

Planning Update

Design Strategies

1164 and 1166 Highcroft Drive

Village of Manotick

Introduction

The original design strategy was to construct 11 three storey single family freehold dwellings. Five of which would front onto Highcroft Drive while the remaining 6 units would be constructed on the interior of the property fronting on a private road.

A review of the proposal against Policy 2.5.1 Designing Ottawa outlined in the Official Plan and the City's Design Guidelines for Rural Villages indicated that revisions were necessary to fully meet the intent of the Policy direction and make the proposal more sensitive to the site typography and transitions in land use from the Main Street in the village to the abutting residential development.

Policy Considerations

Section 2.5.1 sets 3 main components that define quality urban form: Build form, open spaces, and infrastructure. Development in keeping with good urban design will help new development achieve positive compatibility when compared to existing development.

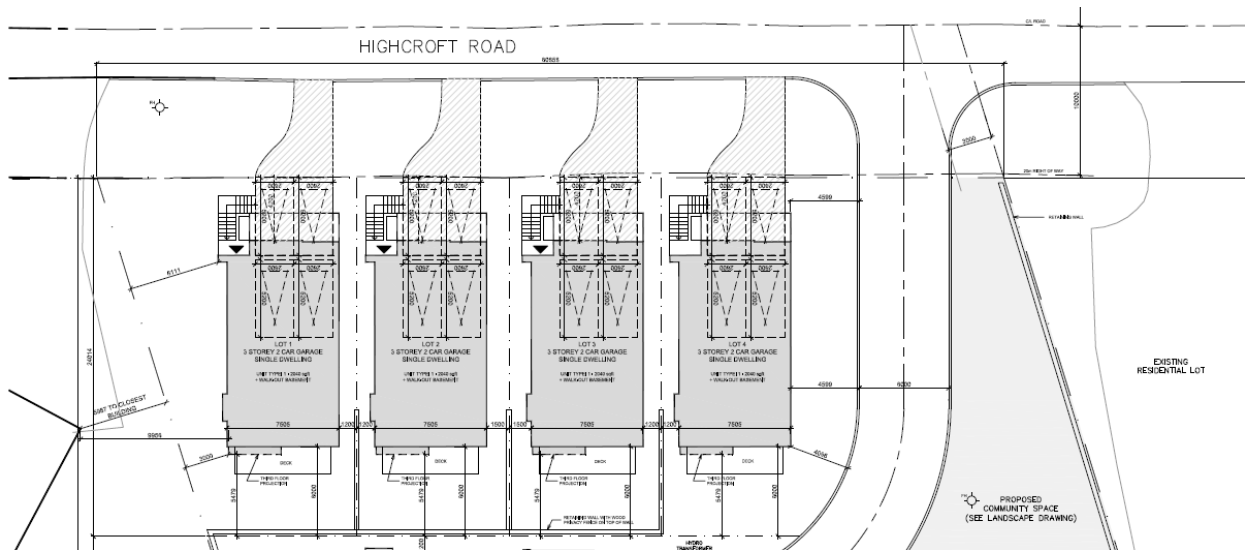
The Designing Ottawa policy does not advocate that new development needs to be the same as existing development. The policy proposes simple test to ensure that new development can coexist with an existing community. "Fits well and works well" are what guides new development and ensures that new properties can be created without causing undue adverse impact on surrounding properties.

The City has also published 43 design guidelines for Rural Villages. These guidelines fall under 5 broad categories: Open Space, Built Form, Streetscape, Community Layout and Design and Heritage and Architecture.

This review will test the revised development proposal against the Design Guidelines and show how the revision "fits well and works well".

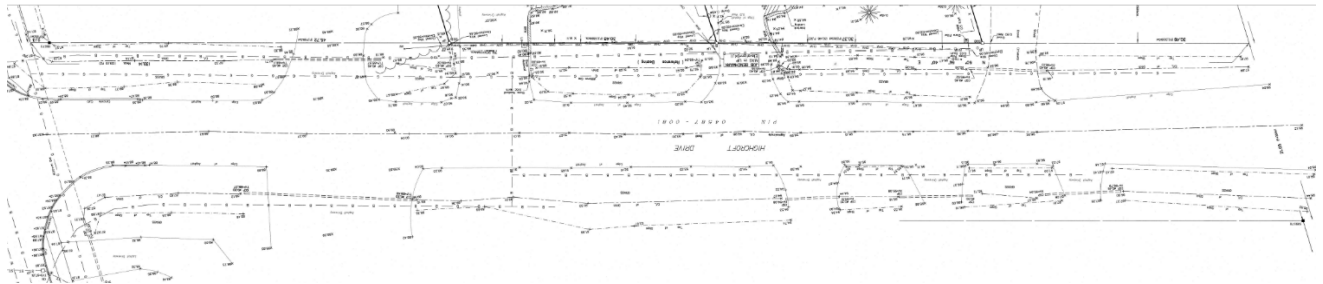
The Revised Proposal

The original development scheme proposed 5 units fronting onto Highcroft Drive. This has been reduced to 4 units and the frontage has been reshaped to introduce more soft landscaping and smaller pavement footprint at the street edge. The reduction also allowed the units to be respaced given more distance between the existing and new residential units, a better access to the private roadway and more open space.



