

November 29, 2023

Mayor Shantz and Woolwich Council
24 Church Street West
P.O. Box 158
Elmira, Ontario N3B 2Z6

Re: OP Changes as per Ministers Request

Mayor Shantz,

This letter is a follow up to our letter dated November 15, 2023 and the council meeting held on November 21st, 2023.

We support the staff's memo which is to request that the minister use the Countryside line as was implemented for the Township of Woolwich on modifications on April 11, 2023 with the staffs suggested conditions. This will give staff the resources to plan for the future and to accommodate for the badly needed housing supply.

If the Township doesn't plan for local growth, the need for housing doesn't just vanish. New households will still be established, and new Canadians will continue to arrive. However, without local accommodation, these individuals will have to travel further to find affordable housing. This is evident in the rapid expansion of smaller communities over the last 10 years within the commuting distance of the Waterloo Region, such as Stratford, St Mary's, Palmerston, Arthur, and others. Ignoring the need for local growth doesn't eliminate it; instead, it forces people to commute longer distances. This not only wastes family time but also has negative environmental impacts.

Due to the high cost of housing in Woolwich, residents might consider moving to more affordable regions where their financial resources allow for a better quality of life. This trend could lead to a significant migration to locations like the western parts of Canada, known for their balanced cost of living, or even to sunbelt states in the U.S. These areas offer not only more affordable housing options but also growing job markets, appealing climates, and a promise of a more financially sustainable lifestyle for families and individuals alike.

Businesses invest in Ontario and Woolwich because they have the confidence to do so. With certainty of achievable housing removed, havoc ensues. Financial institutions will cancel project

financing, developers will invest elsewhere, job creation deferred or worse lost, and the housing crisis will deepen. Municipalities will not achieve their housing targets nor conform to the minimum 15-year land supply requirement of the PPS. Combined, the province's objectives to increase housing supply and choice for the people of Ontario will not be realized.

Industrial and high-tech companies are hesitant to invest in Woolwich and the Region, as the escalating housing costs in the area pose a significant barrier for their employees. This affordability crisis means that families of these potential workers find it increasingly challenging to secure suitable homes, a situation that could deter these businesses from establishing their operations in Woolwich, seeking regions with more accessible housing options for their workforce instead.

Thomasfield's involvement represents just a fraction of the area proposed for expansion. This additional area will introduce more competition, which we see as a positive development. We endorse this expansion as we believe that increasing housing supply is the key solution to addressing the housing crisis.

Thomasfield and other homebuilders and developers are the primary investors in our community's growth and development, not the special interest groups. We provide housing solutions not existential apprehensions. We, the builders and developers, are at the forefront of creating new communities. Our role involves investing in, planning, and consulting with community stakeholders, as well as constructing these areas. We focus on building sustainable communities that offer a diverse mix of housing options. Our aim is to create well-designed, master-planned neighborhoods that are mixed-use and walkable, ensuring a high quality of life for residents. We face the challenges of rampant inflation and continuously rising infrastructure costs head-on. Our role involves not only the physical creation of housing and amenities but also navigating the complex economic landscape to ensure sustainable and prosperous community developments. This distinction underscores our commitment to Woolwich and the significant responsibility we bear in collaboratively shaping the community's future.

For all of the reasons outlined above — not least of which is the considerable time and resources that the Township has already dedicated to updating the Breslau Secondary Plan — we respectfully submit that maintaining the Province's modifications to ROPA 6 is in the best interests of the Township and its residents. Minister Calandra's letter notes in particular that "lower-tier municipal feedback on the original official plan submitted to the province will be important to supporting its implementation." We therefore ask that the Township of Woolwich express its support for the modifications made by the Province through its approval of ROPA 6.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom McLaughlin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom McLaughlin

VP Finance Thomasfield Homes

cc. Hugh Handy – GSP Group

