



31 July 2018

Heritage Ottawa to Built Heritage Sub-Committee

Re: APPLICATION TO ALTER THE FORMER SISTERS OF THE VISITATION MONASTERY,
114 RICHMOND ROAD

Heritage Ottawa has reviewed the proposal for rehabilitation and development of the property located at 114 Richmond Road.

While we are encouraged by the revised approach to conserving the former Monastery building and its significant heritage features, Heritage Ottawa remains concerned that aspects of this proposal ignore important recommendations and guidance provided by the Peer Review Panel (established in 2010) and, more recently, by the Cultural Heritage Impact Statement (CHIS). In particular, we note the following:

Heritage Ottawa opposes the demolition of any part of the historic building, specifically the west wing of the former Monastery. As noted in the Statement of Cultural Heritage Value and the CHIS, the west wing is an integral part and character defining element that completes the composition and expresses the function of this place as a Monastery. The proposed replacement wing disrupts and threatens this legibility. While we accept the removal of the south wing, **we strongly oppose demolition of the west wing and urge further investigation into the retention and adaptive reuse of this wing of the building.**

In 2010, a Peer Review Panel was established to guide redevelopment of the site. The Panel provided explicit guidance on the protection of the Monastery when it suggested that: *“... any height of the building to the south should be distanced from the Convent.”* The current Zoning Bylaw reinforced this guidance by defining a “No Building” area within a tapered space, measuring 6.1 m at its narrowest point, to the south of the existing building. The current proposal disregards this important guidance and the Zoning provisions by proposing a 9-storey building that not only extends into the “No Building” envelope; it proposes a scale and massing that are disproportionate and incompatible with the Monastery building.

The short arm of the L-shape extends beyond both the footprint and the building envelope of the existing wing that it proposes to replace, and is totally out of scale with the existing building. It also extends the 9-storey component to the north, linking with the existing building, where no new construction is permitted. The sharp stepping-down from 9 to 4 storeys along this wing is grossly insufficient to provide the spatial relief required to protect the Monastery from eclipse by adjacent

construction. A greater and more distinct separation is required between the existing building and any proposed addition or construction to the south.

Regarding the alignment of the 9-storey residential module, Heritage Ottawa supports the CHIS recommendation to reduce the protrusion of the west elevation of this module. **It is recommended that the west elevation of the 9-storey building be aligned with the existing west face of the Chapel.**

It is understood that a physical link between the existing and new building is desired. However, the replacement of heritage fabric to make this link is simply not justified. Any above-grade connection to the existing building must be discreet and no higher than 9.0 metres (per the current Zoning By-law). **Heritage Ottawa recommends a more explicit, yet discreet connection to differentiate new construction from existing**, and to allow the Monastery to continue to read as a separate building, distinct from the massing of the new construction.

The retention of certain heritage features is a positive component of the current proposal. Reinterpretation of the interior courtyard, the retention of dormers, windows and verandas, and retention of two significant interior spaces — The Elms and the Chapel, which are designated portions of the property — are welcome initiatives of the current proposal. Heritage Ottawa acknowledges the work that Heritage Staff undertook to achieve these outcomes.

Heritage Ottawa also supports the Staff recommendation regarding the “Holding” zone for the 9-storey component of the project. The creation of this zone is aimed at ensuring the restoration of the historic Monastery prior to permitting development of the 9-storey module.

In conclusion, we reiterate that Heritage Ottawa remains concerned that significant aspects of this proposal ignore important recommendations and guidance provided by the Peer Review Panel and the Cultural Heritage Impact Statement. We urge the BHSC to consider these concerns and to **oppose demolition of the west wing as proposed**, in favour of further investigation into the retention and adaptive reuse of this wing. We further urge the BHSC to **recommend significant design refinements to the 9-storey building with the objective of minimizing the impact of its form and massing on the existing heritage building.**

Thank you for considering our comments.

Linda Hoad

Co-Chair, Heritage Ottawa

CC to: Sally Coutts, MacKenzie Kimm