

Staff Report



Development Services Department

www.kitchener.ca

REPORT TO: Heritage Kitchener

DATE OF MEETING: January 7, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Garrett Stevenson, Director of Development and Housing Approvals, 519-783-8922

PREPARED BY: Deeksha Choudhry, Heritage Planner, 519-783-8906

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 4

DATE OF REPORT: December 11, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2025-016

SUBJECT: Lower Doon Mill Ruins – Repair and Stabilization Work

RECOMMENDATION:

For information.

REPORT:

The Development and Housing Approvals Division is in receipt of a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) dated 24 July 2023, prepared by LHC Inc. for the Lower Doon Mill Ruins. The Ruins are currently listed as a non-designated property of cultural heritage interest or value on the City's Municipal Heritage Register (MHR). They are located on the north side of Old Mill Road, on the west bank of Schneider's Creek between Roos Street and Pinnacle Drive (Fig. 1).

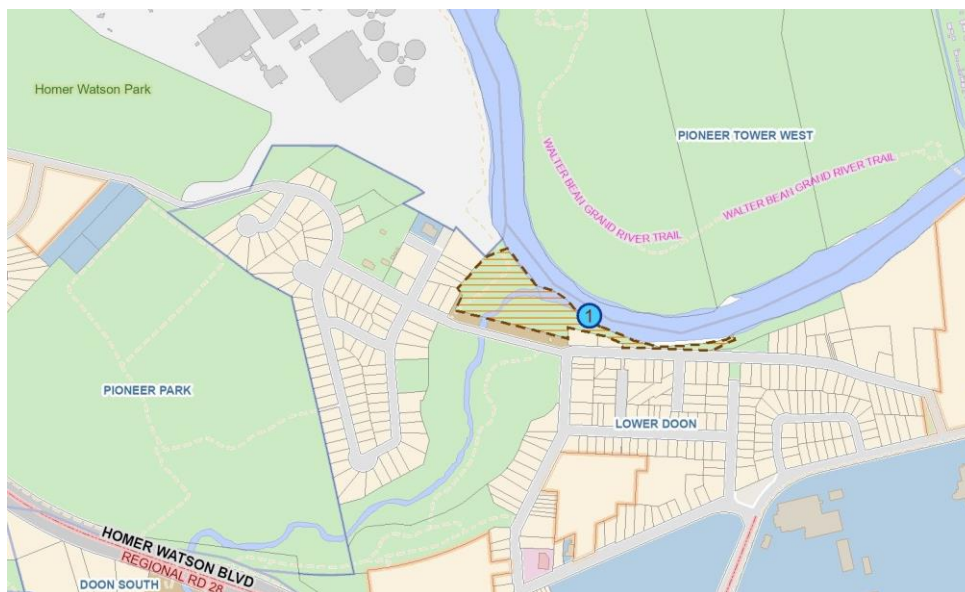


Figure 1. Location Map of the Lower Doon Mill Ruins.

*** This information is available in accessible formats upon request. ***
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

While the property once had a functioning mill, today the property contains ruins of that former mill, including a southwest corner of the mill made of rough cut limestone and coursed rubble construction, a small section of the south wall of the mill that extends towards the Creek, and the accompanying coursed rubble foundation for these sections. There is also an existing channel, a metal pipe, and a stone lined culvert outlet (Fig .2).

