

January 14, 2022

To: The Council of the Township of North
ATTN: Carson Lamb, Clerk

Re: Responding To Developers Comments
PROPOSED OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT AND ZONING BY-LW AMENDMENT
AFFECTING LOTS 367-370 (166 John St. W.) FORMER TRAILER PARK SITE WINGHAM

We have received a letter from the applicants, Jonathan Eelman and Brock Hodgins, regarding our comments about the above application. Please find attached our response to their letter which we would like to add to the file with our previous comments. Also attached is a copy of the letter from Mr. Eelman and Mr. Hodgins and the guidebook for the Wingham Ecological Park which we reference in our letter.

Thank you

Jack and Nancy Gillespie
118 John Street
Wingham, Ontario

Hello Jack & Nancy,

Thank you for sending us your concerns related to our proposed development.

1) Loss of valued parkland

Unfortunately if our project continues this area will no longer be a space for recreational activities. Up until recently this property was a trailer park which would also have limited the unrestricted use of the property as well. There are numerous other parks and recreational spaces located throughout Wingham which include:

- The Cruickshank Park is located in the heart of Wingham directly across from the Wingham Fire Station.
- West Riverside Park and Splash Park located at 239 William St
- Riverside Park located at 145 Park Drive
- Willow Park Patch is a privately run park open to the public located at 229 Arthur Street

Although an argument can be made for the subjectivity of a statement like 'highest and best use' we rely on the direction and leading from our local and provincial planning departments to guide development. They have the expertise to understand all of the different factors that influence a successful and enjoyable community. Our proposal was based on the request from the Huron County Planning Department that this site be developed as high density residential.

2) High Density

The building may seem large but when compared to the footprint it occupies, it is actually on the smaller side. The total covered space on the completed building will be about 15% of the total property. If someone desired to do so, they could propose a building nearly 3 times the size as the maximum lot coverage for this property would be 40%.

In order to keep up with the demand for required housing while being limited in developable land in the Wingham area the logical and preferred method of growth is densification. This is the goal of all planning departments at this time. We want to reduce the urban sprawl of our communities and take advantage of the proximity to the main amenities usually located within the heart of a community. We do acknowledge that this is a first for Wingham. Other communities in our area are now building similar projects as well. Listowel has four story buildings going up. Goderich has granted

approval on a six story building. Other local communities such as Kincardine, Walkerton and Hanover all have or are building similar buildings.

We are indeed looking for a few changes to the R3 zoning specifically for this site. The Maitland Valley Conservation Area has reviewed this development and has no concerns with it at this time. Please see the attached letter. We also would like to point out that although a couple of changes are required we satisfy the vast majority of the zoning requirements with ease. Also, although we are asking for the zoning to allow for five stories, the building will appear to be four stories in height from the main views due to the split grade on the property.

Both townships (North Huron and Morris Turnberry) did not feel that the increase in population around the proposed development would require a traffic study; however, if deemed necessary we would be open to participating as required. We have heard numerous complaints about the increase of traffic on John and William street. To help manage this we have proposed changing the address to a Victoria St address instead of maintaining the current 166 John St address. This would direct visitors, deliveries and service vehicles away from the park area on John/William Street.

3) Parking space concerns

In our original application we asked for a revision to parking requirements to be 1 parking spot for every unit. This would have meant 73 spots total. Based on developments in neighbouring communities such as Goderich and Listowel this request would provide sufficient parking. With that said we have had numerous concerns about the 1:1 ratio not providing enough parking and therefore have looked for a suitable solution. Working alongside our architects (Allan Avis Architects Inc.) we have added enough parking to get us to 1.23 spots for every unit. We are continuing to see if we can add additional parking and will do our best to add as many as we can without undergoing major revisions to the site plan.

4) Process

The distribution and who is notified and impacted by developments is not something that we are directly involved with as that is set out by the Provincial Planning Act. With that said, we agree that information should be made readily available and easily accessible. There is nothing that we are trying to hide and we want to have open communication regarding our plans.

As the developers of this project, we held a drop in information meeting on October 27th ahead of the required official public meeting at town hall to try and provide additional information to those interested. This was not required; however, we deemed it important that anyone who wanted to meet and ask questions about the development were able to do so.

