Lower Doon Land Use Study
Heritage Component

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Heritage Report

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City of Kitchener

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1. Heritage Conservation Within the Land Use Study

1.1 Introduction

This section of the Lower Doon Land Use Study describes the heritage character of the study area. Determining heritage character is important: it informs future development by describing local cultural heritage resources and by providing recommendations for inclusion in future planning policies and procedures for Lower Doon. Conservation of cultural heritage resources is also a necessary step towards resolving a broader issue. Local residents perceive an erosion of local character caused by impacts resulting from student housing and incompatible infill development. Whereas Upper Doon has been conserved within a Heritage Conservation District since 1988, no such protections are in place for Lower Doon. The current study will focus on groupings of cultural heritage resources that provide the means to describe heritage character in a comprehensive fashion. The conservation measures recommended in this study are intended to be integrated within the Lower Doon Land Use Study’s policy and implementation framework.

What follows is a review of background material found in secondary sources provided by the City of Kitchener Public Library, the Waterloo Region Museum, and local historians. The summary history provides information on existing and potential cultural heritage resources found within the study area. While not a comprehensive history of Lower Doon, this review provides a context for determining heritage character and for identifying cultural heritage resources that should be conserved. The report concludes with recommended heritage planning policies that will implement conservation and interpretation.
1.2 Understanding Lower Doon’s Heritage Character

Lower Doon today is the result of the community’s evolution from a small mill village to a commuter suburb of Kitchener. After a long period of Indigenous occupation along the river, Lower Doon was founded as a single industry town largely under the ownership of the Ferrie family, Scottish industrialists and investors recently arrived in this part of Upper Canada. The mills eventually failed, and the village became best known for its associations with artist Homer Watson. He lived in Lower Doon for much of his life and although he did not paint scenes of the village, his portrayals of early-mid-19th century rural life along the Grand River became famous as expressions of Canadian identity. Lower Doon became a place to visit so as to experience those scenes, in the gallery and along the river. By the mid-20th century, as automobile use became widespread, Lower Doon was also known for its swimming and camping at the former mill pond and for the activities of the Doon School of Fine Arts. Although Watson died in the 1930s and the School closed in the 1960s, an artistic connection survives in the Homer Watson Museum and Gallery, located near the site of the former mill complex.

Today the mill ruins are largely gone, the mill pond has been drained, and post-World War Two residential development and Conestoga College have dramatically altered the village streetscapes. The construction of Highway 401 and, later, Homer Watson Boulevard, severed Lower Doon from Blair, to the southeast, and from Upper Doon, to the west. Upper and Lower Doon’s final loss of identity came in 1968 with annexation by the City of Kitchener. Today, aside from small groups of 19th century buildings along portions of the original streets, there is little left of the built form and development pattern that would express the character of the former mill village. While the Homer Watson Museum and Gallery and the nearby Doon Heritage Village have offered some interpretation of local history in the form of walking tour brochures and re-creations of typical Waterloo-area street scenes, there is no concerted effort to tell Lower Doon’s story and there remain few examples of buildings and settings with which to tell that story. The Land Use Study offers an opportunity to begin to do so.
Lower Doon looking north to the Grand River ca. 1950.
Source: Kitchener Public Library

Doon Mill ruins.
Source: Kitchener Public Library

Representative Example of a Painting of the Grand River valley by Homer Watson.
Source: National Gallery of Canada
Upper and Lower Doon 1870.
2. Assessment of Heritage Character

2.1 Assessment Method

The City of Kitchener has assessed Lower Doon for potential cultural heritage resources in several ways. After research and evaluation of individual properties, it has added several to the municipal Heritage Register, some of which are designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. The first comprehensive attempt to provide an assessment of cultural heritage resources in Lower Doon was in the Cultural Heritage Landscape (CHL) report of September 2019 prepared by Stantec consultants. In that report, cultural heritage resources were reviewed holistically, as part of potential cultural heritage landscapes, rather than as a series of individual properties.

