

**Town of Gawler
Contributory Items Assessment**

DESKTOP SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

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prepared for:
Town of Gawler

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1.0 Summary of Preliminary Findings

1.1 The Brief

A Desktop Survey of Contributory Items currently included in Table Ga/6 of the *Town of Gawler Development Plan* was undertaken between October and December 2019. The review has been commissioned by Council as part of a Local Heritage 'Transition' Development Plan Amendment to meet the requirements of the Government of South Australia's new Planning and Design Code (the Code) which was due to take effect from July 1, 2020.

The broad objective of this review is to identify if any of the previously identified Contributory Items are worthy of Local Heritage recognition.

It should be noted that the review does not extend to identifying any new, additional, places of Local Heritage value within the municipal area.

In accordance with the project brief, the Desktop Survey comprised two parts:

- Review of the previous Thematic History included in the Gawler Heritage Study (Hignett & Company 1981)
- Desktop assessment of all Contributory Items located within the nine Historic Conservation Areas designated in the Council's Development Plan.

1.2 Thematic history

A broad, yet succinct, overarching thematic history of Gawler was prepared by Hignett & Co Architects and Planners as part of the *Gawler Heritage Study Stage 1* process in 1981. While that history was divided into chronological phases, it was not modelled on the now commonly accepted *National Australian Historic Theme Framework*. Much of the historical information from previous surveys has been incorporated and is acknowledged in the preparation of this review.

The Framework was developed in 1998 and provides links between the different regional stories in Australia's history and the heritage places which help to illustrate, or demonstrate, that history. The framework also recognises that State and Local historic themes have also developed in parallel. It deals with historic values, although it recognises that natural, social, scientific and aesthetic values may also reside in a place.

In summary, the thematic framework;

- provides a vital structured approach to local heritage survey work;
- guides both the survey work itself, as well as inform the assessment of values of individual places as well as groups of places arising from a survey;
- helps with understanding the specific history of places in a wider context, relating that specific history to broader historical themes in the local area, including whether such themes are more or less important, with many or few places related to the theme, and provide clues to the relative importance of specific places; and
- provides a safety net to ensure consideration of important themes which are not always obvious amongst the readily-found and most obvious population of heritage places.

This commissioned Thematic History of the Town of Gawler takes the relevant sub-groups of The Framework and explores how they relate to the Local historical context and identifies how that has shaped the physical environment which exists today.

The following tasks have been undertaken in order to prepare the Thematic History of the Town of Gawler;

- Review the existing Thematic History as prepared for the Gawler Heritage Study Stage 1
- Source and review other published histories on the development of the Town of Gawler;
- Prepare a revised brief thematic history of the Town of Gawler in line with the recommended framework.

It is important to understand that this *Thematic History* is not a complete chronological history which records the development of Gawler since its establishment. Further, the aboriginal history of the Town of Gawler municipal area does not form part of this brief thematic history.

1.3 Desktop Survey

The study area covered the nine existing Historic (Conservation) Policy Areas identified within the Town of Gawler Development Plan.

All **607** listed Contributory Items located in these Policy Areas were reviewed as a desk-top assessment, using readily available sources of information from previous heritage surveys and published histories, along with on-line resources and with some assistance from Council staff and local history groups.

More detailed research of sources such as historic rate assessment books, digitised newspapers, historic Land Titles through the SAILIS (South Australian Integrated Land Information System) was required to confirm the likely heritage significance of those items currently reviewed as being of 'potential' value.

Items that were clearly unlikely to meet the threshold criteria for listing, or that were confirmed to have been demolished or destroyed, were also identified.

The following figures summarised the preliminary findings:

- 4 places were doubled up/repeated within the existing table, making a total of **603** places to be reviewed;
- **253** places (comprising 42% of items) **would** most likely meet the assessment criteria and were worthy of local heritage listing, subject to obtaining sufficient supporting evidence
- **220** places (comprising 36% of items) **did not** meet the assessment criteria thresholds and were therefore not worthy of local heritage listing
- **130** places (comprising 21%) **may** have met the assessment criteria, subject to additional research and/or site investigations

1.3.1 Limitations and Assumptions

Given the large scope and limited timeframe of the Desktop Survey phase, the preliminary tally was not regarded as an exhaustive and final assessment of all 603 items.

Rather, at that stage, an attempt was made to identify places that were *considered likely* to meet one or more of the criteria for Local Heritage listing, or where there was sufficient evidence to suggest that they *may* meet the criteria. In both cases further and more detailed research was required to confirm that was the case.

The places currently listed as Contributory Items were - in the majority of cases - identified in the Heritage Study carried out on behalf of the Town of Gawler by Hignett & Company in 1981. Not all of the recommendations were adopted by Council at the time.

The same survey identified and recommended the basis for the large Heritage (Conservation) Policy Areas containing the many Contributory Items included. A reasonable starting point for this current process is to ask why a fresh assessment of a place previously assessed as not meeting criteria for local listing is justified.

