



Committee of the Whole Report **For the Meeting of December 14, 2023**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 30, 2023

From: Karen Hoese, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development

Subject: **Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00260 for 1218 Langley Street**

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council authorize the issuance of the Heritage Alteration Permit No. 00260 for 1218 Langley Street in accordance with plans submitted to the Planning department and date stamped by Planning on November 28, 2023 (the "Plans"), subject to:
2. That the Heritage Alteration Permit, if issued, expires two years from the date of this resolution.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

In accordance with Sections 617 and 618 of the *Local Government Act*, Council may issue a Heritage Alteration Permit which may be subject to terms consistent with the purpose of the heritage protection of the property, including: (i) conditions respecting the sequencing and timing of construction, (ii) conditions respecting the character of the alteration or action to be authorized, including landscaping and the siting, form, exterior design and finish of buildings and structures and (iii) security. Council may refuse to issue a Heritage Alteration Permit for an action that, in the opinion of Council, would not be consistent with the purpose of the heritage protection of the property.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information, analysis, and recommendations for a Heritage Alteration Permit Application for the property located at 1218 Langley Street. The proposal is for the addition of an exterior elevator lift, an exterior staircase and landing, a new rear door opening, fire shutters, and a trellis over the windows.

The following points were considered in assessing this application:

- consistency with the Official Community Plan (OCP)
- consistency with the Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP) and Old Town Design Guidelines
- consistency with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada
- consistency with Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters
- consideration and recommendation of support from the Heritage Advisory Panel.

The application meets several heritage conservation policies such as minimal intervention, and making improvements to existing buildings that are sensitive to the historic fabric and providing accessibility to the historic building. Overall, the application is supportable, and it is recommended that Council approve the Heritage Alteration Permit.

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposal

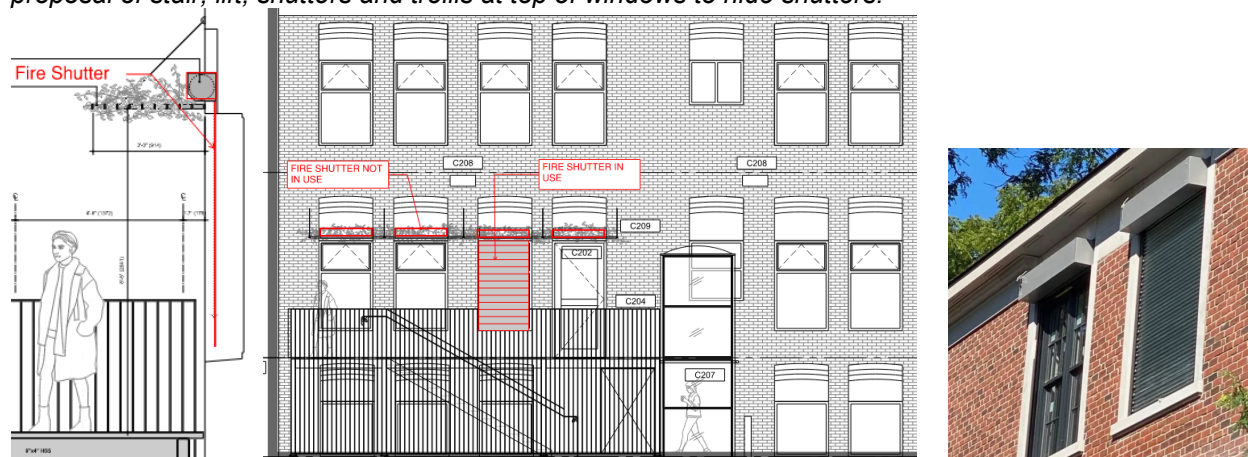
The proposal is for the rear addition of an exterior elevator lift, an exterior staircase and landing, a new rear door opening, window and door fire shutters, as well as trellis over the windows. This work adds necessary accessibility and access to the rear courtyard in Bastion Square and does not add any floor area. As this is a heritage registered building in a Heritage Conservation Area, Old Town District, it requires a Heritage Alteration Permit.

The proposal includes the following major design components:

- stairs and guardrails
- elevator lift
- trellis
- security / fire-rated shutters on three of the windows and one glass door.



Images left to right: Image of current condition of rear of 1218 Langley facing Chancery Square; Design proposal of stair, lift, shutters and trellis at top of windows to hide shutters.



Images left to right: Fire shutter in section showing its relationship to window and trellis; In elevation showing location of shutters on façade and how they will be seen in use and not in use; Example of fire shutter installed for a window application.

History of Place

The Chancery Chambers at 1218 Langley Street was built in 1905 by architect Francis Rattenbury for J.H. McGregor, who rented office space in the building to lawyers and law firms. Between 1889 and 1963 the B.C. Provincial Courts were in the adjacent building at 28 Bastion Square, so this was the ideal location for law firms to locate their offices.

