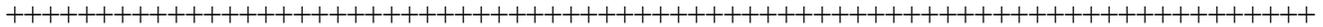


On prohibiting future COUNTRY LOT ESTATES



Issue

For the third time in ten years, staff is advising Council to simply prohibit future so-called country lot subdivisions -- developments in the rural area usually of 40 or more units at minimum 2 acres each that are not on city services and are totally car-dependent. Many municipalities in Ontario have put a stop to this type of development as it is a form of rural sprawl that in no way supports the objectives of their official plans.

It doesn't support Ottawa's objectives either but strong local lobbying has allowed this type of development to continue. It is very important that Council hear that there is strong support for prohibition.

Background

In 2003, against the recommendation of staff, at the behest of former Councillor Janet Stavinga, country lot estates were allowed to continue being developed. In the 2009 review of the Plan, Council agreed to impose a moratorium and the Ontario Municipal Board agreed that doing so was "good planning." But a developer sought leave to appeal to Divisional Court and it was granted. The 9-page Reasons for granting leave to appeal strongly suggest that a trial would find against the legality of the moratorium. No trial date has been announced.

This time around, staff is again proposing to do away with country lot subdivisions once and for all. (About 2,300 units which are in the pipeline could still be built.) Their draft proposals tabled on January 29, 2013 said: "The preliminary proposal is that country lot subdivisions no longer be allowed" and noted that:

"Concerns about ongoing country lot subdivisions include the following:

+ Country lot subdivisions are not sustainable. Large areas of land are used for only one form of housing—single detached—that rely almost entirely on private automobiles.

+ The subdivisions do not contribute to development of complete communities because they do not often increase the supply of recreation amenities or support more public services, nor do they add to the mix of housing, commercial and other uses.

+ The most attractive locations for subdivisions are close to the urban area or villages, in attractive natural settings. Impacts on natural systems can be measured in terms of the addition of new roads and more traffic, as well as the loss of trees, connectivity and habitat. As forests are cleared for building sites, they become smaller and can support fewer varieties of plants and animals.

+ Country lot subdivisions already touch the urban boundary in several locations. Ongoing subdivision development near the urban area or villages precludes opportunities to use that land more efficiently in the future, if additional village or urban land is needed.

+ Country lot subdivisions do not contribute significantly to economic growth in villages and most residents seek services in the urban centres."

When it turned out that the Greenspace Alliance was the only voice speaking out in support of staff's proposal, while perhaps as many as 20 landowners had protested the proposed prohibition, a citizen organized a petition and, in a matter of a few weeks, gathered 214 signatures. Mayor Watson duly responded, confirming that he will support staff's proposal.

In a June 8, 2013 Panel Discussion on Natural Linkages, the senior environmental planner of the City noted that, in his analysis of viable linkages for wildlife, country lot estates are often a key impediment. This does not come as a surprise: CLEs typically like to locate themselves in the "nicest" parts of the landscape -- parts that are vital for the sustainability of flora and fauna.

Ottawa will be in good company when it finally, unequivocally, prohibits country lot subdivisions. The Greenspace Alliance's September submission noted:

"We understand that the Region of Waterloo, Halton Region, Hamilton, Essex, Peel, York, Durham, Oxford County, Mississippi Mills, Sudbury, Huron County, Durham, Peel, the Town of Mono, Kawartha Lakes, Port Hope, Deep River, East Luther Grand Valley and Shelburne all, in one way or another, prohibit country lot subdivisions."

As we saw in 2003, what will be decided in the end is anyone's guess. It is very important that Councillors again hear the voice of concerned citizens that this abominable form of development be declared unacceptable once and for all.

Points for oral or written interventions

- It is high time that the City does away with the most unsustainable form of residential development -- country lot subdivisions.
- The interests of a few landowners and developers should not weigh up against the serious and permanent detrimental effects of this type of development.
- As a form of residential development, country lot subdivisions run counter to every principle and objective of the Official plan. Ottawa should join much of the rest of the province and do away with them once and for all.

Background

- + [The Greenspace Alliance's submission to staff, September 5, 2013](#) (linked; see esp. pp. 2-3).
- + The petition in support of prohibiting new CLEs and Mayor Watson's response - https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Support_the_prohibition_of_New_Country_Lot_Subdivisions/?ffuzTbb&pv=7
- + "Document 10" -- staff's brief in 2003 laying out the arguments regarding CLEs -- accessible from <http://greenspace-alliance.ca/node/159>
- + [Cavanaugh vs. City of Ottawa - Reasons for Granting Leave to Appeal](#). Annis, J. 28 June 2012 (linked; 1.43MB).