



**RON DAVIDSON
LAND USE PLANNING CONSULTANT INC.**

February 11, 2020

Municipality of Meaford
21 Trowbridge St. West
Meaford, ON
N4L 1A1

Attention: Liz Buckton
Senior Planner

Dear Mrs. Buckton:

**Re: Applications for Official Plan Amendment and Consent
Part Lot 32, Concession 3, Geographic Township of Sydenham,
Municipality of Meaford
Owner: Coffin Ridge Developments Inc.**

Further to our recent meeting with your office, please be advised that the owners of the above-noted property wish to reactivate their applications for Consent and Official Plan Amendment.

Also note that the applications are to be amended to include an additional 2.2 hectares of land in order to ensure that at least 10.0 hectares of the 12.7 hectare severed parcel are available and capable for the planting of apple trees.

A new severance sketch is enclosed.

When the applications were originally filed on September 24, 2018, the application package included a Planning Report prepared by the undersigned as well as an Agricultural Assessment conducted by ORION Environmental Solutions. This letter is intended to serve an addendum to the Planning Report.

County of Grey Official Plan:

In addition to filing the above-noted Planning Act applications with your office approximately 17 months ago, an application to amend the County of Grey Official Plan was submitted to the County Planning Department. Now that the new County Official Plan is in effect, there is no need to reactivate that particular application since the County Official Plan gives consideration to the creation of lots under 40 hectares in size within the 'Agricultural' designation subject to compliance with Section 5.2.3 (Consent Polices) of the County Official Plan.

On that note, I wish to provide an evaluation of the proposed lot creation within the context of Section 5.2.3 using comments provided in the original Planning Report plus additional information that has been requested. Please consider the following:

Section 5.2.3 states:

Lot creation in the Agricultural land use type is generally discouraged and may only be permitted for agricultural uses, agricultural-related uses, surplus farmhouse severances, infrastructure, and conservation lots in accordance with section 5.2.3 of this Plan.

- 1) *A consent for one new lot may be permitted provided the original farm parcel is a minimum of 40 hectares. The options for consent would be:*
 - a) *One lot severed to create a farm parcel of generally 40 hectares in size, provided both the severed and retained lots are 40 hectares in size. Where a severance is proposed to create a smaller farm lot, an official plan amendment will not be required, but an Agricultural Report is required by a qualified individual, (which may include an agrologist, agronomist, or a professional agricultural business degree) that addresses the following criteria:*
 - 1) *Agriculture shall be the proposed use of both the severed and retained lot,*

Comment: Apples will be grown on the severed parcel and used in the making of apple cider within the winery facility on the retained lot. Grapes will continue to be grown on the retained parcel as part of the onsite winery operation.

- 2) *A farm business plan is required, demonstrating the viability of the severed and retained uses for the types of farm operations proposed,*

Comment: An Agricultural Assessment prepared by a qualified expert has addressed economic viability of both the severed and retained parcels.

- 3) *Demonstration that both the severed and retained lots will be economically viable and flexible to respond to economic change. The applicant shall provide information necessary to evaluate the viability of the new farming operations on the parcels of land. Information pertaining to the scale and nature of the operation, projected revenue, expenses, financing, soil quality, water quality and quantity, and any other viability criteria relevant to the proposal shall be provided to the satisfaction of the County, in consultation with the Province,*

Comment: The owners of Coffin Ridge Vineyard turned an abandoned farmland (dormant for over 20 years) into a thriving vineyard which produces award-winning wine and cider; and, in the process this facility has become a tourist destination point in Grey County. The business began seeing a profit after five years of opening its doors.

The owners are convinced that a ten hectare orchard would definitely be viable, as evidenced by the fact that many tender fruit orchards are located on smaller farmer parcels. (Based on a cursory review of the aerial photography provided on the County's GIS website, there are at least seven orchard properties just west of Meaford ranging in size from 2.0 hectares to 24.2 hectares on which the orchards occupy anywhere from 1.8 hectares to 11.7 hectares of land.)