The consultants used an assessment method developed by the Region of Waterloo. The Regional Implementation Guideline for Cultural Heritage Landscape Conservation (2013, updated May 2018) is “a framework for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of candidate and identified CHLs in Waterloo Region (Stantec, p. 2.6)”. The Guideline has significance criteria — cultural heritage value or interest, historical integrity, and community value — the so-called “three-pronged approach”. Cultural Heritage Value or Interest is determined using the criteria found in O. Reg. 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act as amended by the Region to apply specifically to landscapes. Historical integrity provides an understanding of the landscape within its historic context, using a range of sub-criteria, at least one of which must be met. Community Value measures the ways in which local residents have interpreted, celebrated, and cared for a landscape (again, there are many sub-criteria, at least one of which must be met).

Each criterion, with sub-criteria, is listed below:

- Cultural Heritage Value or Interest
  - Design/physical value
  - Historical/associative value
  - Contextual value
- Historical Integrity
  - Land use
  - Ownership
  - Built elements
  - Vegetative elements
  - Cultural relationships
  - Natural features
2.2 CHLs Identified in the 2019 Report

The report identifies three CHLs within the Lower Doon Land Use Study area, all of which are properties in municipal ownership:

- Homer Watson House
- Willowlake Park
- Doon Valley Golf Course

The consulting team for the Lower Doon Land Use Study agrees with these assessments.

In addition to an evaluation of potential CHLs, the Stantec report also assessed intersections that had the potential to be visual gateways. The evaluation concluded that “the intersections identified as potential gateways...were all determined to have limited interest from a heritage perspective (op. cit. section 5.2.10, p. 5.15)".
2.3 2019 Assessment of Pinnacle Drive Streetscape

Aside from the three CHLs identified in the Stantec report, neither the Conestoga College Campus nor the Pinnacle Drive Streetscape was deemed to be a CHL. The heritage analysis in this Land Use Study accepts the above three CHLs, agrees that Conestoga College does not qualify as a CHL but disagrees with the rejection of the Pinnacle Drive Streetscape. The reasons for this, and a revised evaluation, are described below.

In section 5.2.9 of the Stantec report, the evaluation using the Region’s three-pronged assessment determined that the Pinnacle Drive streetscape that extends south from Old Mill Road to Doon Valley Drive did not represent a CHL. The reasons for this determination were:

- Homes with a mix of architectural styles, massing, setbacks and ages
- Modern infill that interrupts “an understanding of the roadway as a historic route through the Village of Doon”
- Insufficient historical association and historical integrity
- No evidence “that the community values the road for its historical associations to the area”

The inventory and evaluation of the existing and potentially significant cultural heritage resources in the Lower Doon Land Use Study area has come to a different conclusion. Using the Region of Waterloo’s evaluation assessment method, the study team identified cultural heritage values for Pinnacle Drive. The following is an evaluation using the Region’s three-pronged approach, with summaries of the results of assessment addressing the relevant sub-categories in each criterion. While the Stantec evaluation addressed the entire Pinnacle Drive streetscape and has found that, as a totality, the streetscape is not a CHL, the following assessment has identified a sub-area in the northern half of the streetscape that has cultural heritage value.

Unlike the three CHLs identified in the 2019 report, properties in this sub-area are in private ownership, with the exception of the municipally owned street right-of-way. Rather than designation as a CHL, for the purposes of this Land Use study, the consulting team is recommending the use of a different tool, implemented under the Planning Act. This tool is a Heritage Character Area, a policy that can be a precursor to, or an alternative for, designation of a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. Heritage Character Areas contain conservation policies and guidelines, providing more detail than usual Official Plan policies but not as much as would be found in an HCD Plan.
2.4 Revised Assessment of Pinnacle Drive Streetscape

Criterion #1: Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The portion of the streetscape south of Old Mill Road to the intersection of Amherst Drive (the “sub-area”) has design/physical value as a representative example of the early settlement pattern in Lower Doon and contains significant built heritage resources (Nos. 20 and 37 Pinnacle Drive are both designated properties under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act). This portion also has historical associations with the mid-late 19th century development of the village, especially with the former railway and railway station. It is physically and functionally linked to the original street network and former mill pond.

