

1. Background

1.1. Colonel Light Gardens State Heritage Area

South Australia's State Heritage Areas represent significant aspects of the state's rich natural and cultural heritage. Colonel Light Gardens was designated as a State Heritage Area under the *Heritage Places Act 1993* in 2000. The designation ensures that future development of properties and open spaces within Colonel Light Gardens is managed in a way that maintains the State Heritage Area's heritage value.

1.2. Purpose of Heritage Standards

The Heritage Standards have been prepared by Heritage South Australia and are published in accordance with the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* and the *Planning and Design Code (Code)*. They are a supplementary tool of the Code and are referenced in the State Heritage Area Overlay.

Any proposals to undertake development within a State Heritage Area will be referred to the Minister responsible for administering the *Heritage Places Act 1993*, who has the authority to direct the decision. The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) Heritage South Australia (Heritage SA) is the Minister's delegate for decisions on referred development applications. The Heritage Standards form a key part of Heritage SA's assessment of these development proposals.

Heritage Standards are presented in three parts:

- **Background** – the historical development of Colonel Light Gardens and the principles that underpin the State Heritage Area listing
- **Statement of Significance** – the South Australian Heritage Register listing and the context and description of the heritage values
- **Heritage Standards for Development** – Principles and Acceptable Standards for development

1.3. History – Colonel Light Gardens

A model garden suburb for South Australia¹

The Garden City idea was introduced and disseminated in Australia primarily through the Australasian Town Planning Tour of 1914–15, co-organised and led by Charles Reade and William Davidge on behalf of the British Garden Cities and Town Planning Association. Reade was a New Zealand-born journalist turned town planner and Davidge was an English architect-planner. Following the outbreak of the First World War, Davidge returned home. Reade delivered lectures nationally to introduce and promote the concepts of town planning and the garden city idea and the mantra of 'planning on garden city lines'.

After the tour, in April 1915 the South Australian Government invited Reade to become Adviser on Town Planning and to draft a Town Planning and Housing Bill. In 1918 the government elevated him to Government Town Planner. At Reade's urging, in June 1915, the South Australian Government purchased Grange Farm at Mitcham from the estate of William Tennant Mortlock as the site for the construction of a model garden suburb. The sale conditions included that 10 acres of land would be reserved specifically for recreation purposes. Soon after making its purchase, the state gave the entire site over to the Australian Government for use as a First World War military training camp.

In October 1917 Reade hosted the first Australian Town Planning and Housing Conference and Exhibition in Adelaide as a forum to further promote town planning. He arranged an exhibition of material from various parts of Australia and from overseas. Also, he commissioned Victorian architect David William Crawford to draw a bird's eye perspective of the proposed Mitcham Garden Suburb for display in the exhibition. The perspective became Reade's visual promotional tool for the model development. At the second Town Planning and Housing Conference held in Brisbane in 1918 South Australia's Attorney-General Henry Barwell gave a paper in which the Mitcham Garden Suburb plan and its key design elements were formally and publicly described for the first time.²

Following the end of the war, the South Australian Government passed the Garden Suburb Act 1919 which enabled the suburb's establishment and created a Garden Suburb Commission (of one person) responsible for all aspects of the suburb's development and administration.

¹ History – Colonel Light Gardens' kindly authored by Dr Christine Garnaut, January 2021

² Henry Barwell, 'South Australia-Soldiers' Settlements', *Volume of Proceedings of the Second Town Planning and Housing Conference and Exhibition*, Brisbane, 1918, pp.59-75.

The commission administered the garden suburb until the Act was repealed in 1975. Then, Colonel Light Gardens came under the control of Mitcham Council.

The model garden suburb takes shape

Reade left South Australia in December 1920 to work as Government Town Planner in the Federated Malay States. The development of the early suburb was overseen by Garden Suburb Commissioner Charles Davenport Harris (1921–28) assisted by Garden Suburb Secretary Tom Collins Stephens, who succeeded Harris as Commissioner (1928–51). Both were professional colleagues of Reade and understood Garden City planning principles and Reade's intent for the suburb.