We appreciate your written statements and hope that our comments have put some of your worries at ease. If you would appreciate discussing further feel free to reach out to us.

Respectfully,

Brock Hodgins - 519 531 3256

Jonathan Eelman - 519 357 6986

January 13, 2022

TO: Johnathon Eelman and Brock Hodgins,

FROM: Jack Gillespie and Nancy Gillespie

RE: Follow up to letter of reply for planning applications at Former Wingham Trailer Park (166 John Street)

Thank for your letter of January 11, 2022 in answer to our comments regarding the proposed 73-unit apartment building on the former Wingham Trailer Park.

1) Loss of valued parkland:

Yes, the campers limited the unrestricted use of the property but to compare that to a large five-story apartment building with its paved sidewalks and parking spaces is a bit of a stretch. We enjoyed the atmosphere created by the campground, it represented a slower pace, something we all need more of right now.

We have often walked through the former Wingham Trailer Park in the summer and enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere of people on vacation with campfires burning and people on lawn chairs enjoying a summer evening.

Your reference to numerous other available parks and recreational spaces is somewhat disingenuous. To begin with the Willow Park Patch is located outside North Huron and a considerable distance from the area in question. Riverside Park at 145 Park Drive is mostly open space, devoted to outdoor sports facilities and lacking in trees. It is not suited to outdoor activities such as trail walking or even just relaxing on a bench. Cruickshank Park on the main street is a wonderful oasis of greenery, but with the constant flow of traffic cannot be compared to the natural space offered at the former campground property by the Maitland River.

You also mention the West Riverside Park and Splash Park, located at 239 William St., which is part of the Wingham Ecological Park as is the former Wingham Trailer Park – the property in question. The Wingham Ecological Park was created many years ago to fill a need for naturalized public space in Wingham. I've attached a copy of their guidebook, which for those interested, outlines the amazing diversity of life, both plant and animal that exists along our riverbank.

The guidebook states in its Introduction why the name "ecological park" was chosen: 'The name was chosen because the changes made here through the park project were

designed to help restore healthy “ecological systems” (“ecosystems” for short) on the land, and in the water.’ It goes on to explain the many different ecosystems the park contains, and how fragile and interconnected they all are.

Volunteers from the Wingham Community Trail group have spent countless hours over the years planning, planting and helping to maintain this beautiful natural space. The trail runs through the park along the riverbank as their map indicates. It is a true benefit to our community and to the health and well-being of all our residents.

The closing of the trailer park presented a golden opportunity to more fully incorporate that space into the Ecological Park, and to carry out some of the recommendations contained in the new North Huron Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan for developing our parkland and trails.

Preserving this property as parkland was the option we were referring to in our comments on this application. It is why we questioned the statement in the land use analysis that high-density residential is the ‘highest and best use’ of the subject property. As if development is deemed the imperial imperative by which “progress” is measured.

You state your proposal was based on the request from the Huron County Planning Department that this site be developed as high density residential and that they have the expertise to understand all of the different factors that influence a successful and enjoyable community. Huron County Planning did not come into North Huron and recommend high density residential at this site on their own, they came at the bidding of the Township. It sometimes occurs, depending on priorities and other factors, that governments and government agencies do not always reach decisions that result in “successful and enjoyable” outcomes for the community.

A case in point would be the A2A Wingham Creek development of a few years ago. The then North Huron Council and Huron County Planning Department were both involved, and many concerns were expressed at the public information meeting. Yet the result was that a large tract of developable land, right adjacent to Wingham, now lies in limbo.

Perhaps if the process had proceeded differently at that time we would have plenty of land for development, and we might not now be dealing with a proposal to dig up our valued parkland.

2) High Density

You state that the building may seem large but when compared to the footprint it occupies, it is actually on the smaller side, and if someone desired to do so, they could propose a building nearly 3 times the size.

By this reasoning alone, it could be argued that one could build a skyscraper on the site. Surely good planning demands that the proposed development is compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood. The area at this location is composed of single-family homes, two-story townhouses, single-story community facilities, the Legion Building and parkland. All long established and compatible.

