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Inaction not in best interests of the city

THE Minister for Planning, Paul Holloway, has it in his hands to take a historic step towards saving the remaining heritage of Colonel Light's old City of Adelaide (the Square Mile and North Adelaide within the Parkland belt).

He can lay a foundation stone for the future sustainable development of Adelaide by proceeding with the listing of the 431 commercial and residential buildings proposed for heritage listing by the Adelaide City Council in 2009.

The Minister has already sat on the list for nearly a year. The obvious inference is alarming.

Decimation of the character of Adelaide, and rampant overdevelopment of the old city, is not in the interests of existing long-term city property owners.

The minister, who has an economics degree, would appreciate that as an incidence of the law of supply and demand, overdevelopment forces rents down and building vacancies up.

This prejudices the interests of long-term, existing city property owners in favour of "come and go" developers. Tenants migrate to new buildings, often on extensive rent holidays.

The minister has described the Adelaide City Council's list as a "wish list", which is an ominous portent of things to come. Make no mistake, these nominated buildings are magnificent heritage buildings. Council's external heritage consultants reportedly certified each and



every building as complying strictly with the legislative criteria for heritage listing.

The minister has publicly (and no doubt deliberately) "confused" the local heritage listing process with the process of listing state heritage items by suggesting that the list should be "culled" where a building of the same type is already represented on council's heritage list.

The state heritage process lists representative "gems" reflecting the state's past, whereas local heritage involves preserving the character of areas throughout the state.

The minister's approach, which is in conflict with the legislation, would be like listing one 1940's bungalow in Colonel Light Gardens as representative of that area's past, rather than preserving all bungalows, as has occurred, to maintain the area's local character.

South Australians may well ask how it can be that hundreds of bungalows are preserved in Colonel Light Gardens, and numerous turn-of-

the-20th-century houses in Unley, when an array of the state's earliest commercial buildings in our capital city dating between the 1860s and 1890s are not. This is clearly a ridiculous situation, bringing no credit to bear on either our current or indeed past state politicians.

Culling the list, whether by way of direct ministerial action or placing pressure on council to review (or "cull") its proposal to get it through, will represent a constructive refusal by the minister to protect old Adelaide's heritage.

The council will no doubt cave in to requests by the minister out of fear that he might otherwise refuse to list any buildings.

The local heritage requirements normally only need developers to maintain the heritage fabric of buildings to a depth of 12m. The result is that the loss of development potential on large city commercial sites is minor, and no bar to the construction of new buildings.

A homogenous city based upon Adelaide's heritage is more likely to attract development, and tourists, rather than to repel them. This will result in an attractive eclectic blend of old and new, as we saw with the fabulous East End Market development in the 1980s.

If you care about Adelaide's heritage, then you should pay attention to the minister's next step.

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