SORENSEN’S NURSERY SITE
HERBERT STREET
LEURA
1. INTRODUCTION

This Development Control Plan No. 14 was prepared pursuant to Council’s resolution of 10th December 1991 and took effect on 30th April, 1992. The Development Control Plan has been amended and this amended Development Control Plan takes effect on 8th June 1993.

2. AIM

This plan aims to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the subject land.

3. OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives of this plan are:-

3.1 To ensure that development recognises and conserves the cultural and natural attributes of the site;

3.2 To ensure that the form and siting of buildings, colours, landscaping and building materials are appropriate for the place;

3.3 To ensure the conservation of the natural ecological elements within the area, especially the environmentally sensitive vegetation units and natural watercourse.

4. LAND TO WHICH THIS PLAN APPLIES

This plan applies to all land within the area edged heavy black on the attached map.

5. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING INSTRUMENTS

This plan is supplementary to Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan 1991 (Amendment No.4).

6. DEFINITIONS

Conservation terms used throughout this Development Control Plan are in accordance with those defined in the Burra Charter adopted by Australian ICOMOS and are as follows:-

**Place** means site, area, building or other work, group of buildings or other works together with pertinent contents and surroundings.

**Cultural Significance** means aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations.

**Fabric** means all the physical material of the Place.

**Conservation** means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance. It includes maintenance and may according to circumstance include preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation and will be commonly a combination of more than one of these.

**Maintenance** means the continuous protective care of the fabric, contents and setting of the place, and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves restoration or reconstruction and it should be treated accordingly.
**Preservation** means maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration.

**Restoration** means returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions of or reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.

**Reconstruction** means returning a place as nearly as possible to a known earlier state and is distinguished by the introduction of materials (new or old) into the fabric. This is not to be confused with either recreation or conjectural reconstruction which are outside the scope of the Burra Charter.

**Adaptation** means modifying a place to suit proposed compatible uses.

**Compatible** means a use which involves no change to the culturally significant fabric, changes which are substantially reversible, or changes which require a minimal impact.

7. **DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS**

7.1 In assessing any development application on the site, Council must be satisfied that the development has addressed the issues as details in this section.

Note: This section is based on the “Draft Conservation Plan” prepared by Tropman and Tropman Architects (September 1991). A copy of this document is held at the Council Offices in Katoomba and may be viewed during normal office hours.

7.2 **Discussion of Significance**

Following analysis of the documentary physical evidence, Sorensen’s Nursery is found to possess historic, scientific, social and aesthetic heritage significance.

The main historic significance of the Nursery is through its association with Paul Sorensen, one of the most influential garden designers in Australia during the early twentieth century. The nursery was his home and workshop. The gardens and grounds of the nursery developed by Sorensen are of extraordinary quality and are a testament to his skill as a garden designer.

The Nursery is also of scientific significance due to the diverse range of ornamental trees concentrated on the site, many of which are rare in cultivation, or of excellent ornamental quality, or valuable as parent stock for propagation.

The Nursery is of social significance, particularly to the Blue Mountains community, as it was the major source of horticultural plants for the community throughout most of this century. A unique feature of the Nursery was its originality of layout, providing an area with large trees under which plants of the same species were displayed for sale, enabling customers to gain an appreciation of how the plant would grow and develop.

Interspersed among the trees were shrubs which, in addition to showing the above function of education customers, were also used to provide propagation material for the nursery. The plant displays, stone walls and water features provided inspiration to many amateur gardeners in the Blue Mountains.
Sorensen’s Nursery played a major role in developing the present garden character of the Blue Mountains that remains a major local attraction to this day.

The Nursery is of aesthetic significance because the quality of the plant displays, stone walls and water features represent important creative accomplishments that influenced the standards of beauty in garden design recognised widely by the local community.

7.3 **Statement of significance**

The following sets out in point-form the reasons why Sorensen’s Nursery is significant based on the documentary and physical analysis.

