Environment and Heritage Minister Marion Scrymgour yesterday inspected the Old Pine Creek Chinatown, which is subject to an Interim Conservation Order while its heritage values are assessed.

Ms Scrymgour met with representatives of mining company Burnside – who are the leaseholder of the mining site at Pine Creek, the local mining operator, the Pine Creek Community Council and National Trust.

Ms Scrymgour said the aim of the visit was to see the historical remains first hand and discuss options for conserving the heritage in a way that will see mining proceed.

“The NT Government sees heritage as very important for maintaining our lifestyle and sense of identity, and it also plays a very significant role for local tourism,” she said.

Old Pine Creek Chinatown has been nominated for permanent heritage protection, and following some disturbance to the site an Interim Conservation Order (ICO) has been placed over a small part of the mining lease. This will allow the required heritage assessment to be conducted.

“As Heritage Minister this was the responsible and proper action for me to take, however the ICO does not itself mean that the site will be given permanent protection,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“A thorough assessment, taking into account community views, is required, and I have asked the Heritage Advisory Council to finalise this assessment as a matter or urgency.

“The mining company made it clear to me yesterday that while the ICO is an issue they want resolved, it is not the issue that will determine whether or not mining proceeds.”

Ms Scrymgour said she was aware of the importance of mining to the Pine Creek community both in the past and into the future.

“I have listened to the views of all interested parties, and I am very confident that with goodwill and some creative thinking, the future of mining in Pine Creek can be secured in a way that continues to celebrate its mining heritage.”

The Old Pine Creek Chinatown site includes the remains of a Chinese Temple, Yet Loong Chan Battery and a Chinese oven. The site was occupied in the 1800s during which more than 700 Chinese worked in the goldfields.