



Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association

February 22, 2020

Ms. Gudavicius
Approving Officer
Saanich Planning

RE: SUBDIVISION APPLICATION FOR 1291 TRACKSELL, SUB00870

Dear Ms. Gudavicius,

Thank you for inviting QCHCA to comment on the above-noted subdivision application. Following receipt of your request for comments, we contacted Mr. Taylor Love of Kasapi Construction to set up a meeting. Six of our Board members met with him to walk the property on January 21. The neighbour at 1292 Tattersall saw and joined us. Mr. Love indicated that they would not be interested in co-hosting a neighbours meeting with us to share their plans. Subsequently, QCHCA booked a room at the Cedar Hill Rec Centre for February 9 and invited residents on Tracksell, Tattersall and James Heights. A total of 56 people attended, six of whom were QCHCA Board members. We shared what we knew of the application including the site plan and the landscape plan and then took questions and comments. We urged attendees to write to you with their comments and asked them to cc QCHCA so our input would reflect their views and concerns.

Having heard the strong concerns raised at the meeting and received cc's on over 40 letters or emails to Planning on the proposal to date, all of which express significant concerns, QCHCA does not support the proposed subdivision. Our reasons are as follows:

1. Location of proposed building envelope missing

The 'location of the proposed building envelope' is noted under 'Information required for submission' on Part 2 of the subdivision application and yet **the site map provided by Kasapi Construction's application does not include the proposed building envelope**. It is therefore impossible to accurately gauge the potential extent of injury to adjacent neighbours, the irreversible damage to the sensitive woodland ecosystem and habitat, and the negative impacts to the hydrology of the surrounding area. This is an incomplete application. We assume that, prior to any consideration of a complete application, both hydrological and geological surveys would be required.

2. Injurious effects on immediate neighbours

If allowed to proceed, the injurious effects on immediate neighbours would include those from blasting, from changes to the area's hydrology, on access/egress, aesthetics and property value, quality of life and privacy as follows:

- a) **Effects from blasting** – the extent of blasting required to create a driveway and services through the approximately 6-meter high rocky outcrop would be enormous. The toe of this rock outcrop is **actually under the house** at 1292 Tattersall and the southeast corner of their foundation is built around it. The undeveloped right-of-way is only 25 feet from 1292's property line and the blasting for the proposed driveway would traverse the entire width of the property only 30 feet from the front of the house. The rock formations in the area are unique and run in deep, long seams. Blasting into the seams has the real potential to cause tremors and instability in rock quite distant from the blast and the neighbouring homes to the south and west that sit on it. Blasting will change the topography and drainage patterns of the area, creating issues for the homes at 1291, 1295 and 1299 Tracksell as well as the adjacent area of Cedar Hill Park. Blasting will also irrevocably damage the iconic and beautiful rocky outcrop and surrounding area, leaving a scarred and unappealing landscape. There is only a very small flat area within the natural geology of the proposed new property such that extensive blasting and rock removal would be required for the construction of any home(s). Blasting will also disrupt use of the Park's chip trail, used by up to 800 people a day. The rocky outcrop is part of a high rocky ridge extending into Cedar Hill Park that separates the Bowker and Colquitz watersheds and blasting could alter these flows.
- b) **Effects from changes to hydrology**

The ultimate effects of changes to hydrology caused by blasting, rock and soil movement and increase in impermeable surfaces on the area's water table and natural hydrological system after construction are unknown. However, the water flow is already heavy, carries sediment and floods properties to the north of the lot. Many of the rock outcroppings in this area give rise to springs. Neighbours at 1299 Tracksell say it's likely there is a natural spring somewhere on the hill as "our curtain drains collect water continuously, irrespective of rain". The other neighbours affected by changes to hydrology would be Cedar Hill Park and its users. The corner of the Park adjacent to the proposed lot and its Tracksell neighbours is in particularly bad condition following the past several wet months and any change to the hydrology would exacerbate these issues. Changes in water flow into the Colquitz watershed could have significant and unpredictable negative impact.
- c) **Effects on access/egress and potential safety issues**

The proposed driveway would cut across the front of 1292 Tattersall's home, creating access/egress challenges for adjacent neighbours and potential safety issues for all children, pedestrians, cyclists, dog walkers and vehicle traffic in or using the area given its location on the corner where Tattersall turns to the south and becomes James Heights, the narrow width of the road and the blind corner.
- d) **Effects on aesthetics, property values, quality of life and privacy**

The destruction of a significant portion of the rocky outcrop and the effect of this on the beauty of natural landscape, the loss of a great number of trees and understory, and the reduction or loss of wildlife in the area will have a significant negative effect on the aesthetics of the area, the enjoyment of their nearby homes by residents and on current property values. Loss of privacy for all adjacent neighbours will occur. All of the above will affect nearby neighbours' quality of life negatively.

