting within carriageway, typical of 1930s planting patterns.
- Uniformity of allotment width.
- Mostly single-fronted houses.
- Early re-subdivision produced three wider allotments for gardens and car accommodation.
- Eight double-fronted houses built across two allotments.
- A few semidetached houses.
- Small factory on the Flood Street corner site.
- Uniformity of housing style, scale and materials as result of limited period of construction 1903-1914.
- Almost all houses single storey in scale.
- Building materials of face brick. Some plastering and painting of original face brick walls.

- Three timber houses on northern side of Albert Street.
- Terracotta tiled roofs, some new iron roofs.
- Low brick fences.

Statement of Significance or Why the Area is Important

- One of a number of conservation areas that collectively illustrate the nature of Sydney's early suburbs and Leichhardt's suburban growth particularly between 1871 and 1891, with pockets of infill up to the end of the 1930s (ie prior to World War II). This area illustrates development following the 1890s Depression and was built over a very limited period from 1903-1914. It is significant for its surviving development from that period and the few individual buildings from the 1920s.
- It is aesthetically significant as a fine uniform collection of single-storey houses almost exclusively of the 1903-1914 period with a canopy of mature brush box street planting.
- Demonstrates through its street alignment and width of streets and laneways the requirements of the Width of Streets and Lanes Act of 1881 and the need to provide space for future services. This standard was carried through to the adjoining subdivision towards Elswick Street.
- Demonstrates through the alignment of the streets, and the allotments fronting the street, the strength of the Parramatta Road alignment, the boundaries of the original grants in the area and their integration, through subdivision layouts, into a suburban area.
- Demonstrates the type of housing affordable to tradesmen and skilled labourers at the time when New South Wales was emerging from the 1890s Depression.
- Demonstrates through its building materials the ready availability of good face bricks and of skilled builders in this early post-Depression period.
- Demonstrates the invasion of small industries into well-located residential areas during the fall of property values in the Great Depression.

Management of Heritage Values

Generally

This is a conservation area. Little change can be expected other than modest additions and discrete alterations. Buildings which do not contribute to the heritage significance of the area may be replaced with sympathetically designed infill.

Retain

- Uninterrupted kerbing without further crossovers.
- All buildings from 1903-1914 and those built into the 1920s. All buildings, except Nos. 3, 5, 49A Albert Street and 1 Flood Street, need to be kept,

without any change to their original shape by two-storey additions (low two-storey pavilion additions could be considered to the rear lane).

- Original pattern of 20ft-wide subdivision.
- Back lanes of 20ft width.
- 66ft-wide carriageway with tree planting in carriageway.
- Narrow spaces between buildings.
- Single-storey scale of buildings (no two-storey additions: investigate the possible use and effect of low two-storey pavilions to rear lane).
- Face brick finishes to buildings.
- The three timber single-fronted cottages in the street.
- Unglazed terracotta tile roofs, except where investigation shows corrugated iron was used.
- Low fences.
- Original architectural features.

Avoid

- Any two-storey additions.
- Painting or plastering of face brick.
- Road chicanes which deviate from the central parallel carriageway strips.
- Interruptions to the almost continuous kerb and gutter line
- Inappropriate high masonry fences.

Note

- Houses Nos. 21, 43 and 51 require further investigation.