

**496857**  
GREY ROAD 2  
THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

**LANDSCAPE  
ANALYSIS**

September 11, 2024

PREPARED FOR  
Homefield Management Ltd.

PREPARED BY  
Envision-Tatham Inc.  
115 Sandford Fleming Drive, Suite 200  
Collingwood, ON L9Y 5A6



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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Envision-Tatham is retained by Homefield Management Ltd. to prepare a Landscape Analysis in support of the proposed development at 496857 Grey Road 2 (Part of Lot 29, Concession 8) in the Town of The Blue Mountains. The following report addresses the suitability of the site for development, the visual and physical complexities of the site, preservation & enhancement measures, and mitigation to protect the landscape character of the site, in accordance with B3.7.4.3 of the Official Plan.

## 1.2 Site Context

The site is located between Grey Road 2 and the south side of Highway 26 (**Figure 1.**) The Georgian Trail runs parallel to the northeast property boundary. Indian Brook extends onto the property on the northeast corner. To the northwest is Sun Retreats, a seasonal RV resort, as well as designated Employment Lands. To the south are several single detached homes and agricultural lands.



**Figure 1.** Site Location. (Image: Grey County mapping)

## 1.3 Existing Conditions

As described in the Environmental Impact Assessment, prepared by Birks Natural Heritage Consultants Inc. (2024), this 37.4 ha property is generally characterized by wetland vegetation communities in the south and more upland in the north. As a result, the south half of the property is largely undeveloped, while the north half is partially developed.

### 1.3.1 Existing Built Characteristics

At the existing entrance along Grey Road 2, there is a gate and signage (**Figure 2**). Interior to the site, there is a central gravel driveway (**Figure 3**) leading to a building (**Figure 4**) and an overgrown trail system that runs through much of the property. The trail network has varying hierarchy with clearings in vegetation ranging from 1m to 6m in width. There appear to be no existing connections between the property's trail network and the Georgian Trail (**Figure 5**).



**Figure 2.** Existing entrance on Grey Road 2.



**Figure 3.** Existing gravel driveway.





**Figure 4.** Existing main building and outbuilding.



**Figure 5.** View from the Georgian Trail into the site.

Further to this, several instances of debris and small outbuildings exist throughout the site and there are also ornamental and fruit trees planted, primarily along the main driveway. The property also includes some man-made ponds.

### 1.3.2 Existing Natural Characteristics

The frontage of the site along Grey Road 2 is meadow, with some deciduous shrubs and trees.

Interior to the site, the natural characteristics are largely defined by Indian Brook and other natural heritage systems, including significant woodlands and unevaluated wetlands.

Indian Brook, a cold-water fishery, runs along the north property boundary and crosses the property on the northeast corner. The watercourse is flanked by deciduous and coniferous vegetation (**Figure 6**).



**Figure 6.** Existing vegetation along Indian Brook.

Much of the site is forested, and as noted above, it includes significant woodlands, much of which is dense cedar. In the areas identified as unevaluated wetlands, there are various forested swamp communities. In the center of the site, the landscape character is more open and is characterized by a reed canary grass meadow and shrub thickets. The site also includes a pine plantation, buckthorn thickets (invasive species), and the ornamental plantings mentioned in Section 1.3.1 (**Figure 7**).

With respect to species at risk, as noted in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report by Birks Natural Heritage Consultants Inc. (2024), there were no Butternuts observed. Black Ash were identified within the natural heritage constraint area but will not be impacted by the proposed development.



**Figure 7.** Internal site views of existing vegetation.

### 1.3.3 Existing Topography

The site is located at the base of the Nipissing Ridge and drains towards Georgian Bay. Groundwater seepage contributes water to unevaluated wetlands at the base of the ridge. The site sits higher than Indian Brook, with vegetated embankments leading down to the creek edge.



## 2.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 Development Proposal

The Draft Plan of Condominium proposes a total of 376 residential units, with 5 different rowhouse types. The blocks of rowhouses are connected by several roads, with one entrance from Grey Road 2. Rowhouse frontages vary from 4.95m to 7.4m and have no more than 8 units in a connected row.