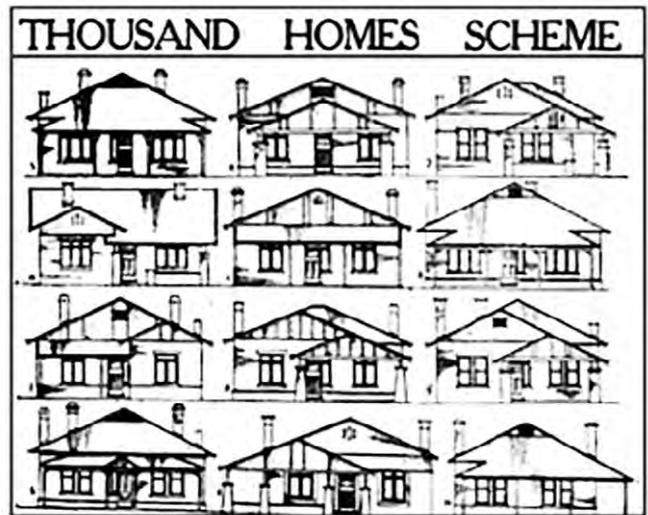
The Mitcham Garden Suburb was named Colonel Light Gardens in April 1921, and in September 'By-laws under the Garden Suburb Act 1919' came into effect. These covered various topics including building setbacks from the street and clearances around buildings, and considerations such as 'location, use and general character of the building [and] harmony in exterior design' to address in assessing building applications.³

In August 1921, the South Australian Government announced the release of the first blocks of land for sale in the suburb – in the north-east corner. Two subsequent land releases were made.⁴

The first houses were built in Lincoln Avenue, Salisbury Crescent and Tidworth Crescent and there were seven by mid-1922.⁵ Work was under way by then in the public realm. Respecting the garden city approach of retaining existing vegetation, surviving trees were preserved on Doncaster Avenue, Flinders Avenue, Freeling Crescent and West Parkway. Trees were reported as beginning to be planted and in July 1922 there were a total of 1077 in avenues along twelve streets.⁶ By 1924 the suburb was connected to reticulated water, sewerage lines were being installed, public transport to the suburb was being improved, sites were set aside for a school and police station, and land had been bought for several churches.

The Thousand Homes Scheme and the modification of Reade's plan

Aspiring to address Adelaide's severe housing shortage, in June 1924 the South Australian Government announced the



Thousand Homes Scheme house designs advertised in The Mail (Adelaide), Saturday 28 June 1924., page 1.

Thousand Homes Scheme, Australia's first mass affordable housing program, for the garden suburb site and purchased additional land west of Goodwood Road to accommodate the targeted number of houses. The suburb's two parts were separated by an arterial road.

The government did not change its goal to establish the suburb as a model garden suburb, but some adjustments were made to the approved plan prepared by Reade. The southern section was modified to accommodate more housing blocks than proposed originally for that part of the suburb. The street pattern was unchanged, but the house blocks were remodelled to a standard size. The open spaces proposed as internal reserves were removed and the final 18 acres set aside for recreational use was reduced in size. The ornamental lake and formal gardens were removed.

