

12 September 2014

Slobodanka Lekic, Manager of Building Design & Construction
The Corporation of the City of Cambridge
50 Dickson Street, Cambridge, ON

Re: Old Galt Post Office – Ideas Exchange and Restaurant Project
12 ½ Water Street South, Cambridge, ON

ERA Architects Inc. was engaged by the City of Cambridge to prepare a Conservation Master Plan for the Old Post Office Building. In Section 5.0 of that report we recommended that all conservation work be carried out in accordance with the Eight Guiding Principles and the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places. Since preparing our report, we have had the opportunity to review the 100% Schematic Design proposal including the proposed repairs to the heritage fabric for the project. We have been asked to provide comments regarding the project's conformance with the Principles and the Standards and Guidelines.

In general, we find the massing, transparency and level of connection with the heritage building is respectful of its heritage value. Specifically, the ground floor addition is a large glazed area that permits views of all sides of the heritage building. At the 2nd and 3rd floors there is a link on the south elevation that has minimal connection to the building and it is again transparent so that the features of the building are visible on the interior and exterior.

We have reviewed the Eight Guiding Principles and find that the proposal addresses all eight. Two key principles of the eight that govern such proposals are reversibility and legibility. With regard to legibility, the proposal fully satisfies this requirement by being of its time and thoroughly distinguishable from the heritage resource. In the case of reversibility, there are some alterations to the heritage fabric that facilitate efficient use of the site, such as introducing an opening on the south elevation at the third floor and modifying a portion of the south addition. Mitigation for these alterations is being addressed through documentation and storage of the fabric. Interpretation of the alteration can also provide an appropriate mitigation. In this way the project is understood to be reversible.

With respect to the Standards for Rehabilitation we believe that the proposal is in conformance with the twelve standards that apply. A key phrase within the standards that can be used as a yard stick for evaluating additions is, "make the new work physically compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place." We believe that these three requirements must be achieved in a balance but they are somewhat conflicting and so each is satisfied to a varying degree.

In the case of this proposal, it is strongly distinguishable, in its material, form and

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relationship to the heritage building. We also believe that it is compatible with the heritage building in that it respects the many details and features of the building and the key views from the northeast and northwest. The additions are not visible in the view from the northeast and from the northwest it is prominent but in balance with the heritage building.

Finally, the proposal is subordinate to the heritage building to a lesser degree, in that the addition is largely restricted to the ground floor on the west and to the south, the two least prominent (and most heavily altered in the past) areas of the heritage building. Though the third floor cantilever is prominent it still remains subordinate in that it is clearly separated from the heritage building with a modest link that acts as a reveal between the two. The cantilever is positioned to the south and west to ensure that it does not obscure key views. Finally, as a contribution to the understanding and appreciation of the heritage building the third floor meeting room provides the opportunity of having a viewing position that allows a new view of the building from the roof level and also affords a panoramic view of the heritage river and the context of the old town of Galt.

Based on our review of the proposal we believe that at this stage of the design, it continues to be in conformance with the heritage principles that we have advised should govern the development of the project.

Sincerely,



Andrew Pruss
Principal
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