**Statement of Cultural Significance for Sorensen’s Nursery site Leura:**

a) It was the home and workshop of Paul Sorensen, one of the most influential garden designers in Australia during the early twentieth century.

b) The mature trees and shrubs constitute an excellent horticultural collection of cool climate exotics, many of which are rare or of high ornamental quality.

c) The wide range of stone walls demonstrate a high degree of technical and creative excellence.

d) The Hydraulic Ram was a rare example of 1920’s technology.

7.4 **Constraints and Requirements**

a) **Physical Constraints and Requirements arising from the Statement of Significance for Sorensen’s Nursery, Leura.**

   (i) No development shall be permitted that will diminish the fact that the site was the Nursery and home of Paul Sorensen, one of the most influential garden designers in Australia during the early twentieth century.

   (ii) No development shall be permitted that will damage or destroy the significant stone walls on the site.

   (iii) No development shall be permitted that will damage, remove or destroy the significant plants on the site.

   (iv) The 1920’s Hydraulic Ram has been removed since the Conservation Plan was prepared in September 1991. The irrigation system should be made operational.

   (v) Any new buildings, services or activities on the site should be carefully designed, sited and formulated to respect the significance fabric of the place.

b) **Procedural Constraints and Requirements arising from the Statement of Significance.**

   Areas and items of the site have been identified as being of cultural significance, therefore all work affecting those areas and items should be
done in accordance with the principles of the Burra Charter of Australia *ICOMOS*. In particular the following procedural requirements should be noted.

(i) **Original Fabric**

All conservation work should be based on a respect for the existing fabric and should involve the least possible physical intervention. (Burra Charter Article 3).

(ii) **Recording**

The existing fabric should be recorded before any disturbance. This process has been partly carried out for the Draft Conservation Plan prepared by Tropman & Tropman Architects (1991). (Burra Charter Article 23).

(iii) **Investigation**

Any disturbance of the fabric or archaeological excavation should be undertaken where necessary to provide data essential for decisions on the conservation of the place. (Burra Charter Article 24).

(iv) **Preservation**

Preservation is appropriate where the existing state of the fabric itself constitutes evidence of specific cultural significance. Preservation is limited to the protection, maintenance and, where necessary, the stabilisation of the existing fabric. (Burra Charter Articles 11 and 12).

(v) **Restoration**

Restoration is appropriate only if there is sufficient evidence of an earlier state of the fabric and only if returning the fabric reveals the significance. (Burra Charter Article 13).

The contributions of all periods to the place must be respected as being new work. (Burra Charter Article 16).

(vi) **Reconstruction**

Reconstruction is appropriate only where a place is incomplete through damage or alteration and where it is necessary for its survival. Reconstruction is limited to the reproduction of fabric and it should be identifiable on close inspection. (Burra Charter Article 17).

(vii) **Adaptation**

Adaptation is acceptable where the conservation of the place cannot otherwise be achieved and it must be limited to that which is essential to a use for the place determined in accordance with the conservation policy. (Burra Charter Articles 20 and 21).
(viii) **Responsibility**

The consent of the Council is to be obtained for all development on the site. It should be noted that the heritage provisions in LEP 1991 require development consent for work which on non-heritage items would not normally need consent. These include demolition or alteration of a building a work, alteration, damaging or excavating a relic, damaging or despoiling a place or tree, or damaging or removing any tree or horticultural features on land which comprise the heritage item. (See Clause 25 and the relevant definitions in Schedule 4 of LEP 1991). (Burra Charter Article 26).

(ix) **Direction and Supervision**

Appropriate professional direction and supervision must be maintained at all stages of the work. (Burra Charter Article 27).

(x) **New Evidence**

A record must be kept of new evidence and future decisions. (Burra Charter Article 27).

(xi) **Archives**

Copies of all reports and records should be placed in a permanent archive and made publicly available. This archive shall be kept at the offices of the Council. (Burra Charter Article 28).

