

**RPRA comments to be added to the City of Ottawa Heritage staff report for
1 Maple Lane/1112 Lisgar Road
BHC meeting November 6, 2023**

This is an egregious example of demolition by neglect. Constructed in about 1925, this Tudor Revival style house is a Grade I house. Among the most important heritage structures in Rockcliffe, it is a local landmark. The Heritage Committee of the Rockcliffe Park Residents Association is dismayed that this historic house has been so badly neglected for so long that engineering reports and city staff recommend that there is no option but to demolish it. **This is a method used by some owners to circumvent heritage protections.**

The Rockcliffe Park Heritage Plan is designed to strongly protect Grade I houses – demolition can occur very rarely : it “*will only be permitted in extraordinary circumstances including, but not limited to, fire or natural disaster*”. The circumstances at 1 Maple Lane/1112 Lisgar Road have nothing to do with fire, natural disaster, or anything extraordinary.

This case will be seen as setting a precedent. Approving the demolition would encourage others to follow a course of calculated neglect. It is a startling fact that of the 33 buildings on the city’s Heritage Watch List for the entire city, 10 are in Rockcliffe Park. (And there are in fact more than 10 at risk in Rockcliffe.)

First, and at the very least, the proposed redevelopment of the property should be required to strictly follow the provisions and intent of the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Plan. It does not and therefore should not be approved.

In Rockcliffe, it is Grade I properties that set the parameters – the limits - for new development. When an existing Grade I property is itself destroyed by neglect, the new development should be required to strictly conform to the parameters of the destroyed property. Otherwise, demolition by neglect of Grade I properties will be encouraged by paving the way to the building

of larger and larger homes – with financial benefit to the owner – and to the detriment of the heritage character of Rockcliffe Park.

In this application, the existing side yard and rear yard setbacks are significantly reduced. The mass is significantly increased, and the height is not clearly restricted to the existing height. Green space is significantly eroded by failing to confine the redevelopment to the existing footprint.

None of this should be permitted.

The Rockcliffe Park Heritage Plan specifies that existing materials and extensively deteriorated or missing parts of character-defining elements be replaced in kind. It also requires that “[Half] timbering and other features associated with the Tudor Revival shall be retained”.

Existing materials and aspects of the character-defining style are not replaced in kind. The only two architectural features that remain in the application are the asymmetry and the irregular plan of the structure. The gable shed (jerkinhead) metal roof, generous overhanging eaves, stucco material, half timbering, and wrought iron gate of the current Grade I home are important heritage attributes of this property. **It should be required that existing materials and these heritage attributes be replaced in kind.**

Some of the provisions of the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Plan that are relevant are set out in more detail below.

Second, we ask why the city’s Heritage Watch List has failed to prevent demolition by neglect.

The City of Ottawa website indicates that “A Property Standards Officer visits each property on this list quarterly and issues orders for board-up, graffiti removal, repair, restoration or property maintenance as required.” Why did the City not require the owner to restore or repair this building some years ago so that this demolition could have been avoided? If the City did ask for work to be done, why was the work not done or not done well enough to conserve this building? Where was the enforcement? What strong measures can the city take to bolster the effectiveness of the Heritage Watch List?

Third, this historic Grade I building should be recorded and archived

The Rockcliffe Park Heritage Plan provides: “In the rare instance that the demolition of a Grade I building is permitted, heritage staff may require that the building be recorded and the information be deposited at the City of Ottawa Archives.” **The owner of this property should be required to do this.**

More detailed comments

Importance of this property

Both the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and the Heritage Survey sheet indicate that this 1925 house is strategically located at the intersection of 3 roads: Road, Maple Lane, and Minto Place. It is located at the gateway into Rockcliffe Park and is surrounded by numerous grade I properties including the next houses over on Minto, Lisgar, and Maple, and is 3 houses away from the iconic Norwegian Embassy Residence also on Lisgar Road. It is also located across from the Governor General's Residence.

The Heritage Impact Assessment states that this building is a local landmark.

Owners' responsibility for demolition by neglect (HDC Plan 7.3.2)

The neglect this building has suffered is the reason our community and the City of Ottawa are losing this landmark. *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* repeatedly states the importance of regular maintenance to help preserve a cultural heritage landscape. The RP HCD Plan also states that maintenance is the key to conservation and is the responsibility of property owners. The owners of this property have not complied with this part of the HCD Plan.