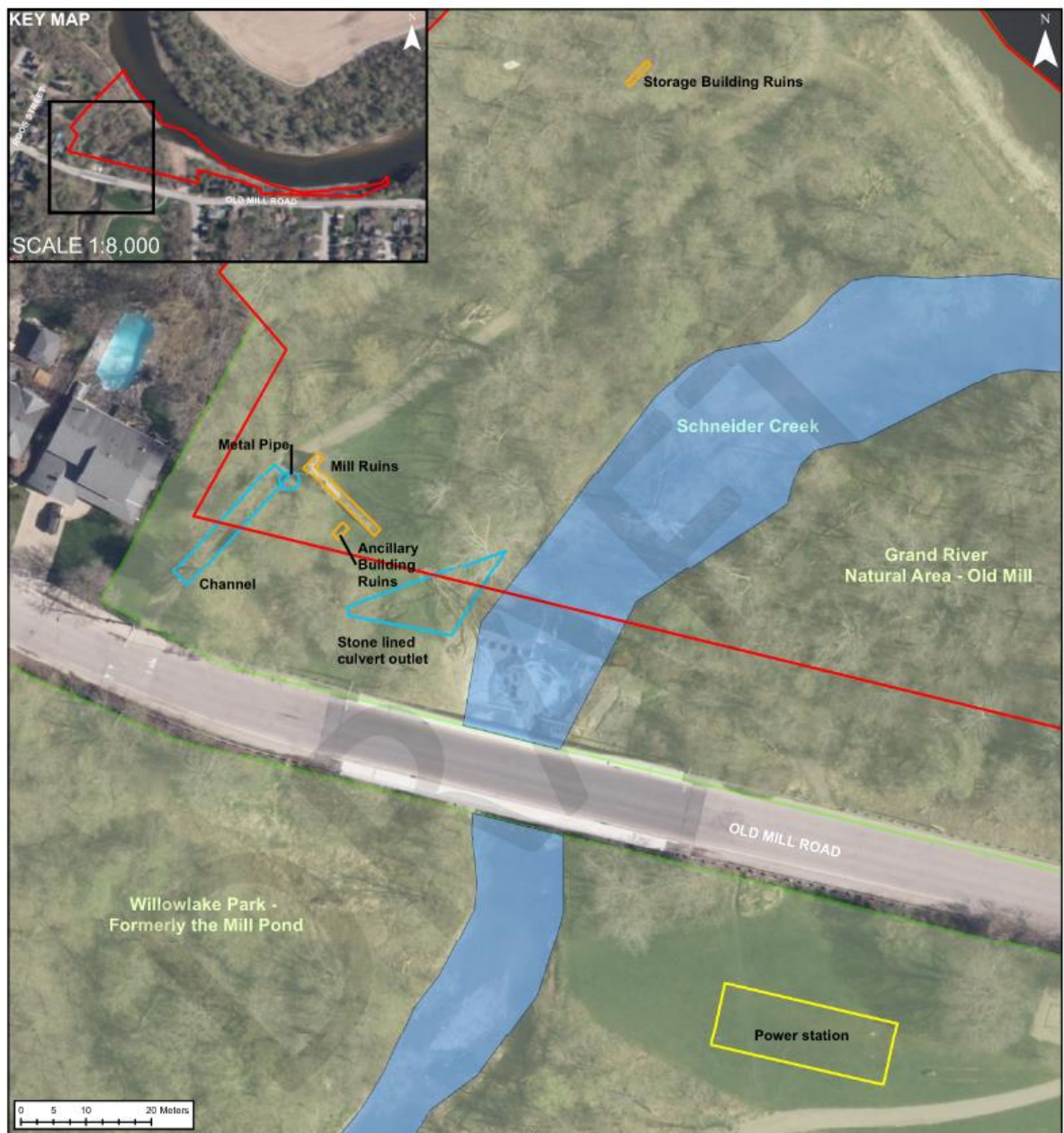


Figure 2. Key Map of the Ruin Features. (Source: Lower Doon Mill Ruins CHER)

The Ruins are in poor condition, with many sections of the stone falling off and are in need of repair and stabilization (Fig. 3 & 4). As a result, it was determined that a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) be completed. The purpose of the CHER was two-fold:

- To determine the cultural heritage value of the Ruins and determine whether they meet criteria for designation under Ontario Regulation 9/06; and
- To identify the repair and stabilization work needed for the Ruins.



Figure 3. View of the south elevation of the ruins. (Source: Lower Doon Mill Ruins CHER)



Figure 4. View of the top of the shaft of the west elevation wall. (Source: Lower Doon Mill Ruins CHER)

A CHER was submitted by LHC Heritage Planning and Archaeology Inc. (LHC) initially dated February 24, 2023, then revised July 24, 2023. All the information contained within this staff report has been taken from the CHER that was submitted by LHC. The full CHER is available as Attachment A with this staff report.

Lower Doon Mill History

Pennsylvania Dutch Mennonites settled in the Doon area in the 1800s and established the first industries here. The Village of Doon was founded by Adam Ferrie Jr. in 1834. The ruins are located on Biehn's Unnumbered Tract, which was granted by the Crown to Richard Beasley, James Wilson, and John Baptiste Rosseau on February 17, 1798. Then, on July 18, 1899, John Bean purchased three thousand six hundred (3,600) acres from Richard Beasley, James Wilson, and John Baptiste Rosseau. The mills complex was built by Adam Ferrie Jr, after he purchased the three hundred (300) acres of land in 1834 from the executors of John Bean's estate. He named his enterprise Doon Mills, which he named after Loch Doon (River Doon) in Ayrshire, Scotland. The enterprise was financed by his father, Adam Ferrie, who moved to Canada in 1829. In 1845, Adam Ferrie Jr.'s brother, Robert Ferrie, opened a post office and served as Postmaster. By 1852, several businesses had been added to the community, including a grist mill, a sawmill, a blacksmith shop, a shoemaker, a wagonmaker, tavern, a farm, a hotel, another general store, a tailor shop, a mill pond, and eleven (11) workers' houses.

The mills were water-powered and contained a flour, barley, and oatmeal mill, a distillery, a mill pond, a sawmill, and worker's houses. A year later, the dam burst emptying the mill pond which destroyed the distillery and some homes. A temporary dam was then installed while the dam was rebuilt, and the operations of the mill complex resumed soon after.