(xii) **Catalogue**

Fabric of cultural significance unavoidably removed in the process of adaption must be kept safely to enable its future reinstatement. Such items should be professionally catalogued and protected. (Burra Charter Article 29).

c) **Constraints Arising out of the Documentary and Physical Evidence.**

(i) It is reasonable to assume that more evidence, particularly documentary evidence, would come to light during a properly conducted conservation program; e.g. more old photographs of the Nursery would probably come to light if advertised throughout the local community.

d) **Constraints Arising out of the Physical Condition of the Place.**

(i) **Generally**

The original layout of the Nursery is generally intact. Although the site has not functioned fully as a nursery since the late 1980’s, this function is still strongly evident.

(ii) **Stonework-Physical Condition**

The major stone walls on the site are substantially intact however, most require minor repairs. Some of the smaller ironstone contour walls have been removed. These may provide difficult to reconstruct
because ironstone is now a scarce material. The coping stones of the base of the ‘Wedding Tree’ have been removed and the base itself is cracked in a number of places and some of the stone blocks have dislodged. The slate cascades and steps are substantially intact but require minor repairs.

(iii) **Irrigation System - Physical Condition**

The irrigation system as a whole requires repair. Some of the pipes have been damaged or severed when trees were removed. The Hydraulic ram has been removed.

(iv) **Planting’s - Physical Condition**

Most of the ornamental trees remain on the site although some have suffered because of neglect over the past twelve months. A number of ornamental trees were removed during 1990. The removal procedures have damaged some of the existing trees by breaking limbs and exposing roots. Many of the ornamental shrubs and bulbs were also removed during 1990. Authentic reconstruction of the shrub areas would require careful investigation to determine the original locations and species, and only sympathetic conjectural reconstruction may be possible.

(v) **House - Physical Condition**

The house is substantially intact, however many of the interior fittings of value have been removed.

e) **Constraints Arising out of Environmental Conditions of the Site**

The site contains some areas and items of environmental significance. These include natural springs, a hanging swamp and a diversity of flora and fauna communities. The following describes the constraints on development arising form these environmental features.

(i) **Northern Boundary**

Along the northern boundary of the site beside Scott Avenue is a band of relatively undisturbed woodland dominated by Sydney Peppermint (Eucalyptus piperita) with associated shrubs and herb understorey. While this vegetation community is common in the Blue Mountains, the land that it occupies is very steep with slopes ranging from 20 - 33%. The urban capability in this area is severely restricted due to these slopes. Any clearing of the natural vegetation communities in this area would create an erosion hazard and may cause siltation of the wetland areas below. This area is shown as Protected Area - Environmental Constraint Area on the map. Development of this area is discouraged because of the environmental constraints.

(ii) **Hanging Swamp**

This area, commonly referred to as the hanging swamp, is a sedgeland/shrubland dominated by button grass sedge (Gymnoschoenus spaerocephalis), heath-leaved Banksia (Banksia
ericifolia) and tea-trees (Leptospermum spp.). These wetland communities have significant hydrological benefits for the headwaters of the Valley of the Waters Creek and represent a mature and specialised wildlife habitat for birds and small native mammals. As a result, development should be precluded from this area and any nearby development should not impact upon this area. This area is shown as Protected Area - Environmental Constraint Area on the map. Development of this area is discouraged because of the environmental constraints.

(iii) South-Eastern Corner

In the south-eastern corner of the site, an open forest area dominated by Sydney Peppermint (Eucalyptus piperita) with associated shrub and herb understorey. The vegetation community in this area is in good condition and weed free and would provide significant visual screening for any future development of the site. It forms a significant buffer area above an undisturbed handing swamp.

f) External Constraints and Requirements Arising out of the Significance of the Place.

(i) Heritage Council of NSW

The heritage significance of the site has been recognised by the Heritage Council of NSW in placing a conservation order (under Section 130 of the Heritage Act 1977) on the site. This order was placed to prevent further harm to the site following the commencement of the removal of certain horticultural features in 1990. This order was not renewed when it lapsed in November 1991, because of the listing of the subject land in the Schedule 2 of Heritage Items in the then draft LEP 1991. The Draft Conservation Plan on which this Development Control Plan is based, was produced for and been endorsed by the Heritage Council.