As a result, the sub-area meets this criterion.

In addition to the resources in the sub-area, it should be noted that individual properties south of the sub-area may have cultural heritage value or interest (e.g. Nos. 55 and 75 Pinnacle Drive) and 39 Doon Valley Drive is a designated property. Small portions remain of the former Old Huron Road and its intersection at Pinnacle Drive, included as part of the property at No. 39 Doon Valley Drive. Another component of potential cultural heritage value or interest is the portion of the former railway right-of-way that terminates on the west side of the southern half of Pinnacle Drive (now a pedestrian/cycling trail).

Criterion #2: Historical Integrity

While the southern half of the streetscape has been significantly altered by demolitions and new infill, the sub-area has continuity of land use from the mid-19th century in terms of surviving built elements. The sub-area contains significant built heritage resources that are representative examples of 19th century housing and commercial hotels and the adjacent Willow Lake is the site of a former mill pond (later recreation area). The former hotels retain a cultural relationship adjacent to the location of the former railway station and to Willow Lake. Views into and from the sub-area are similar to what would have been the case historically (i.e. to Willow Lake and to the Grand River). The street alignment within the municipal right-of-way appears to have remained, although it is likely that the street tree canopy has been reduced.

As a result, the sub-area meets this criterion.
Criterion #3: Community Value

The southern half of the streetscape has been substantially altered but the sub-area in the northern half contributes to community identity and the former Red Lion Inn (No. 37) is frequently mentioned in local histories, walking tours and local media. Comments made by members of the public in community consultations undertaken as part of the Lower Doon Land Use Study have indicated a strong affinity with the history of Pinnacle Drive. However, the sub-area has otherwise been absent of physical evidence of pride and stewardship or been a component of community image as expressed in municipal planning and tourism documents, although there is potential for interpretation and enhancement.

Because it meets one of the criteria for community value, the sub-area meets the criterion.

As a result of the foregoing assessment using the Region’s Guideline for CHLs, this study has determined that the sub-area on the northern half of Pinnacle Drive, along with the adjacent Willowlake Park, can be considered to be a Cultural Heritage Landscape (the Stantec report already recommends a CHL for Willowlake Park). The following is a description of the sub-area that would underlie creation of a Heritage Character Area within the municipal Official Plan.
3. Upper Pinnacle Drive
Heritage Character Area

3.1 General Description of Upper Pinnacle Drive

This part of Pinnacle Drive retains the principal elements of the streetscape that has been in place for over a century. The houses and former commercial buildings are in their original locations, if not in their original uses, and without what would have been a group of outbuildings. Any street trees planted in the 19th and early 20th centuries are no longer present. But the street alignment is the same, with a kink just south of the intersection with Amherst Drive, itself the western extension of the village’s original street grid (composed of present-day Amherst Drive, Sydenham Street, Durham Street and the unopened road allowance of Drummond Drive). Historical mapping shows that this grid pattern was not replicated in the surrounding area, where a scattered development pattern prevailed. In the area west of the mill pond, however, development was concentrated near the mill and flanking what is now Old Mill Road, with only one extension north along Roos Street. As a result, this part of Pinnacle Drive is an important, and intact, example of the village’s original layout. And thanks to a narrow ledge and steep bank on the west side of this part of Pinnacle Drive, also retained is the close visual relationship with the former mill pond in Willow Lake (now filled to create Willowlake Park).

