
SUBJECT: Notice of Intention to Demolish – Single Detached Dwelling
83 John Street, Thornhill Heritage Conservation District,
Ward 1

PREPARED BY: Evan Manning, Senior Heritage Planner, ext. 2296

REVIEWED BY: Regan Hutcheson, Manager of Heritage Planning, ext. 2080
Stephen Lue, Senior Development Manager, ext. 2520

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) THAT the December 12, 2022, report titled, “Notice of Intention to Demolish – Single Detached Dwelling, 83 John Street, Thornhill Heritage Conservation District, Ward 1,” be received;
- 2) THAT the recommendation from the Heritage Markham Committee on November 9, 2022, in support of retaining the existing single detached dwelling at 83 John Street (in accordance with Appendix ‘B’ of this report), be received as information;
- 3) THAT Council supports the proposed demolition of the existing single detached dwelling at 83 John Street located within the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District;
- 4) And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

This report recommends that Council support the proposed demolition by the property owner (the “Owner”) of the existing dwelling at 83 John Street (the “Property”) within the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District (the “District”).

BACKGROUND:

Owner proposes to demolish the existing 1½ storey detached dwelling built in 1946

The existing structure was constructed in 1946 based on a review of Municipal Property Assessment Corporation records. Once an owner provides their written intention to demolish structures on a property that is designated under Part IV or V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (the “Act”), a municipality has 90 days from the date the notice of receipt is served to the applicant to either:

- Approve the demolition;
- Refuse the demolition; or
- Approve the demolition with conditions.

On October 19, 2022, formal acknowledgment was served to the Owner of the City's receipt of their notice of intention to demolish the existing dwelling.

The Property is categorized as Class 'C' - Other Buildings/Properties in the District Plan

As described in Section 2.2.2 ('Building/Property Classification') of the District Plan, Class 'C' properties possess the following qualities:

- *They are building/properties primarily constructed post-1939*
- *They include buildings/properties that are sympathetic to the District by virtue of their scale or design qualities*
- *They include buildings/properties not sympathetic to historic character of the District*

Note that only Class 'A' and 'B' buildings are considered to contribute, support, and define the heritage character of the neighbourhood, according to the District Plan. Section 4.3 of the District Plan encourages improvements to Class 'C' buildings intended to enhance the District's character, and states that demolition is to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Removal of Class 'C' buildings has been supported in the past

Council has approved the demolition of some Class 'C' buildings within the District on the understanding that any replacement building designed in accordance with the policies and guidelines contained in the District Plan would also be complementary to the heritage character of the District. In 2017, Council supported Staff and Heritage Markham recommendations to permit the removal of the neighbouring Class 'C' building at 85 John Street. The structure approved for removal was similar in vintage, scale, and design to the existing dwelling on the Property, and was associated with the provision of housing for returning World War II veterans through the *Veteran's Land Act*.

The Owner's proposal to demolish has been reviewed by Heritage Markham Committee ("Heritage Markham")

As the Property is designated under Part V of the Act, review by Heritage Markham and approval by Council is necessary to permit the demolition of the existing building.

On November 9, 2022, Heritage Markham did not support the demolition of the existing dwelling (Appendix 'B') and noted that the dwelling contributes to the overall heritage character of the District, and encourages the Owner to design a compatible addition. Notably, Heritage Markham supported retention of the existing dwelling for its historical/associative value with the *Veteran's Land Act* (of which there are few remaining examples within the District), and for its compatibility in scale with the nineteenth and early twentieth century dwellings within the District. Heritage Markham also noted that the District Plan mentions Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Housing in the District's Statement of Heritage Value, in reference to their massing and scale being similar to those built in the late 1800s.

The following has been excerpted from the Section 2.2 ‘(Statement of Heritage Value)’ of the District Plan (bolding added):

*The concentration of mid-19th century Georgian and Neo-classical buildings in the historic village core is remarkable, and constitutes the original basis of the village’s heritage character. Other houses dating from the late 19th century through the early 20th century represent many of the styles developed during those prolific decades. Regency, Victorian vernacular, Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, Edwardian, Foursquare, Arts and Crafts, and Craftsman Bungalow styles are all represented in the District. **Many of the mid-20th century houses, including the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) housing, were built in the Cape Cod Cottage style which shares the New England Georgian model with the old village houses of a century before,** and many of the recent houses have made an effort to reflect the heritage styles in the village ... The quality of the heritage resources in the District is indicated by the number of properties designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, and the large number of buildings carrying “A” and “B” grades in the District Inventory.*

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

The Act requires Council to consider all demolition applications for designated properties

According to Section 42(1) of the Act, an owner is required to obtain a permit from the municipality to:

1. alter any part of the property other than the interior
2. erect, demolish or remove any building or structure on the property or permit the erection, demolition or removal

The Act does allow Council to delegate its power to grant permits for the alteration of property situated in a heritage conservation district to an employee or official of the municipality. Markham Council has approved such a by-law delegating its power for the approval of alterations to the Manager of Heritage Planning. However, upon consultation with Legal staff, it has been determined that the delegation of the authority to approve “alterations” to staff does not include the authority to consider applications for demolition or removal which are addressed under Part IV and V of the Act. No delegation provisions apply in such circumstances.

Therefore, all applications for demolition of buildings and structures within heritage conservation districts whether of cultural heritage value or not, must be considered by Council.

Staff support the demolition of the building

A review of the Property by Heritage Section staff has determined that although complementary to surrounding heritage buildings in terms of scale, form and materials, the existing structure is not considered to have architectural significance, nor can it be said to be significant relative to the overall heritage character of the District, which is derived from buildings predominantly constructed in the latter half of the 19th century.