Of importance is that last unit before the existing residential is now 9.956 metres or 32.6 ft between residential units and the distance from the property and the front corner of the new residential unit is now 6.111 metres or 20 ft. which indicates a clear transition from new development and existing.

The revised proposal must not only be tested in plan view but also in the context of the street typography. Highcroft Road has significant elevations that both hinder and help new development. Highcroft, where it meets Main Street, starts at 87.92 metres above sea level. At the top Highcroft reaches 99.13 metres – a rise of 11.21 metres.



These elevations ensure that the new 4 unit proposal will not dominate the existing development to the west and although might present a visually awkward vista as you are driving up from Main Street the terracing of the units will give a consistent streetscape when travelling either up or down along Highcroft Road.

Discussion

The Question that needs to be resolved found in OP Section 2.5.1 - Does the revised 4-unit proposal fit well and work well. Do the 4 units have any adverse impacts on surrounding properties.

The following discussion will show that the 4-unit concept fits well and works well and has a negligible impact on surrounding properties.

The purpose of the Design guidelines for Rural Villages guidelines is to guidance to assess, promote and achieve appropriate development in Villages and while not all guidelines apply in this location some are very appropriate to this development scenario.

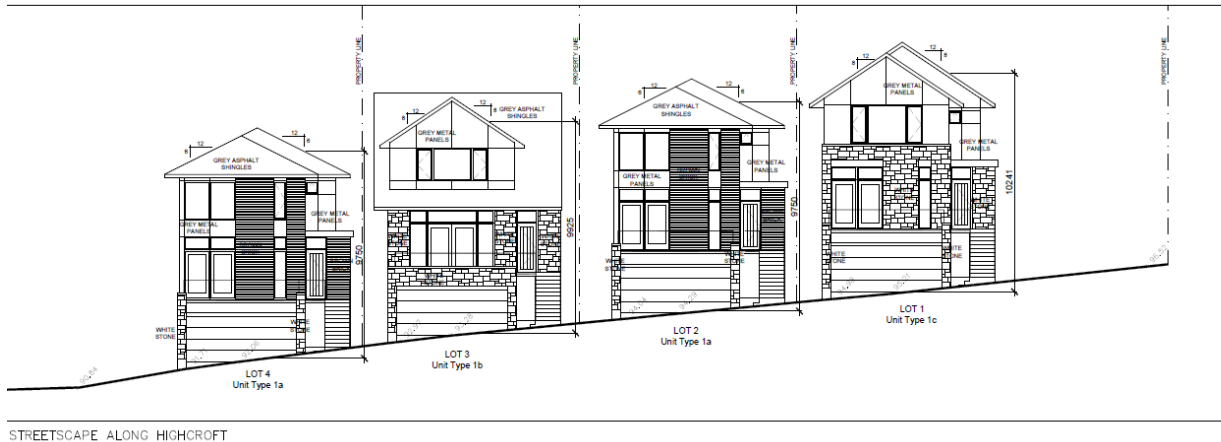
Guidelines for Community Layout and Design which apply to our 4-unit proposal are:

- Ensure new development respects the natural topography of land, and integrates existing landforms such as hills, terraces, cliffs, valleys, rocky outcrops and watercourses. Avoid altering natural terrain to accommodate development.
- Establish a variety of lot sizes in residential developments. Creating a mix of lot sizes promotes a range in dwelling types and, in turn, creates housing options for residents. Explore innovative servicing methods where lot sizes may be restricted by servicing capabilities.
- Develop of mix of housing designs along neighbourhood blocks to avoid a mass produced or “cookie cutter” appearance. Varied housing styles, colours and materials create a visually interesting streetscape and village atmosphere.
- Concentrate a mix of uses – commercial, residential, recreational and institutional – within the village core. Locating uses within walking distance of each other strengthens community interaction and viability.

As illustrated early the Highcroft proposal works with the natural topographic grade change (11.21 metres) to create a stepped approach which allows for healthy separation between old and new residential units and allows for a defined transition between the Main Street character area and the large lot residential community.



The four-unit streetscape can be seen below.



The proposal introduces a smaller lot size which is consistent with the design guidelines and supports the idea of transition in lot sizes and land use.

The unit elevations bring a modern housing design to the village. They remain single detached dwellings – the same typology as the surrounding residential but are modern recognizing the wants and needs of the modern village family.

Concentrating more residential development within walking distance of the village Main Street is consistent with the goal of concentrating uses. The introduction of new single-family homes in very close proximity to Main Street meets the goal of strengthening community interaction and viability.

Guidelines for Built Form which apply to our 4-unit proposal are:

- Ensure new buildings are compatible with adjacent development by using a common scale, massing and height to complement the existing context. New buildings, including gas stations, should respond to the village context.
- Avoid developing buildings with blank facades along public rights-of-way. New buildings should follow the existing architectural pattern and rhythm established by adjacent development. Visually divide large facades into smaller sections using a human-scale, windows, bays and articulation to reduce the perception of massing.
- Orient buildings to frame the street. Primary façades should parallel the street and entries should be clearly visible and connect to the public sidewalk.