In 1848, Adam Ferrie Jr. sold the mill complex to Robert Ferrie at the request of his father. However, by 1857, Ferrie & Company was experiencing financial problems because of accounting errors. In 1860, The Gore Bank seized the mill complex from Robert's estate after his death in 1860. The mill complex had different owners until 1893, when Jacob Cluthe purchased the mill and updated the dam. In 1898, a fire broke out and destroyed the mill. The roof was then replaced, and Jacob Cluthe established a glue factory, a cider mill, and a scissor manufacturing business. Another fire broke out in 1922 and left the mill damaged beyond repair Fig. 5).



Figure 5. Lower Doon Mill Ruins c. 1920 (Source: Lower Doon Mill Ruins CHER)

In the 1930s, the Cluthe family converted the mill pond into a summer resort complete with a sand beach, a high-dive platform, and cabins which were constructed around the mill pond. The mill pond soon became known as Willow Lake and residents used it for swimming and skating. However, in 1968, a storm damaged the dam and Willow Lake drained into the Grand River.

Over time, the mill's smokestack and granary deteriorated and crumbled. In 1965, the west wall of the mill was knocked over after Schneider's Creek flooded. Shortly after 1968, Lawrence Cluthe granted part of the property to the City of Kitchener and the other part to the Grand River Conservation Authority. Today, only parts of the mill walls remain on site. They include only portions of the original mill complex that existed, which includes:

- A lower section of the southern elevation;
- Part of the southwest outside corner of the building;
- Mill race sidewalls which make up the channel; and
- Isolated portions of the ancillary structures.

Cultural Heritage Evaluation of the Doon Mill Ruins

The subject property has been evaluated against Ontario Regulation 9/06 under the Ontario Heritage Act to determine its cultural heritage value. According to this assessment, the mill ruins meet seven (7) out of nine (9) criteria, and is recognized for its physical, historical/associative, and contextual values. The findings have been summarized in the table below.

Ontario Regulation 9/06 Criteria	Criteria Met (Yes/No)	CHER Rationale
<p>1. The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, or representative example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The mill ruins, including the remnants of the mill race and storage building, are not a rare, unique, or representative example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method.</p> <p>However, they are a locally early example of a mill complex. The 1839 date is not early for mills in general, but the area has been settled by Europeans for less than 40 years and the village was only established 5 years earlier.</p> <p>Coursed rubble stone buildings were relatively common with numerous examples throughout the province.</p>
<p>2. The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or merit.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The mill ruins, including the remnants of the mill race and storage building, do not demonstrate a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit. The Ruins are consistent with standard stone mill construction at the time.</p>
<p>3. The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The mill ruins, including the remnants of the mill race and storage building, do not demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement. There is no evidence to suggest that the mill was constructed with a higher degree of technical or scientific achievement than a standard mill at the time. No evidence has been found that suggests a high degree of technical achievement was required to build and operate a mill at this location.</p>
<p>4. The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The mill ruins, including remnants of the mill race and storage building, have direct associations with a person and theme that is significant to the community. The mill ruins are directly associated with the Ferrie family and the development of the community of Doon. Adan Ferrie Jr. constructed Doon Mills and established the community of Doon. The Cluthe family further development the community be establishing the mill pond as a resort and local attraction.</p>

Ontario Regulation 9/06 Criteria	Criteria Met (Yes/No)	CHER Rationale
significant to a community.		
5. The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	Yes	<p>The mill ruins, including the remnants of the mill race and storage building, have the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of the community of Doon.</p> <p>The presence of partial storage building and the partial wall segment immediately south of the mill ruins suggests that additional remnants of the Doon Mills complex, and the early settlement of the Doon area may be present. This could contribute to the understanding of the original mill complex and the development of the community of Doon.</p> <p>The history of mills, milling, and the architecture of building are well understood aspects of Ontario history.</p>
6. The property has historical or associative value because it demonstrated or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer, or theorist who is significant to a community.	Yes	<p>The mill ruins, including the remnants of the mill race and storage building, demonstrate the work or ideas of a designer that is significant to the community.</p> <p>Doon Mills was designed by Adam Ferrie Jr. He established Doon Village with the construction of his mill complex, which included other types of buildings like worker's housing.</p>
7. The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area.	Yes	<p>The mill ruins, including the remnants of the mill race and storage building, are not important in maintaining, or supporting the character of the area. However, the presence if the Mill ruin does help define the area. The area is name for the mills that were located at this site as the development of the area in the mid 19th century was influenced by the mill and mill dam.</p>

