



## MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Arvin Prasad, Commissioner of Development Services

Prepared by: Peter Wokral, Senior Heritage Planner II

Date: February 16, 2023

**Re:** Partial Removal of Modern Construction on a Property Designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, 11172 Warden Ave., The Clayton Schoolhouse

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## RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the February 16, 2023, memorandum titled, “Partial Demolition of Modern Construction Components on a Property Designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, 11127 Warden Avenue, Former Clayton Schoolhouse”, be received;
2. That Council has no objection to the removal of non-heritage construction damaged by fire at 11172 Warden Ave;
3. That as per the recommendation of both Heritage Markham and City staff, the historic solid brick walls of the former Clayton Schoolhouse be protected from the elements and temporarily stabilized, in consultation with City staff, so that the historic building may be restored;
4. AND THAT staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to the former resolution.

## BACKGROUND:

On December 25, 2022, a fire occurred at 11172 Warden Avenue affecting the former Clayton Schoolhouse, which has been converted to a dwelling unit and was designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* in 1982. No one was injured in the fire, but it severely damaged a modern two-storey frame rear addition to the historic building and a deck. The fire also

destroyed almost all of the wooden portions of the historic schoolhouse, but left the foundation and multi-wythe solid brick walls intact (See Appendix A).

The former schoolhouse, constructed in 1874, was designated due to its high level of cultural and architectural significance. The building demonstrates ancient, sustainable, and durable construction techniques along with exceptionally fine design and craftsmanship rarely produced today. Along with being a landmark strongly linked with the local community and early public education in Markham, it is the purest example of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gothic Revival architecture in the municipality (See Appendix B).

Based on the findings of two separate reports prepared by structural engineers in the days immediately following the fire, the brick walls appeared to have escaped any serious damage and were structurally sound and stable. The reports recommended that the gable walls be temporarily braced. Heritage Staff and Heritage Markham have no objection to the removal of what remains of the non-heritage portions of the building, but that everything possible be done to preserve the remaining historic masonry structure so that the heritage component can be restored (See Appendix C).

The City received a Building Permit application for the demolition of what remains of the non-heritage portions of the building, but not the historic masonry structure (See Appendix D). Section 34(1) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* states that an owner is required to obtain a permit from the municipality to:

1. *Demolish or remove, or permit the demolition or removal of, any of the property's heritage attributes, as set out in the description of the property's heritage attributes in the By-law that was required to be registered under clause 29 (12)(b) or subsection 29(19), as the case may be*

Therefore, all applications for demolition (partial or full) of a building on a property designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* must be considered by Council.

As the remaining historic brick structure is exposed to the elements and requires temporary bracing to make it safe, it is important that Council provides its approval for the removal of the non-heritage portions of the property so that a more thorough examination of the structural integrity of the historic masonry can be safely conducted, and allow an investigation into the probable cause of the fire.

Therefore, Heritage staff recommends that Council support the removal of the non-historic portions of the former Clayton Schoolhouse and that the remaining historic brick structure be protected from the elements and temporarily stabilized to prevent any further damage to the structure, so that it may be restored to its original appearance.

## APPENDIX A: Photographs of Clayton Schoolhouse after Fire





**APPENDIX B: Photograph of Clayton Schoolhouse and Designation By-Law**



SCHEDULE "D" TO BY-LAW NUMBER 187-82

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION (Clayton Schoolhouse,  
Warden Avenue west side, Part Lot 28, Concession 4,

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Significance

The Clayton Schoolhouse is recommended for historical reasons for the importance of its early role in the Markham school system, serving School Section No. 12.

It is also recommended for designation for architectural reasons as a good example of a rural schoolhouse built in the Gothic Revival style. The attention to Gothic Revival details, highlighted with the use of brick patterning, demonstrates well the talent of its builder, resulting in a structure of high quality. With few alterations to its original state, it also helps to illustrate the nature of the formal education a Markham Township schoolchild would have received in the late 19th century.

Architectural Description

The Clayton Schoolhouse is typical of 19th century rural school design being a one-room school, a single storey high, yet it is the attention to detail it shows which elevates it from the average. The schoolhouse is Gothic Revival in style and decorated with white and red brick patterning.

The area surrounding the school is characterized by farm fields and farmhouses. The surroundings compliment the rural nature of the building.

The 3/4 acre lot on which the schoolhouse stands is lined with mature trees including maples and pines. While some of these trees have been planted recently, the tree screen created around the lot is in keeping with the 19th century philosophy, that a schoolyard should be sheltered with an educational variety of trees.

The Clayton Schoolhouse is rectangular in plan, a single storey in height, and sheltered by a medium pitch gable roof. Red bricks laid in a stretcher bond indicate a brick veneer over a timber frame. White bricks are used to create decorative patterning, which lends to the building a distinctive appearance. Fieldstones have been split, squared, and laid in courses for the foundation.

