

Area 3

Whaleyborough Estate Conservation Area

Landform

This conservation area lies to the west of Norton Street between Marion, Elswick and Allen Streets. Land slopes gently downhill to the west of the Norton Street ridge.

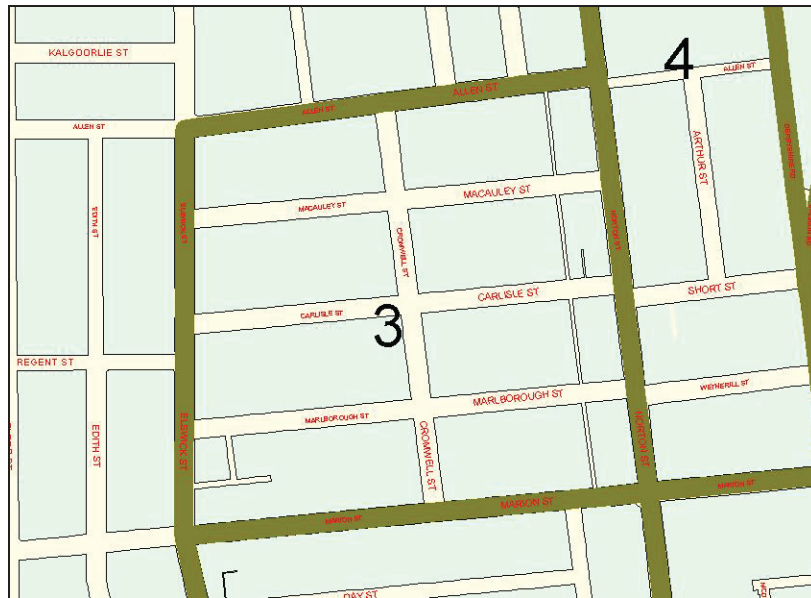


Figure 3.1 Whaleyborough Estate Conservation Area Map.

History

This area was once part of James Norton's Elswick Estate which stretched from Parramatta Road to William Street, and from Flood Street (part) to part of Balmain/Derbyshire Roads. Its subdivision by Norton's family in 1867 into four large sections accessed by surveyor-standard one chain (66ft) wide roads at Elswick, Norton and Allen Streets, and at Short Street for access to Balmain Road, established the layout of modern Leichhardt.

This conservation area was Section 2 (42 acres) of that Elswick Estate subdivision. In 1878 it was purchased by William Whaley Billyard who marked out eight sections of building allotments divided by four streets each one chain wide, with rear lane access for the allotments facing Norton Street. The 213 generous building allotments were 50ft-wide with depths of about 142ft, and were probably designed to attract a more affluent market than the more tightly subdivided Excelsior Estate to the south of Marion Street.

A number of free-standing double-fronted single-storey houses were built, mostly as one dwelling, sometimes as two semis across the 50ft wide allotments. However, the greater demand for cheaper housing saw many of these generous allotments accommodating two and sometimes three terrace houses. The most elevated part of the estate, near the Marion/Norton Streets intersection, was chosen for civic and church buildings – the Blaket-designed All Souls Church, the Primitive Methodist Chapel (1883) in Cromwell Street and the police station (1885) in Marlborough Street. Other church groups also chose sites in the Whaleyborough Estate – the Salvation Army Hall (1916) in Carlisle Street the

Leichhardt Masonic Lodge (1924) in Marlborough Street and the Congregational Church (1911) on Elswick Street.

The allotments with back lanes facing Norton Street were taken up for commercial premises with attached dwellings.

The PWD detail survey of inner Sydney of 1888 showed 216 brick, 24 weatherboard and a few stone buildings. Most of these remain today, and more were built during the following decade such as the single-storey single-fronted terraces in Carlisle Street. An examination of the remaining buildings suggest that the area was probably fully built upon by the end of the 1930s.

Sources

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

Cusick, A 1989, 'Leichhardt West, original land grants and subdivisions', *Leichhardt Historical Journal*, No. 16.

Significant Characteristics

- A spacious low-rise residential area with wide streets and nature strips and the sense of garden space at the back of each building.
- A mixture of free-standing houses and terraces.
- A mixture of single-storey and two-storey development.
- Parapeted two storey commercial buildings and pubs along Norton Street.
- A considerable collection of ecclesiastical buildings.
- A range in the age of the buildings dating from 1880s-1930s. Most buildings belong to the nineteenth century.
- Brick is by far the most dominant building material, and is used in a variety of surfaces – as plastered brick through the 1880s, as face brick with plaster decoration during the early 1900s and as dark blue face brick into the 1930s.
- Unglazed terracotta tiles form the predominant roof cladding. There are also some slate roofs and the occasional iron roof.
- Suspended awnings along Norton Street.
- Sandstone kerbs and gutters remain for considerable sections of all streets.
- There are some original iron palisade fences.
- Crepe myrtle plantings in Carlisle Street.

Statement of Significance or Why the Area is Important

- One of a number of conservation areas which 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 is significant for its

surviving development from the 1880s and 1890s, which gives it its particular identity. All allotments appear to have been taken up and built upon probably by the late 1930s.

- Through its wide roads, its important mixture of cottages, terraces and shops, mostly dating from the 1880s-1890s, and the form and materials of its construction this area provides an interesting built example of late nineteenth century economics where pressures for denser and cheaper accommodation have overlaid the original spacious suburban intentions.
- With the adjoining Excelsior Estate subdivision to the south, its roads, lanes and subdivision pattern defined the layout of central Leichhardt.
- It demonstrates through its range of external finishes (first plaster, then brown face brick and blue-face brick) the increasing sophistication in brick making from the 1880s.

Maintenance 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

- Existing width of streets. Avoid chicanes that diagonally cut across these wide carriageways.
- Existing laneways.
- All remaining sandstone kerbs and gutters.
- All pre-1939 buildings especially those identified on the DPW detail survey of 1888 (see LHJ No. 16).
- All shops, commercial buildings and pubs along Norton Street with awnings and original shopfront where remaining.
- All plaster finishes to external walls where it was originally applied (as a rough rule of thumb this will mostly apply to pre-1890s buildings). Reconstruct where necessary.
- All original unplastered face brick external walls.
- All original external architectural detail, including verandahs, parapets and awnings, and encourage replacement of lost elements, but only where evidence is available.
- Any remaining original iron palisade fences.
- All street planting schemes including 1960s crepe myrtle. Reinstate individual trees as part of street planting schemes where they have been lost.

- All existing ecclesiastic or civic buildings in the area. Find new sympathetic uses for them if the original use should be closed.

Avoid

- Amalgamation of any original 50ft-wide allotment which might lead to a change in the pattern of development in the streetscape.
- Demolition of any building shown on the 1888 map (see LHJ No. 16). Reinstatement of external form and materials of any of those buildings which have suffered unsympathetic change is encouraged where evidence of former form or materials can be verified.
- Removal of any plaster or decorative plaster to external walls.
- Plastering and/or painting of original face brick walls.
- Second-storey addition to an original single-storey building.
- Additional architectural detail for which there is no evidence in the photographic record or on the building itself.
- Post-supported verandahs over footpaths, except where evidence of such structure is available.
- Inappropriate fences such as high brick fences/walls, new iron palisades on high brick bases.

Further Work

- Need to identify which buildings in the area are not identified on the detail survey of 1888, and/or which do not contribute to the continuing story of this subdivision into the 1930s. Recommend ways in which their sites could be re-used.
- Compile photographic records of the buildings of the subdivision from late nineteenth century to the 1990s as a means of ensuring appropriate reconstruction/'restoration'.