(ii) Local Environmental Plan 1991

Sorensen’s Nursery is listed in Schedule 2, Heritage items and Heritage Conservation Areas in LEP 1991. Clause 25 of the LEP is applicable to development of heritage items or conservation areas.

g) Constraints Arising out of the Ownership of the Place.

h) Client Requirements

In commissioning the Draft Conservation Plan, the N.S.W. Department of Planning required the identification of areas on the site suitable for future development and the range of potential uses detailed. This enables the Department of Planning, Council and any owners to be fully conversant with the heritage constraints on the site.
i) **Graded Areas of Significance**

Considering the physical and documentary evidence gathered, the statement of cultural significance and the various constraints and requirements, a grading of areas within the site is possible.

The areas of significance are indicated on a site plan (Figure 3) and are rated according to the amount and intactness of significant fabric within them. The areas are rated from the highest level of significance, 1, down to the least, 3.

### 7.5 Draft Conservation Policy

a) **Discussion**

The following is a draft conservation policy formulated out of consideration of the Statement of Significance, the physical condition of the place and other constraints. Uses should be chosen for the site that allow the implementation of these policies.

b) **Statement of Conservation Policy**

(i) **Areas of Category 1 Significance**

The areas identified as being of category 1 significance contain a concentration of significant fabric, accordingly they should be conserved in such a way as to demonstrate their significance. The conservation processes appropriate for the items within the areas of category 1 significance are described in the following:

**Stone Walls**

The stone walls should be restored and reconstructed to their original form and detailing and maintained in this state. Where stone walls have been removed they should be reconstructed in their original locations.

**Planting**

The existing trees and shrubs should be maintained in accordance with current horticultural techniques. Where trees or shrubs have been removed they should be replaced with the same species in their original locations. Where the species of removed trees or shrubs is not known a conjectural substitute species may be used.

**Sorensen’s House**

The exterior of Sorensen’s House should be retained, it may be adapted to suit a compatible use.

**Glasshouse**

The stone base wall should be retained as physical evidence of the glasshouse. It may be adapted as a walled garden or the like. The frame should be re-used as a component of a new glasshouse on the site, if such a development is proposed.
**Water Features**

Water features such as the cascades and ornamental pools should be restored and reconstructed.

**Irrigation system**

The irrigation system shall be repaired and reconstructed to make it functional. This may require the introduction of new fabric as the original hydraulic rams are now missing.

**(ii) Areas of Category 2 Significance**

The areas identified as being of category 2 significance contain a limited amount of significant fabric but contribute to the setting and character of the category 1 areas. These areas assist in displaying the significance of the site. Accordingly, the significant items within these areas, such as ornamental trees, walls and landforms should be conserved. However, these areas may be adapted to suit a proposed compatible use provided that modifications are of a minor nature and reversible.

**(iii) Areas of Category 3 Significance - Recommended Development Area**

These areas contain no significant fabric and their significance is limited to the fact that they are part of the Sorensen’s Nursery Site. Accordingly, these areas are the most suitable for new development. Within the areas of category 3 significance are natural environmental features that may constrain new development. These environmentally sensitive areas are indicated by the Environmental Constraint Area on the LEP 1991 (Amendment No. 4) Map.

**(iv) Guidelines for New Development within Recommended Development Area**

It is envisaged that new development within the least significant area may need to be substantial due to the limited size of the area and the need to undertake conservation works to the significant areas of the site as part of any new development. Accordingly, the following guidelines have been prepared so that the design of any substantial new buildings has a minimal impact on the visual amenity of the site.

**Height**

In accordance with the provisions in LEP 1991, new buildings shall not exceed two storeys and 8 metres in height.