Turning back to the northern third of Pinnacle Drive, the two houses on the east side, at Nos. 10 and 20, share a common design. According to the text of a walking tour prepared by a local historian (Stephenson, n.d., p. 4), these houses were constructed in the “Regency style”. Built in 1858, these houses would have been fashionable in Lower Doon even though by then Regency had gone out of style in cities. These were not worker’s houses (unlike No. 55 Pinnacle Drive, for example). Instead, they would have been owned by members of the military or by local merchants who had the means to maintain a good but not extravagant house.

Further up the street are two former hotels. The former Red Lion Inn at No. 37 was built in 1892 (op. cit. p. 4) to replace an earlier structure. It would have had stables and other outbuildings nearby and would have enjoyed views over the adjacent mill pond. But the main reason for its location was the proximity to the railway station, formerly sited at the southeast corner of Pinnacle and Amherst Drives. The residential building across the street at No. 6 Amherst Drive began life as a hotel, then became a store and, later, the Bonnie Doon Club.

In summary, despite the many changes to the appearance and urban character of Lower Doon, the remnant streetscape in the north part of Pinnacle Drive can provide a coherent image of the origins and evolution of the village. As a result, it merits conservation and interpretation.
What follows is a formal description of the Upper Pinnacle Drive Heritage Character Area’s cultural heritage resources and its heritage attributes, using terms found in Provincial and federal guidelines.

3.2 Description of the Heritage Place

The village of Doon straddles Schneider Creek, a watercourse flowing north to the Grand River and located in the southwestern corner of the City of Kitchener, Ontario. In the early 19th century, the Ferrie family of Scottish immigrants chose this location because the creek provided a reliable source of water to power the mills they intended to build. The village grew around their mills and, at its height in the late 19th century, along with its sister village of Upper Doon (located just upstream), Lower Doon supported a variety of industries as well as shops, schools, hotels, churches and a range of housing. The railway cut diagonally through Lower Doon in the 1850s and the station was located at the southeast corner of Pinnacle Drive and Amherst Drive. Local industries declined in the early 20th century and Lower Doon became a popular place to swim and cottage at the Cluthe family’s resort on Willow Lake. By the late 1960s, Lower Doon was becoming a bedroom suburb for the region, and the municipality converted the former lake into a public park, next to the ruins of the mill. The village also became famous for its associations with the 19th century artist Homer Watson, whose house and grounds on the west side of the village are now a public gallery, and whose portrayals of Lower Grand River valley were important early examples of Canadian landscape painting.
3.3 Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The Upper Pinnacle Drive Heritage Character Area has cultural heritage value because it includes built heritage and cultural heritage landscape resources that represent key characteristics and important periods in the village’s evolution, from its origins as an industrial village in the early 19th century to a residential suburb and regional park in the mid-20th century. The Heritage Character Area includes the former mill pond and mill ruins (Willowlake Park) that are remnants of the industrial complex which formed the core of Lower Doon. The Area also includes largely unchanged portions of the Grand River shoreline that would have influenced Homer Watson’s paintings. Adjacent properties on Pinnacle Drive (from Old Mill Road to the intersection of Amherst Drive) provide surviving examples of a former high-quality hotel (Red Lion Inn), a former hotel/shop/club (6 Amherst Drive), as well as examples of housing built for mill employees. Pinnacle Drive, Amherst Drive and Old Mill Road represent parts of the original village street network and alignments as well as abut the location of the former rail line and station. The area is also associated with two important community members who were instrumental in the development of Lower Doon – the Ferrie and Cluthe families – the former for founding the community and milling operation, the latter for taking over the mill and for establishing a regional recreation complex on the former mill pond. Because of its location, the area also is likely to have potential for both pre-contact and historical archaeological heritage resources (to be determined by further research).