The significant grade change in the topography is of significant assistance in mitigating height as the new builds will not dominate the lower profile homes at the top of the street. The grade change from the upper corner of the new property to the top of the street is 2.85 metres which given the placement of the 4 new units will ensure that the new units although much different style are not higher than the existing dwellings.

Each new dwelling has a front facing terrace which will encourage strong interaction with street frontage and eliminate blank facades. Having the ability for homeowners to be interacting with the street activity improves the streetscape and encourages community interaction.

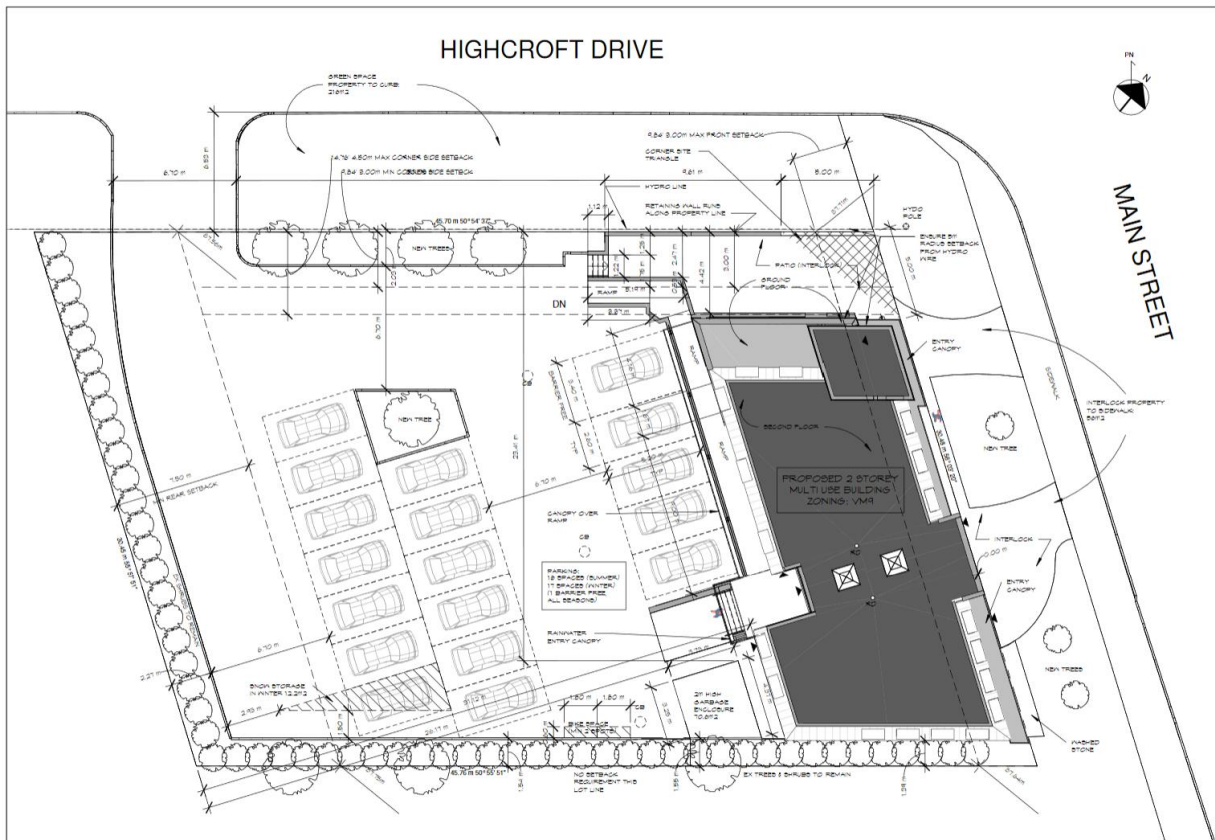
Testing the applicability of the of the design guidelines it is clear that the 4 new units, while different and new, will not adversely impact adjacent properties and are consistent with the OP policy direction contained in section 2.5.1.

The last design facet that warrants evaluation is the streetscape transition from the commercial Main Street to the residential community.

A perfectly designed village community would feature a tightly knit commercial shopping street – a High Street – with the option of residential above the storefront. Services would come from the back and streetscape would not be broken by vehicle access. In behind the High street would be where the higher density residential would start and the density would decline as you move away from the High Street.

Unfortunately, most communities don't evolve perfectly and as times change so does the evolution of a village community. In the case of Highcroft can the introduction of smaller lot single homes provide an appropriate transition from the commercial nature of Main Street and within the residential community.

Already the neighbourhood is evolving in a positive direction with the proposed development at 5506 Main Street. This development is closing a vehicle entrance on Main Street and providing a building that frames the street and the corner with Highcroft.



Consistent with City design guidelines what is the appropriate transition from this new development and the low profile, large lot residential community. Given the parking in behind 5506 and the location of

the building a denser residential fabric is an appropriate transition between Main Street and the low profile residential community.