

Experiment Farm Cottage Reserve Landscape and remediation works - August to November 2022

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What work is happening?

The works at Experiment Farm Cottage Reserve will involve the installation of a brightly coloured geofabric marker layer over the existing grass. New, certified clean soil will be placed over the top and lightly compacted, and new turf installed.

A double-width footpath will be constructed along the western end of the nature strip, similar to that already in place at the eastern end. A sandstone block retaining wall will border the new footpath and a new driveway will be installed in the Hassall Street frontage to allow access for maintenance vehicles.

An underground irrigation system will be installed, along with a solar panel to power the system, with a control panel located near the Ruse Street frontage. This system will ensure turf, trees, and other vegetation will continue to have access to water.

When will works occur?

Works will take place between 7am and 5pm Monday to Friday, and between 8am and 5pm on Saturdays, and are expected to take nine (9) weeks, weather permitting. Works are expected to be completed by November 2022.

Why are these works needed?

Experiment Farm Reserve has been identified by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) as one of many sites across Sydney where waste associated with James Hardie and Company was disposed.

Testing was conducted at the site in 2018 and 2020, and this testing confirmed that asbestos containing materials are present within the soils at the site.

Asbestos can only pose a risk to human health if it can become airborne and be inhaled. While existing layers of grass and topsoil generally protect against exposure risk, best practice requires permanent treatment.

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To prevent the erosion of topsoils and the exposure of fill materials, physical barriers or 'caps' are constructed to ensure that asbestos containing materials can never come to the surface.



Experiment Farm Cottage aerial photography 1955.

What safety precautions will be in place?

While Experiment Farm Cottage remains open, a compound to the north of the cottage creating a safe-work-zone will be established. Public access will not be permitted in this area and pedestrian detours will be in place.

All appropriate safety precautions will be undertaken, including the use of air-quality monitoring during any works with the potential to disturb contaminated soils.

All works will be undertaken by a licensed contractor and approved by an assessor.

Throughout the program, workers will wear appropriate protective equipment and follow safety protocols as mandated by NSW SafeWork and the EPA.

How did this material get here?

Aerial imagery suggests that asbestos materials may have come to the site in contaminated fill in the 1950's, before the area was converted to parklands. Records provided to the EPA suggest that the material originated at the James Hardie manufacturing facility at Grand Avenue, Camellia.

A small portion of the material found may be associated with houses that were present (now demolished) on parts of the site, immediately opposite Experiment Farm Cottage.



Experiment Farm Cottage aerial photography 1970.

Experiment Farm is historically important – how is this site being protected?

In preparing for these works, Council consulted with Heritage Consultants and archaeologists and stakeholders including the National Trust. A Heritage Impact Assessment was prepared and on review of these studies the Heritage Council of NSW provided consent for these works.

A Heritage Consultant has been engaged to ensure that the significant historic value of the site is protected during works and specialists will also ensure the trees are protected.

What about the fig trees?

All trees are being protected. Arborists will advise on and implement measures to ensure the health of the trees on site during, and after, the works. Special tree-sensitive capping will be used around the Port Jackson Figs, with an erosion control 'terramat' and mulch capping layer constructed within their root zones. Special tree 'snorkels' will be installed, providing the trees with vital oxygen and other nutrients.

Generally, the existing topography of the site will be retained within the capping layer to ensure no impact to the overland flow of rainwater at the site.

How will access, traffic and parking be affected?

Experiment Farm Cottage will remain open, however a compound to the north of the cottage will be created to establish a safe work zone.

Traffic management and control workers will be on site to facilitate deliveries of the large volumes of soil needed for this project, using Stop/Go signage to manage traffic. During works within the nature strip, parts of the left lane of Parkes Street may need to be closed.

Visitors to the reserve are asked to take extra care and follow instructions provided by traffic controllers and staff.

What pedestrian detours will be in place?



Pedestrians heading along Hassall / Parkes Street are directed to use the footpath on the north of the street. Visitors to the reserve will be directed to use the pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Purchase Street and Hassall Street to the east.

Pedestrians travelling west will be directed to use the pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Parkes and Harris streets.

Access between Ruse Street and Parkes Street will be via a detour along the existing footpath along Harris Street.

Traffic management and control workers will be on site and signage will guide visitors.

For safety, all visitors are asked to follow directions provided by staff on site.

Is Experiment Farm Cottage still open?

Yes! Experiment Farm Cottage is managed by the National Trust of Australia. Information about the cottage opening hours and tours is available on the Experiment Farm web page here <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/experiment-farm-cottage>

You can also call the National Trust on (02) 9635 8149 for information on tours and opening hours.

Where can I find out more about asbestos?

For information on James Hardie Legacy sites please see Council's webpage: <https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/jh-sites>

For information on asbestos generally and asbestos around the home, please see: <https://www.asbestos.nsw.gov.au/>

Where can I find out more about Parramatta's early history?

Parramatta has a fascinating history. You can find out more about Parramatta's pre-European and Colonial history, and see information on tours here: <https://atparramatta.com/discover/history-and-heritage>

I have questions, who can I speak with?

Contact City of Parramatta on 1300 617 058, and ask to speak with the Experiment Farm project team or email openspace@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au