3.4 Heritage attributes

- Former mill pond and Cluthe family recreation grounds (Willowlake Park south of Old Mill Road)
- Ruins of the former mill complex (Willowlake Park north of Old Mill Road)
- Surviving portions of the Grand River shoreline at the outlet of Schneider Creek
- Surviving examples of early housing (Nos. 10, 20 Pinnacle Drive)
- Surviving example of an early hotel/shop/club (6 Amherst Drive)
- Surviving example of an early hotel (No. 37 Pinnacle Drive)
- Original street alignment (Old Mill Road, Pinnacle Drive, Amherst Drive)
- Views north from Pinnacle Drive of the Grand River across Old Mill Road
Character Area Looking South from Old Mill Road

Character Area Looking North from Amherst Drive
10 Pinnacle Drive

6 Amherst Drive and Site of Former Railway Station
37 Pinnacle Drive
(former Red Lion Inn)

View North From Intersection of Pinnacle Drive and Old Mill Road
Willowlake Park and Schneider Creek Looking South

Willowlake Park and Mill Ruins Looking Northwest
4. Land Use Study Recommendations

4.1 Policies

As discussed in Section 3, above, the following are policy recommendations for the Lower Doon Land Use Study Area:

• Identify a Heritage Character Area extending north from the intersection of Pinnacle Drive and Amherst Drive (the Upper Pinnacle Drive Heritage Character Area).

• Include in the Heritage Character Area a Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest and list of heritage attributes.

• Designate key properties under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act:
  - Willowlake Park (including the southern portion between Homer Watson Boulevard and Old Mill Road and the Doon Mill ruins)

• Conduct further research to determine the potential cultural heritage value of the following properties inventoried previously and situated outside of the Upper Pinnacle Heritage Character Area:
  - No. 55 and No. 75 Pinnacle Drive
  - No. 500 Doon Valley Drive
  - Nos. 1751, 1754, 1763, 1765, 1857 Old Mill Road

• Properties identified above that are currently listed on the Municipal Heritage Register should be evaluated for potential designation. Further research should include an evaluation of these properties using the criteria in O. Reg. 9/06. Listed properties found worthy of designation should be designated, and existing designating by-laws should be updated using this evaluation process, as needed. Properties in the Heritage Character Area not listed on the Heritage Register (10 Pinnacle Drive and 6 Amherst Drive) should also be evaluated for potential designation."

• Require Heritage Impact Assessments for proposals to alter or demolish Listed properties (as per Official Plan policy 12 C.1.23 a)-c), as amended) and for proposals for development adjacent to Listed properties.

• Design and implement heritage interpretation in Lower Doon. Interpretive content, media and locations should be prepared by the City in collaboration with residents of Lower Doon.
Appendices

A. Chronology of Lower Doon’s Development

Indigenous Occupation

- Indigenous occupation for 11,000 years
- Early 17th century: European exploration of Grand River in early 17th century found Neutrals occupying area
- Late 17th and early 18th century: dispersal of various Iroquoian-speaking peoples from New York State area Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Algonkian-speaking peoples from northern Ontario moved into the area occupied by Neutral peoples as well as Anishinaabe (Mississaugas).

1784:
study area part of Block Two of the Haldimand Tract granted to members of Six Nations who had remained loyal to the British in the American War of Independence.

1791:
land surveyed by Augustus Jones

1798:
Joseph Brant acting on behalf of the Six Nations via power of attorney began selling portions

study area currently understood as being within the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois and Six Nations) and Neutral peoples.

European Settlement

1798:
Block 2 (including the study area) sold to Richard Beasley, James Wilson and John Baptiste Rosseau.

1800:
Beasley sells portions of the study area to John Bean (also Biehn), with the lands becoming known as “Biehn's Unnumbered Tract” with lands in the eastern part of the study area known as “Beasley's Old Survey”

Early 19th century:
German-speaking settlement in Waterloo Township including study area
1840s:
English, Scottish and Irish settlers moved into the area during initial European settlement period (German settlers predominated elsewhere in the region)

1856:
Grand Trunk Railway completed through Township

**Lower Doon Development in the 19th Century**

Early 19th century:
John Biehn Jr. builds sawmill in what became Doon (location undetermined)

