

Exchange between Paul Johanis and Jan Harder on the Brazeau pit development

I am writing to you in your role both as Chairs of Planning and Environmental Protection committees, and as councillors for Barrhaven and Goulbourn. We wish to register our concerns regarding two current development projects in Barrhaven that pose risks to significant greenspace.

Secondly, we have learned through the ERO that the Ministry has received an application for a Permit to Take Water for the Brazeau pit development whereby massive volumes of dewatering would be allowed in anticipation of the approval of a plan of subdivision on that property. Our concern is that this will lower the water table such that it will imperil the water supply via the Kars esker to the Cambrian Woods, an Urban Natural Feature located a few hundred meters to the north of this development, leading to its destruction from lack of water. While draft approved under delegated authority in October 2019, the zoning bylaw amendment for this development is on the agenda of the upcoming Planning Committee meeting on February 20.

Upon examining the documentation available on Devapps for this application, we note that many of the documents referred to in the Draft Approval have not been posted, for example the 'Functional Servicing Report for Caivan Communities, Brazeau Lands, 3809 Borriokane Road, September 11, 2019, 3rd Submission'. Only the first submission is posted. Similarly, the EIS posted on Devapps from 2018 makes no reference to the potential impact of the dewatering that is now under consideration. There seems to be some confusion over the location of a proposed stormwater pond as between the initial application and the draft approved plan. Is it proposed in the Brazeau Pit, as per the initial application, or in the Drummond pit further to the north? The staff report for the February 20 meeting does not address any of these points. Again, it would seem appropriate to have a fully transparent process and record of decision for a development of this magnitude in an urban expansion area. We will make representations at the February 20 meeting but would appreciate the release of updated servicing reports and environmental impact studies ahead of the meeting.

Paul Johanis  
Chair, Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital

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Mr. Johanis,

Thank you for your email. There is definitely a great deal of misinformation and confusion around both of the matters that you have addressed below. I will attempt to clarify these for you:

I understand from discussions with the applicant and staff that the Brazeau Pit PTTW application you have noted is consistent with normal site servicing requirements and will be temporary. I also understand that the volumes of water estimated within the PTTW application package were overestimated to ensure that no compliance issue would result during the temporary water taking related to site servicing activities. The volumes expressed in the PTTW application are meant to capture groundwater infiltration during excavation and water accumulation in open pits from rain events which would require pumping. With this said, City Staff and the MOECP are reviewing this application in detail and have not yet released the application for processing by the MOECP. The applicant and its engineer must demonstrate that the activities on site will have no negative impact. I will look into the studies you have noted below but I can confirm that the Drummond Pit is NOT part of the planning application for Zoning By-law amendment being brought forward to committee at this time.

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Thank you Councillor Harder for your response to my email, and thank you for getting the Functional Servicing report of September 11 for the Brazeau development up on DevApps. My reading of this report has confirmed that the location of the storm water pond for the Brazeau development has been changed and would now be located in the Drummond pit. This is even closer to the Cambrian Woods UNA than in the previous plan and raises more concern for its impact on the health and preservation of this unique woodland in South Barrhaven. Your response has also confirmed that the Permit to Take Water requested by the proponent is vastly overestimated. While you qualify it as temporary, the application is for a 10 year period, long enough to cause permanent lowering of the water table, starving of water supply the Cambrian Woods, which are up grade from the site.

The potential impact on this Urban Natural feature, designated as such in the Official Plan, of the location of the storm water pond, and of the planned dewatering under the PPTW, has not been addressed in the environmental assessments conducted to date. It would seem that a whole class of in-depth studies for this new residential development on what was recently a resource extraction area should be conducted. From a quick glance at Schedule B of the Official Plan it would seem that these lands are designated Developing Community (Expansion Area). In our experience with expansion areas (the Greenspace Alliance has paid special attention to the outcomes of each of the expansion areas approved under OPA76), comprehensive studies are required to move such areas into the General Urban Area designation. I do not believe such studies have been conducted for these lands.

It is as if everything is being done backwards on this application: the PTTW being approved before zoning is confirmed, zoning application processed before General Urban Area designation is recognized, no OPA to change designation from Expansion Area to General Urban Area.

I would note that the Cambrian Woods UNA is City owned, having been obtained in a land swap with the proponent for this development some 10 years ago. It would be a dark irony to see them destroyed as the result of the City mishandling of this planning application. I will submit to Planning Committee that the file be withdrawn and referred to staff for further investigation of these issues.

Paul Johanis  
Chair, Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital

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Here are a couple of points further to respond to the email you recently sent. I trust these facts will satisfy your concerns.

- Comprehensive studies including an Environmental Management Plan and a Master Servicing Study were completed through the CDP process which included the pits lands in the study area. The subdivision was reviewed and draft approved accordingly. The master plans acknowledged that the PTTW will be determined during the detailed design stage after subdivision draft approval. This is where we are right now
- Official plan (Section 3.12, Policy 5) specifically states that "An amendment to this Plan will not be required to remove the designation of Developing Community (Expansion Area) and replace it with General Urban Area", that developments may proceed through the subdivision review.

Staff are happy to assist Mr. Johanis to locate CDP documents if required. Let us know if you do.