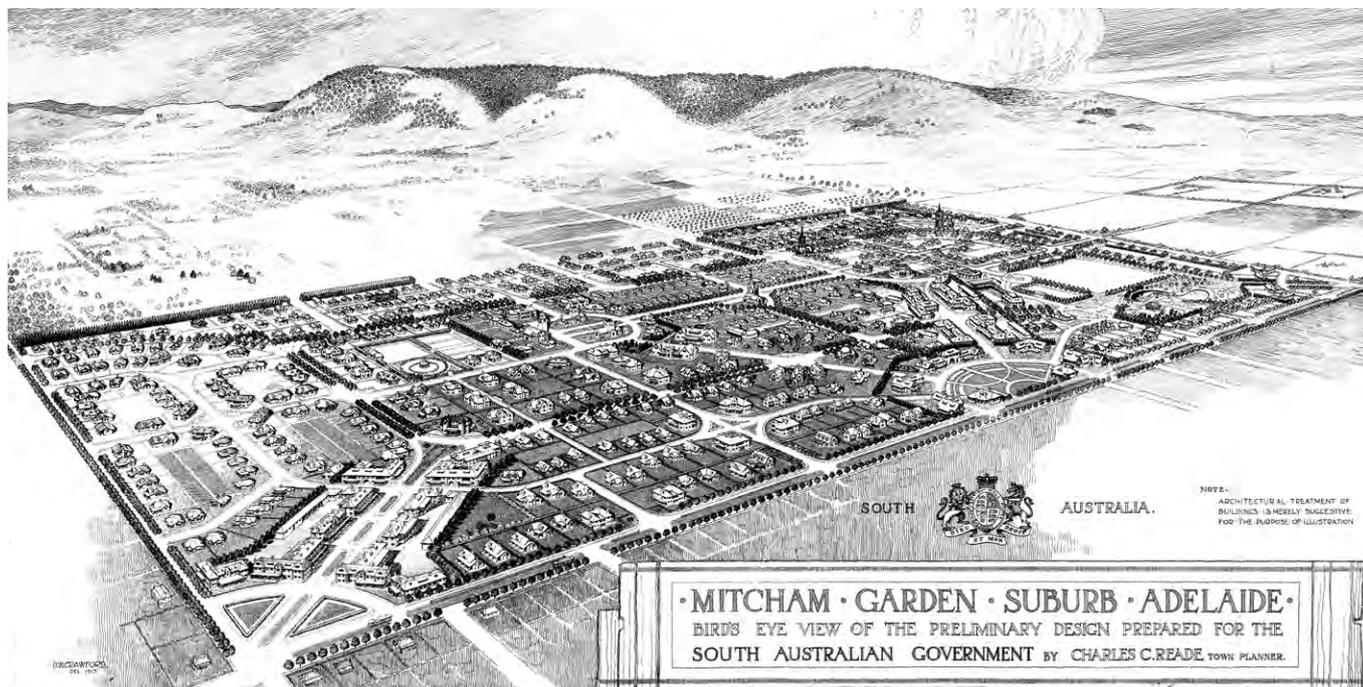
Generally, to fulfil his brief to maximise the number of residential blocks, Government Town Planner Walter Scott Griffiths laid out the western section as a conventional grid with straight streets. Most sites were allocated for housing, the only open spaces being a semi-circular reserve in Light Place and a recreation reserve (Hillview Reserve) between Penang Avenue and Rozelles Avenue. Service lanes that featured in the original section of the garden suburb were not adopted although the plan did incorporate several pedestrian lanes.

3 Garden Suburb Act 1919: 'By-Laws under the Garden Suburb Act 1919', *South Australian Government Gazette* 29/9/1921, pp.719-720.

4 First land sales area boundaries: Grange Road to Flinders Avenue, Flinders Avenue to Salisbury Crescent to East Parkway, East Parkway to the Grove (north side), The Grove to View Street (west side). Roads within the boundaries: Lincoln Avenue, Rosemont Street, Tidworth Crescent, York Place.

5 Christine Garnaut, *Colonel Light Gardens: model garden suburb*, Crossing Press, Sydney, 2006, p.93, 63.

6 Garnaut, *Colonel Light Gardens*, 2006, p.64.



Bird's eye perspective Mitcham Garden Suburb (later Colonel Light Gardens). Original held Mitcham Heritage Research Centre.

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Thousand Homes Scheme houses were constructed in designated areas in the original part of the suburb and entirely in the section west of Goodwood Road apart from on the site of the existing Hanns and Shobbrook farmhouses.⁷ They were built to one of 14 specified designs, and in accordance with the Garden City principle of 'unity but not uniformity' no two houses side-by-side were of the same design. Plans were drawn for the houses by State Bank architects – they modified existing drawings of Soldiers' Homes. Eventually 363 Thousand Homes dwellings were built on the original site for the garden suburb and 332 in the section west of Goodwood Road.⁸

Development in parallel to the Thousand Homes

While the Thousand Homes dwellings were being constructed, people continued to buy blocks and build houses in the northern part of the original garden suburb.⁹ Some of these houses were financed by loans from the State Bank and were built according to plans available from

the bank; therefore, they have design features of Thousand Homes Scheme houses but were not built under the auspices of the scheme.

