

30 May 19

HERITAGE DA COMMENT

AUBURN BOTANIC GARDENS,
96 Chiswick Road, Auburn
DA-122/2019

HERITAGE STATUS OF THE SITE

The Auburn Botanic Gardens are a listed heritage item in the Auburn LEP 2010, with the listing details outlined in Table 1 below. The Auburn Botanic Gardens were also listed on the NSW National Trust Register in 2015.

Table 1: Heritage listing details for the subject property from Schedule 5 Part 1: Heritage Items of the Auburn LEP 2010

Locality	Item name	Address	Property Description	Significance	Item no.
Auburn	Auburn Botanic Gardens	Chisholm Road	Lot 36, Section 8, DP 7097; Lot 12, Section 8, DP 7097; Lot 1, DP 222366; Lots 1 and 2, DP 235351; Lots 26–29, DP 6713; Lot 1, DP 938994	Local	I3



Figure 1: Extracts of Heritage Map Nos. 002 and 003 Auburn LEP 2010 showing the Auburn Botanic Gardens as Heritage Item No. 13 in green

Heritage planning controls relating to the site are contained in Section 5.10 of the LEP

PROPOSAL DOCUMENTS VIEWED

- Site survey by LTS Lockley dated 17/10/16
- Site and demolition plan by Graham Bakewell Architect dated April 2019
- Statement of Environmental Effects for Demolition of Glasshouse at 96 Chiswick Road Auburn by Graham Bakewell Architect dated April 2019
- Statement of Heritage Impact Former Bonsai Gardens, Auburn Botanic Gardens, 96 Chiswick Road, Auburn 2144 NSW prepared for Cumberland Council by Niche Environment and Heritage, dated 5 March 2019
- Photographic record of the Bonsai Gardens Glasshouse undertaken for Cumberland Council

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The following historical information is summarised from the Statement of Heritage Impact by Niche Heritage.

On 28th February 1968 Auburn Council set aside an area of 9.5 hectares in the Duck River Open Space Zone created in the Cumberland Planning Scheme for a botanic garden. The gardens were designed by Eric Black, Chief Engineer and town planner of Auburn Municipal Council between 1949 and 1979. In July 1968, Black presented a report to Council on proposing a mixture of sporting grounds and intensive cultivation of the Duck River parklands. Black envisaged a series of gardens representing national garden styles around the world. This vision was later reduced, though some elements survived, including the Japanese gardens and lake, the formal gardens and reflection pool, and the different Australian habitats. Initial construction work on the Botanic Gardens site commenced in 1969 with the excavation of the Japanese Gardens Lake.

In September 1973 several hundred trees were planted in the Avenue of Remembrance, Garden of Trees and Woodland area during a Tree Planting Ceremony. Further construction work and plantings completed the eight main divisions of the botanic gardens complex – the Japanese Hill and Lake garden, the central formal area containing the reflection pool and pergola, the sunken rose garden, the garden of trees, the scented garden, the air woodland theatre. Other features comprising plant nursery, glasshouse, fern house, administration room, kiosk, public toilets, rangers' cottage and floral clock were also completed.

Community groups also added a bonsai garden and an aviary to the basic plan, A native fauna reserve was set up in consultation with Taronga Zoo as a later addition by the Council's parks and gardens department.

During the Whitlam federal government years (1972-1975) pioneering direct federal government funding to local government through regional development program funding to Auburn Council in 1974 and 1975-76 enabled the Council to develop the Botanic gardens utilising unemployment relief labour. The Auburn Botanic Gardens were officially opened by the NSW Governor Sir Roden Cutler VC on 11 September 1977.

The Avenue of Remembrance was opened on 12 September 1987 by the Hon Michael Cleary.

Two plaques located at the northern end of the Avenue commemorate the part played by the Australian Government in the development of the Gardens and in particular the role played by the Hon Tom Uren, and Victory in the Pacific in 1945 and the servicemen, women and civilians who gave service to our homeland in Australia's hour of need

The Bonsai garden was added later by a community group (around 1982).

The Aviary was added by a Community group and officially opened on 5th December 1988 by the Hon Gary West. The Aviary was supported as a Bicentennial Project by the Commonwealth Government.

