

Memo

To: Brenda Guy, Manager, Community Development, Town of Gananoque
From: Carl Bray, Bray Heritage
Date: Thursday, August 28, 2014
RE: Island Harbour Club (175 St. Lawrence Street) Heritage Impact Study: Peer Review

Dear Brenda,

Thank you for requesting my firm to prepare a peer review of the Heritage Impact Study (HIS) submitted for this project. The report, dated May, 2014 and prepared by Golder Associates, was sent to me along with elevations and plans for the proposed development. I have reviewed these documents in relation to the Town of Gananoque's Heritage Impact Study Guidelines (attached to the Golder report as Appendix A).

Study Context

The report addresses a development application made for the former industrial property bounded by Kate, St. Lawrence, Market, and Water Streets in the Lowertown district of Gananoque. This was the site of the Mitchell & Wilson Ltd. construction works which, for much of its history in the 20th century, consisted of the manufacture and storage of construction materials. The site also included oil storage tanks on one corner of the property. The industrial uses ceased operation and the site was converted to commercial uses before closing and the property being acquired by the Town. The property has since been purchased by a private land development company and is proposed to be redeveloped as a four storey mixed commercial residential complex known as the Island Harbour Club.

The Heritage Impact Study was one of several studies required by the Town in order for the proposed development to proceed. The Town's Official Plan (Section 5.4.9) outlines the conditions and requirements for Heritage Impact Studies. In this instance, the requirement is triggered primarily by the adjacency of a heritage property, the former Pump House, designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

At the time the HIS was submitted, there remained several structures on the property. The HIS determined that these structures had no heritage significance. The structures have since been demolished. Archaeological and environmental/geotechnical studies have been prepared separately and are not the subject of this review.

Study Scope

The Study appears to address the majority of the items listed in the Town's HIS Guidelines. It provides a very comprehensive review of the site's development history within the context of the history of the town. It reviews the planning policy context thoroughly, from Provincial policy down to the Town's planning regulations. Lowertown is subject to special policies via the Lowertown Master Plan and these are reviewed for their relevance to heritage resource conservation. Overall, the report assesses impact within a broad historical and policy context.

Impact Assessment

The (formerly) existing buildings on the property were assessed as part of the HIS and determined to have no cultural heritage significance (Section 5). As a result, the Study recommended neither listing on the Town's Register of Heritage Properties nor designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. These recommendations were based on a visual inspection of the buildings, informed by the historical research conducted on the site's development history.

Although I agree with the conclusion that the buildings did not warrant protection, the Study could have addressed the Town's HIS Guidelines more specifically had it undertaken the following tasks:

- Provided a general assessment of the condition of the buildings, as noted in Guideline 3.2.5, in order to support the conclusion that they could be removed;
- Provided more information on the urban context of the proposed development, by including a site plan and photographs or images showing the development in that context, as noted in Guideline 3.4.3 (this would also help address Guideline 3.4.2.2 which discusses "neighbourhood appearance"); and
- Specifically addressed the issue of potential incorporation of all or portions of the existing buildings within the new development, as stated as an option for non-heritage resources in Guideline 3.6.3.3.

Impact on adjacent heritage resources – the Pump House – is addressed and recommendations made for ensuring that views of the Pump House are not unduly restricted.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the HIS is a comprehensive report providing the Town with professional recommendations supported by thorough research into the property's history and policy context. It addresses the Town's HIS Guidelines sufficiently to justify the Study conclusions and recommendations. The Lowertown Master Plan is addressed through assessment of views and through description of the property's history. Suggestions are made for both the content of any interpretation of that history as well as for incorporation of an industrial artifact (pulley) into the new development.

While this Study is sufficient for the Town's purposes, it might be advisable for the Town to consider ensuring that future HIS reports slightly expand their scope to include assessment of impact on the surrounding urban context. While the Golder report was careful to avoid commentary on urban design, it did comment on building design which, in this case, will have an impact on the neighbourhood.

How this could affect the proposed development is a factor of the area's history and current character. The subject property was formerly part of a predominantly industrial area, served by branch rail lines and characterized by outdoor storage of materials next to industrial buildings of various shapes and sizes. Aside from some housing extant still in the early 20th century, the area was not residential in character. The area two blocks north, however, had and still has the character of a stable and mature residential neighbourhood. As a result, the new development can be seen in the context of the former industrial character but also as establishing a new, predominantly residential character. The interface between the adjacent residential neighbourhood and the new residential development needs further consideration by the Town in order to ensure an effective transition, both visually and functionally. The issue of a compatible relationship between new, higher density development and existing development still remains to be addressed.

In terms of this development, the proposed building attempts to make a compatible relationship by taking some design cues from the adjacent residential area, such as balconies, chimneys, varied massing (including towers), and brick and wood detailing. But these are perhaps token gestures, given the contrast in scale between the proposed building and the single family dwellings predominant in the adjacent neighbourhood.

However, this contrast in size, if not in use, has a historical precedent that may help ensure an acceptable transition. The new building's massing echoes some of the larger of the former industrial buildings (such as the former Cow and Gate factory) once located nearby in Lowertown. As the first of a series of predominantly residential developments in this area, this project will establish a precedent for building design and urban design that still has echoes of the past.

As a result, the ways in which the Town can address the issue of the evolving character of this part of the community will be through the types of interpretation suggested in the Golder report and in the Lowertown Plan as well as by encouraging the type of medium scale development recommended here, with proper regard for the transition to adjacent land uses. In concert with the types of improvements to the public realm recommended in the Lowertown Plan, the change in urban character brought about by conversion of industrial lands to residential and commercial can be understood in its historical context and support the Town's broader goals of celebrating its past while fostering its future.