There is a modern addition to the rear, west end of the schoolhouse. One storey high and slightly wider than the schoolhouse, it is built with bricks laid in stretcher bond. The simple design of the addition serves not to distract from the original building.

The schoolhouse is oriented with gable ends on an east-west axis. The principal elevation is in the east gable end facing Warden Avenue. This elevation has a central door, recessed in an umbrage, flanked by two windows, symmetrically placed.

The opening to the umbrage in the principal elevation has a centre-pointed head with straight sides and base. The brick umbrage leads to a double leaf wooden door, each leaf having four recessed panels. The upper two panels in each door are glazed. The lower two are recessed, closed with planks set on a diagonal. The door is protected by a wooden, double leaf storm door of similar design. Above the double doors is a panel made up of narrow wooden planks set in a chevron pattern.

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The two windows which flank the central east doorway are typical of all the original windows in design. They differ only in the sills which are replacements. These windows are lancet shaped and fixed. The frames are wooden as are the mullions and wide crossbar which divide the windows into eight glass panes. The crossbar creates a distinct separation between the top two panes and the rest of the window. The trim is made up of a simple wooden moulding. Winter storm windows are also framed with wood. The replacement sills on these two windows are concrete lugsills.

The north and south elevations are alike. Each has four windows and four buttresses. The windows are paired and open the wall between the three westernmost buttresses. The walls between the third and fourth buttresses at the east end of each side are left blank. Except for the sills, the windows on the north and south elevations are like those on the east facade. The sills on the side windows are outward and downward sloping wooden blocks, slightly wider than the brick window frame.

The west gable end of the schoolhouse is partially concealed by the modern addition. The addition covers the full width of the west wall and extends vertically to just below the collar beam level. Above this point the west wall is plain with the exception of six small vents clustered in the upper centre of the gable. Each vent has a wooden block watershed.

The general appearance of the Clayton Schoolhouse is made distinctive owing to the Gothic Revival details and decorative brickwork.

White bricks interplay with red bricks to create decorative belt courses, window and buttress heads, and a distinctive umbrage/doorway head. The polychromatic brickwork has involved making many of the bricks wedge shaped. The use of wedge shaped bricks is unusual among Markham buildings.

On the east facade the centre-pointed head to the doorway umbrage is outlined with two rows of brick voussoirs. The outer row is made up of wedged, brick stretchers while the inner row consists of brick headers. Both rows alternate with groups of four red and four white voussoirs. There is a secondary, slightly recessed row of bricks around the inside edge of the umbrage opening.

The brick trim on all window heads is like that over the umbrage opening but alternates from red to white in groups of three.

There are three horizontal bands of white brick trim across the east facade. The bands at the tie beam and tie bar levels use a single row of white brick crosses with borders, while that at the collar beam level uses a double row of crosses and borders. The decorative band which traverses the east elevation at tie beam level continues along the north and south elevations under the projecting eaves.

The buttress heads are built in white brick. On the east facade, extending from the white brick head of the buttresses, at each corner, are five stylized quoins. Built using wedged bricks, the quoins are triangular and point toward the front facade windows.

The whole of the original schoolhouse is set on a slightly raised plinth of white bricks.

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Attention to decorative detail is also evident in the roof design. Projecting eaves create a wide overhang on all sides and exposed rafters add to the interplay of light and shade created by the overhang. On the east elevation five large decorative brackets sit under the eaves.

A detail, not decorative, but important to the identity of the Clayton Schoolhouse, is its datestone. It is a rectangular stone, situated above the centre point of the umbrage opening. It says: "SCHOOL SECTION/NO. 12/ 1874".

While typical of many 19th century rural schools in its dimensions, the Clayton Schoolhouse is made interesting through the use of polychromatic brickwork and Gothic Revival details.

Now used as a home, the former schoolhouse and its grounds are well maintained.

## APPENDIX C: Heritage Markham Extract of February 8, 2023

### 6.3 DEMOLITION PERMIT

#### **PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF THE CLAYTON SCHOOLHOUSE 11172 WARDEN AVENUE(16.11)**

FILE NUMBER:

DP 23 110974

Extracts:

R. Hutcheson, Manager, Heritage Planning

P. Wokral, Senior Heritage Planner

#### Recommendations:

THAT Heritage Markham does not support any demolition permit proposing to demolish the remaining solid brick walls of the Clayton Schoolhouse at 11172 Warden Ave.;

**THAT Heritage Markham requests the Owner takes immediate and appropriate steps to prevent further deterioration of the existing facade of the Clayton Schoolhouse from the elements and provides proper stabilization of the remaining structure.**

AND THAT Heritage Markham has no objection to the demolition of what remains of the modern two storey rear addition or the deck located on the north side of the schoolhouse.

**Carried**

## APPENDIX D: Plan showing Proposed Scoped Demolition of Non-Heritage Portions of Clayton Schoolhouse

