

## **New Information to County of Bruce 12.16.23**

From: Larry and Nancy Skinner, 392 Blind Line Allenford, Ontario

Re: Proposed Amendment to County Official Plan C-2022-016 and S-2022-030 Barry's Construction and Insulation Ltd.

**Overview:** Our family is opposed to converting agricultural land into houses in a non-settlement area. At both the public meeting of the Town of South Bruce Peninsula on September 19, 2023 and the meeting for the council of the County of Bruce on September 21, 2023, we made written and verbal presentations outlining our reasons for the opposition to the proposed development. (Please see our 09.21.23 presentation to council-attached.) Such an approval would contradict the intent of Ontario's provincial policy statement and the County Official Plan, both of which prioritize agriculture. We need not remind you that without land, there is no agriculture, at least agriculture as we know it.

In our view, this file, which has many important facets and reasons why it should not go ahead, has boiled down to a discussion of minimum distance separation. (MDS). Since the September reports to the two councils, new information has been brought forward by your planning department. We, too, are bringing forward new relevant information regarding MDS. These facts will shed new light on the required setbacks from a livestock facility and show conclusively that a reduction in MDS should not be considered for this proposal.

**Brief History of our Involvement on this matter:** When we took over the farm at 392 Blind Line in 2019, we decided, in the short run, to use the barn for machinery storage. At no time did we discount its use for future livestock production. We reasoned that because our children are involved in animal agriculture, they might want to carry on livestock farming here at some point. Consequently, we made minor changes to the already excellent structure. At the present time, it would house swine or cattle very well.

Prior to making a written submission on September 8th for the September 19, 2023 public meeting at the Town of South Bruce Peninsula and the subsequent Bruce County meeting on September 21, 2023, we were never contacted by municipal staff to verify usage of the barn, its structural soundness or the square footage of same. We did receive a call from the developer early in 2023 and we indicated we were using the facility for machinery storage at the time. He made no mention of a pending subdivision application at that point. We also received a call from the planner on September 12 seeking some details about our recent written submission.

In our MDS calculations for our September presentations, we used a livestock number of 80 sows farrow-to-wean, a number reportedly housed by the previous owner. That resulted in a required MDS setback of 388 meters. In September, the two councils did not move forward on the matter and when we contacted the county planner on or about September 30, 2023, we were informed the application was put "on hold." We received a courtesy call on November 30, 2023 that a recommendation was moving forward to both councils on December 5 and December 14, 2023 respectively. While glad of the call, we were shocked that no further enquiry had been made of us to discuss or verify staff generated numbers related to MDS.

### **Detailed MDS Discussion:**

- Since this process began we have had a number of conversations with staff at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Rural Affairs. (OMAFRA) These are experts in the application of MDS and its relationship to municipal planning. Not having used the barn for livestock ourselves, we did not realize the previous owner was underutilizing the square footage of the barn. As a result the number previously used (80 sows) does not represent the true capacity of the facility. A measurement of the inside dimensions revealed that the barn is 6440 square feet or 598 square meters. In our professional opinion, having been in hog production for over 35 years, this could quite easily accommodate 400 feeder pigs. When the numbers are run for MDS 1, the minimum distance from the livestock barn to a proposed *lot creation for four, or more, residential lots outside of a settlement area* is 780 meters. (Please see map below) In our view, this distance prohibits the development of the proposed lots according to provincial regulation.
- The actual distance from the corner of the barn capable of housing livestock to the edge of the proposed development is approximately 305 meters, not 330 meters as calculated by the planner. Please see page 2, paragraph 4 of the Staff Report to Council dated December 14, 2023. It would appear from the map on page 4 of the report that county staff used a starting point over half way back the barn, not at the corner of the barn capable of housing livestock, as it should have been.
- In the same staff report to council, page 2, paragraph 3, a default calculation for an unoccupied livestock barn was applied based on 400 square meters. This generated a setback distance of 370 meters. Why would this number be used without consulting the owners about the true dimensions of the barn? Using the actual inside dimension of 598 square meters, as shown above, we find this default calculation generates a setback of 473 meters. (Please see map below)
- The unoccupied livestock barn calculation of 473 meters is 168 meters (551 feet) beyond the closest point of the proposed development. Using a number of 400 feeder pigs (barn occupied) the minimum distance separation exceeds the closest point by 475 meters. (1558 feet) In our view, neither of these overages justifies a reduction in MDS.
- Due diligence was not followed here in our view. For most of this process, we as one of the neighbours most closely affected were kept in the dark. For example, we were not informed of the consultant's report (MHBC, #8 in your packet) commissioned by the County. The report tries to discredit the structural soundness of our barn, by stating "the barn has been decommissioned." In addition, the consultant calculates MDS using barn measurements based on dimensions never verified with ourselves.
- In addition we find it staggering that municipal staff acknowledge on page 2 of their staff report to council that "with a proposed plan of subdivision, MDS I calculations are required for all livestock facilities within 1500m." Why then was only one (Murray Mizen's barn) out of the eight eligible barns analysed prior to the September meetings? We wonder had we not raised a red flag on MDS, if the matter would have even received proper consideration at all.

**Conclusion:** We trust that Bruce County Council will consider all relevant information on this file, including the new information brought by your staff, ourselves and any other contributors. As you can clearly see from our input, the proposed subdivision is in serious contravention of Minimum Distance Separation requirements. The future of our farm at 392 Blind Line would be adversely affected if this rezoning proposal is allowed to go forth. As a council you have an opportunity to keep agriculture in Bruce County on a firm footing by declining the proposal.

## MAP Re: MDS Setback Distances for 392 Blind Line Allenford



### **Notes:**

473M MDS circle uses Unoccupied Barn Measurements. Number is based on actual inside measured area of 598 sq metres.

780M MDS circle has the distance determined through MDS calculations for 400 feeder pigs which is the viable capacity for the barn (based on 16 sq ft/1.49 sq m per pig)