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Sent by EMAIL

Dave Ruggle

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Planning and Building Services

Town of Newmarket

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RE: 951 SRIGLEY STREET, NEWMARKET
(E R A P R O J E C T N O . 1 3 - 1 1 9 - 0 6)

Dear Mr. Ruggle,

The purpose of this letter is to provide the Town of Newmarket with a professional peer review of the Heritage Assessment report, prepared by Philip Goldsmith, Architect, for 951 Srigley Street, Newmarket. The following documents were reviewed as part of this process:

Philip Goldsmith, Architect

Heritage Assessment, 951 Srigley Street, Newmarket, Ont, dated December 3rd, 2018

Heritage Newmarket Advisory Committee (HNAC)

Municipal Register of Properties Designated Under the Heritage Act

Municipal Register of Properties Non-Designated Properties Parts 1-7

Town of Newmarket

Official Plan, consolidated December 2016

Interim Control By-Law 2019-04

George Robb, Architect

Heritage Conservation District Plan for Lower Main Street, Newmarket

Additional Reference Materials

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

Provincial Policy Statement (2014)

Ontario Heritage Tool Kit

Background

This report provides a critical review of the Heritage Assessment prepared by Philip Goldsmith, Architect and Certified Heritage Professional, for 951 Srigley Street, Newmarket, Ontario (the “Heritage Assessment”).

Under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (“OHA”), municipalities may, by by-law, designate properties that meet the prescribed criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest set out in Ontario Regulation 9/06. Generally, the designation of a property may result in additional heritage review and approval requirements for any application that considers a change on or adjacent to that designated heritage property. Changes may include, but are not limited to full or partial demolition, additions, or alterations.

The Property is not within a Heritage Conservation District or subject the guidelines for development associated with a Heritage Conservation District.

It is ERA’s understanding that the Heritage Assessment was completed by Philip Goldsmith in response to an application for consent to sever the Property, and the absence of a Heritage Newmarket Advisory Committee (HNAC) meeting to hear the application.

SUMMARY OF REPORT FINDINGS

The Heritage Assessment contextualises the Property within the development of Newmarket from when it emerged as a settlement in the early nineteenth century, up until the early 1970s when the Property was largely constructed. The contextual study provides an overview of the patterns of migration, industry and population growth of the Town of Newmarket and indicates how this has informed the characteristics of Srigley Street and the surrounding area.

Additionally, salient points covered in the assessment relate to the designer of the Property, Fraser Milne, an architect local to Newmarket and responsible for several institutional and residential works in the municipality.

The evaluation of the Property under Ontario Regulation 9/06 contained within the Heritage Assessment concluded that the Property does not have sufficient design, historical/associate, or contextual value to warrant designation under Part IV of the OHA.

ERA Comments on Ontario Regulation 9/06 Evaluation

It is ERA’s opinion that Property does not warrant designation under the Ontario Heritage Act. ERA agrees with the assessment that the Property does not appear to satisfy the criteria for determining cultural heritage or interest. Additional commentary to support this opinion is provided below.

Design

The Heritage Assessment reveals important observations regarding how the Property can be understood as a succession of parts and how they are to be interpreted when experienced together as a whole. The additive nature of the building described provides an indication that the Property displays qualities that are ad-hoc and represents an aesthetic and form that is the result of readily available and popular building materials that were commonly used at the time of construction. In the absence of archival information that

describes the design process, ERA has deduced that although there is value in the architect's approach; the resulting work does not meet the criteria associated with design value as indicated in Ontario Regulation 9/06, and therefore agrees with Mr. Goldsmith's conclusions relating to design value.

Historical and Associative

The Heritage Assessment relates the Property to the other works of Fraser Milne and the firm in which he was a partner, Smith and Milne. The Heritage Assessment notes that the firm's predominantly public work has a limited degree of historical significance, and as a result, the degree of significance by which a residence designed by the firm should be considered is further limited. ERA agrees with this examination approach as being a fair and appropriate interpretation of Ontario Regulation 9/06. Additional relevant historical information the Heritage Assessment does not include is the discussion on the development of the surrounding area from the early 1970s onwards, when the Property was mainly constructed; however, this commentary would not alter the outcome of the review.

Contextual

The Heritage Assessment examines the Property within the context of suburban design character. Although the Heritage Assessment highlights that the Property stands as distinct, it is undetermined what differences are conveyed within the assemblage of immediately surrounding homes. In ERA's opinion, although there is scope for additional contextual analysis, it would not change the result of the Heritage Assessment which correctly determines that the Property does not provide cultural heritage value or significance to its context.

RESPONSE TO HNAC COMMENTS

Although the Heritage Assessment report complies with the Town of Newmarket's heritage evaluation form, it only addresses one of the two comments provided by HNAC when the application was circulated in October 2018 when they indicated that the Property should be considered for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act. These two comments related to the Property's association with the architect, Fraser Milne, who also designed the Ray Twinney Centre in Newmarket, and secondly, its modern/Scandinavian design inspiration, which the HNAC indicated was the first of its kind in Newmarket.

The Heritage Assessment examines the significance of the architect of the Property, Fraser Milne, and provides evidence to support an argument that although work of him and his firm demonstrates a competent investment in the local community, 951 Strigley Street is not of heritage significance. In ERA's opinion, a response to the above-noted HNAC comment relating to the potential value of the Scandinavian design inspiration is absent and should be addressed. ERA has provided a discussion of the Property's design below.

