

Land Use Planning, Development Approvals & Project Management Services

October 4th, 2021

Mr. Shawn Postma, *MCIP, RPP*
Senior Policy Planner – Planning Services
Town of the Blue Mountains
32 Mill Street, P.O. Box 310
Thornbury, Ontario
N0H 2P0

Dear Mr. Postma,

***Re: Town of the Blue Mountains Official Plan Update
Request for Site Specific Additional Permitted Uses-Commercial Corridor Designation
Town Plot Lot 13 to 15 Alice, E/S Lot 13 & 14 Louisa W/S, Pt. Lots 46 to 49 Louisa E/S
ARN# 424200001700300***

Purpose

Plan Wells Associates is the planning consultant for the above noted lands. Under the current Town of the Blue Mountains Official Plan, the subject property is designated Commercial Corridor. Institutional uses are permitted under this designation.

The purpose of this letter is to request that the ongoing Official Plan Update consider adding a retirement home/long-term care facility, with an affordable accessory rental residential component for staff housing, as site specific additional Institutional uses on the subject lands. Interest has been shown for these lands by several retirement home/long term care providers and our request responds to this confirmed need and interest.

Subject Lands

The approximate 6.5 ha (16 ac) property is located just east of the western gateway into the Town of Thornbury and is bounded by Arthur Street (Highway 26) to the north and Alice Street West to the south. Alice Street West is a local public road, maintained year-round. The property is within walking distance to the Thornbury Foodland and LCBO and is in close proximity to the downtown core and waterfront.

Provincial Policy Statement 202 (PPS)

The PPS states that Settlement Areas shall be the focus of growth and development.

Healthy, liveable, and safe communities are sustained by promoting efficient development and land use patterns which sustain the financial well-being of municipalities over the long-term. In part, this can be achieved by:

- Accommodating an appropriate affordable and market-based range and mix of residential types, affordable housing for older persons, employment (including long-term care homes), recreation, park and open space, and other uses to meet the long-term needs.
- Improving accessibility for persons with disabilities and older persons by addressing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society.
- Ensuring that necessary infrastructure and public service facilities are or will be available to meet current and projected needs.

Planning authorities shall provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options by permitting and facilitating all housing options required to meet the social, health, economic and well-being requirements of current and future residents, including special needs requirements and needs arising from demographic changes and employment opportunities.

Comment

- The subject lands are within a Primary Settlement Area.
- The additional uses will permit the development of a retirement home/long term facility for seniors arising from on-going demographic changes
- The proposed additional uses will create employment opportunities and provide affordable rental opportunities for facility staff
- The development will be on full municipal services
- Community service facilities and recreation amenities are readily available and accessible
- The request for the proposed additional uses is consistent with the PPS

County of Grey Official Plan

The County of Grey Official Plan designates the subject property Primary Settlement Area and Hazard Lands.



The County Plan promotes the development of Primary Settlement Areas for a full range of residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and institutional uses. These areas are to be the focus of growth.

Section 2.4(2) – Updating the Local Official Plan to the County Plan, local municipalities will:

- Develop policies and/or guidelines to ensure that new development does not conflict with the surrounding development
- Ensure a variety of housing and development opportunities within Settlement Area land use types
- Ensure convenient access to retail facilities, recreational facilities and services via motor vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian travel
- Ensure development will provide a wide range of housing types, including special needs housing

The County Plan considers Social and Special Needs Housing ‘non-market’ housing and refers to housing that is provided or owned only by public or private non-profit organizations, targeted towards a specific at-risk population. Long-term Care facilities are considered Social & Special Needs housing. The County recognizes the need to direct new social housing units toward Primary Settlement Areas to ensure residents live close to essential services and supports and by promoting ease in carrying out a healthy lifestyle.

