

September 11, 2020

Dear Mayor, Members of Council, Town Clerk and Town of Blue Mountains Planning Staff

This letter is in regard to the proposed development at 20 Alice Street East, Thornbury, and the owners' application for a Zoning Amendment on the Public Meeting agenda for September 16th at 10:00 am (File # P2877 (20 Alice Street East) and Roll # 424200001703600000).

We are the owners and residents of [REDACTED], one of Thornbury's historical homes. Our backyard on the south-side is connected to the property at 20 Alice Street South and we share a large boundary of 39 metres. The request before Council is a rezoning of 20 Alice Street South from an R-1 to R-3 to support a new development of 11 apartments within the existing structure of the existing house. In addition, the owners of 20 Alice Street East, have requested waiving of the Development Charges and Cash in Lieu of Parkland.

We are adamant that Council and Town staff consider this application seriously and ensure that the outcome meets with the Official Plan, Community Design, the Town's Strategic Plan, and is also fully compatible with the existing character of the neighbourhood

It is our opinion that the proposed development of 11 apartment units, does not meet the character of the neighbourhood and is a significant "change in use" of this property. More specifically, the following are our concerns:

1. Although the owners are proposing not to increase the exterior size/square footage of the existing historical house, the shift to R-3 and creating 11 apartments is a very significant change in use. We believe this proposed density is on the very high end at 50% based on 11 units on .22 ha of land, in a neighbourhood consisting of primarily single family homes. Additionally, the property will require modifications and landscaping to accommodate 16 parking spaces, as well as provide enough outdoor space or amenity space to support the new residents.
2. We are disappointed that the new owners have not contacted us and other property owners directly affected by their plan/proposal. We feel that this suggests that our interests and concerns are of limited interest to them during their planning process and we worry that once the project is completed and operating, they may continue to have limited interest in our opinions and feedback.
3. The new owner's failure to understand that Development Charges and Cash in Lieu of Parkland would be required to be included in their business model is of concern. To expect Council to exempt this property under the auspice that they are providing affordable housing suggests they have not completed their due diligence during their planning and design process. Our hope is that Council does not provide an exemption and passes the staff recommendation for the item on the September 15th, Committee of the Whole (deferred from the September 8th meeting).
4. We understand the goal of various levels of government around intensification policies in the settlement area of Thornbury and Clarksburg. Having said that, our opinion is it seems unhealthy for one particular block to "over contribute", as we deem is happening in our block fronting Bruce Street between Alice and Louisa East streets. Currently, there are two R-3

properties, Erinrung (60 residents) and land slated for future development at 23 Louisa Street East. Although future development cannot be determined, the Official Plan is a future planning document and the future designations must be considered by Council during this development application.

5. We feel the proposed backyard of 20 Alice Street South will be for the most part parking spots and the driveway, which will be a two way due to space constraints. We believe the remaining outside amenity space to serve more than 11 residents is not adequate and is not in keeping with the look and feel of the existing neighbourhood. We believe this will lead to numerous problems. For example, this past summer, there were just two tenants living at the location, and the neighbourhood suffered from evenings of noise, such that the OPP were called on various occasions. We expect that this will only increase if the residents in the proposed 11 units utilize the small outside space left on the property. We believe there is very little common area existing either outside or inside the proposed structure.
6. We understand the need for affordable housing within the Town of Blue Mountains in order to provide housing to support employment opportunities and support local business. In reading the letters from the new owners, it is our opinion that although they are proposing to provide Attainable Housing, there appears to be no commitment to provide their apartments at affordable rates. We appreciate that these new owners likely have good intentions, but we recognize that they must cover their costs and make a profit. As they have not considered all the costs within their budgets, affordable rents will be difficult to make that profit. How will they define the criteria for their targeted tenants, and how will they ensure the rents remain affordable?
7. Nine of the proposed 11 units are “bachelor or suite” size. They range from 242 square feet up to 422, an average of 310 square feet, with a median of 285 square feet. These are very small almost “dorm like” apartments. Our concern is who will be attracted to live in these units on a long-term basis. It is unclear why the owners feel this is what is needed to meet the needs of “attainable housing”. Each unit will only allow one resident, therefore not attracting young families or couples. It appears that in the Conceptual Business Plan for the BMAHC, they are not including bachelor pads as part of their definition of attainable. We hope that Council will look very closely at the Preliminary Interior Design provided by the new owners, and consider who would be attracted to these units and will they meet the need of local businesses who are looking for permanent staffing, not seasonal students. We worry that the small size of all these units raises concern that some might be used for short term rentals, which would have a negative impact on the neighbourhood. We would hope that Council would prohibit short term rentals during their discussion on the rezoning.
8. The Grading and Service Site Plan has proposed a fence which would provide privacy between 20 Alice Street East, and our home at 59 Bruce Street South. It appears that they are proposing a Temporary Heavy Duty Sediment Fence during construction, and then a permanent fence. We are supportive of the permanent fence and would request that it be built prior to the commencement of any construction on their site, preserving the existing trees (one which we understand to be protected) on both sides of the fence. The fence must connect and conform in height, materials and design to the fence already existing at the corner of our mutual lots and Erinrung’s property.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input. In summary, we believe that the owners should be required to revisit their proposed plans making it viable for their needs, the needs of “attainable housing” as detailed by BMAHC, as well as meeting the character and safety of the surrounding neighbourhood. We believe that one option may be to reduce the number of apartments, therefore reducing the parking requirements, reduce construction costs and consequently increase outdoor amenity space.

Consequently, we request that the Zoning Application be denied based on the 11 units. In our opinion this development is not in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood, which is primarily single family homes, with the exception of Erinrunga, which have nice lots and are very low in density. We feel that should this development be approved as submitted, it will provide precedent for future conversion of the old historical homes which are part of the history and charm of Thornbury.

As this process of review is a public process, we hope that our significant concerns and those of other owners about this development be considered as Council reviews this application for a zoning change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lynn and Tom Horlor

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