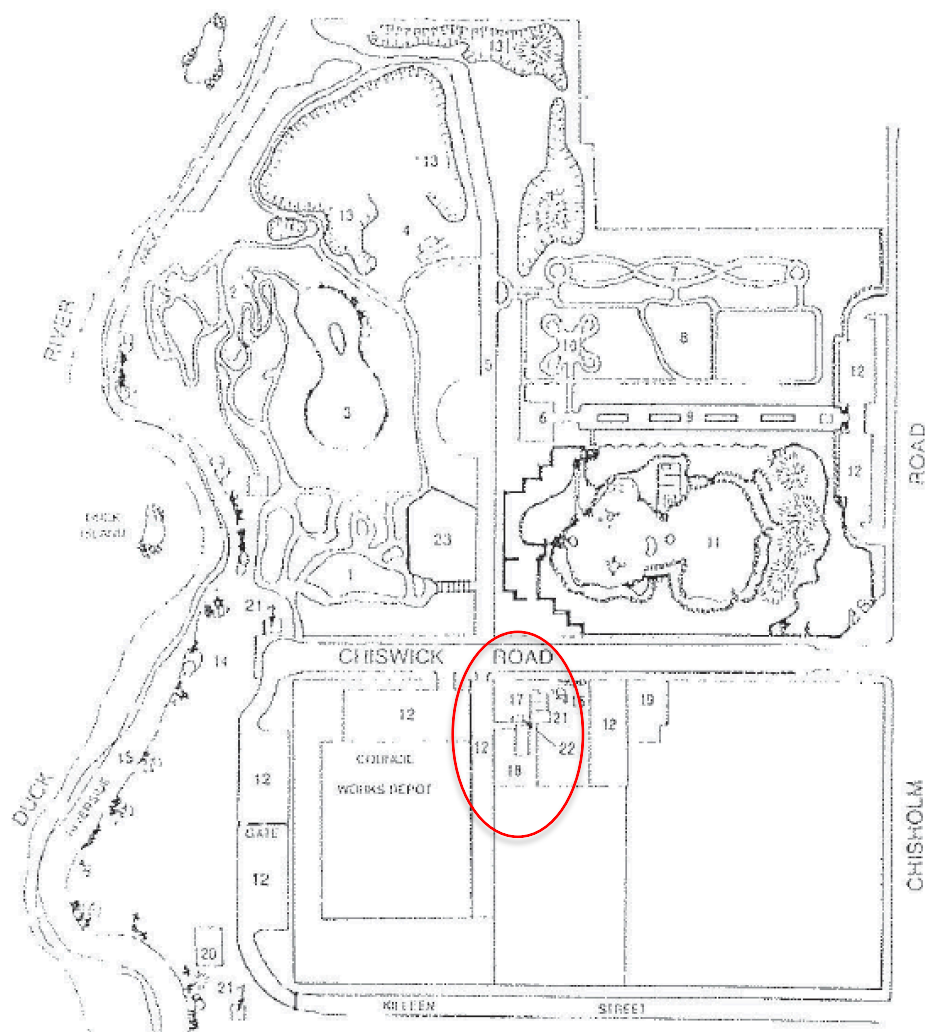
A Fauna Reserve was opened in 1994 and the equal access playground, a project supported by the Commonwealth Government, was opened by the Member for Reid, Laurie Ferguson MP on 28 May 2001.

The glasshouse was built sometime after 1970 and prior to 1980 on the southern side of the Peacock Gallery & Arts Studio. Note that the Peacock Gallery & Arts Studio building is an adaptation of the Botanic Gardens' former Fern house and former Kiosk.

At a later time, after 1982, a brick wall was built to enclose the glasshouse in a rectangular space for a bonsai garden. The bonsai garden, associated fish pond and the glasshouse are now disused and closed off from public use and the glasshouse is deteriorated though structurally sound.

A draft masterplan was prepared for the Auburn Botanic Gardens in March 2018 and was on public exhibition in April 2018, however the master plan only covered the core area of the Botanic Gardens north of Chiswick Road (i.e. excluding the area affected by the current proposal, which is south of Chiswick Road).

