

Heritage Significance and Impact Assessment
Installation of Oil and Compost Leachate catchment tanks
Wentworth Castle Gardens
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The development works discussed here are planned for installation in an area of the Wentworth Castle estate considered in some detail in the HIA prepared to accompany the planning application made for pre-opening works in December 2018. As understanding of the site has not significantly altered since that date (except for some limited additional information recorded during watching briefs from the pre-opening works (OSA forthcoming)) , the earlier document is cited here for collation of relevant evidence, historical narrative and identification of heritage significances and potential. It is on the basis of the conclusions drawn there that the Impact Assessment below is made for the presently planned works.

Car Park Drainage and Oil catchment tank

The available evidence indicates that the land now occupied by the car park was previously farmland, latterly planted as woodland following the 1910 Coronation. This would suggest limited archaeological potential from the outset. In more recent times, an area was cleared in the woodland and a carpark constructed by the Wentworth Castle Gardens Trust. It is understood that this involved the usual stripping of topsoil down to a firm substrate prior to construction. This would argue that much of any residual archaeological potential would have been removed too, only deep features having the potential to survive. (The 2019 watching brief did identify such a feature, though one of modest interest, a wall footing, aligned north-south, at the western edge of the car park).

The planned works involve introducing drains 400mm deep and 500mm wide around much of the car park perimeter (inside its constructed limits not outside them) and some of its interior. This depth is likely to penetrate through the car park construction layers and into substrate to some degree. If any archaeology is present, naturally it would be adversely affected. However, given the extensive previous disturbance and the understood developmental history of the site, it seems unlikely that archaeological resources will exist here.

The catchment tank will require excavation of a trench of c.1500mm wide by 3000mm long by 2000mm deep. This will clearly penetrate the car park construction layers, any substrate and indeed may well reach underlying geology. The depth of the tank is unlikely to be of great archaeological significance, as any potential for such remains would only be in the superficial substrate. Again, there is no cause to think that archaeological remains will be present.

Discharge from the tank will be into the existing watercourse to the south. Care will be taken to avoid altering the earthwork of the channel, as this appears to have been significantly modified by past human activity, development that is not presently fully understood.

Impacts on Heritage Values in summary:

	Characterisation	Impact	Assessment
Evidential	No known archaeological resource Potential low in view of recent development and suggested earlier history	Proposal would damage any archaeology found to be present, but probability of this is low	No clear evidence of harm
Historical Illustrative	Very limited significance. Utilisation for visitor services established in early 2000s to be continued	Aside from surface addition of drain channels and inspection chamber, once finished the works will not be evident.	No impact
Historical Associative	None identified		
Designed Aesthetic	Little present aside from use of remains of Coronation Wood to screen the car park.	None	No impact
Fortuitous Aesthetic	None identified		
Symbolic	There is a slight commemorative value in naming the wood after the 1910 Coronation	No effect	No impact
Communal	Used as a main means of access to the property for visitors.	Limited effects, though ensuring that water sources are unpolluted could be seen as a community benefit.	No impact

Compost Leachate tank

This part of the site was affected by the works undertaken in the spring of 2019, and relatively little is known of its archaeology. As was discussed in the previous HIA, contemporary C18 references suggest that the soil layers present are likely to be relatively slight, soon giving way to bedrock, unless they have been artificially augmented. That is not entirely impossible, as the area in question was taken into the enlarged bounds of the productive gardens at a date before 1732. On the 1734 plan the site would have been in the south-eastern “bed” of a long narrow walled enclosure, to the south of its medial path/avenue. The nature of that depiction perhaps suggests that this was then mainly a garden of fruit trees, perhaps with little cultivation in the spaces between the linear plantings.

The north-west side of the present enclosure in which the compost area lies had come into existence by the time the first edition OS 6” survey was completed in 1855. The south-east side would come with further sub-division of an earlier larger plot, that had occurred before the first revision of that survey was published in 1891. This shows some

subdividing rectilinear paths in the smaller plot, passing close to the affected site. Subsequent OS editions show no detail at all in the enclosed plot.

The evidence would suggest that this site may have been brought into horticultural use (its setting certainly was) in the earlier eighteenth century and has continued in working use since. Prior to this usage it appears to have been agricultural land very similar to that which is now the site of the car park. Early horticultural usage probably represents a higher risk to any early period archaeology that might have been present on the site than was the case in the car park, though with some potential for horticultural activities to have left some physical trace themselves. However, on the other hand contemporary utility usage is then more likely to have disturbed the site again. There is nothing in the available evidence to suggest that any very specific remains would be expected on the site.

Again the development proposal involves installing a system of relatively superficial drains and a deep collection tank. The insertion trench for the latter will be of the same dimensions as that in the car park, but this example will not be provided with a discharge.

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	Characterisation	Impact	Assessment
Evidential	No known archaeological resource Potential low in view of recent development and suggested earlier history	Proposal would damage any archaeology found to be present, but probability of this is low	No clear evidence of harm
Historical Illustrative	Very limited significance. The ongoing gardening use of the site continue to reflect a historic precedent, in broad terms	The proposal will facilitate ongoing horticultural usage.	No impact
Historical Associative	None identified		
Designed Aesthetic	None identified		
Fortuitous Aesthetic	This is a working part of the property and will continue to be so.	Only change will be addition of surface drainage channels and an inspection hatch. No impact on any heritage value present.	No impact
Symbolic	None identified		
Communal	None identified		