For this discussion, although nebulous, the term *Scandinavian style* is associated with a design movement that emphasised simplicity, minimalism, and functionality. The movement emerged during the late nineteenth century and was primarily a result of aspirations to break from historicist traditions. The style flourished internationally, particularly in North America during the 1950s, as it provided a design language that was relevant to the culture and technological innovation of the present day. Consequently, the style's influence is pervasive and is not limited to a clearly defined architectural vocabulary.

It is ERA's opinion that the Scandinavian style is principally represented by the Property's exterior, which features a largely unadorned, simplified design approach. With little available information about Fraser

Milne, this utilitarian approach to design is, however, equally reminiscent of agricultural structures that are prevalent throughout Southern Ontario.

Internally, the Property has elements that reflect the expressionist qualities associated with Scandinavian design. The fireplace appears as experimentation in form creation, and the resulting feature has an organic quality. Although this element creates a distinct private space and speaks to the nature of heritage attributes, which embody the cultural heritage value of a place, it could be replicated and is not of the level of cultural significance to support the designation of the entire Property that it is enclosed within.

Outwardly, it appears that the building does not present the necessary design value for designation under Part IV of the OHA, but rather the simplified design approach which has potentially influenced subsequent Scandinavian-inspired dwellings in the area could be regarded as having some associative value. However, the Heritage Assessment does not present evidence that Fraser Milne was a crucial figure in the propagation of the Scandinavian design, but rather his decision to use it to inform the design of his own home suggests he was an admirer of the style. Furthermore, due to the construction timeline associated with the Property, which dates the beginning of Scandinavian-styled additions to the 1970s, it is evident that the Property followed the development of a well-established design paradigm. ERA does not, therefore, consider the Property a cultural achievement as there is no evidence to suggest that it elevated the popularity of the style in which it is constructed.

Overall the Property could, therefore, be understood mainly as an expression of an aesthetic predicated on restraint and reduction to create architecture that is an expression of functionality, rather than a clearly defined affinity with a Nordic geographical region. The discussion concerning the associative value could be revised and the Heritage Assessment updated to include missing discussion related to the continuity of ideas that the building represents, an inclusive dialogue between Scandinavian and Canadian culture, and design sensibilities from the 1970s onwards.

Noted Omissions

The design of Fraser Milne's home appears to be an example of the work of a Scandinavian design enthusiast as opposed to a pioneer in the movement's development. Like the distinctions of the movement, the extent of Scandinavian-inspired architecture within Ontario is amorphous. There is, therefore, value in documenting the specific details of the building as part of measures to record an overarching theme of Scandinavian influence in Ontario.

The Heritage Assessment includes a concise study of the interior and exterior of the Property along with an overview of the history of the building and its surrounding context. The analysis of the building is the result of a building survey, interviews, and archival information. Noticeable omissions include the absence of the verification of construction dates; plans of the building either in its as-found condition, or to illustrate how the building has evolved with adaptations and additions; historic photos of the subject site; and information regarding the development of the surrounding area after the 1970s. Other than being a product of the hand of architect Fraser Milne, the assessment also provides no information concerning the Property's relationship to a theme in architectural design.

In accordance with best practice, *the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* advises that, "understanding an historic place is an essential first step to good conservation practice. Stakeholders, therefore, may wish to consider a documentation process that includes measured drawings, photo documentation of the property, and a deconstruction process that allows for an

examination of existing materials. This process would allow the different stages of the Property's construction to be understood and recorded. The documentary process could also pay particular attention to features that would be considered as heritage attributes if the Property was designated. An element of note is the fireplace added in the 1990s, and research on the design inspiration for this could also be considered. Upon completion of the documentary study arrangements could be made for its inclusion of a publicly accessible municipal archive.

CONCLUSION

It is ERA's opinion that 951 Srigley Street is the result of an approximately sixty-year evolution and does not reflect a singular vision at one given point in time. Instead, it is a phased approach to creating a home through additions and adaptations, the resulting Property is restrained in style and emphasises an architecture of functionality.

Although the gestures of the architect appear commendable, ERA agrees with the Philip Goldsmith that the building as it stands does not warrant designation. Moreover, determining that the Property has cultural heritage value or interest would also impose conditions that imply that it is fixed and complete, rather complement its additive and evolving nature.

It is ERA's opinion that although not of Heritage Significance as defined by the Ontario Heritage Act, the Property does have value as part of a collection of *modern/ Scandinavian* inspired buildings and designed objects that were once popular and are to be ubiquitously found in the province. Measures could be taken to ensure that a detailed and comprehensive study of the Property is made that complements the recording of histories associated with its design style in Ontario.

Stakeholders may wish to consider that any proposed development of the Property should be done so in accordance with existing design guidelines and the Provincial Policy Statement's definition of conservation which includes the use of mitigative measures and/or alternative development in the management and use of built heritage resources.

Recommended Next Steps:

- 1. Update Heritage Assessment to include items highlighted under the Noted Omissions section of this report,*
- 2. Review any current or future proposals for the Property against existing design and development policies that the site is subject to ensure proposals are contextually sensitive and consider the site's local interest.*

We trust that the information contained herein is satisfactory at this time. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further details or wish to discuss the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,



Michael McClelland, Principal
E.R.A. Architects Inc.