Public realm development continued, too, in the original section of the suburb as trees were planted in the verges alongside major roads and streets, and in selected median plantations, for example on Broadway. Trees were not intended for or planted in the verges beside narrower residential streets.

'Ornamental plots' at street corners were grassed and planted with 'hardy shrubs'.¹⁰ The suburb's main recreation area, named Mortlock Park, was established with adjacent playing field and a children's playground close to the Education Department's infant and primary school. In a reserve eventually named Reade Park and set aside for active and passive recreation in the northern part of the suburb, areas had been designated for tennis courts, croquet and lawn bowls and for a rotunda and formal gardens.¹¹ Tennis courts and a bowling rink were established initially. Hillview Reserve in the section west of Goodwood Road was developed with four tennis courts, playground equipment, a grassed area and bandstand (later moved to Light Place).

7 The South Australian Government purchased the Hanns and Shobbrook agricultural estates for the Thousand Homes Scheme. The farmhouses associated with the estates as well as a group of existing shops were excluded from the sale.

8 Garnaut, *Colonel Light Gardens*, 2006, p.71.

9 See principal stages of 1920s land sales map in Garnaut, *Colonel Light Gardens*, 2006, p.65.

10 Garden Suburb Commission, *Annual Report, 1927-28*: 1. Available online at: <http://www.clghs.org.au/documents/GSC%20annual%20reports.pdf>.

11 Reade's plan showed four tennis courts. Eighteen were installed by 1926. Garden Suburb Commission, *Annual Report, 1926*

The internal reserves retained at the northern end of the original section of the garden suburb were not a focus of development in the suburb's founding years. They were intended for community recreational and horticultural purposes principally by residents living in the adjacent houses. At first, their focus was on establishing their own houses and gardens but before too long, with approval from the Garden Suburb Commission, one reserve had been converted into two tennis courts, playground equipment was installed in another and trees and shrubs planted in a third.¹²

In December 1927 the Garden Suburb Commissioner declared that 'nearly all the blocks in the suburb are now occupied'.¹³ The initial stage of the suburb's development was complete.

Buildings in the garden suburb

Buildings played a fundamental role in the garden suburb as sites of shelter, activities of various kinds, and of interaction between residents of all ages. They were also familiar landmarks that helped create residents' sense of place. Houses were regarded as critical to fostering healthy, contented and community-minded residents and therefore were considered the focal building type. The style of house was not dictated; rather, adoption of local preference was promoted.

Colonel Light Garden Houses

Overview

The style of houses built in Colonel Light Gardens followed the popular fashion of the day. The majority were built in the founding decade and, through their common scale, form, materials and colours, demonstrated the Garden City principle of 'architectural unity but not uniformity'. The first houses were bungalows derived from the style popularised in America but modified to suit local conditions and materials. Bungalows were built throughout South Australia and in



'Moving-in day', to a Thousand Homes Scheme house, Corunna Avenue. Undated photograph. Original held by J. Ball. Source Mitcham Heritage Research Centre.

Colonel Light Gardens in the 1920s. The Tudor Revival style was increasingly popular from about 1927 although relatively few were built in Colonel Light Gardens due to the lack of availability of building sites by that time.

After Second World War state government building restrictions and a shortage of materials affected dwelling size and materials. The houses built in the suburb in the post-war era reflect the constraints of the time in their 'Austerity' style. Prominent examples include the houses on Piccadilly Circus built on land reserved in the original plan as the suburb's main entrance and intended to feature formal gardens, as well as others in Eton Street on land associated initially with the Garden Suburb Depot.

The Colonial style brick retirement homes built on Kandahar Crescent in the 1960s are typical of their era and ten single-storey semi-detached dwellings constructed in the 1990s by the SA Housing Trust on the site of the former Garden Suburb Depot in Eton Street are sympathetic in form and materials to the suburb's bungalows. Some facades of houses in the suburb display Art Deco elements that were popular from the 1930s. These decorative features were often applied to remodelled building facades.

