

# Bowden Heritage Precinct

## HERITAGE UPDATE



RenewalSA



### BACKGROUND

Bowden Heritage Precinct encompasses six hectares on the former gasworks site, bounded by the Outer Harbour railway line, Drayton, Chief and Second streets.

The gasworks were originally established in 1863 by the South Australian Gas Company and were operated for more than 100 years by various companies. The most recent of these was Origin Energy, which began winding down operations at the site in the year 2000. The site was acquired by the Land Management Corporation, in 2010. These responsibilities and functions now lie with Renewal SA.

Before the shift to natural gas in the 1960s, coal was burnt at very high heat to produce gas in furnaces known as retorts on the site. All the retorts were dismantled as working facilities

in 1969. The Retort House adjacent to East Street is one of the individually listed State Heritage structures which will be retained as part of the redevelopment of the precinct.

The site has long stood dormant as a result of environment issues created by previous heavy industry uses. Renewal SA purchased the site with a vision to revitalise it as part of the Bowden project by transforming it into a lively, pedestrian friendly neighbourhood.

A comprehensive renewal approach was prepared after several years of detailed investigations and consultation with members from the local community, including the former Bowden Reference Group, which was set up in 2010 and operated for 6 years.

The Heritage Precinct Master Plan is drawn from the broader Bowden Master Plan and Urban Design Guidelines to ensure continuity and connectivity between the various stages of the overall project.

Bowden is re-emerging as a vibrant inner-city destination. It mixes the past with the future, blending history, culture and sustainability into a smarter way to live.

The Bowden Master Plan provides for a blend of retail, commercial, residential and community activity set within a balance of heritage and contemporary architecture that celebrates the industrial character of this unique inner city area. It is focused on a balanced approach to retention and adaptive reuse of heritage and character structures.



Government  
of South Australia

## WHAT IS BEING RETAINED AND HOW

Eight structures of cultural and historic significance are being retained and integrated with the new development, reflecting Bowden's rich industrial heritage and a strong sense of local identity and place. New streets, landscapes and buildings will be added to the Bowden Heritage Precinct to improve accessibility, showcase retained structures, and accommodate a mix of retail, commercial, residential and community activity.

The retained structures include three individually listed State Heritage structures:

- Retort House**  
 Formerly known as Retort House No. 3, built in 1879. Once home to retort furnaces used to manufacture gas from coal, more recently used for storage and maintenance. Located on the corner of East Street and the Outer Harbor Railway Line corridor.
- Chief Street Wall**  
 Prominent bluestone wall and associated metal framework running along Chief Street and the railway corridor. This structure is the partial remnant of former Retort House No. 4, built in the early 1900s.
- Gasworks Chimney**  
 This striking 21 metre high, red brick chimney stack is another surviving remnant of former Retort House No. 4. The chimney once served as a vent for two retort furnaces and it was previously enclosed within the retort house, with just the top protruding.

Character structures to be retained:

- Purifying House**  
 Random rubble and red brick structure, built in 1873. Originally used for gas purification. After the Second World War the interior was adapted to serve as storerooms, laboratories and amenities rooms for workers.
- Works Superintendent's Cottage**  
 Small bluestone cottage believed to date to the early years of the gasworks, between 1870 and 1880. Later used as a meter shop for assembling and testing gas meters.
- Carpenters' Workshop**  
 Also used as a press shop in a former life, most recently used for storage and maintenance. Believed to have been built between 1870 and 1880.
- Chemistry Laboratory**  
 Bluestone structure, dated between 1870 and 1880. Believed to have formerly housed the gasworks chemistry laboratory, last used as an office.
- Bluestone Wall**  
 This random rubble bluestone wall connects the Chemistry Laboratory and Carpenters' Workshop buildings and showcases the tradition of enclosing the site from the surrounding streets.

It is important to note that some structures have previously been known by other names, based on their functions at different times.



PRECINCT BOUNDARY —  
 RETAINED STRUCTURES ■

*Boundaries and maps are indicative*



## ADAPTIVE REUSE

Historic buildings can provide a sense of our past and lend character to communities as well as serving practical purposes now and in the future.

The retained structures will be adaptively reused to give them new life while honouring their history. They will be integrated within the context of their location in the development and sensitively adapted to suit their new uses.

Adaptive reuse also has environmental benefits as it retains the original building's embodied energy. This is defined by the CSIRO as the energy consumed by all of the processes associated with the production of a building, from the acquisition of natural resources to product delivery, including mining, manufacturing of materials and equipment, transport and administrative functions.

In August 2018, Renewal SA received approval to demolish structures of lesser significance on the site through a statutory development approval process. This will enable the adaptive re-use of the selected structures previously mentioned, broader development, accessibility through the precinct and showcasing of retained structures. It will also enable connectivity with earlier completed stages of the broader Bowden project.

At the time of approval, the site was provisionally listed on the South Australian Heritage Register. Under the Development Act 1993, provisional listings are treated the same as confirmed listings when development applications are assessed.

## STATE HERITAGE PLACE LISTING

In June 2015, the southwest section of the site, between East and Chief Streets, was provisionally entered into the South Australian Heritage Register as a State Heritage Place by the South Australian Heritage Council. This listing was confirmed in October 2018, on the basis that it represents important aspects of the evolution of the state's industrial history, has rare qualities that are of cultural significance and has a special association with an organisation of historical importance to South Australia.

The site demonstrates the early pattern of industrial and economic growth in western Adelaide in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The gasworks were a catalyst for industrial expansion in the area, supplying fuel from 1863 onwards to the new factories which sprung up nearby.

The pre-1964 structures illustrate the scale and complexity of coal carbonisation during the first 100 years of gasworks on the site. The energy produced was used for lighting, heating water and many manufacturing processes. In the 1960s, the gasworks transitioned to processing newer products including Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) and natural gas.

The site has a special association with the SA Gas Company, later known as SAGASCO, which was established as a publicly listed company in 1861 to serve the needs of the young colony of South Australia.

It also has cultural significance because it is the only former gasworks site of its kind remaining in the state and this important industrial heritage will be honoured as an integral part of the Bowden Heritage Precinct redevelopment.

This heritage update was published by Renewal SA in November 2018



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## FURTHER INFORMATION

Information about the demolition and remediation process for the precinct is available from:

[www.renewalsa.sa.gov.au/projects/bowden](http://www.renewalsa.sa.gov.au/projects/bowden)

Information about the broader Bowden development:

[www.lifemoreinteresting.com.au](http://www.lifemoreinteresting.com.au)

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