

To: Members of Markham Council:

DSC December 12, 2022, Agenda Item 7.1: 83 John Street

My wife and I have lived at 34 Colborne St., in the heart of the Thornhill Heritage District, for the last 30 years.

As some Council members will know, I recently served on the Heritage Committee for 7 years. I was a member of the Committee in 2015, when the demolition of the DVA house at 85 John Street was allowed. I now regard that decision as a mistake. It did nothing to enhance the heritage character of the District: rather, it detracted from it.

It is rare for me to disagree with Heritage staff, but I do disagree with their assessment that demolition of the DVA house “will not have an adverse impact on the cultural heritage value of the District”. Council should note that the DVA houses (of which there are only 2 remaining) are explicitly mentioned in the District Plan Section 2.2 (page 8) “Statement of Heritage Value” as contributing to the character of the area.

Council should also note that classification of a building as a ‘Class C’ in the Plan was not understood to mean that it had no value and could be demolished as of right. The District Plan states in Section 2.4.3 Objectives for Other Buildings that the objective of the Plan is “To encourage improvements to Class C buildings which will further enhance the District’s heritage character”. Demolition of a DVA house, and replacement by a very ordinary modern house, does nothing to achieve that objective. Rather, it detracts from the District’s heritage character. The Heritage Committee’s decision in June to advise against demolition was very much in keeping with the District Plan.

Additions are greatly preferred to demolition as they promote greater character for the area – each building has a story to tell of how it has grown and developed with the area. Demolition and new build interrupt that story.

The existing building is consistent with and respectful of the historic character of the area. The character of the area is predominantly simple cottages.

Recent examples in Thornhill of successful additions to simple cottages are 17 Colborne Street and 82 John Street.

The Heritage Committee was right, and consistent with the Heritage District Plan, in June of this year to not approve the proposed new build for 83 John, but rather to recommend preservation of the DVA house and the building of an addition at the rear. The Committee was right again in November to recommend against demolition. Please endorse the Heritage Committee’s recommendation and deny the application for demolition.

Yours sincerely

Tony Farr