



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) engaged Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants Inc. (TMHC) to produce a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) and Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) that considers the potential heritage value of the Harrington Conservation Area in the Township of West Zorra, Oxford County (the "Subject Site") and the potential heritage impacts of any future changes that may occur to the Harrington Dam deriving from recommendations emerging from an ongoing Conservation Ontario Class Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA was launched due to significant concerns with the structural integrity and hydraulic capacity of the dam and its embankment. The objective of the EA process is to identify, evaluate, and recommend alternatives that will allow UTRCA to remediate safety concerns for both the dam and embankment.

Section 2.1 of the Oxford County Official Plan addresses planning principles. Section 2.1.2 speaks specifically to heritage, acknowledging:¹

- The promotion of cultural heritage awareness and education will be achieved by ensuring significant built heritage resources, significant cultural heritage landscapes and significant archeological resources are conserved and, where possible, enhanced through appropriate planning and urban design measures;

and that planning will:

- Encourage a sense of place by promoting well designed built form and cultural planning, and by conserving features that help define character, including heritage resources.

Section 3.3 of the Official Plan identifies the following relevant heritage objectives including those for heritage management and preservation:

- 3.3.1 Goals for Cultural Resource Policies - County Council shall adopt a comprehensive approach toward maintaining the cultural heritage of the County through the land use planning process. This approach shall also consider the humanmade hazards associated with past development, requiring mitigation in order to maintain public health and safety.

County Council and the Area Councils will strive to:

Facilitate a safe and healthy environment by identifying various human-made constraints on land and related resources and by applying land use restrictions or, where appropriate, requiring effective mitigating measures as a requirement of development.

Aid the conservation of the County's heritage resources by supporting conservation initiatives in Area Municipalities, integrating conservation of heritage resources into the County planning process, and providing leadership through proper stewardship of County-owned heritage resources.

- 3.3.2 Heritage Resources County Council and Area Councils shall encourage the preservation and enhancement of properties or areas of historic, architectural, and/or archaeological interest. This will be accomplished through:

¹ Oxford County 2021



the establishment of land use policies and regulations to preserve and protect archeological and heritage resources.

To encourage initiatives for the preservation and enhancement of the heritage resources including buildings, structures, sites, landscapes and heritage conservation districts in the County.

This CHER/HIA is intended to provide a heritage evaluation of the Subject Site against the criteria set out by the *Ontario Heritage Act* (OHA)'s O.Reg. 9/06, an assessment of the proposed development's impact on identified heritage attributes, and strategies for mitigating that impact. The HIA portion of this report follows the general format set out in the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries' (MHSTCI) *InfoSheet #5: Heritage Impact Assessments and Conservation Plans*, which is included in the resource *Heritage Resources in the Land Use Planning Process* within the Ontario Heritage Toolkit.

The Subject Site is a conservation area that includes the Harrington Dam, the Harrington Pond, treed clusters, lawns, and the Harrington Mill. It is located in the Township of Zorra, Oxford County. The Subject Site is within the boundaries of the former West Zorra Township and is owned by the UTRCA.

The Subject Site is listed on the Oxford County Heritage Resources Inventory, which was last updated in 2006, but it has not been designated under Part IV or Part V of the OHA. There are no National Historic Sites, Ontario Heritage Trust-owned properties, conservation easements, or Provincial Heritage Properties present on or adjacent to the Subject Site as verified by the Ontario Heritage Trust and the MHSTCI.

Evaluation of the Subject Site against the O.Reg. 9/06 criteria concluded that the Harrington Conservation Area meets the criteria on the basis of its physical/design, historical/associative, and contextual values.

Several alternative interventions are proposed to remediate the safety concerns for the Harrington Dam and its embankment. These are:²

- 1) Do Nothing;
- 2) Remove Dam and Install Rocky Ramp;
- 3) Remove Dam and Construct Natural Channel;
- 4) Remove Dam and Construct One or More Offline Ponds/Wetlands with a Natural Channel (preferred);
- 5) Replace Dam with a New Structure Downstream of the Existing Dam;
- 6) Lower the Dam Crest with Natural Channel; and
- 7) Reconstruct the Existing Dam in its Current Location and Configuration with New Materials.

The heritage impact assessment conducted for this CHER/HIA found that, while the dam's remediation is necessary to facilitate infrastructural functionality in this location, it will likely result in the disassociation and isolation of the historic mill from the Subject Site, remove viewpoints, negatively affect heritage attributes, and negatively impact the possibility of the mill to operate. Accordingly, the following general mitigation measures have been recommended for the proposed alternatives whereby the safety issues of the dam can be addressed while providing appropriate conservation of the Subject Site's heritage:

² Ecosystem Recovery Inc. 2017:iii



1. Documentation of the Subject Site, with particular attention to dam structure, through drawings and/or photographs should be produced prior its demolition and made available to future researchers through the Oxford County and Perth County archives. This CHER and HIA, subsequently accompanied by images of the chosen alternative, an architectural plan and profile of the dam and mapped extent of the pond, photographic key plan, and any available schematics of the original structures, represent sufficient documentation.³
2. UTRCA has indicated they intend to develop a Master Plan for the site as part of or prior to the completion of the EA process. This plan should consider the function of the mill, general use of the site (including recreation), and the relation between heritage attributes on the site. After the EA and Master Plan process, UTRCA should also consider undertaking a Strategic Conservation Plan in order to manage and conserve the specific heritage values, attributes, and integrity of the Subject Site through policy and strategy.
3. The functionality of the mill should be considered as part of the aforementioned Master Plan exercise, noting that the most faithful restoration of the mill's functionality for demonstration purposes would be hydraulic power, but recognizing that this may not be feasible. Alternative means of powering the mill should be considered. Furthermore, a mitigation strategy should be proposed to maintain views and access points throughout the Subject Site, including the maintenance of an east-west connection along the northern part of the property so as not to disassociate the mill from its surroundings.
4. If the current dam is altered, removed or rebuilt, after undertaking a heritage interpretation design plan, interpretive signage should be installed near the former location of the dam and spillway, sluice and raceway, and along parts of the former pond. This signage should communicate the past industrial and recent recreational uses of the Subject Site while also maintaining a level of association between the mill and the Subject Site. If feasible, the retention in situ of the spillway and one or both of the associated wing walls should be considered as a commemorative salvage strategy. Consideration may also be given to incorporating the spillway and one or both of the associated wing walls into the new landscaping.
5. Discussion with the Zorra Township, including the Zorra Heritage Committee, and the Harrington and Area Community Association is recommended to gauge the desirability of the resulting mitigation strategy.
6. A Stage 1 archaeological assessment was conducted in 2015 by ARA Ltd. and identified areas of archaeological potential within the Conservation Area. The report recommended “that all areas of archaeological potential that could be impacted by the project be subject to a Stage 2 property assessment in advance of construction.” Based on the report’s mapping, as shown in Appendix B, the impacts from Alternatives 2-7 fall within areas of archaeological potential. As such the work must be preceded by a Stage 2 archaeological assessment.
7. Finally, it is recommended that the UTRCA consider ways to indicate its support to Zorra Township and Oxford County in formally designating the Harrington Conservation Area under Part IV of the OHA.

³ Reference the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) guidelines specific to engineering structures for more information: <https://www.nps.gov/hdp/standards/HAER/HAERHistoryGuidelines.pdf#page=5>.



The successful implementation of these recommendations would result in appropriate conservation of the of the identified heritage values should the UTRCA proceed with the proposed alternatives.

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