**Bulk**

Any new development should avoid the appearance of bulkiness by ‘stepping’ new buildings in both plan and elevation. In addition, careful landscaping may also reduce the appearance of bulkiness.
Form

New buildings should utilise forms that blend with the physical environment and respect the existing landforms.

Materials

The materials used for new buildings should be recessive in colour blending with the colours predominant in the surrounding landscape. Materials should be generally consistent with those used in the surrounding residential areas.

Character

The character of new buildings should be one that sits comfortably with the bushland/garden setting of the site. The character of new buildings should reinforce the horticultural significance of the site by incorporating plants into the built forms.

c) Possible Uses

(i) Generally

Any proposed development of the Sorensen’s Nursery site must be compatible with the retention, recovery and reinforcement of the cultural significance of the place.

Any proposed development should be firmly committed to implementing all of the conservation policies stated in this DCP and provide the necessary levels of maintenance required to retain the significance of the site. It is envisaged that a mixed use should occur that satisfies both conservation and development requirements.

The preferred uses should:

* be compatible with the conserved garden and nursery areas, and realise these areas as a valuable asset to the development;

* encourage public access and use of the conserved garden and nursery areas but not in a fashion that will confuse the interpretation of the original function of the site as a garden and nursery;

* be economically viable; and

* follow the consolidation of the site as a whole.

(ii) Retail Plant Nursery

Part of the site was originally built and used as a nursery. This use began in 1920. The use of these parts of the site for this purpose would therefore be appropriate. Historically and socially it would be the preferred usage if it allowed acceptable economic returns.
(iii) **Ornamental Gardens**

A compatible use for the areas of category 1 significance would be as ornamental gardens. These areas were originally developed as ornamental gardens that formed the framework for the Nursery functions. The high quality of the stone walls, water features and ornamental trees in the areas of category 1 significance mean that the continuation of this use is particularly desirable.

In order for this use to be economically viable in these areas, it would need to be associated with and ancillary to, a substantial development within the recommended areas. The use of the areas of category 1 significance as ornamental gardens should respect the need to provide public access and the need for these areas to be interpreted as garden associated with a former Nursery.

(iv) **Residential**

The site is zoned Residential Bushland Conservation (Consolidation). This requires all the lots which form the subject land to be consolidated into one lot prior to development. This requirement is necessary because the original twenty one (21) residential allotments are unrelated both to the use of the site as a nursery and to the topography of the site (for example, some of the lots cannot be built upon because of environmental constraints). Any attempt to develop the site using these existing allotments would be extremely detrimental to the heritage values of the site and the conservation policies could not be implemented.

In the plan, only one dwelling house is permissible on a lot, however Schedule 1 of LEP 1991, makes permissible integrated housing and subdivision. It is preferred that such a scheme should be carried out under community titles legislation in order to achieve an appropriate management plan for the conservation of the heritage and natural attributes of the site. Whilst no density or minimum lot size is specified, regard should be had for the character of Leura, which is one of detached cottages in garden settings. In order to protect the residential amenity of neighbouring properties, adequate setbacks shall be observed to site boundaries, to prevent loss of solar access or privacy.

(v) **Retirement Village**

This use would be compatible if new development occurred within the area recommended for development. Advantages of this use would be that the conserved Nursery and garden areas could be utilised as an attractive open space amenity for the retirement village. However the access requirements for the aged and disabled may be difficult to accommodate on this site whilst at the same time restricting buildings to the least constrained part of the site. The approved development application for a retirement village on the site, prepared by Jenning’s retirement living, is not compatible with the significance of the site because it would require the removal of a high proportion of significant fabric.

(vi) **Education Establishment**
Some form of educational establishment may be compatible provided new development occurred within the recommended area.

Advantages of this use may be that the conserved garden and nursery areas could be utilised as attractive open space amenity. In addition such a usage would allow greater public access to the site.