The sketch plan below shows the early layout of the Auburn Botanic Gardens with the area affected by the proposal circled in red.



Auburn Councils Sketch Plan of the Auburn Botanic Gardens Precinct and Themes

Sketch plan of early layout of the Auburn Botanic Gardens with the area affected by the proposal circled. Note that No. 17 is the Kiosk, No. 22 is the Fern House, and No. 18 is the Bonsai Garden, No. 21 are toilets, and No. 16 is the Floral Clock. Source: Page 4 Draft Masterplan Auburn Botanic Gardens, March 2018

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Auburn Botanic Gardens overall:

The State Heritage Inventory form for the Auburn Botanic Gardens includes the following Statement of Significance:

Auburn Botanic Gardens is significant for its aesthetic qualities as an expression of cultural planting in the local area and demonstrates a high degree of creative accomplishment in parkland design and social significance for its association with Auburn Council and unemployment relief works.

The NSW National Trust Statement of Significance for the Auburn Botanic Gardens is:

The Auburn Botanic Gardens has social significance to the people of Auburn City and visitors from around Australia and overseas who visit the Gardens and attend family events such as weddings or enjoy the festivals that are regularly held in the Gardens.

The Gardens has aesthetic significance for the range of environments presented such as riverside ecosystem, Australian rainforest and native garden, rose garden, fauna reserve and the Ryoan-ji style Japanese Garden.

The Gardens has historic significance through its origins in the Cumberland Planning Scheme (1946–1951) which set aside the area along the banks of the Duck River for recreation and the 1972–1975 pioneering federal government recognition of local government through direct funding and Auburn Council receiving regional development funding in 1974 and 1975–76 to develop the gardens.

The Gardens is significant in that its original concept and design is credited to Council's former Engineer and Town Planner Mr Eric Black rather than a commercial landscape architectural firm.

The glasshouse, bonsai garden etc.:

The Statement of Heritage Significance by Niche Environment & Heritage has attempted to assess the significance of the affected area, however in my professional opinion, not adequately in relation to the NSW Heritage guidelines. Below is an assessment of the affected precinct as an element of the Auburn Botanic Gardens in relation to the relevant NSW Heritage significance criteria.

a) Historical

The glasshouse was constructed in the 1970s as part of the main period of construction of the Auburn Botanic Gardens in 1974-1977.

The bonsai garden, fish pond and brick perimeter wall were constructed after 1982 and therefore can be considered to be elements of low significance to the Auburn Botanic Gardens.

b) Historical association

The glass house has no historical association with any prominent persons. The glasshouse is not significant under this criterion.

c) Aesthetic

The glasshouse is a utilitarian 1970s structure and has no special aesthetic characteristics. The glasshouse is not significant under this criterion.

d) Social

The glasshouse has no particular social significance as an element of the Auburn Botanic Gardens, noting however that the Auburn Botanic Gardens do have social significance as a whole.

e) Scientific

The glass house has no particular scientific significance. The precinct in which the glasshouse sits was heavily disturbed in the mid 20th century as it was an area used to mine clay and for landfill during the 1940s –1960s and is considered to have no archaeological potential.

f) Rarity

The glass house is not rare

g) Representative

The glass house is not considered to be representative of a class or type. It is a utilitarian 1970s glass house.

The conclusion of this significance analysis is that the glasshouse is considered to be an element of moderate significance to the Auburn Botanic Gardens. Elements of moderate significance generally may be retained or demolished depending on circumstances.

DESCRIPTION OF AREA SUBJECT TO THE DA

The area affected by the proposal, on the south side of Chiswick Road, is to the south of the Peacock Gallery & Auburn Arts Studio. The area is closed to the public and does not function as originally intended as a space open to the public.

The subject area is rectangular and surrounded by brick perimeter walls constructed after 1982 creating an enclosed courtyard. Structures within the area include the glasshouse (1970s), the former bonsai garden (constructed after 1982), and fish pond (constructed after 1982), along with entry and exit fences and metal turnstiles.