A five-story apartment containing 73-units is out of proportion with the surrounding neighbourhood. This is not good planning. In fact It is out of proportion with the rest of the town where all other multi-dwelling units are three stories at most. At present the largest single residential building in town is the two-story 12-plex, which is located in the same area facing Riverside Park where William and Patrick Streets meet. The building you are proposing is over six times the occupancy level of this building.

You are correct that the logical and preferred method of growth is densification, and Wingham is no stranger to this reality bound as we are by the Maitland River on three sides. Over the years Wingham has fully developed all available land within its boundaries, but we cannot solve this problem by beginning to now develop our parkland. I do not see any studies you have undertaken to identify other possible sites within North Huron that would be more suitable for this project. We are sure there are more suitable than building in an ecological park.

You mention other communities such as Listowel, Goderich and Kincardine that all have or are building similar buildings. The buildings I am aware in those communities are going up on the edge of town in new developments, and not in the middle of established single-family neighbourhoods like you are proposing.

I might add that those larger buildings have come about through incremental development. Meaning that all of these communities have been growing steadily over the years, and larger apartments are a natural outcome of that growth. That is logical planning. Wingham has not seen that same level of growth and you have not provided any needs study to indicate that a building of such size makes sense at this time.

In your letter you indicate that the Maitland Valley Conservation Area has reviewed this development and has no concerns with it at this time. Just to clarify, Maitland Valley Conservation's letter pertains only to natural hazards, which is its mandate, and is not an endorsement of the project generally.

A traffic study has not been done either. Using the Canada average of 1.5 vehicles per household, a 73-unit apartment could result in 100 vehicles on the site. To put that in perspective the shopping plaza at the south end of Wingham has spaces for approximately 130 vehicles (excluding the spaces immediately around Tim Horton's).

Adding that much traffic volume each day to John and William Streets; in addition to the traffic to the Day Care, Jack Reavie Centre, Legion and Riverside Park and Splash Pad should be of concern. It should also be noted that William Street has no sidewalks, and

so people with strollers, walkers and children are all forced to walk on the roadway. This is already a safety concern.

3) Reduce parking spaces requirements from 1.5 to 1 space per dwelling

In our comments we noted that in a small town like Wingham there is no public transportation and so people are reliant on their own vehicles to get around. We also pointed out that Wingham residents drive to other communities to take advantage of shopping opportunities, to visit medical appointments, for entertainment and dining experiences, and many other reasons. As a result owning a vehicle here is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

It was for this reason we questioned reducing the parking spaces per unit from 1.5 which is the Canadian average to a 1:1 ratio. You mention that in Goderich and Listowel the 1:1 ratio would be sufficient, but it is precisely to these larger communities Wingham residents are forced to drive. Listowel and Goderich already have many of these amenities and have less reason to leave their community.

We appreciate that you have made the adjustment to add enough parking to get the number of spaces to 1.23 per unit. You make mention that the building is actually on the smaller side and that the total covered space on the completed building will be about 15% of the total property. In fact, you state if desired you could have proposed a building nearly 3 times the size for this property. With that in mind, we are confused as to why attaining a parking space ratio of 1.5 per unit for a smaller building presents such a difficulty.

4) Process

We acknowledge that the distribution of information and who is notified and impacted by developments is not something that you are directly involved with. However, looking at a preliminary site plan would have been helpful to see where the building, parking and green space will be situated. We were unable to find this information and feel that the developer or the Township should have made such information available. The simple drawing attached to your notice for the information meeting in November lacked such details.

Also, we have learned, since we submitted our comments for the public meeting on December 20th, that the Township still owns the property. Did you apply for the OPA and ZBA changes even though you do not own the property or did the Township? If the Township is actually the applicant then would that not be a conflict of interest? We are not sure how such matters are carried out. We realize some of these questions may be

better answered by North Huron staff and will on our cover email to the Township Clerk, draw his attention to them.

We would like to thank you for responding to our comments, unfortunately they do not alleviate our major concerns regarding the suitability of this project.

Regards,

Jack and Nancy Gillespie
519 357-2890