In many cases the decision to identify a place as a Contributory Item, rather than Local Heritage Place is very clear (poor integrity, marginal, commonplace). In a large number of cases, however, it cannot be understood how the places were assessed as not meeting assessment criteria (for example, the prominent ridge top collection of fine dwellings in Gawler East).

The assumptions underlying this review are that:

- Changes in government planning policies combined with development pressures in the housing market are creating a sensitive environment, where communities perceive a

threat to heritage, and are fearful about what will happen when/if the current level of protection of existing Contributory Items is withdrawn as proposed;

- It is possible that some places that might have been 'borderline' worthy of listing as local heritage places at the time were designated as contributory places instead, given the reassurance of the Conservation Area protection;
- There is, or has been, some notional 'ideal' number of Local Heritage Places underlying the selection of places for local listing, i.e. only the 'best of the best' should be listed;
- Subsequent events since the last study have changed the perspective on what constitutes local heritage, i.e. some types of buildings which were common may now be less so, due to any intervening re-development, demolition, deterioration over time or loss etc;
- Current theoretical approaches have influenced the way heritage value is assessed, eg the application of a thematic frameworks; and
- Contributory Items were identified based on the extent to which they contribute to, or detract from, the desired character of an Historic (Conservation) area. This judgement relies on the external observable appearance of the place and unlike State or Local Heritage Places there are no formal criteria that apply. Evaluation of heritage significance also takes into account additional factors such as associations with people or events, which are often not observable, and which only become discoverable through historical research.
- It was found that addresses, extent of listing and other information about current Contributory Items is not always correct. In several instances it appears that the place listed has been confused with an adjacent property, and in at least one case it is likely that one property has been listed as Local Heritage and the other as Contributory, when the intention was the other way around.
- There are a small number of Contributory Items that appear to have been demolished, though are still listed. These will need to be removed from the table.
- Where it seems that a Contributory Item is associated historically with an already locally listed place, and it is possible to do so, it is recommended that the CI be added to the extent of listing of the existing Local Heritage entry. This can occur if the two places are contained within the one land parcel and/or are under the same ownership.

1.4 Council Endorsement

Following presentation of the preliminary findings to Council in early-December 2019, the initial Desktop Survey was endorsed and instruction was received from Council to proceed with full assessments of the shortlisted places identified as being likely to meet the Criteria thresholds.

On that basis, between December 2019 and March 2020 Flightpath Architects:

- Undertook site visits to survey the Contributory Items identified as being (a) likely and (b) possibly able to meet assessment criteria for Local Heritage listing (subject to further historic research);
- Undertook additional historic research to support the proposed listings;
- Prepare detailed datasheets for the proposed Local Heritage Places.

1.5 Findings and Recommendations

- Throughout the site survey process and with additional research it became clear that a considerable number of the places initially believed to possibly meet the criteria threshold, it became clear with comparative analysis that they were not of Local Heritage significance.

It also became clear that the tight assessment guidelines within the DPTI Practitioner's Guide further limited those places which could be considered to meet the threshold for inclusion.

It was also evident that the large proportion of residential places in the existing Contributory Places which do not meet the assessment criteria threshold table would be adequately described and

included within the recently revised Character Statements for the Policy Areas.

On that basis, as a result of the site visits and additional research, datasheets have been prepared for a proposed **150** Local Heritage Places for Council endorsement.

1.6 Community Response: Addendum

Gawler Council endorsed the report findings on March 19 2020.

The author of this report has received and incorporated below, the following comments relating to the importance to the local community of the use of local materials and builders:

'Gawler built heritage and the unique situation of local input – both materials and building design and construction: the combination of a) and d) provide potential to list all of the buildings that can be demonstrated to have mostly local building materials. We don't have details of precise builders for many buildings but I we could demonstrate that local builders would have built almost all of the buildings involved – the nature of industry at the time meant that travelling out from Salisbury of northern Adelaide to build a house in Gawler was not practical.'

'23 (4) A Development Plan may designate a place as a place of local heritage value if—
(a) it displays historical, economic or social themes that are of importance to the local area; or
(d) it displays aesthetic merit, design characteristics or construction techniques of significance to the local area.

'The history document provides some information on building materials and builders. Local materials include:

- Limestone – from the plains – paddock limestone, some quarried;
- Bluestone – G South hills;
- Sandstone – foothills to east;
- Bricks, including ornate styles for wall tops etc local works from local clay – houses, quoins, u/g tanks, wells, walls, outdoor toilets etc.
- Sand for plaster, mortar from rivers and elsewhere local
- Lime for mortar from local lime kilns, limewash on walls was common instead of paint
- Cinders from local trains and other materials to colour pointing work
- Gravel from rivers and elsewhere local
- Timber – some use of local Redgum
- Cast iron for veranda posts, fence posts, gates etc – local foundries
- Iron lacework for verandas, fences etc – mostly from local foundries
- pine and pug buildings.'

The above comments have been included at the request of Council. Notwithstanding the recommendations of this report, the community expectation remains that most, if not all of Gawler's Contributory Places satisfy Section 23(4) Criteria (a) and (d).