The glasshouse, 15m x 7.5m, is built of brick dwarf walls, rendered to the exterior, painted to the interior with metal framing above including metal framed fixed glazing and glass louvres and including a gabled panelled glazed roof with metal framing. Timber slats screen the upper glazed portions of the glasshouse walls on the south, east and west sides.

Due to the 2m height of the brick perimeter walls of the area, only the gabled roof of the glasshouse is visible from outside the rectangular enclosed courtyard.

There are three trees within the enclosed courtyard around the glasshouse, all of which are to be retained.

Recent photographs of the affected area and structures form **Attachment 1** to this report.

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is shown in the plan at Attachment 2 to this report.

The proposal is to demolish the following structures in the rectangular enclosed courtyard area on the southern side of Chiswick Road, to the south of the Peacock Gallery and Auburn Arts Studio:

- The glasshouse
- Northern timber wall of the glasshouse
- Entry and exit fences and metal turnstiles within the northern perimeter wall
- Fish pond and surrounding stone edging

- Partial removal of the rendered brick courtyard perimeter wall, at the western end of the northern perimeter wall.

The fish pond area (to the south-western corner of the affected rectangular area) would be filled in and levelled and the existing paving of the area is proposed to be removed and the area levelled. Work benches within the area would also be removed.

The majority of the perimeter wall would remain, along with all remaining trees within the affected area.

The purpose of the proposal is to remove the dilapidated glasshouse and associated structures to create a new space for installation of 3-4 art studios to be used by artists as an expansion of the Peacock Gallery & Auburn Arts Studio. This would open up the area again to the public. No detailed design of the potential new structure has been prepared, though

HERITAGE COMMENTS

The demolition of the structures within the affected area is considered appropriate as the structures, built after 1982 (outside the main construction period) , are elements of low significance to the Auburn Botanic Gardens, and the glass house is an element of moderate significance to the Auburn Botanic Gardens. The use of the currently disused area as an extension of the Peacock Gallery & Auburn Arts Studio is also considered to be an appropriate new use which will open the area up to the public again.

The Niche Environment & Heritage Statement of Heritage Impact stated, with regard to the possibility of adaptive reuse of the glasshouse:

“The adaptive reuse of the glasshouse has not been considered as the proposed works require art spaces which cannot be adequately accommodated within the existing structure and would require extensive rectification works to the building to deem it safe. The space as a whole [being the entire rectangular space within the perimeter walls] is identified as an adaptive re-use of the intended function of the walled space and is a positive outcome”.

RECOMMENDATION

The proposal to demolish the structures within the enclosed rectangular courtyard including the glasshouse and level the area, demolish part of the northern wall of the enclosure and the gates and turnstiles, to clear the area for future construction of artist studios, is considered to have minimal heritage impact on the local heritage significance of the Auburn Botanic Gardens, as the affected structures are considered to have low to moderate heritage significance as elements of the Auburn Botanic Gardens, and the proposal will open up and reactivate the affected area, enhancing the viability of the Gardens.

There are no heritage concerns with the approval of the proposal as it will not diminish the heritage significance of the Auburn Botanic Gardens, and is in compliance with the objectives and provisions of Clause 5.10 of the Auburn LEP 2010.



Chery Kemp, Heritage Specialist

ATTACHMENT 1:

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE GLASSHOUSE AND ENCLOSED AREA SURROUNDING
THE GLASSHOUSE, THE AFFECTED AREA OF THE
AUBURN BOTANIC GARDENS



The eastern perimeter wall and the glasshouse roof



Closer view of the glasshouse roof from the east



View along the northern perimeter wall with turnstiles and gates. The central gate accesses the glasshouse.



(Left) View of the area to the west of the glasshouse, with the fish pond arrowed.



Interior of the glasshouse, looking south



Detail of brickwork, fixed glazing and glass louvres to glasshouse wall, taken from interior of glasshouse



View along the western exterior wall of the glasshouse, with timber external vertical slats



View of the area to the east of the glasshouse and interior of eastern perimeter wall



The fishpond to the north-west corner of the glasshouse enclosed courtyard area



View of the area west of the glasshouse. Note the tree in the foreground is to be retained.



View of the glasshouse from the south-east



View of the area east of the glasshouse within the eastern perimeter wall



View along the western wall of the glasshouse.