Of the total site area (+/- 37.37 ha), 9.8 hectares of the site is being considered for development. Within the development area, 3.44 ha has been dedicated to stormwater management, parks, forest edge restoration planting, and retained natural heritage areas.

The proposed development includes the following features, as demonstrated in the landscape concept (**Figure 12**) and further described in Sections 2.1.1 to 2.1.6.

- Entrance feature and signage
- Walkways and Trails
- Visitor parking
- Neighbourhood park & parkettes
- Stormwater management facility
- Naturalization and enhancement planting

The proposed development provides a 30m setback from the Indian Brook high water mark. A 15m setback has also been provided along the Natural Heritage Constraint Area in the south.

To facilitate construction of this development, a portion of the site will be cleared of vegetation, except:

- natural heritage constraint areas (south wetland communities and Indian Brook)
- natural heritage setbacks
- retained natural heritage areas

Minimal vegetation clearing may also occur within the natural heritage constraint areas to provide formal recreational trails.

Utilities and services will be provided by connecting to existing infrastructure as detailed in the Functional Servicing Report by Tatham Engineering.

#### 2.1.1 Site Entrance

The proposed entrance at Grey Road 2 will consist of two 8m wide condominium roads separated by a planted median, to allow for safe fire access and provide a prominent gateway to the site. The road will be flanked by two parkettes with entrance signage and feature planting (**Figure 8**).



**Figure 8.** Example of development entrance with sign.

### 2.1.2 Walkways and Trails

The proposed pedestrian circulation system consists of sidewalks along the condominium roadways, two recreational trail loops through existing natural heritage areas (including the stormwater management facility), and a connection to the Georgian Trail. Trailheads will be provided in park blocks. This network will provide many routes and opportunities for active recreation at varying levels of difficulty. Sidewalks and park trails will be concrete or granular, but wilderness trails through natural heritage areas will be natural surface (i.e., wood chips) in consideration of the sensitivity of these environments. All sidewalks and park trails will meet the requirements of Accessibility for Ontarians Disabilities Act (AODA).

### 2.1.3 Visitor Parking

Several visitor parking stalls have been incorporated into the overall site plan. The two primary locations for visitor parking include the neighbourhood park block and the stormwater facility. Designated visitor parking supplements the dedicated 2 parking spaces provided for each unit and creates a safer pedestrian and vehicular environment.

### 2.1.4 Parks & Parkettes

The proposed development has several open space areas designated as parks or parkettes. The two parkettes at the entrance to the development will consist of trees, feature planting, and signage. A third parkette is proposed between rowhouse blocks for trail access to Indian Brook. A linear park, adjacent to the SWM facility, will provide a trail connection to the Georgian Trail. The linear park may also support amenities such as a dog park or additional naturalized planting.

The large neighbourhood park is centrally located and may support neighbourhood amenities such as walkways, a playground (**Figure 9**), shade pavilion, and community gardens (**Figure 10**). The large frontage of the park provides visual access to the park consistent with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).



**Figure 9.** Example of a park playground.



**Figure 10.** Example of community gardens.

### 2.1.5 Stormwater Management Facilities

A large stormwater management facility is proposed at the northeast end of the development, at the lowest point of the site. The stormwater pond will be naturalized with native tree and shrub planting around the perimeter and the maintenance access will also serve as an extension of the trail network within the development (**Figure 11**).



**Figure 11.** Naturalized Stormwater Management Facility.

### 2.1.6 *Naturalization and Enhancement Planting*

Naturalization and enhancement planting is proposed in several locations around the site. Forest edge restoration planting is proposed in the linear park and neighbourhood park to widen the buffers around natural heritage constraint areas. Along the north boundary, a 3.0m landscaped buffer of deciduous and coniferous trees is proposed along the rear lots of units that back onto existing residential properties. Naturalization and enhancement planting is also proposed within the natural heritage constraint area as recommended in the Environmental Impact Assessment by Birks Natural Heritage Consultants Inc. (2024).