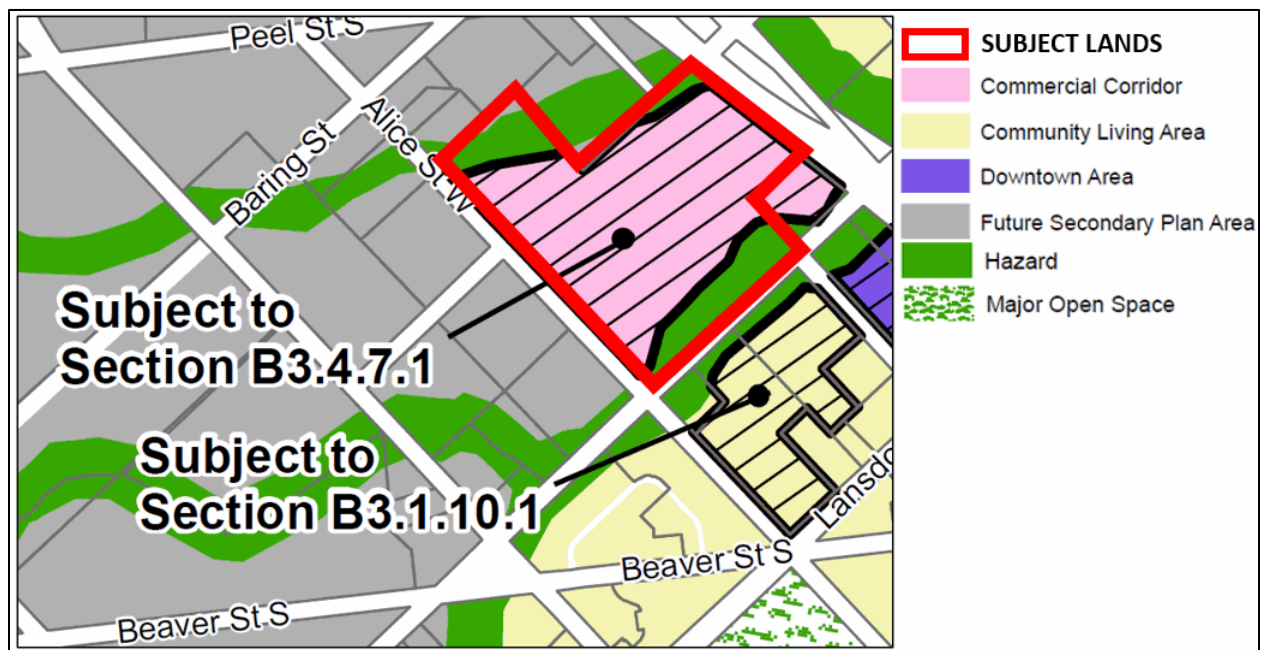
The County Plan promotes opportunities for flexible, experimental seniors housing to assist in accommodating an aging population. As populations age, their housing needs change. The County is focused on providing for a variety of options that would account for psychological, physical, and social needs. The County Plan supports safe and accessible community design for all ages, including facilities such as senior citizen homes, nursing homes and rest homes in urban areas where other supportive services exist.

Comment

- The proposed additional permitted uses (retirement/long term care facility and staff residential component) will not conflict with the surrounding development
- The subject lands are close to essential community services and supports
- The proposed additional uses will provide housing for the aging population and their changing needs
- The proposed additional uses will create employment opportunities and provide affordable rental opportunities for facility staff
- The proposed request to permit the additional uses maintains the intent and direction of the County of Grey Official Plan

Town of the Blue Mountains Official Plan

The subject lands are currently designated 'Commercial Corridor' and 'Hazard.'



To the west and south are lands in the future Secondary Plan Area. To the east are lands designated Community Living, some of which have been developed (Meadowbrook Lane, Far Hills) and the future Blue Meadows residential and commercial development.

Proposed Additional Uses within the Commercial Corridor Designation

The subject property has an area of approximately 6.5 ha (16 ac). This area is quite large given the compact size of the Town of Thornbury for the uses permitted under the Commercial Corridor designation (supermarkets, restaurants, department stores, retail uses, automotive commercial, service uses, wholesale establishments, institutional uses, and business offices). Collingwood and Owen Sound are designated primary centres where larger box stores serving a regional market are to be located. The subject property has not been developed over the life of the current Official Plan due to lack of interest by the type of uses permitted, whereas there is a pressing need for suitable sites (size/location) to accommodate a retirement/long term facility with accessory affordable housing for staff.

