

February 27, 2020

Mayor Cam Guthrie and  
City of Guelph Councillors

Dear Mayor Guthrie & Councillors:

**Re: Committee of the Whole Meeting March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020**

**10.1 IDE-2020-17 Clair-Maltby Secondary Plan - Open Space System Strategy <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>  
Clair Maltby report – Planning Department staff recommendations on park  
Placement**

First our apologies for not being able to present to Council in person, family matters make it necessary for us to be in Barcelona. It is in part the way in which the municipal council here is working to balance private development and broader public needs to ensure that the city remains a vibrant, economically mixed community that has led to our ask of council.

**Our ask is simple: that you reject the recommendation of the city planning department staff to place the large park for the entire Clair Maltby development on the lands of the Marcolongo Farm.**

Our specific concern with the choice of the planning staff is that the lands of the Marcolongo Farm will provide an opportunity for two very important sets of housing to be built on this last Guelph greenfield site. We will speak to the community consultation process, as we attended both sets of community consultations, later in this letter

Options for Homes – a Social Enterprise which provides help to those who simply could not afford to purchase a home on the open market has agreed to build new homes to purchase on 35 acres of the Marcolongo Farm. This will provide an **affordable home ownership option for 100+ families of moderate means.**

In addition land on the Marcolongo farm set ***aside 7 acres for social housing.***

We need not remind any member of council how desperate the need in Guelph is for:

- Moderate cost homes to purchase
- Affordable rental accommodation – for singles, families, adults and seniors
- Social housing units for those with special needs

This is by no means a new phenomena – nor is it the fault of this particular council that the need for affordable housing in Guelph is in such a sorry state (Guelph has a rental vacancy rate of less than 1% and the average purchase price for a home in Guelph is 570,000) It is decades since the city built any affordable housing. In addition council is part of the County of Wellington housing strategy, which has meant limited funds, the county has chosen to build outside of Guelph, because the cost of land is simply beyond their means.

So Council has had real difficulty in meeting its goal and vision of providing moderate cost housing to rent and purchase in Guelph.

Guelph City Council now has an incredible opportunity – to actually ensure that *some* affordable housing to purchase and social housing may be built in Guelph.

Why would you turn down this opportunity in favour of a park when there are other options for the park to be placed that would meet the needs of this new greenfield development?

We attended both the September and December workshops that the Planning Department facilitated by consultant Rebecca Southern on behalf of the planning department.

The September workshops (we attended the evening event) helped the group scope out a lot of issues around use of open spaces for Clair Maltby - it also raised lots of questions – about use of space over time and other players who have an interest in the development (schools private developers etc). many of those issues remain unanswered – but it is a big project and will take many years to develop, however, it is important to get some of the key space use decisions aired early on in the process, to ensure that there are not unintended consequences down the line.

The December workshop (we attended the evening event), was well attended by 40 + community members. We found it quite difficult to get the information we needed to contribute productively and the maps that were provided by the planning staff – while obvious to them, were not particularly helpful. We want to thank the person who actually outlined things like lakes and wetlands for us (no idea who he was) that helped us make an informed contribution to the discussion.

The recommendation that the staff have brought forward for you to consider – presumably based on these series of workshops and some kind of on-line voting system (could we have voted on this a 100 times with different names?) Does not reflect the discussion we listened to at the December workshop. Nor do we see an adequate rationale in the staff report and recommendations that shows how they evaluated each of the positions and what led them to recommend a site which will lose desperately needed affordable housing and social housing.

In addition, while not related to the desperate affordable housing shortage in Guelph, the Margolongo site will also provide:

- 15 acres (including 6 acres of open space) of the Marcolongo farm Cultural Heritage Landscape to be bequeathed to the City of Guelph, and
- The balance of the property to be protected from development by the Natural Heritage Strategy and the Cultural Heritage Landscape designation. (helping our water re-charging needs as well as helping to protect the Paris Galt moraine.

We would respectfully request that council does not accept the staff recommendation either here at the committee of the whole, or when it comes to a council meeting. We hope that you will vote for the desperately needed affordable housing opportunities that the Marcolongo site offers for our city.

Sincerely  
Ron East & Lin Grist  
Guelph residents – currently in Barcelona Spain