1834:
Scottish immigrant Adam Ferrie Junior buys 300 acres, establishes Doon Mills (named after Loch Doon in Ayrshire, Scotland), flour mill, oatmeal mill, distillery, and sawmill as well as general store and tavern (Prerine Brothers flax mill in Upper Doon, formerly Tow Town and Oregon, later included rope factory, brick and tile works, sawmill and some other businesses) financed by this father, Hon. Adam Ferrie, a wealthy Scottish businessman who came to Upper Canada in 1829 (Bean, 165); village is located at confluence of Schneider Creek and Grand River. Most settlers were workers (artisans, millers and brick makers of English and Scottish origin)

1839:
water-driven Doon Mills fully operational (oatmeal, flour and barley)

Ca.1840:
first mill dam collapses, destroying stone distillery, houses (workers?) and trees, is rebuilt

1845:
post office opened

[n.d.] Hon. Adam Ferrie builds “commodious home” at Willow Lake for son Robert Ferrie] (Bean, 167), has what is now Homer Watson house built for him

1851:
census lists Doon’s population as 452

1854:
Presbyterian church opens on land (and with some funds) donated by Robert Ferrie
1867:
GTR station opens south of intersection of what are now Pinnacle and Amherst Drives

1868:
Methodist Church opens on Durham Street

1878:
Bonnie Doon school opens (burns, replaced in 1956)

By 1890s:
Village has post office, grocer, baker, two tailors, a cooper, blacksmith, shoemaker, wagon maker, bridge builder and scissors manufacturer, with three hotels (Red Lion Inn, Doon Hotel and Bush Inn)

**Lower Doon in the 20th Century to the Present**

- Doon remained agricultural and rural into mid-20th century
- Community clustered around present-day Pinnacle Drive, Drummond Drive, Sydenham Street, Amherst Drive and Durham Street, with southern edge defined by GTR tracks and station
- Late 19th-early 20th century artist Homer Watson lives and works in Lower Doon, his house becomes art gallery

1922:
Doon mill closes after successive fires, ruins progressively collapse

1930s:
GTR station closes

1920s-1968:
Cluthe family (owners of mill property) create beach operation on Willow Lake

1948-1966:
Doon School of Fine Arts established at Homer Watson House (former Red Lion Inn used as a residence)

Mid-1950s:
Doon Valley Golf Course developed

1957:
Doon Heritage Village begins operation north of Doon village (Waterloo Region Museum added in 2010)
1966:
Homer Watson Boulevard constructed, bisecting village into Lower and Upper Doon

1967:
Conestoga College begins development

1968:
Doon annexed by City of Kitchener, railway tracks abandoned by then, mill dam collapses in a storm and is not rebuilt, Willow Lake drained, Cluthe beach operation ceases, lake filled to create park

1981:
City of Kitchener buys Homer Watson House, opens to public as museum and art gallery, Conservation Authority pulls down remaining walls of mill

1988:
Upper Doon Heritage Conservation District designated by municipality
B. References

Article on 6 Amherst Drive: Kitchener Record, July 26, 1951.

Article on Cluthe Willow Lake resort: Kitchener Record, 2010.


City of Kitchener (n.d.): Ferrie Mill Heritage Evaluation.

Designation By-law for No. 20 Pinnacle Drive: City of Kitchener, 1982.

Designation By-law for No. 37 Pinnacle Drive: City of Kitchener, 1982.

Eby, Marguerite Bechtel: Doon 1867 – Before and After; Waterloo Historical Society, No. 54, 1966.

Homer Watson House & Gallery (n.d.): Lower Doon Walking Tour.


Stantec Consulting Ltd.: Lower Doon and Homer Watson Candidate Cultural Heritage Landscape Evaluation (Final Report, September 30, 2019)

Stephenson, Lois (n.d.): Lower Doon Walking Tour.

Waterloo Regional Museum (n.d.): History of Doon. (posted on WRM website).