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September 14, 2025

Excerpt from brief presented to City of Ottawa Built Heritage Committee

TO: Built Heritage Committee
FROM: Heritage Ottawa Advocacy Committee

RE: Meeting #34, September 15, 2026

4.4 1485 and 1495 Heron Road - Heritage Permit Application

HO recognizes the thorough review and documentation in both the Heritage Impact Statement and the staff report. We have also reviewed the Zoning Memo submitted in support of the Zoning By-law Amendment.

We are in support of many of the recommendations made to bring this important site back to life.

However, we have a number of concerns and questions.

Delegation of approvals

While we respect the need for the City and Build Canada Homes to "*advance the shared objectives of expediting the redevelopment of this site*," we are very concerned by the statement that ongoing approvals including further details of the design will be confirmed through the subsequent Site Plan Control process. We are also concerned that the approval of future applications under Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act are to be delegated to the Program Manager, Heritage Planning Branch. We understand that the Conservation Design Guidelines will be applied during future applications for new construction and additions when more detailed information is available.

However, we feel that Heritage Ottawa, the neighbourhood community, and the Built Heritage Committee, are being asked to sign a blank cheque. Surely the need to reduce delays and the benefits of public consultation can be better balanced.

Demolition and Replacement of Buildings C & K

We understand that the initial phase of development concerns Buildings 1 to 4C, combining mid-rise apartment buildings and stacked townhomes which allows for some further consideration of the recommendation to remove buildings C and K and to approve the proposed replacement buildings.

The removal of Buildings C and K will have significant impacts on the verticality and visual balance of the overall site. The demolition of Buildings C and K removes critical vertical architectures that historically framed Building A (the Chapel) and enclosed the campus.

Construction of stacked townhouses (Building 4b) - located where Building C stands today - will remove the role of Buildings C and K as "*the main vertical anchors of the site that flank and frame the central campus.*" The proposed replacement buildings do not "*conserve the architectural balance of the sit*e" cited in the HIA as a reason to remove both buildings and, in fact, will lead to "*a skewed vertical presence*" said to be the reason to remove both C&K.

We appreciate that buildings C & K present many challenges for adaptive reuse such as student housing, hostel, shelter or single occupancy units. The location of the property "*far from high order transit, post-secondary, social service or employment hubs*" makes these potential uses more challenging.

However, we question the conclusion that there are no appropriate users for the buildings in their current configuration. Supportive housing would include necessary services for residents. The City is working to decentralize hostels, shelters, and social services from the downtown and, therefore, there may be an opportunity here for innovative solutions to address the homelessness problem.

Have the applicants consulted with non-profit housing providers and other organizations working in this field about the potential of these buildings? The goal of retaining and reusing the heritage assets of this site may depend on widening the field of potential uses.

Heron Road is currently served by several all-day, frequent service bus routes. Given the large-scale intensification proposed at this site and at the former Archdiocese property on Kilborn Avenue as well as the current Heron Gate Community redevelopment to the east, improved transit will be required.

Massing and design

The proposed Minor Zoning By-law Amendment removes the stepback condition and the maximum building length and width limits for mid-rise structures imposed in the Conservation Guidelines. This poses a risk to the original scale or proportions of the campus, and will encourage monolithic arrangements of massing in the form of imposing, sheer walls.

Construction of a new six-storey building (Building 8) along the western edge of the site, incorporating the façade of Building J and located where buildings H and I were and partially where Building K stands today, is problematic. The length of this building is not characteristic of the original site layout - the massing should be broken up.

The proposed additions to Buildings D, E, and J are to be integrated with the retained structures using a similar design language. However the Heritage Impact Assessment has not delineated the specific structural and architectural motivations for these adjustments beyond general adaptive reuse.

Modernist institutional architecture derives its integrity from spatial depth and honest structural expression often found in other cohesive structural facets of the building rather than simply its 2D facade. Disclosure is critical, as Recommendation 2 has requested Council to delegate alteration approvals to City staff, which means that contentious details of these facade additions will bypass future public or Built Heritage Committee hearings.

Buildings B and L
A contemporary addition is proposed on the north façade of Buildings B and L. The concept plan is not clear about the location of this addition which will result in "*a direct alteration to the heritage attributes*."

The Chapel - Building A
Unlike the other buildings, the interior of the Chapel (Building A) is part of the designation. Its architectural attributes are specific to its liturgical use and the chapel's central plan, which present challenges in its adaptive reuse for modern residential or commercial purposes without violating said protected attributes. The strategies that will be employed in the rehabilitation and conservation of a once sacred interior like Building A (Chapel) should be the subject of public consultation.

The new nine-storey volumes to the northeast of the chapel, instead of the four-storey buildings proposed in the 2024 demonstration plan, will impact the "*iconic silhouette of the Chapel and its visual dominance on the sit*e."

We support the condition that an analysis of impacts on this view should be included as part of a future application. It should be possible to shift the proposed massing and height in order to better protect the valued silhouette of the Chapel.

Landscape Plan
We strongly endorse the condition to require the submission **"*of a heritage landscape plan to ensure that the Modernist landscape design of the property is protected and conserved as part of the overall redevelopment*."**