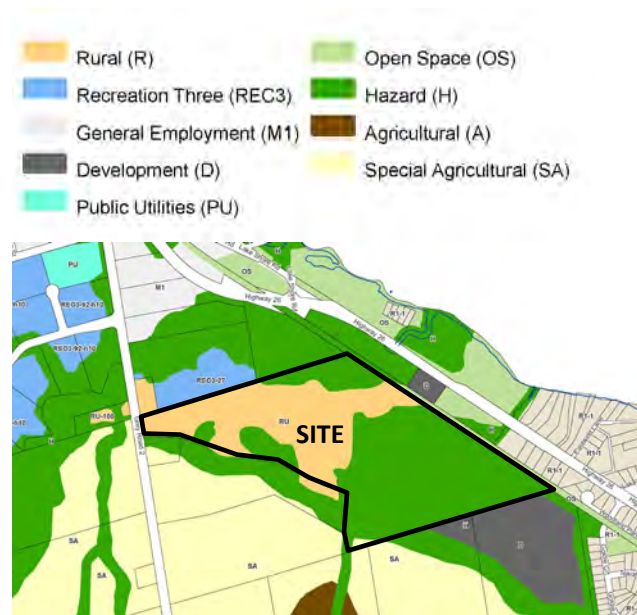
## 3.0 LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Suitability of Site for Development

The subject lands are designated on Map 2A of the Grey County Official Plan (2019) as being within the Thornbury Primary Settlement Area. Within this designation, a wide range of urban uses are permitted on full municipal services. The site would therefore not require an amendment to the Grey County Official Plan.

In the Town of Blue Mountains Official Plan, the site is designated as Rural and Hazard Lands as shown in Schedule 'A-2'. The development would require an amendment to the Towns Official Plan to bring the proposed development lands into the Community Living Area designation.

The site is currently Zoned Rural and Hazards lands by the Town of The Blue Mountains Zoning By-Law (Schedule 'A' Map: 10) (**Figure 13**). A Zoning By-law amendment will be required to allow residential units to be built on the site, and as such a Residential Two (R2) zoning is being proposed.



**Figure 13.** Rural & Hazard Lands (Town of The Blue Mountains Zoning By-Law #2018-65).

While the site is not currently zoned for residential development, the proposed development and site provides a unique opportunity for attainable residential living in close proximity to Thornbury. The following subsections will demonstrate the site's suitability for development in context of the site location and existing landscape.

#### 3.1.1 Attainable Housing

The proposed development intends to provide quality attainable housing within a planned neighborhood. While attainable housing is often found in more urban areas, the site location and proposed development offers the following benefits:

- close proximity to downtown Thornbury and many community amenities
- connections to recreational trails and active transportation networks
- parkland and open space areas
- views of natural heritage systems

The subject proposal represents an opportunity for attainable housing in a situation and setting that is traditionally reserved for higher end residential markets.

#### 3.1.2 Transportation Networks

The location of the site provides many opportunities for vehicular and active transportation, benefitting the residents of the development.

The Town of Thornbury can be accessed by a three-minute car ride, allowing for ease of access to community amenities and services.

Safe, active transportation is supported by the community trail system, as shown in the Town of Blue Mountains Official Plan (Schedule 'B-1'). Thornbury is a ten-minute bicycle ride or a forty-minute walk along the Georgian Trail from the site. The Beaver River Trail and Bayview Park Trail are two other multi-use trail networks in close proximity of the Georgian Trail, that can connect residents to

public parks, waterfront access points, and other natural areas.

While public transportation to Blue Mountain Resorts, Collingwood, Meaford, etc. can be accessed from Downtown Thornbury, there are currently no transit stops or routes along Grey Road 2. The Town could consider re-routing the bus from Collingwood and provide a stop along Grey Road 2 if there is sufficient demand.

