



January 22, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

RE: Bradley-Craig Barn and Proposed Property Development, 590 Hazeldean Road, Stittsville

MTBA Associates Inc. has been asked to review a limited set of documents pertaining to the question of the application to demolish and relocate the 1873 Bradley-Craig barn, a fundamental and integral character element of this property designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, as part of a redevelopment proposal.

MTBA has over 30 years' experience in Architecture, Urbanism and Conservation. Our previous projects include heritage evaluation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse in urban, rural and suburban settings. We were retained by the Town of Perth in recent years to evaluate options for the 19th C. McPherson-Darou Farm, which includes a farmhouse and large bank barn as well. This and other projects have provided opportunity for us to be familiar with many of the architectural, urbanistic and conservation issues surrounding the property in question.

MTBA agrees with City Staff's opinion. Without belabouring points that have already been brought before Committee, I will underscore just a couple of related points:

1. DETERIORATION - REHABILITATION

The prevailing wisdom at the City of Ottawa is to hold owners accountable for multi-year degradation of their own heritage property, and to refuse the reasoning that the building is now so deteriorated that it is not feasible to rehabilitate and reuse. The structural P.Eng. report by John G. Cooke & Associates confirms that the key element of structural stability remains and there are no structural barriers to reuse of the asset.

2. CONTEXT

Ontario Regulation 9/06 determines that a property has contextual value if it meets at least one of three criteria. As the Staff report points out, this property meets *all three* criteria. This most definitely confirms it has contextual value under the Ontario Heritage Act.

In the CHIS, the author states, and builds its argument around, "*...the farmstead is no longer associated with the land.*"

However in our view it is the very farmstead that *is* the landscape, the property that was designated.

There are many slightly varying definitions for 'farmstead' but three common ones are:

Merriam-Webster: *the buildings and adjacent service areas of a farm; broadly: a farm with its buildings;*

Collins English Complete and Unabridged: *(Agriculture) a farm or the part of a farm comprising its main buildings together with adjacent grounds;*

Cambridge English: *the house belonging to a farm and the buildings around it.*

Therefore the "farmstead" is indeed connected to the land, both physically and culturally; it is the core 4 acres of land that is Designated Heritage and is the most culturally significant portion of the original farm. As the CHIS itself reports, farms of the day were organized such that the farm core buildings were situated closest to the road with the fields laid out behind the farmyard, its house, barn and out-buildings. This core farmyard is a cultural landscape onto itself; as the Statement of Cultural Value itself says, the designation applies to the entire complex: "...the farmhouse, and large barn and farm yard". This indicates clearly that the designated property character involves not only the two historic buildings, but their relationship to each other on the lands between and around them. Therefore to remove the barn entirely away from these 4 acres is to desecrate the Designation. To say the farmstead has been "disassociated from the land" is disingenuous. In fact the surrounding encroaching suburban landscape is disassociating the wide open farm land from the core farmstead. This makes the designated farmstead that much more important to preserve. Case in point: Figure 17 of the CHIS is a photo of the bleak auto-oriented view which defines this stretch of the Hazeldean Road area, with its acres of asphalt parking, its highway-like roadway and its ubiquitous chain stores, and is the very reason that it both:

- begs to have the injection of the rural roots and now-unique farmstead, with its landmark barn preserved, if for no other reason than to provide a point of interest within this sameness and;
- provides great commercial opportunity and potential, due to the farmstead's identity, its unique 'brand'. Retail/commercial analysts agree that providing a unique character to a retail development will help set it apart from the sea of commercial development and attract customers and dollars.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AND THE FARMHOUSE

Sensitively revitalized, these 4 acres (3.33% of the overall 120-acre property) can therefore provide a major economic boost to the rest of the 116 acres. A unique heritage-based development of these 4 acres would in our opinion be a wise investment. In fact, using heritage resources in this way has now become mainstream in North America. It does take some effort and creativity to identify the optimal mix of uses and cost-effective rehabilitation combination, but there are a very large number of successful samples. Even locally, the redevelopment of the popular-again Aberdeen Pavilion, which was a reasonable-cost rehabilitation, is a good example.

Unfortunately the proposed development options for the site go in the opposite direction: divorced from any heritage value or sensitivity, these three options are variations on the standard box retail formula, devoid of any meaning from the Heritage Designated site. For example, the CHIS states that the farmhouse should "...be maintained as the most prominent feature along the street with the new development set back to allow views of the house from the street." However, none of the three options presented does this. In fact, 2 of the 3 actually show new box retail/restaurant set *forward* of the house.

As well the CHIS states, "It is recommended that the link connecting the (farm) house to the new retail as shown..... be more carefully considered." In fact, there is no link at all shown on any of the 3 options. In all 3, the new box retail is slammed up against the house with no intermediating "link" consideration whatsoever.

4. CONCLUSION

The proposed redevelopment options not only desecrate the Designated Historic Place by removing the barn, they do not even respect the heritage value of the farmhouse. Therefore the proposed overall development, and certainly the removal of the barn, is in our view unacceptable.

Clearly, wiping out a 4-acre farmstead, a designated cultural landscape, with formulaic box retail and parking is not a good solution. Going back to the drawing board to produce a design for a new commercial complex that is well-inspired by and sensitive to the Historic Place and incorporates the historic barn is strongly recommended.

I would be pleased to discuss further with members of Council or Staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MTB' followed by a stylized flourish.

MTBA ASSOCIATES Inc.

Mark Thompson Brandt, OAA, RAIC, LEED AP, CAHP
Senior Conservation Architect & Urbanist