7.6 Implementation of Conservation Policy

(a) Generally

In order to retain the heritage values and landscape qualities of Sorensen’s Nursery the conservation policy should be implemented as soon as possible. It is recognised that a new compatible development may take well over 12 months to commence. It is expected that the bulk of the conservation policy be implemented concurrent with any new development. In the interim however initial stabilisation works and on-going maintenance are urgently required to retard any further deterioration of the significant fabric. The following describes the works required for initial stabilisation, on-going maintenance and implementation of conservation policy.

(b) Initial Stabilisation Works

Initial stabilisation works should be carried out on the site as soon as possible in order to retard any further deterioration of the significant fabric.

Initial stabilisation works should include the following tasks:

* Recommencement of watering garden areas and trees.
* Removal of weeds
* Removal of rubbish
* Repairs to damaged stonework
* Introduction of erosion control measures.

(c) On-going Maintenance

On-going maintenance is required following the implementation of initial stabilisation works. A program of maintenance should be formulated that provides for the continuous protective care of the significant fabric until a new compatible development occurs that allows the full implementation of the Conservation Policy as part of a detailed Plan of Management for the site.

It is envisaged that on-going maintenance would be provided by a full-time gardener, preferably living on the site. On-going maintenance may need to be for a period of over 12 months until permanent maintenance provisions are in place. On-going maintenance should include the following tasks:-

* Watering of Garden areas and trees.
* Pruning and general tree surgery.
* Weed control.
* Repair of water features.
* Repair of existing irrigation system.

(d) Implementation of Draft Conservation Policy.
Once a compatible use or uses are chosen for the site, the developer shall undertake to prepare the necessary documentation to implement the Conservation Policy. This documentation shall be prepared by suitability qualified consultants approved by the Council and the Department of Planning. The proposed implementation works shall be approved by the Council and the Department of Planning prior to commencement.

It is essential that the developer of the site demonstrate to the Council, in consultation with the Heritage Council both the means and commitment to fully implement the Conservation Policy as part of any new development and to provide continuous maintenance of the conserved fabric.

The documentation for the implementation of the Conservation Policy shall be presented as part of a detailed Plan of Management to be approved by the Council in consultation with the Heritage Council.

The Plan of Management should include strategies for the following items and areas of significant fabric:

**Site Clean-up**
- Remove weeds and rubbish

**Stone Walls**
- Restore and reconstruct existing stone walls
- Reconstruct removed low walls in arboretum area.

**Water Features**
- Restore and reconstruct cascades and ornamental pools.

**Irrigation System**
- Repair, reconstruct and make operational.

**Planting’s**
- Pruning, tree surgery and general maintenance. Replacement of removed shrubs.

**Sorensen’s House**
- Retain and adapt to compatible use.

**Glass House**
- Retain stone base wall, re-use elements of frame.

**Paths and Paving**
- Restore and reconstruct.
BLUE MOUNTAINS
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN No.14
Locality Map
SORENSEN'S NURSERY SITE, LEURA.

Subject land edged thus □
GRACED AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

CATEGORY 1
AREAS AND ITEMS SHOULD BE RESTORED, RECONSTRUCTED AND MAINTAINED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO ENSURE THAT THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

CATEGORY 2
SIGNIFICANT TREES SUCH AS MAJOR SPECIES SHOULD BE CONSERVED. AREAS MAY BE ADAPTED TO SUIT A PROPOSED COMPATIBLE USE PROVIDED MODIFICATIONS ARE MINOR AND SUBSTANTIALLY REVERSIBLE.

CATEGORY 3
AREA SUITABLE FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT PROVIDED DEVELOPMENT IS COMPATIBLE WITH AREAS OF CATEGORY 1 AND 2 SIGNIFICANCE.

NOTE: WITHIN THE AREAS OF CATEGORY 5 SIGNIFICANCE ARE AREAS WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS ON DEVELOPMENT (REFER TO SECTION 7.5)

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SORENSEN'S NURSERY
CONSERVATION PLAN SEPTEMBER 1981
DRAWING TITLE FIGURE NO.
GRACED AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE 3