### 3.1.3 Existing Landscape

As per the EIS prepared by Birks Natural Heritage Consultants, Inc. (2024), the area of the site proposed for development is characterized by dense cedar forest, buckthorn thickets, dug ponds, some ornamental plantings, and a pine plantation. The vegetation within the proposed development area was categorized as having relatively low ecological function, compared to vegetation being retained; though the lands contain 'Other Wetland' and 'Significant Woodland' limited ecological functions associated with this area of the property. Further details are provided within the EIS.

## 3.2 The Visual and Physical Complexities of the Site

### 3.2.1 Physical Complexities

The dominant physical features of this site are the unevaluated wetlands, significant woodlands, and Indian Brook. The extensive trail network and existing vehicular access also add to the physical complexities of the site.

### 3.2.2 Visual Complexities

Visually, the site is not particularly prominent along Grey Road 2 and the vegetated frontage is similar to that of neighbouring properties (**Figure 14**). The existing buildings are set back beyond naturalized areas and are not visible from the road.



**Figure 14.** Looking toward the existing gravel driveway from the property to the north of the site.

Neighboring properties on the south side of the site are primarily agricultural, except some residential properties that have coniferous buffers along their frontages (**Figure 15**, **Figure 16**).



**Figure 15.** Other property frontages along Grey Rd 2.





**Figure 16.** View from the existing gravel driveway looking out of the site.

The residential property and the RV resort immediately north of the property are characterized by mature trees and lawn along their frontages. The RV resort has established a prominent entrance with signage and other gateway features (**Figure 17**), similar to what is proposed for this development.



**Figure 17.** View of RV Resort frontage.

In addition, the site is currently not clearly visible from the Georgian Trail, due to the dense vegetation that lines this section of the trail. The proposed development maintains a vegetated buffer along the Georgian Trail to minimize impacting the experience of trail users, except where a trail connection is proposed.

The topography of the site is fairly level and does not offer any notable views to or from the site from both the Georgian Trail and Grey Road 2.

Based on the above, the proposed development would have a limited impact on the character of the surrounding area as viewed from public roads or trails.

### 3.3 Protection the Landscape Character of the Site

The following preservation, enhancement, and mitigation measures are proposed and illustrated in the Landscape Concept to protect the landscape character of the site:

#### 3.3.1 *Preservation Measures*

To preserve the existing landscape character of the site, a 15m natural heritage area setback has been provided for the south Natural Heritage Constraint area and a 30m setback from the Indian Brook high water mark. In addition, several areas of retained vegetation have been identified inside the development area to provide additional buffering. Providing formal recreational trails through existing natural heritage areas may help to preserve and limit unwanted disturbance to the natural heritage areas by residents.

Along the Georgian Trail, as noted above, a buffer of existing vegetation will be preserved to maintain the existing character of the high-use trail. Maintaining this vegetation has several benefits:

- provides visual and physical separation between the development and the Georgian Trail
- maintains and preserves natural heritage features on and adjacent to the property
- maintains a vegetated east-west corridor along the Georgian Trail for animal movement to Indian Brook

#### 3.3.2 *Mitigation Measures*

Several mitigation measures can be implemented during construction to prevent negative impacts of the development on the natural heritage system. Tree protection fencing and siltation control measures will help to protect the natural heritage features from the disturbance of construction activities. Additionally, in accordance with the Migratory Birds Convention Act, tree removals should occur outside of the migratory bird breeding

season, to protect migratory birds that may be present on the site.

Views towards the development along Grey Road 2 can be mitigated through planting of the two parkettes located along the frontage of the site. A mixed deciduous and coniferous tree buffer would help maintain the landscape character of Grey Road 2, while also mitigating noise pollution from vehicles. It should also be noted that current grading plans propose that the buildings closest to the site entrance will sit over 2m below the road elevation of Grey Road 2.

Tree planting along the perimeter of the stormwater facility and within the linear park would help to fortify the existing vegetated buffer along the Georgian Trail and mitigate any views of the development from the trail.

