

To: Chair and Members, Planning and Environment Committee

Re: 247 Halls Mill Road , request for demolition of the Historic William Griffith Coach House/ barn

Historical structures or landmarks give people a sense of pride and adds character and balance to a city. Unfortunately, London has lost many significant historical properties which were destroyed by purposeful neglect by property owners. The City of London recognizes this need to protect properties valued by the community and in August 2019, listed neighbourhoods to be granted historical designation.

Unfortunately, the property owner at 247 Halls Mill Road took this purposeful neglect one step further with the intentional demolition of the historic William Griffith Coach House/Barn. This impressive, one of a kind structure made from Chestnut trees, was built in the 1800's and has been painted, photographed and written about ( Nancy Tausky, Roy Kerr etc) because of its impressive beauty and uniqueness.



After an article featuring a large photograph of this outstanding historic Red Barn appeared in The London Free Press August 23,2019, discussing the historical designation of the Halls Mill Road neighbourhood, the property owner started removing the roof of the barn on the west side, which was not visible from the street.



By mid September, the entire back of the roof was removed and the building was exposed to the elements so concerned residents contacted the City of London and a building inspector was sent to the site. The owner claimed to be renovating.





By the beginning of November, the property owner was removing the boards from the south side of the barn and again, the city was contacted and a building inspector revisited the site and issued a cease demolition order and, a group of 28 people sent a letter to LACH expressing their concern that the structure was in danger and expressed the need to have the property given an official historical designation. The letter was added to the November 13th meeting.



The property owner continued to remove boards from the building and, on December 10, 2019, after several people witnessed the property owner removing more boards from the barn during most of the day, the building collapsed at approximately 7:50pm.



Unfortunately, the property owner has shown a blatant disregard for the citation issued by the City of London and proceeded to demolish a historical building without a proper permit and knowing that not only was his property listed on the city's historical inventory but soon the entire neighbourhood would be given historical designation.

LACH has determined the property at 247 Halls Mill Road be given historical designation and the barn/coach house be repaired or rebuilt. The decision made by this committee is precedent setting and will have a profound impact on whether historical properties in the future will be saved or, make it easier for historical properties to be destroyed with little or no consequences.

I ask that the Chair and Members of the Planning and Environment Committee recognize that this destruction of significant, historical properties through willful neglect or purposeful demolition must be halted. We have a responsibility to protect places of historical value for future generations. Regulations need to be changed and purposeful destruction has to be stopped.

I agree with the recommendation made by LACH and would like to see this historic barn that stood impressively at the top of a historical street, rebuilt.

Thank you  
Debbie Park  
( owner of a historic property in the Halls Mill neighbourhood)