

October 26, 2015

Attention: Glen Letman
Manager of Planning & Development Services
Town of Aurora
100 John West Way, Box 1000
Aurora, Ontario L4G 6J1

**Re: Reply to Urban Design and Architectural Design Peer Review Comments
Highland Gate Developments Inc. – 21 Golf Links Drive (Reference No. TPP 1724)**

Dear Mr. Letman,

We have reviewed The Planning Partnership's peer review comments dated October 20, 2015, regarding the proposed Highland Gate Redevelopment Urban Design and Architectural Design Guidelines (February 27, 2015). In general, we agree with The Planning Partnership's comments and have prepared the following responses.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

SECTION 2.0 – THE CONCEPT PLAN

1. *Section 2.4 Trails & Pedestrian Connections*

Provide a cross-section illustrating the typical walkway block design (width of pavement, landscaping, fencing, etc.), taking into consideration pedestrian visibility and screening from adjacent properties.

A cross-section illustrating the configuration of a representative Walkway Block will be provided (attached to this reply).

SECTION 3.0 – HOUSING

2. *Section 3.2 Building Orientation*

Consider adding the following:

- *“Along long, straight streets, building setbacks should be varied (i.e. Street ‘A’).”*
- *“Along curved streets, building setbacks may consistent.”*

We believe that the proposed additional statements regarding building setbacks are in keeping with the intent of the existing language and will be added and cross referenced to the Architectural Design Guidelines which provide similar directions.

3. *Section 3.4 Garages*

Make reference to the Architectural Control Guidelines (Section 3.10 Garage Treatment & Location) to ensure that designs are coordinated.

We will provide a reference to Section 3.10 Garage Treatment and Location in the Architectural Design Guidelines, which provides a higher level of detail regarding the design of garages.

4. *Section 3.6 Priority Lots*

*Priority Lots are important in defining the scale and character of the development; the recommended design enhancements and upgrades should be mandatory, where possible. For example, under Corner Lots, Bullet 3, consider the following wording: "Corner lots **shall** provide a consistent level of detailing on all publicly exposed elevations."*

*Similarly, with respect to Elbow and Cul-de-sac Lots, consider "Special attention **shall** be given where the bend of the street can be partially exposed..."*

We agree and as identified in comment 7 below we will review the use and specified meanings of the words "may", "should", and "shall" in both the Urban Design and Architectural Design Guidelines.

5. *Section 3.9 Utilities & Mechanical Equipment (and Section 4.0 of the Architectural Design Guidelines)*

Consider adding the following:

- *For **high density buildings**, ensure that mechanical equipment and elevator overrun is screened or set back from the façade.*

We agree. We will add language to both the Urban Design and Architectural Design Guideline documents to address the location, architectural integration or appropriate screening of roof top mechanical equipment and elevator overruns.

SECTION 5.0 – STREETSCAPES

6. *Section 5.1 New Local Roads*

- a. *Add dimensions to Figure 15 and clarify the location of the street tree on the left hand side of the cross-section; is this tree located within private lands or a landscape buffer?*

Figure 15 will be revised to indicate dimensions and the limits of public versus private ownership will be illustrated.

- b. *Consider, to the extent possible, that sufficient space within the R.O.W. can accommodate both a bio-retention gallery and sufficient soil volumes to ensure (street) tree growth.*

The dimensions of the area adjacent to the bioswale will be reviewed to confirm the available soil volume. If it is determined to be required, continuous planting trenches will be considered in order to optimize the amount of soil available for the root zones of the street trees.

- c. *Provide details of the proposed methods of landscape screening/mitigation for the various conditions throughout the site. In particular, along new local roads where existing lots have become ‘through lots’ and new lots are fronting onto existing backyards, how will the new streetscape be experienced from both vantage points? What is the character of these new streets and what are the hard and soft landscape elements that will be provided to create that character?*

There are diverse edge conditions throughout the site. We will provide illustrations of the predominant situations and key these to a map. Specific solutions are being prepared for individual lot interface conditions through consultations with individual homeowners. To date well in excess of 100 adjacent landowners have been consulted and detailed interface plans have been prepared for each lot that has been the subject of this consultation exercise. Solutions proposed include additional tree planting, the establishment of new cedar hedges or the infilling/extending of existing hedges, the replacement of existing fences with new screen or ornamental fencing, the addition of architectural screening elements within the private back yard area and so on.

- d. *If animated streetscapes is an objective of the plan, consider designs that allow the opportunity for private gates (from existing lots) accessing the new local roads.*

HGDI has no objection to allowing for private gates to access the adjacent new streets. However, it is our understanding that it is a standard requirement of the Town of Aurora to require that the boundary between privately owned lands and Town-owned lands be defined by a fence without any gate. We will defer to the Town for direction with respect to this matter.

- e. *Replace the reference to ‘consistent with’ with ‘complementary to’ (the character) when describing landscaping within the boulevards. Uniformly applied, consistent tree species does not represent current best practices in arboriculture. Providing a diversity of species is one of the preferred methods of building resiliency to disease (and the complete loss of urban canopy in that event).*

The wording change will be made as recommended in the comment.

- f. *To the previous point, consider providing a tree planting strategy as part of the overall streetscape master plan.*

Detailed street tree planting plans will be prepared for the proposed development for approval by the Town of Aurora. Species diversity will be considered as an objective in the process of generating the plans, which are proposed to be created as a condition of draft plan approval.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

7. *Provide clarification regarding the level of compliance and conformity that will be required (i.e. “may”, “should”, and “shall”) for the design guidelines.*

We will add clear definitions (within the context of this document) of the terms “may”, “should”, and “shall” to section 1.0 Introduction. We will also review the use of these terms in both the Urban Design and Architectural Design Guidelines to ensure consistency of meaning.

8. *Section 2.2.7 Building Heights Compatibility*

Expanding on Section 3.1 of the Urban Design Guidelines regarding ‘Architectural Style’, consider adding the following:

“On lots that slope down from the front to the rear lot line, additional building height may be permitted at the rear of the dwelling only. The additional height will be measured at the rear face of the building.”

We support guidelines that will encourage compatibility between existing and proposed buildings. We understand the intention of this comment and believe that this is a matter that is most appropriately addressed by the proposed zoning by-law. The proposed zoning by-law measures height at the front elevation of the house.

9. *Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4*

Rather than repeating the general descriptions contained in the Urban Design Guidelines for the Priority Lots, the Architectural Design Guidelines should provide a greater level of detailed design guidance for dwellings in these prominent locations. Moreover, specific design enhancements/considerations (for example, with respect to ‘fenestration’, ‘driveway locations’ and ‘selection of models’) should be provided and, their application and the responsibility of the builders should be clarified.

We propose to maintain the existing text for priority lots that is duplicated in both documents. We believe that the inclusion of these sections dealing with priority lots in the Urban Design Guidelines helps to define the structure and appearance of the proposed development. We also believe that the duplication of these sections in the Architectural Design Guidelines provides a context for architectural guidelines for priority lots. We will add additional text to the Architectural Design Guidelines to provide clarity to the builders regarding the specific design expectations for those locations as suggested in The Planning Partnership comments.

We thank The Planning Partnership for the clarity of their comments in the Peer Review of the Urban Design Guidelines and Architectural Design Guidelines. We look forward to the continuation of this dialogue should the necessity arise.

Yours Truly,
The MBTW Group



Michael Hannay
Vice President W Architect Inc.
Director - Business Development MBTW-WAI
B.ARCH., B.E.S., MRAIC, MCIP, LEED AP

ATTACHMENT #1:

Revised Cross Section for the Walkway Block (Comment #1, Section 2.4)