Building: 1218 Langley Street, Chancery Chambers

Architect: Francis Rattenbury

Built For: J.H. McGregor

Recognition: Registered, 1990



There is no Statement of Significance for this building, however the character-defining elements include:

- continued use as an office building
- location and relationship to the BC Provincial Courts, and Bastion Square
- its form, scale and massing as expressed by its three-storey height
- parapet, cornice, and detailing
- arched window openings and fenestration pattern.

Accessibility

This proposal seeks to make voluntary accessibility improvements to the historic building, which are not a requirement of the BC building code. The applicant has received a grant from the City of Victoria's Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program. This program supports Victoria-based arts and cultural spaces operated by a variety of not-for-profit societies and organizations. As an example, and in the case of this application, the program supports upgrades to existing facilities including accessibility and life-safety infrastructure.

ANALYSIS

The following sections provide a summary of the application's consistency with the relevant City policies, regulations, and design guidelines.

Official Community Plan

The *Official Community Plan* (OCP) identifies this property within Development Permit Area 1, Old Town District. The broad objectives as described in Section 8: Placemaking of the OCP promote land management at all scales to consider heritage values and that heritage property should be conserved as a resource for current and future residents and visitors. Additionally, the proposal advances the objectives of Section 15: Community Well-Being, that facilities, services, and places of employment should be accessible and welcoming to users.

Development Permit Area (Heritage Conservation Area) and Design Guidelines

Downtown Core Area Plan (DCAP)

In the DCAP, heritage conservation is about retaining places that matter to the community, and its purpose is to retain, protect and improve real property with heritage value as a public benefit.

The applicant in this case is proposing to make improvements to the property by providing secondary and accessible access at the rear of the property located in Bastion Square. The access point will be created by adapting an existing window opening into a door, adding a stair with landing and an accessible exterior lift.

By providing a secondary rear access point, it is anticipated there will be 'more eyes on the square'. The improvements also add security measures to help reduce the vandalism of windows and break-ins, and the fire-rated shutters and stairs provide safe egress at the new secondary exit in case of a fire.

The DCAP Design Guidelines recommend that the addition of any structure is designed such that it is minimally visible when viewed from the street. In this case the exterior rear addition will not be visible from the street, and the two facades seen from the street will be unaffected.

Old Town Design Guidelines (2006)

It is typically preferable to have accessible entry at the street-facing façade or primary access. However, in this case a compromise was made for the protection of the front façade, and favoring minimal intervention, by locating an exterior lift (versus an internal one) for accessible entry at the rear of the building.

Guidelines for Fences, Gates and Shutters (2010)

The goal of the guidelines is to ensure that where fences, gates and shutters are required, they are well designed and complement their surroundings. In this case, shutters are required for life safety during fire egress, as well as for security. The applicant has described the use of the fire shutters to only be in use during a fire, and for security purposes after hours when the building is vacant.

It is recommended that the application includes appropriate architectural interventions to mitigate the visual impact of the fire shutters and reduce the fortress-like appearance of the rear façade when the building is vacant.

The addition of the trellis with the intent to grow plants along it, was to provide an architectural element to hide the fire shutter box, and act as an armature for the other security measures, such as cameras and audio speaker to help deter vandalism.

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

The proposal for this heritage alteration permit is sensitive to the existing fabric; as shown in their plans, the stair, landing, and lift are supported on their own structure without relying on the building's structure and façade, and the trellis and shutters will be stalled on the wood portion of the transom, not the brick masonry, which ensures the integrity of the brick is maintained. The proposal also uses an existing window opening, making an acceptable alteration to enlarge it as a door.

This application has provided design solutions which meet many of the Standards: the lift and stair are located away from the front façade of the building, an approach of minimal intervention has been adopted, as they are not trying to reconfigure the interior of the building, and the addition is no bigger than necessary. The design of the architectural stairs, guardrails and trellis are a simple, yet thoughtful solution, which complement the historic fabric while being distinguishable as a new and contemporary addition. Lastly, the proposed changes would not impair the essential form and integrity of the historic place if any one of them were removed in the future.

Heritage Advisory Panel (HAPL)

The application was reviewed by HAPL at its November 14, 2023 meeting. HAPL recommended that Council approve the application:

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend to Council that Development Permit Application No.00035 for 1218 Langley be approved as presented.

CONCLUSIONS

This application proposes design solutions that are distinguishable from, and sensitive to, the existing historic fabric and are minimal in their intervention of the heritage building; therefore, approval of this application is recommended.

ALTERNATE MOTION

That Council decline Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00260 for the property located at 1218 Langley.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristal Stevenot
Senior Heritage Planner
Development Services Division

Karen Hoese, Director
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Development Department

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

List of Attachments

- Attachment A: Subject Map
- Attachment B: Aerial Map
- Attachment C: Applicant's Letter, dated November 27, 2023
- Attachment D: Plans date stamped, November 28, 2023
- Attachment E: HAPL minutes

