

Council allows demolition of home in Kettleby

By Mark Pavilons

In a tug-of-war between heritage value and individual property owners' rights, the taxpayer won out.

King councillors decided to allow the demolition of a Kettleby home, making way for a fitting replacement ??an addition to this historic gem of a hamlet.

The tough decision sided with the property owners, the Youngs, who plan to rebuild their vintage home at 446 Kettleby Road, turning it in to their retirement home. They contend the new home will maintain Kettleby's historic charm.

Councillors went against staff recommendations, which not only suggested refusing the demolition, but intending to designate the property under the Ontario Heritage Act.

The Youngs want to tear down the existing structure, which currently contains a 1 1/2 storey 1860s dwelling, with a two-storey rear addition built in 1990.

The home is currently listed on the Township's heritage registry. Under the rules, the owners must request a demolition permit from the Township, which has 60 days to respond. King can, and did, request a Heritage Impact Assessment, an important tool that enables staff and the Heritage Advisory Committee to assess properties for their heritage value.

The plans to tear down the home caused a bit of tension in the hamlet and several residents believe it's an important part of Kettleby's history that should be retained.

Resident Kathy Cartan, who opposed the demolition, came forward at the Feb. 25 council meeting, asking that her property be designated, as a sign of her personal commitment to local heritage. Her home, at 435 Kettleby Road, was once home to the village blacksmith. She said it was only fair for her to make this request and place the same limits on herself that she asks of other homeowners.

Heritage designation, she stressed, does not hurt a property's value. Cultural values, she argued, is not about economics. She believes it's important to preserve Kettleby's streetscape.

Designation guides alterations and expansions to buildings and does not prohibit them outright. This process allows the Township to ensure modifications to buildings complement heritage attributes and won't adversely impact cultural heritage values. Designation also doesn't include interior spaces.

The designation of a property places it under protection and allows for careful consideration of any proposed alterations, additions, changes or plans that may have an impact on the heritage attributes.

The HAC, after evaluating the property, believed the property meets the criteria for designation, and urged the structure be maintained.

It's described as a Loyalist cottage style home and the committee contends the building was likely built by Martin?Lockhart, carriage maker, or Oliver St. John Smith, a carpenter, in the 1860s. There is a direct association with the theme of tradespeople operating a small factory shop at their residence, which is typical of the 19th century practice.

Elaine Robertson, former chair of the HAC, pointed out this home was built in 1868, the first year of Confederation. ?It is one of very few, still existing, examples of a working class house of that period in our area,? she said.

?Once the streetscape is changed, by removing a house through demolition, the historic significance, and along with it, Kettleby's uniqueness, will be compromised, and indeed, gone forever.?

She told councillors that the idea should be to honour our heritage and not tear it down.

Jeremy Young, a 52-year resident with strong family roots in King, fully understands heritage and has done his part with this, and another property in the area.

He had a Heritage Impact Assessment carried out by renowned expert Su Murdoch, who found no compelling argument to keep the home. She also felt there was little to warrant designation. In her lengthy and detailed analysis, she pointed out that so many alterations have been made to the house that it's lost its important architectural components.

Murdoch said there is some associative value found in the former use of the property by tradesmen. But relating this theme doesn't rely on the continued existence of this ?evolved??1860s dwelling.

When originally built, the modest dwelling was typical of the style and construction method being used in those days. But Murdoch

said the house never had a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.

As it stands in its evolved and renovated condition, this 1860s dwelling has become a remnant or shell of its original state," she wrote.

While she admitted that the historic character of Kettleby warrants careful consideration of future development, this proposed plan fills that need. The Youngs' drawings show a modern interpretation of Georgian Revival styling. The Youngs are planning a reasonable design on the existing foundation, in keeping the Kettleby's character. Heritage, he said, is such a hot topic that perspective has been lost.

The Kettleby Design Guidelines contain principles that encourage the preservation of the character of the village.

Murdoch wrote that the proposed dwelling has good potential for "integrating into the historic streetscape." Although not historically authentic "the overall composition is vintage" in character with the historic village setting.

"446 just doesn't have the heritage value," Young said, adding individual property owner rights must be considered and protected.

Councillor Avia Eek called Jones's concept drawing "gorgeous."

Mark Hall, a veteran architect, planner and heritage consultant, said designation of 446 is not warranted and its value is "weak." He's been through the house personally and believes the owner's plans fit and are appropriate, and make a positive contribution to Kettleby.

Resident Rick Sikorski said King's heritage and built landscape should be protected. He did observe that staff recommended pursuing historic designation, which is a process in itself that involves evaluation, etc.

Bruce Craig, speaking on behalf of Concerned Citizens of King Township, noted this matter has made him appreciate contextual value. He urged for a deeper discussion on heritage and streetscaping, to allow people to come together and share ideas. He suggested the Township look at a special streetscape plan and policies that suit every community.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said she's received many calls and letters on the issue, the majority of which indicate history and heritage is very important to residents. There's a value in respecting our history, she said, adding most want 446 preserved and it comes down to owners' rights. The HAC, she said, looked at this home purely from a heritage point of view.

Councillor Bill Cober lauded Cartan for making a "significant choice," and he supports a homeowners' right to choose. He doesn't think the demolition of 446 will significantly change the landscape. He's satisfied that if the new design includes a vintage style, details of which can be worked out during the site plan phase, the new house will work and fit.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini pointed out the owners of 446 have already gone to a great deal of expense in this exercise. He said there are no compelling arguments to save the home. The Youngs are a "wonderful example of someone trying to maintain the village atmosphere."