Form and materials

The earliest houses in Colonel Light Gardens were single-storey in form and sometimes asymmetrical in elevation. They were constructed of unpainted red brick and featured timber verandah posts, window frames and doors generally painted dark brown, green or white. Chimneys were unpainted red brick. Roofs were of unpainted corrugated iron and typically, eaves were wide and overhanging. Gable ends were either timber weatherboards, pressed sheet metal, stuccoed or half-timbered panelling sheeting. As post-war circumstances improved and a wider range of materials became available, sandstone quarried usually in Stirling in the Adelaide Hills and at Brownhill Creek, Mitcham, was used on front walls and



Junction of Salisbury Crescent and Lincoln Avenue looking south, July 1927. Source: History Trust GN12027.

¹² Weidenhofer Architects, Colonel Light Gardens Conservation Management Plan, 2005, p.80.

¹³ Quoted in Garnaut, *Colonel Light Gardens*, 2006, p.5.

verandah pillars, along with glazed brick and stucco. The side and back walls continued to be unpainted red brick. There was no applied decoration. Hardwood post and crimped wire front fences were typical.

From the mid-1920s timber verandah posts were replaced by either sandstone or exposed, glazed or rendered brick piers or columns. Precast concrete columns became more common the late 1920s. Some houses featured a pergola abutting the front wall and supported by timber posts or pillars to match the verandah.

Tudor Revival houses adopted the rectangular form of the bungalow. Roofs were more prominent and steeper in pitch with steep gable ends. They were generally clad in corrugated iron. Front walls were typically sandstone with unpainted red brick to the side and rear.

Thousand Homes were built to one of fourteen designs and were more restrained in size and materials than the privately built houses.¹⁴ They were all constructed of red brick, unpainted, and broken occasionally by a band of stucco. Roofs were corrugated iron. Timber posts or cement rendered brick piers supported the verandah. Where installed (designs 3, 6 and 8), verandah brackets were cut from timber. The houses featured a hardwood post and crimped wire front fence.

Non-residential buildings

With the exception of the Garden Theatre and the Education Department's Primary School building, the suburb's non-residential buildings were of domestic scale. Temporary buildings were constructed of timber and iron and permanent ones were in brick. The buildings include churches (originally Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregational, Catholic and Anglican), shops in two designated commercial precincts (The Strand and Bond Street), the police station and the Garden Theatre (for moving pictures) both on Goodwood Road, two schools (St Therese's Catholic primary and SA Education Department infant and primary), and two meeting halls (Rechabite (now RSL) and Colonel Light Gardens Institute).

From the 1950s most of the original church buildings were replaced by more substantial structures. A new basketball



House at Colonel Light Gardens, ND, Source: History Trust SA GN07685

stadium constructed on the southern edge of Mortlock Park in 1975 was demolished following a major fire in late 1998. The two-storey Community Association building was erected adjacent to the stadium in the 1980s.

Several buildings have changed uses: the Garden Theatre on Goodwood Road was converted to a supermarket in the 1960s and is used in 2021 as a chemist, the Congregational Church on Salisbury Crescent became a childcare centre in 1996, and the police station on Goodwood Road was adapted as commercial premises from the 1990s and is currently (2021) a medical practice.

New development: 1990s onward

Since the mid-1990s a small number of new houses have been built in the suburb. For example, several structurally unsound original dwellings have been replaced by new houses and new houses have been built on Salisbury Crescent on blocks reserved originally for shops (with rear dwellings). Two new shops have been built in The Strand.

1.4. Reference documents

Bechervaise & Ass et al *Colonel Light Gardens Conservation Study*, (1989)

Garnaut, *Christine Colonel Light Gardens: Model Garden Suburb*, Crossing Press, Sydney 1999

Weidenhofer Architects *Colonel Light Gardens Conservation Management Plan* (2005)

1.5. Supporting reference documents

Freestone, Robert *Model Communities: the Garden City Movement in Australia* Thomas Nelson, Melb 1989

Sulman, John *An Introduction to the Study of Town Planning*, Government Printer, Sydney 1921

Garden Suburb Act 1919: ' By-laws under the Garden Suburb Act 1919', South Australian Government Gazette 29/09/1921



Houses at Colonel Light Gardens (Rochester Ave/Kandahar Cres intersection), ND, Source: History Trust SA GN12005

¹⁴ Plans and specifications are held by State Records SA.