

Area 4 Wetherill Estate Conservation Area

Landform

The area is predominantly on the Norton Street ridge, and falling gently towards the north and Balmain Cemetery, now Pioneers Park.



Figure 4.1 Wetherill Estate Conservation Area Map.

History

This conservation area falls within the Wetherill Estate which was subdivided in 1875. By 1888 there were 114 buildings erected in the Wetherill Estate subdivision – 93 were of brick, 16 were of weatherboard and five were of unknown construction. The conservation area also covers a small number of allotments at the very southern end of Pioneer Park, where two very early attached single-storey cottages and some other early buildings front Allen Street. The two attached cottages could have been constructed for the caretakers of the cemetery.

Development of the area proceeded gradually, so that it was not until at least the 1930s before all the land was taken up and built upon. Some buildings along Derbyshire Road (outside the existing conservation area) have recently been demolished for new townhouses.

Sources

Information provided by Max Solling.

Significant Characteristics

- Varied character – shops and attached dwellings along Norton Street; Art Deco pub and store; large two-storey free-standing houses; single-storey double and single-fronted houses; small groups of terraces and semis; blocks of 1930s/40s flats.

- Landmark and public buildings dominate the skyline and streetscape – Leichhardt Town Hall, post office and fire station.
- Streets mostly one chain wide, with some grassed verges.
- A range in age of buildings from 1870s-1930s/40s: from a pair of early joined single-storey cottages without fire walls to two Inter-War period buildings on the corner of Short Street and Balmain Road and blocks of flats. Most buildings belong to the nineteenth century.
- Brick by far the most dominant building material, used in a variety of surfaces: as plastered brick generally through the 1880s, as face brick with plaster decoration c1890s onwards and as brown or dark blue face brick into the 1930s.
- Few timber houses – Short Street is an exception.
- Roof cladding predominantly of unglazed terracotta tiles. Few slate roofs and some iron roofs.
- Simple parapeted roofs to Norton Street facades with awnings suspended over Norton Street footpaths.
- Decorative elements such as plaster mouldings, decorative glazed tiles, chimneys and Art Deco brick decoration to facades.
- Sandstone kerbs and gutters with few interruptions for access to garages.
- Fences – some original iron palisade fences and some decorative brick fences contemporary with the construction of their houses.
- Street planting of natives and deciduous trees and shrubs.

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 illustrating development over sixty years between 1870s-1930s and includes civic, ecclesiastical and commercial buildings and a variety of housing.
- With the adjoining Whaleyborough Estate subdivision to the west, its roads, lanes and subdivision pattern define the layout of central Leichhardt.
- It is of aesthetic significance for the landmark quality of its public buildings centred around the high land at the Marion/Norton Street corner.
- It demonstrates through its range of external finishes (first plaster, then brown face brick and blue face brick) the increasing sophistication in Sydney brick making from 1870s-1930s.
- Through its now rare weatherboard buildings it continues to demonstrate the nature of that major construction material in the fabric of early Sydney suburbs.

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

- Existing width and alignment of the streets: avoid chicanes which cut diagonally across the carriageways.
- All remaining sandstone kerbs and gutters.
- All pre-1939 buildings especially the few remaining timber houses.
- All original plaster finishes to external walls (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 or low brick fences.
- All street planting schemes. Reinstate individual trees where they have been lost.
- All existing landmark buildings in the area and their settings. Find new sympathetic uses for these buildings if the original use should be closed.

Avoid

- Demolition of any pre-1939 building especially timber buildings.
- Removal of any plaster or decorative plaster to external walls, except where it is to remove more recent plaster on face brick walls.
- Plastering and/or painting of original face brick walls.
- Alteration to the original roof form over the main part of any building, including second-storey additions to single-storey buildings.
- Additional architectural detail for which there is no evidence in the photographic record or on the building itself.
- Inappropriate fences such as high brick fences/walls, new iron palisades on high brick bases.
- Interruption of the kerb and gutter line for vehicular access.