



100 John West Way
Aurora, Ontario
L4G 6J1
(905) 727-3123
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora
Heritage Advisory Committee
No. HAC20-012

Subject: Potential Conversion of the Petch House
Prepared by: Carlson Tsang, Planner/Heritage Planning
Department: Planning and Development Services
Date: November 2, 2020

Recommendation

- 1. That Report No. HAC20-012 be received; and**
- 2. That the Heritage Advisory Committee comments regarding the conversion of the Petch House to a wedding chapel be received and referred to staff for consideration and action as appropriate.**

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Heritage Advisory Committee with information for providing comments on the potential conversion of “the Petch Log House” located at 86 John West Way into a wedding chapel.

- The upgrades required to convert the Petch House to a wedding chapel will not impact the attributes of the building. Staff support the proposal as it will make better use of the building and create a valuable community resource for Aurora.

Background

The Petch Log House was originally located at 15395 Leslie Street on farmland. The building was constructed in 1840 by the Petch family who immigrated to Canada in 1818 from England. The building was built in the log cabin style, which was one of the earliest European construction methods brought to Canada in the early 19th Century. The building was recognized as one of the Town’s oldest buildings and a significant heritage resource for its historic association with Aurora’s early settlement history.

In 2003, the farm was sold to SmartCentres for development. The log house was temporarily relocated to a new site and left unoccupied for several years, which led to severe deterioration. The Town evaluated the building and determined that the most effective restoration strategy was to dismantle the building while saving all usable components, and rebuild the building as closely as possible to its original appearance.

In 2012, the building was rebuilt with approximately 70% of its original materials and relocated to its current location at 86 John West Way on the Town's property (see Attachment 1). Since the Town took ownership of the building, it has remained empty until as a new use could be determined.

At its meeting on February 27, 2019, Council requested Staff investigate the feasibility and cost for the Petch House to be converted into a wedding chapel. The Building Division indicates that it would be possible to convert the building into a wedding chapel as it presently exists with minimal upgrades subject to the following conditions:

- Wedding ceremonies would not be allowed during the winter months;
- Permission to use the washrooms at the Senior Centre or Town Hall is obtained;
- Natural air ventilation be provided by using openable windows and doors; and,
- A maximum occupant load of ten (10) persons would be allowed.

If the building were used for wedding ceremonies on a year round basis, it needs to be upgraded with electrical facilities including lighting and a HVAC system in order to comply with Building Code requirements. The upgrades would increase the maximum occupant load to fifty (50) persons. As long as the chapel operates in the same hours of operation as the Senior Centre or Town Hall, the building would not be required to provide any sanitary facilities under the Building Code.

These recommendations were communicated to Council in Report No. PDS18-038 at its meeting in April 2018. There were discussions about the concerns raised by the Aurora Seniors Association regarding inadequate parking and washroom facilities. Council deferred the item and requested staff to obtain comments from the Heritage Advisory Committee prior to making a final decision.

Analysis

The upgrades required to convert Petch House into a wedding chapel will not impact the attributes of the building. Staff support this proposal as it will make better use of the building and create a valuable community resource for Aurora.

Section 13.7 of the Town's Official Plan states that where a change in function of a Town owned heritage resource is being contemplated, the potential adverse impacts of the heritage attributes and significance shall be considered and mitigated. Although the Petch Log House is not in its original form and is not designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the Town prepared a heritage brief in 2013 after the building was rebuilt which identifies the following elements as important attributes (see Attachment 2):

Exterior Elements

- shallow pitched roof with end gables, soffits, eaves and wooden fascia;
- three-bay facade;
- all window openings;
- Reconstructed 6 over 6 sliding sash wood windows on north-east, south-west, and south-east elevations;
- Reconstructed 3 over 3 sliding sash windows on north-west and south-east elevations;
- centered front door opening;
- off-set door openings and doors on north-west elevation and north-east elevation;
- Lap key joints and hand hewn squared log construction;
- Roof cladding with cedar shakes;
- Wood trim around all windows and doors on all elevations.

Interior Elements

- Exposed hand hewn squared logs;
- Chinking between logs;
- Exposed structural beams;
- Mezzanine;
- Exposed roof cladding.

The upgrades required for the conversion will not negatively affect any of the above attributes. There will be no changes to the physical appearance of the building on the street. As such, staff do not anticipate there will be any adverse impact on the heritage integrity or aesthetics of the building.

Where a heritage building can no longer function with its original use, repurposing it through adaptation is a great way to retain its presence while allowing it to serve a new practical purpose in our modern communities.

Staff consider a wedding chapel to be an appropriate adaptive re-use of the currently underutilized building. The Petch Log House will become more accessible to the public, giving local residents and visitors more exposure to the Town's early settlement history. This will be a successful integration of the Town's cultural heritage into the Town's urban environment. The conversion will make much better use of the building and create a valuable community resource for Aurora.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

Should Council choose to use this building in its present configuration on a conditional seasonal basis, there would be little to no cost implications. If this building were to be used for wedding ceremonies on a year round basis, the building would need to be upgraded with the installation of electrical facilities including a lighting and heating / cooling system. The estimated cost for these upgrades are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Estimated Petch House Upgrade Costs

Heating, ventilation & air conditioning (HVAC) system	\$20,000
Electrical outlets, lighting and service	15,000
Total	\$35,000

Staff propose that these upgrades be funded from the Town's Heritage Reserve Fund which presently has a balance of \$316,600. Council's formal consideration and approval of this proposal and its funding source are still required. To facilitate this review and approval, this project would need to be included as part of an upcoming capital process for the Town.

Communications Considerations

Should Council decide to move ahead with turning the Petch House into a wedding chapel, Corporate Communications will work closely with Access Aurora to promote the facility as a venue. This will be done by utilizing the Town website, social media, brochures and other promotional materials that are used to promote our wedding services at bridal shows and other community engagement events.

Link to Strategic Plan

The conservation of heritage resources supports the Strategic Plan goal of **Supporting an Exceptional Quality of Life for All** through its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in objective **Celebrating and Promoting our Culture**.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

- 1) That the Heritage Advisory Committee provide direction.

Conclusions

The upgrades required to convert the Petch Log House into a wedding chapel are not anticipated to damage any of the attributes identified in the heritage brief prepared by the Town in 2013. Staff support the conversion because it will make better use of the building and create an attractive destination for the Town.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Location Map

Attachment 2 – Heritage Brief

Previous Reports

PDS18-038 – Petch House – Potential Conversion to a Wedding Chapel Use

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on October 15, 2020

Approvals

Approved by David Waters, Director, Planning and Development Services