3. Widespread destruction of ESA-designated woodland

The proposed lot and the driveway access through the road right-of-way are fully within an Environmentally Sensitive Area in Saanich's ESA Atlas. The area is home to 65 Garry Oaks and four Douglas firs. The coastal Douglas fir ecosystem, (which includes the Garry Oak ecosystem), "provides a **home for 200 plus species of wildlife and plants at risk**" and only 4% of the original ecosystem remains according to Thomas Munson, Saanich's Senior Environmental Planner. "The vast majority of Garry Oak and Douglas fir ecosystems (almost 80%) are on private land" and protecting these ecosystems will become increasingly difficult, he says. Habitat and ecosystem services provided by these mature trees cannot be quickly replaced by planting replacements, even if it is on a 3:1 basis. The area is home to, or a corridor for, bats, at least 20 species of birds, deer and other animals and countless varieties of lichens, mosses and insects as well as large clusters of camas and rock slopes covered in licorice fern and miner's lettuce. The precipitous decline in bird and insect numbers worldwide is primarily due to a loss of habitat. The property is part of the wildlife corridor stretching from the Blenkinsop valley to the native areas of CHP and beyond. To fragment it would result in a loss of endangered Douglas fir ecosystem, habitat, biodiversity and forest canopy.

We are in a climate crisis. Saanich has declared a climate emergency. There is no way to replace what would be lost if the subdivision were to be approved. Collectively, we need to do what we can to retain the remaining bits of natural habitat.

4. Unsuitability of lot for subdivision development

The subject property does not lend itself to development without extensive damage to the environment, given the rocky drop-offs to the north and east of about 4 meters and only an extremely small flat area on the top of the rocky outcrop for any kind of building. The whole area is an ESA-designated Douglas fir/Garry Oak woodland. In addition, it is also impossible to estimate with any accuracy how much blasting, soil disturbance and impact to the area's hydrology would be caused by the actual building footprint and the actual siting of the proposed house(s) and subsidiary buildings. We say 'house(s)' because we are very aware of and concerned about the fact that the lot that would result if the subdivision is approved, is large enough for at least two conforming RS6 homes if a further subdivision application were filed and approved. Each resulting home would presumably be able to create and/or apply to create legal and garden suites.

The rocky outcrop has many fissures and is well-forested, both of which facts help with drainage. Blasting would significantly change these drainage patterns, putting greater pressure on the vegetation that remains. The resulting increase in runoff would increase flooding, already a significant issue, for the neighbours to the north and to the Park.

Blasting into the large rocky outcrop to create access to a property that lies fully within an ESA increases the negative impact. In light of Saanich's Climate Action Plan goal to double the rate of planting trees to enhance the urban forest, the loss of or damage to up to 70 protected trees seems inappropriate to say the least. Additionally, the place where the driveway enters the roadway is at a sharp, right hand turn on a narrow street with poor sightlines creating potential danger to car, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

5. Further comments

We have heard many comments about the fact that this kind of legacy 'ownership' without an expiry date shouldn't have been allowed to occur and that it hopefully isn't permitted any longer. Regular payment of property taxes is an expectation of all homeowners and many residents are angered at the thought that this hasn't been the case in this instance.

We understand that there is a precedent for delisting road allowances. Neighbours at 1299 Tracksell advised that "Saanich has had a number of identified road rights-of-way taken off the planning sheets and included under the Park administration" including an identified road connecting Tracksell to Tattersall running along the east side of their home.

We are interested in being part of a discussion with the appropriate individuals on the possibility of removing the undeveloped Tattersall Drive right of way that borders the proposed property and incorporating it into Cedar Hill Park. The location of the right-of-way and proposed lot adjacent to the Park provide an opportunity to enhance the ecological integrity and resilience of the Park. Are there opportunities for give and take on both sides with a net benefit to the developer, the neighbours, the municipality and the environment?

In conclusion, QCHCA does not believe the application is in the public's interest, not in Saanich's interest, is unsuited to the configuration of the land to be subdivided and would injuriously affect the established amenities of adjoining or reasonably adjacent properties including Cedar Hill Park, its visitors and the species that live in or use it as a wildlife corridor.

In addition, the application is incomplete given that no building footprint is shown, leading to fears that more than one home is the ultimate plan and the multiplier negative effects if that were to be the case.

Please let me know if you have any further questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan Haddon
President, QCHCA