Ontario Regulation 9/06 Criteria	Criteria Met (Yes/No)	CHER Rationale
		<p>The character of the surrounding area is comprised of primarily residential properties within some institutional properties. Building materials are primarily brick with some wood and stone.</p> <p>The mill ruins have a character of their own defined by Schneider's Creek. The Ruins are oriented to the creek as opposed to the roadway. It is separated from Old Mill Road by its deep setbacks and the slope that descends from Old Mill Road to the Grand River. Trees on the property block views from Old Mill Road. The Ruins have a lower elevation next to the Creek than other nearby properties.</p>
<p>8. The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The mill ruins, including the remnants of the mill race and storage building, are historically and functionally linked to its surroundings. The ruins are historically linked to several properties in the area through Adam Ferrie Jr.'s establishment and construction of Doon Village. Properties of particular note with historical linked to the ruins include the southern portion of Willow Lake Park (the mill's former mill pond), Schneider's Creek, the Homer Watson House, Doon Presbyterian Church, and 39 Doon Valley Drive.</p> <p>The mill site is functionally linked to its surroundings because the former mill has an impact on how the surrounding area development and on the development of the current park.</p>
<p>9. The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The mill ruins, including the remnants of the mill race, are a landmark, which is "a recognizable natural or human-made feature used for a point of reference that helps orienting in a familiar or unfamiliar environment; it may mark an event or development; it may be conspicuous."</p>

Ontario Regulation 9/06 Criteria	Criteria Met (Yes/No)	CHER Rationale
		The mill ruins are a prominent and recognizable feature in Lower Doon that serves as a gateway through Willow Lake Park. Its landmark status is also evident from its inclusion in historical walking tours, videos online, and photography websites. The remnants of the storage building are obscured by dense tree cover. Therefore, they are not considered to be a landmark.

The heritage attributes of the Mill ruins are:

- Orientation and relationship of the Mill Ruins with Schneider’s Creek, the Grand River, and Willow Lake Park;
- Unobstructed views of the mill ruins;
- The Mill building ruins including:
 - The standing rough-cut limestone and rubblestone walls;
 - Coursed rubble construction with window opening and lug sill on the south elevation;
 - Date stone on the south elevation near the southwest corner of the Ruins that reads “Doon Mills H.S. 1839”;
- The channel west of the ruins including:
 - The stone walls with channel between them;
 - The metal tube at the north end;
 - The relationship of the channel to the Mill building ruins;
- Storage building foundation and lower wall ruins located south of the main mill ruins.

Condition Assessment of the Ruins

According to the Engineer’s report, much of the ruin has been constructed with a combination of roughly cut limestone and un-tooled rubblestone. The ruins are generally in poor condition and in an advanced state of disrepair. Specifically, regarding different portions of the ruins, the assessment concluded that:

- The masonry of the Ruins is in poor condition – particularly in areas where the height exceeds about 1.2 m;
- Masonry of the channel is in good condition;
- Masonry around the metal pipe is in poor condition; and
- Remains of the foundation wall are in fair condition.

A more detailed analysis of the existing condition of the Ruins are included with the CHER report (Attachment A) that is attached to this staff report.

Repair and Restoration Recommendations

The report recommends that the Ruins be stabilized, restored, and commemorated. The stabilization and restoration of the Ruins generally includes the following measures:

- To install a protective barrier around the Ruins to prevent public access and further deterioration (this already has been done, the Ruins have been fenced off with no public access).
- Removing the upper portions of walls that have deteriorated to stabilize the walls, and then provide new stone coping at the top of the walls to match the existing, and to be fabricated with natural limestone.
- Fill in any hollow shafts in the walls of the Ruins with salvaged stone, mortar, and lime-based grout.
- Carry out any other masonry repairs and restoration as needed.

A detailed scope of work for the repair and restoration of the Ruins has been included as Attachment B of this staff report.

Once the repair and restoration has been completed, the City will be designating the Ruins under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and will be undertaking appropriate commemoration for the site. This aligns with the recommendations made within the CHER report, which include:

- That the Ruins be stabilized following guidance from the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and the recommendation of Tacoma Engineers' condition assessment.
- The City of Kitchener designate the property under Part IV Section 29 of the *Ontario heritage Act* and the Ruins be included in the list of heritage attributes for the property, and
- That the history of the Mill be commemorated and interpreted:
 - o Plans for interpretation could include on site and/or digital methods.
 - o On site interpretation could involved different types of interpretive panels, marking the location of missing parts of the Mill using landscaping, and/or partial reconstruction of the site.
 - o Commemoration and interpretation would benefit from archaeological assessment. A public archaeology program could be incorporated into the interpretation and conservation management of the Ruins.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – Capital budget has been allocated for stabilization and repair work outlined by the Engineer's Report and was approved through Budget 2025.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- *Ontario Heritage Act, 2023*

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A - Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report – Lower Doon Mill Ruins
- Attachment B - Tacoma Engineers’ Scope of Work