The Commercial Corridor designation permits Institutional uses. The Official Plan defines Institutional uses - *"Means a use that caters to the social, educational and/or religious needs of humans."*

This definition is somewhat subjective. In our opinion, a retirement home/long term care facility and associated affordable rental housing for staff qualifies as social needs of humans. Therefore, we request that a retirement home/long term care facility and associated affordable rental housing for staff be added as site specific additional Institutional uses under the Commercial Corridor designation.

As noted above, lands to the west and south of the subject property are within the Future Secondary Plan Area. It is likely that these lands will be designated Community Living Area under the Secondary Plan for future residential uses.

The optimal orientation for a retirement home/long term care facility and staff housing would be along Alice Street West, which would provide a transitional buffer between the future Secondary Plan Area uses and the remaining Commercial Corridor lands fronting onto Arthur Street.

Section B3.1.6.1 provides the criteria for the establishment of Long-term Care Facilities and Retirement Homes:

- The site has adequate access to a County or Collector Road
- The site has adequate land area to accommodate the building, an outdoor amenity area, on-site parking and appropriate buffering to ensure compatibility of the use with adjacent land uses
- The use will not cause traffic hazards or an unacceptable level of congestion on surrounding roads
- The use can be serviced by municipal water and sewer

Comment

- The site has adequate land area to accommodate the proposed development
- The proposed use is compatible with adjacent land uses
- The use will not cause traffic hazards or an unacceptable level of congestion on surrounding roads
- The use can be serviced by municipal water and sewer
- The subject property does not directly access a county or collector road. The site has frontage on Highway 26 and Alice Street West, which is a local road. The site is in close proximity to Alfred Street West, which is a county road. Bruce Street South is the only other county road in the Town and is developed on both sides. There is no opportunity to develop a retirement/long term care facility along Bruce Street South. The only collector road in the Town is Clark Street (Grey Road 2), which is identified as a Major Collector Road on Schedule 'B2' to the Official Plan. Clark Street is not an optimum location for a retirement/long term care facility, as it is on the eastern outskirts of the Town.

Community Benefit

The demographics of the Georgian Triangle has matured through the years as permanent residents are aging and more retirees are moving from larger urban centres to the area. The majority of the Town of the Blue Mountains is rural by nature, with interspersed hamlets and villages, with Thornbury being the only 'town.' Thornbury is the primary population centre, offering a full range of community services and recreational amenities.

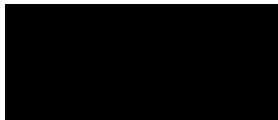
Currently, Errinrung Long Term Care & Retirement Community is the only facility of its kind in the Town of Thornbury, providing care for approximately sixty individuals. Errinrung is located on Bruce Street South, within the Bruce Street/Marsh Street Corridor of the Town and occupies an approximate .5 ha (1.3 ac) parcel of land. All abutting parcels are developed and at this time there is no possibility for Errinrung to expand.

Statistics provided by the County indicate that in 2019 there were approximately 2,542 seniors over the age of seventy-five within a 15-minute drive from the Town of Thornbury. It is expected that by the year 2029, this number will climb to approximately 3,086.

Adding a retirement home/long-term care facility and an affordable rental residential component for facility staff will fulfill an important need in the Town of the Blue Mountains. It will provide existing and future senior residents the option of staying in the community where they have lived for many years.

The proposed additional permitted uses represent good planning, and we respectfully ask that our request be granted.

Yours truly,
Plan Wells Associates



Miriam Vasni, *MCIP, RPP*

c.c.: Alar Soever, Mayor
Rob Potter, Deputy Mayor
Peter Bordignon, Councillor
Paula Hope, Councillor
Andrea Matrosovs, Councillor
Rob Sampson, Councillor
Jim Uram, Councillor
Corrina Giles, Clerk, Town of the Blue Mountains
Trevor Houghton, Manager of Community Planning, Town of the Blue Mountains
Randy Scherzer, Director of Planning & Development, County of Grey
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