### 3.3.3 Enhancement Measures

Enhancement measures for this development may include stormwater management (SWM) facility planting, boulevard tree planting, buffer planting along the perimeter of development, infill planting within the naturalized heritage system, foundation planting, and park/parkette planting.

#### *SWM Facility*

SWM facility planting offers an opportunity to introduce later-succession native species that may not occur in the area, enhancing local biodiversity and providing more resiliency to the area (**Figure 18**). Increased species diversity will help fortify the forest against outbreaks of invasive species (e.g., Emerald Ash Borer). Further to this, as previously noted, perimeter pond planting will also enhance the existing vegetated buffer along the Georgian Trail.



**Figure 18.** Stormwater Management Facility Planting.

#### *Boulevard Trees*

Boulevard trees will be planted where space is available along roadways (**Figure 19**) to enclose the streetscape, control the microclimate of the street, provide traffic calming, and increase urban forest diversity. Tree species should be selected for their tolerance of urban conditions, salt, and the local climate.

Due to the geometry of the proposed development, several triangles of open space exist between the rowhouse blocks. Additional boulevard trees may be planted in these locations as an extension of the streetscape and to help soften the views of residential units.



**Figure 19.** Boulevard trees enhance the streetscape.

#### *Natural Heritage Area Infill Planting*

As noted in the Environmental Impact Assessment by Birks (2024), it is recommended that infill planting be provided in the south Natural Heritage Area to

increase species diversity and reforest areas of previous disturbance. Planting in the Natural Heritage Area may include:

- tree planting to close off/reduce existing trail networks
- tree planting in areas of invasive species removal
- tree planting around proposed pond (within reed canary grass meadow)

Planting in these locations provide several opportunities and benefits including:

- enhancement of local plant biodiversity
- provides a physical barrier to residents entering the Natural Heritage Area, except where intended at recreational trail entrances
- forest cover and diversified habitat for fauna

#### *Foundation Planting*

Rowhouse Type 4 provides a unique opportunity to introduce foundation planting among the residential units. These units have a shared walkway between rowhouse blocks that serves as a pedestrian corridor. Planting along the walkways and units will further connect the overall landscape character of the site to the interior of the development.

Additional foundation planting may be provided at prominent intersections and corners to help enhance views of the streetscape, residential units, and contribute to a more cohesive landscape.

Plant species for foundation and feature planting will be selected with an appropriate height at maturity to maintain sightlines for safety. Planting beds will also be designed as low maintenance to help maintain a tidy and attractive appearance in conformance with principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

In rear yards that back onto adjacent properties, a 3.0m landscaped buffer will be provided. This landscape buffer will consist of deciduous and coniferous trees to provide privacy to these lots from neighbouring lands.

#### *Neighbourhood Park & Parkette Planting*

The location of the north parkette is in a notably clear area (**Figure 20**). Additional planting in the parkette will provide a transition between the boulevard tree planting and existing forest edge along the Indian Brook Trail.

Tree planting within the neighbourhood park and parkettes will help enhance the existing character of the site and provide a soft transition from the built environment to natural heritage areas (**Figure 21**). Like boulevard trees, tree planting in the parks and parkettes will improve microclimate and increase urban forest diversity.

Forest edge restoration planting is provided within the linear park and neighbourhood park to enhance and widen the buffer for the natural heritage constraint area. These areas will be planted with a mix of deciduous and coniferous tree species and help re-establish a forest edge.



**Figure 20.** Existing clearing.



**Figure 21.** Tree planting along park pathways.



## 4.0 CLOSING

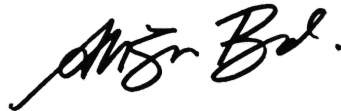
Based on our assessment, the site is suitable for development. We have proposed preservation, enhancement, and mitigation measures to protect the landscape character of the site. These measures are appropriate and should be considered through and in the detailed design stages of the development review and approval processes.

Respectfully submitted,

### ENVISION-TATHAM



Grace Christie, BLA  
Landscape Architectural Intern



Alison Bond BSc MSc BLA OALA CSLA  
Landscape Architect & Arborist