While the dwelling is a product of DVA Housing and the *Veteran's Land Act*, Heritage Section staff opine that this associative value was limited to the period of time in which it served as veterans housing. As its value is associative rather than physical, the cultural heritage significance of the property diminished when it ceased to serve that function. Further, when the District Plan was last reviewed in 2007, the Property was known to be associated with the *Veteran's Land Act*, but the consensus of the community was that despite being complementary in terms of scale and materials, buildings of this type were not considered to be architecturally or historically significant because the primary purpose of the District was to protect the 19th and early 20th century buildings associated with the original mill village.

Removal of Class 'C' properties is also anticipated by the District Plan, which notes that demolition should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Given the absence of architectural significance, and the limited contribution of the existing dwelling to the heritage character of the District, Heritage Section staff do not object to its removal.

Development Applications have been submitted in support of a replacement dwelling

Concurrent Minor Variance and Site Plan Control applications have been submitted for the Property detailing the proposed replacement building. It is the preliminary opinion of Heritage Section staff that the proposal generally conforms to the policies and guidelines within the District Plan for new buildings.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

None

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The protection and preservation of cultural heritage resources is part of the City's Growth Management strategy.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

The demolition request was reviewed by Heritage Markham, Council's advisory committee on heritage matters.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Darryl Lyons, RPP, MCIP
Acting Director, Planning and Urban Design

Arvin Prasad, RPP, MCIP
Commissioner of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix 'A' Property Map and Image of the Property
Appendix 'B' Heritage Markham Extract – November 9, 2022
Appendix 'C' Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan Inventory Page (83 John St)

APPENDIX 'A': Property Map and Image of the Property



APPENDIX ‘B’: Heritage Markham Extract - November 9, 2022

HERITAGE MARKHAM EXTRACT

To: R. Hutcheson, Manager of Heritage Planning
E. Manning, Senior Heritage Planner

EXTRACT CONTAINING ITEM # 6.3 OF THE ELEVENTH HERITAGE
MARKHAM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 9, 2022

6.3 DEMOLITION PERMIT

INTENTION TO DEMOLISH A PART-V DESIGNATED PROPERTY

83 JOHN STREET, THORNHILL HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT (16.11)

FILE NUMBER:

N/A

Extracts:

R. Hutcheson, Manager, Heritage Planning
E. Manning, Senior Heritage Planner

Evan Manning, Senior Heritage Planner, advised that the City has received notice of the owner’s intention to demolish the existing one-storey dwelling located at 83 John Street and replace it with a new two-storey dwelling. The property is designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Staff are in support of the removal as they feel the dwelling is not a significant component of the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District as it is not directly linked to the community’s origins as a mid to late 19th century mill village.

The following deputations were made on the demolition notice:

1. Tony Farr advised that he previously served on the Heritage Markham Committee and regretted the Committee’s previous decision permitting the demolition of 85 John Street which was similar in design, scale and vintage with 83 John Street. Mr. Farr felt that demolishing the house would have a negative impact on the Thornhill HCD as it will be replaced with a modern structure, will not be sympathetic in scale with the District,

and because the dwelling is associated with the provision of housing for returning Second World War veterans as provided through the *Veteran's Land Act*. Mr. Farr noted that the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan also encourages improvements to Class "C" dwellings rather than their removal. Mr. Farr suggested that modest character of the house reflects the historical context of the area. Mr. Farr supported the decision that the Heritage Markham Committee made at its June 8, 2022 meeting, which recommended the conservation of the house, and the construction of a compatible addition.

2. Valerie Burke spoke in opposition to removal of the dwelling and in support of its conservation as the dwelling is connected to the *Land Veterans' Act*, and represents a tangible reminder of the sacrifices made by veterans.

3. Adam Birrell, President, Thornhill Historical Society (formally known as the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill - SPOHT), spoke in opposition to the removal of the dwelling and in support of its conservation as it one of the last remaining veteran's houses. He also noted that its modest design is in keeping with the historic character of dwellings in the District.

The Committee encouraged staff to meet with the Applicant to discuss their intentions, and how they can meet Heritage Markham's expectations. Staff advised that they reached out to the Applicant and it was made clear that they have no interest in conserving the house.

Recommendation:

THAT the deputations by Tony Farr, Valerie Burke, and Adam Birrell, (Thornhill Historical Society), regarding the notice of the owner's intent to demolish the existing one-storey dwelling located at 83 John Street, be received; and,

THAT the written submission by Valerie Burke, and Diane Berwick, regarding the notice of the owner's intent to demolish the existing one-storey dwelling located at 83 John Street, be received; and

THAT Heritage Markham objects to the application to demolish the dwelling located at 86 John Street for the following reasons:

- 1) its connections to *Veterans' Land Act*;**
- 2) its modest character reflects the historical context of the area;**

3) the Thornhill Conservation District Plan encourages improvements to “Class C” dwellings rather than their demolition; and

4) the replacement of the dwelling with a more modern structure weakens the heritage character of the area.

Carried

APPENDIX 'C':**Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan Inventory Page (83 John St)****Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Inventory**

Location: 83 John Street
Year Built: 1946
Style: Bungalow
Storeys: 1-1/2
Classification: C

Foundation: Stone-textured concrete block.
Cladding: Metal clapboard.
Roof: Cross-gable, with other elements, asphalt shingles.
Windows: Double-hung 6/6.

Description: Three-bay house. Left bay has a wide picture window. Centre and right bays are projecting, the centre entry bay having a shed roof, and the right bay having paired windows in a front-gable. Entry door has wide casing and small square cornice. The door is original. Concrete stoop with wrought metal railing. Decorative shutters. Mature Landscaping with large trees.

Archives:

History: DVA House.

Comments: A close cousin to the Cape Cod cottage, but not so true to the original New England precedent style. The small scale makes it fit in to the character of the village.