

Guelph councillors support bid to remove 170-year-old Hart's barn

GUELPH — City councillors Monday approved the removal of a 170-year-old south-end barn after hearing it is so unsafe the late owner wouldn't allow anyone inside.

"We were disheartened to find the structure is so beyond repair," Andrew Lambden, owner of Terra View Homes, told council.

The developer recently purchased the Hart farmstead on Hart's Lane West.

Lambden said he became concerned about the heavy sidehill barn's integrity after the owner told him her late husband wouldn't let anyone inside without him, and Lambden noticed it was leaning significantly.

Lambden hired an engineering firm, which concluded the barn's rubble foundation had failed many years ago.

Now, he said, some parts of the large structure are "unsupported and now literally hanging in thin air."

The engineers condemned the barn, declaring a debris zone around it to protect against falling debris or complete collapse.

Councillors endorsed a staff recommendation to remove from the city's cultural heritage register any reference to the barn. This will allow the barn to be removed, though Lambden said the company has no intention to simply knock it down.

He told council the barn has been computer modelled and will be extensively photographed. He said Mennonite workers with experience with taking down heritage barns will assist with the "careful disassembly."

Lambden acknowledged the Hart farm property represents "a very proud piece of Guelph's cultural heritage," and materials from the barn will be reused in the redevelopment of the farm property.

Lambden said the deterioration of the barn happened gradually over "many decades."

Councillors voted 9-0 to allow the barn's demolition.

They then voted by the same margin in favour of a motion by Coun. Leanne Piper asking staff to report back on how the city can better protect agricultural buildings on the cultural heritage register.



Condemned

Scott Tracey/Mercury staff

This barn on the old Hales farmstead in south Guelph is a danger and should come down, according to a staff report.