Whereas the proposed orchard on the severed parcel is intended to produce (and sell) apples for the adjacent winery, there are – for the sake of demonstrating flexibility of land use – other options. For example, the apples could be sold to a local cooperative, with some farm-gate sales as well. If, on the other hand, an orchard wasn't planted on the subject property, the site could conceivably become another vineyard, and perhaps another winery would be established. On that note, there is clearly enough land to plant a viable vineyard, as proven by the fact that the vineyard on the retained parcel contains ten hectares of grapevines and the soils are clearly conducive to growing grapes of multiple cold climate varieties. Another option for this parcel is to plant cranberries in the lower fields, as this soil type is conducive to growing this fruit type. The owners actually had contemplated growing cranberries instead of grapes before establishing the vineyard, but chose to go with grapes. A further option is to grow a combination of cranberries, apples and grapes, and include a market garden component in their operation. Furthermore, the lands could conceivably be used for the growing of hops, a crop which

is in high demand due to the number of micro-breweries that now exist in area and which yields a good financial return.

- 4) *Demonstration that nearby lots of similar size and farm capability to the proposed lots are not available and suitable for the intended agricultural use,*

Comment: Given that the vineyard already exists on the subject property and that the apple orchard will be planted on lands that are not required for the growing of grapes, allowing for this particular property to be split into two farming operations seems to be reasonable.

- 5) *The suitability of both the severed and retained lots should be assessed based on:*
 - i. *The type and size of agricultural operations common in the area or to the type of agricultural operation proposed, or*
 - ii. *Demonstration that a new viable form of agriculture is suitable for the area and lot sizes proposed,*

Comment: As explained above, the intended use of the severed parcel and the continuation of the existing use of the retained parcel will both be viable and appropriate forms of agriculture for the lot sizes proposed.

- 6) *Demonstration that both the severed and retained lots remain sufficiently large to permit a change; in the agricultural product produced, an adjustment in the scale of operation, or diversification; and,*

Comment: Given the owner's investment in the winery to date and its significant success, it's highly doubtful that there would be a change in use on this retained parcel. With regard to the severed parcel, there will be an instant demand for the apples grown on this site. Whereas cider production has become a significant part of Coffin Ridge Vineyard's operation, this business does not currently grow its own apples. It is therefore intended that the apples to be grown on the severed parcel will be sold to Coffin Ridge Vineyards, as explained above. For the sake of demonstrating flexibility in the business plans, however, the apples could be sold to the local cooperative with some farm-gate sales as well; or, alternatively, the lands could be converted to a vineyard itself and perhaps even another winery could be established on this property. The winery on the retained parcel has proven very clearly that ten hectares of grape vines can provide

for a very successful operation. Furthermore, as noted above, the lands could conceivably be used for the growing of hops, a crop which is in high demand due to the number of micro-breweries that now exist in area and which yields a good financial return.

It's important to note that this ten hectare lot will generally be of a size that is consistent with many other properties within the immediate vicinity.

- 7) *Both the severed and retained lots shall comply with Provincial MDS Formulae.*

Comment: No livestock facilities exist within the immediate vicinity of the subject lands. MDS compliance is therefore not an issue.

Municipality of Meaford Official Plan:

Now that the new County of Grey Official Plan is in effect, the local Official Plan will need to be brought into compliance with the upper-tier document. In this regard, the consideration of a severance involving an 'Agricultural' designated property under 40 hectares in size will not require an amendment to the Meaford Official Plan at some point in the near future; however, in the short term, an amendment is still required.

As explained in the original Planning Report, the creation of smaller parcels is already permitted where both the severed and retained parcels have at least ten hectares of agriculturally-productive land, but only within areas where the lands are designated 'Special Agriculture'. This land use designation applies only to approximately 1000 hectares of land located west of the former Town of Meaford, but does not include the subject property. Given that the 'Special Agriculture' designation applies to apple orchards and tender fruit production areas and the fact that the local Official Plan will be brought into conformity with the County Official Plan vis-à-vis lot size in the near future, it is reasonable to give some consideration to this particular policy at this time, as was suggested by Municipal staff during the preconsultation discussions. On this note, both the severed and retained parcels will each have at least ten hectares of agriculturally-productive land.