Both the Remisz and the Patterson reports, commissioned by the applicant, cite the lack of maintenance as responsible for the level of damage in the structure.

“The building exhibits major signs of deterioration. It has been *abandoned* and left *derelict* for several years. Remisz” p. 1

“Due to moisture and the freeze-thaw cycle there is continuing damage to all timber structural elements at all different levels” “Water presence and long-term excessive moisture accelerate deterioration of all the structural members. *Lack of heating* in the winter season causes frost penetration in the foundations and all other components weakening the building structure.” Remisz p 2

“The building was *abandoned* for several years and was *not maintained* over that period. The building was subjected to extensive water damage due to the *deteriorating condition of the roof*. As a result, the building was impacted with significant mould growth“ Patterson report p. 1

“The roof was sloped and shingled. However, the *roof did not appear to have been regularly maintained*” Patterson report p. 2

All of these statements strongly indicate the high level of neglect on the part of the owners.

Select important provisions of the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Plan

Section 5.0: Key objectives of the Plan are:

“To conserve Grade I buildings and natural features according to the “Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.”

Comment: This has failed since demolition is being recommended by the City.

“To ensure that new house construction is compatible with, sympathetic to and has regard for the height, massing and setbacks of the established heritage character of the streetscape in order to conserve the character and pattern of the associated streetscape, while creating a distinction between new and old.”

Comment: The proposed construction has only had regard for the front yard setback. The massing of the proposed structure will be greater than what is there now. As per measurements on GeoOttawa have a greater footprint than the surrounding Grade I homes which according to the HCD Plan, give direction as to what can be built.

Section 6: Statement of Cultural Heritage Value / Heritage Attributes:

“The unobtrusive siting of the houses on streets and the **generous spacing** relative to the neighbouring buildings” and “**Generous spacing** and setbacks of the buildings”.

Comment: While the front yard setback remains very similar to the original, the rear yard set back, which is currently already non conforming, is even further reduced. **At 1.5 m and 1.32 m** this cannot be accepted as generous spacing. Zoning bylaws require a minimum of 11m as the rear yard setback.

“The predominance of stucco and stone houses over and the relative rarity of brick buildings”.

Comment: While brick is a quality material, it is not common in Rockcliffe and fails to replace in kind the current material which is stucco and timber. Shingle siding is also not common in Rockcliffe. The proposed shingle roof also does not acknowledge the current metal roof.

Section 7.3.2: Conservation and Maintenance

”The Guidelines below are intended to provide direction to property owners to assist in the long-term conservation and enhancement of their buildings.

It is the responsibility of individual property owners to manage properties in compliance with these Guidelines. Regular maintenance is critical to the success of the HCD. Standard 8 of the Standards and Guidelines clearly states the importance of maintenance.

Comment: This illustrates the HCD plan requirement that owners maintain their properties. The owners in this case have not.

“Maintain character-defining elements on an ongoing basis. Repair character-defining elements by reinforcing their materials using recognized conservation methods. **Replace in kind any extensively deteriorated or**

missing parts of character-defining elements, where there are surviving prototypes”.

Comment: The city has the responsibility to require, and the owners have the responsibility to carry out, these repairs. This did not happen. All character-defining elements should be replaced in kind. Which in this case is the entire house due to the neglect of the owner.

“Many Rockcliffe Park houses were designed in the Tudor Revival style and feature half timbering. This timbering and other features associated with the Tudor Revival shall be retained”.

Comment: This uses strong language to indicate that this is a style that should be conserved in the HCD. This has not been achieved.

Section 7.4.3: Landscape – New Buildings and Additions

(4) “**The front lawns and side yards of new buildings shall** protect the continuity and dominance of the soft landscape within the HCD.”

Comment: This is strong language - front lawns and side yards **must** protect the continuity and dominance of the soft landscape. Yet in this application the existing side yard setbacks and the rear yard setback are significantly reduced, eroding rather than protecting this heritage attribute.

(7) “**Setbacks**, topography and existing grades, trees, pathways and special features, such as stone walls and front walks **shall be preserved.**”

Comment: Again this is strong language which **requires** that setbacks be preserved. It does not allow room for interpretation. It means the footprint of the new building has to be the same as the existing building.

(Note that the HIA states that this requirement has been fulfilled when in fact the setbacks of the Grade I property are not preserved.)