Provincial Policy Statement:

The original Planning Report provided an explanation of how the proposed severance conforms to the 'Agricultural' policies of the Provincial Policy Statement. The policy of particular interest from Section 2.3.4 of the PPS states:

2.3.4.1 *Lot creation in prime agricultural areas is discouraged and may only be permitted for:*

- a) *agricultural uses, provided that the lots are of a size appropriate for the type of agricultural use(s) common in the area and are sufficiently large to maintain flexibility for future changes in the type or size of agricultural operations;*

Comment: This policy is reflected in the Grey County Official Plan and, as such, has been addressed in detail previously in this letter. Please refer to those earlier comments.

Municipality of Meaford Zoning By-law:

As explained in the original Planning Report, an amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning By-law is not required to facilitate the severance; however, because the lands have a site-specific zoning that would allow for a second dwelling and it's the desire of the Municipality not to have that zoning remain once the second dwelling has been severed, the owner has no objection to the Municipality initiating a Zoning By-law Amendment at this time to eliminate the current special zoning. In this regard, the owners offer their consent to the Municipality to proceed with such an amendment.

Grey County Comments:

The County of Grey Planning and Development Department provided a letter dated February 1, 2019 which summarized comments from County staff, County Council, the Province and members of the public. To address those comments, I offer the following:

1. *Business Reasons for the Severance:*

It is reasonable to ask the question: *"Why do the lands have to be severed in order for the orchard to be planted?"* In this regard, the owners have advised that the subject lands will never be farmed as long as they form part of the winery property, as the owners don't have the resources to invest into an orchard by themselves. A second party – through a partnership arrangement – is needed to invest into this new apple orchard, but the current owners cannot have that other party invest into the entire property (i.e. without the severance) because the owner's house is located on site. As such, the only viable means of getting an orchard planted is to have these lands removed from the rest of the holding.

Another fair question that has been asked is: “*How do we know that an orchard will be planted once the lands are severed?*” The owners are adamant that once the severance has been completed, the lands will be cleared and tilled by the owners in conjunction with the intended land owner, following which the trees will be planted. The owners have taken great pride in establishing a vineyard and winery on the subject property, and they wish to continue with their hard work in helping to develop an orchard on the site, but only if the lands are severed.

2. *Timing of Orchard:*

Upon the severance being granting, the lands will be sold to the interested party and the planting of trees would occur in 2021. The first apple harvest is expected within three to five years of planting.

3. *Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA) Comments:*

Based on the GSCA’s letter dated January 11, 2019, the size of the proposed severed parcel has been increased in order that at least ten hectares of land can be planted in apple trees outside of the area identified as “hazard lands” on the map provided by the GSCA. The owners are confident that these lands are suitable for growing apples trees. Some apple trees already exist on the site.

4. PPS Policy 2.3.4.1(a)

This policy, which deals with lot size, has been addressed above.

Additional Comments Regarding Impact on Agricultural:

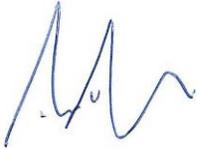
The proposed severance should not create any negative impact on the subject lands or the agricultural community. There is already a dwelling on the severed and retained parcels and so no additional houses will be erected as a result of the severance. Also, the lot creation will actually result in more land being cropped as a result of the severance. At the present time, there are ten hectares of vineyards and two hectares of hay on the subject property; and, following the severance, the two hectares of hay will be replaced with ten hectares of apple trees. Without the severance, however, the owners will not be making the investment to clear an additional eight hectares and plant the orchard.

Concluding Remarks:

I trust this information is satisfactory. Should you require anything further, please let me know.

Lastly, please advise me of the possible meeting date before actually scheduling it, in order to ensure my availability.

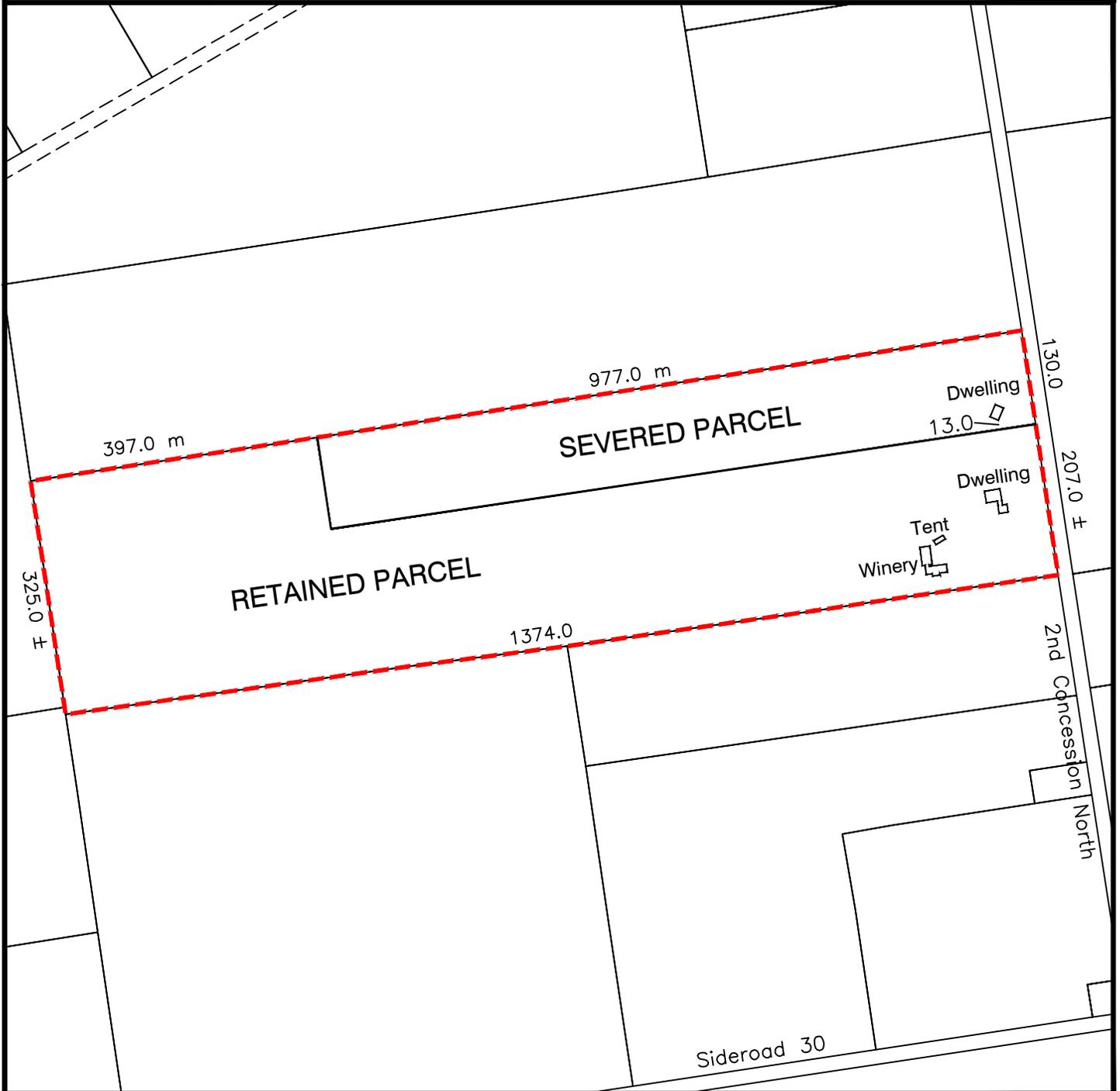
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ron Davidson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ron Davidson, BES, RPP, MCIP

c.c. Gwen Lamont
Stephanie Lacey-Avon (County of Grey)

Figure 2: Proposed Severance



Farm Severance
Coffin Ridge Winery
Municipality of Meaford

RD **RON DAVIDSON**
LAND USE PLANNING CONSULTANT INC
OWEN SOUND, ONTARIO
SCALE 1:8000