

Public Submission

Statutory Public Planning Meeting – Zoning By-Law Amendment

265-327 Elgin Street East, Cobourg, Ontario (County of Northumberland)

November 9, 2020

Members of Council and Staff:

In essence, I support intensification based upon good planning principles for mixed neighbourhoods and the creation of a variety of quality living places. I believe that this proposal seeks to do this. I also support development based on efficient use of energy and with goals in sustainability which also include considerations for prioritizing reparability versus replacement.

I acknowledge that more project details will follow as part of the planning process, but project intent is clear in the reports and drawings included in the public meeting agenda. I support a zoning by-law amendment which seeks to improve quality of living for current and future residents; but, not an amendment enabling change to waste resources, including land and buildings, or compromises quality of life.

If I can only leave you with a main message, it is this: every resident needs their own private and conveniently accessible outdoor place where they can be in nature and sunshine. This time of pandemic has reminded us that some simple pleasures are in fact very important to human physical and emotional health.

And, it is not ok to pave over almost all the existing backyards for the parking of vehicles ... or to have a site plan necessitating the removal of more than 80% (36) of mature trees on site with trunks (DBH) over a foot in diameter. It is unclear if any of the additional 19 trees (under 12" DBH) will be removed. (see page 7 Larkin Planning Justification Report). I encourage you to revisit not only the proposed site plan but also, in regard to rezoning and optimizing land use, the setbacks for front, side and rear yards.

I was unable to attend the Q&A session on October 15 and will take this opportunity to mention a few concerns.

First, I question the need to demolish the existing homes entirely rather than going back to their skeletons, for example solid wood wall studs, and refinishing them and adding new build additions between beyond and above the existing building footprints. The reports claim that the existing homes are at the 'end of their useful life'. How many people do you know who live in homes built before 1980? As example, my own smaller residence is more than three and half times older than the existing homes on site to be demolished.

I raise this issue because there appears to be no report which explored alternatives. What are the core materials used in the existing structures and can the materials like wall board, wiring and insulation, among other updates, be economically removed and replaced? Relatedly, has there been an analysis of proposed construction and its anticipated life span? How long are the new buildings supposed to last? Was there an assessment of reparability vs. replacement?

Secondly, it is mentioned in the reports that overall there will be 46.8% landscaped area, of which 37.4% is soft landscaping and the rest permeable paver. It may be too early to ask about details but I will express concern for quality of outdoor areas for residents. What part of the percentage of landscaped area is general (common element) versus usable and purposeful outdoor areas specific for private use for each home unit? For example fenced yards suitable for a pet, or as play area for young children within sight of home and parent/guardian. And, where are the reasonably sized balconies for upper floor units? I noticed on a drawing the outdoor balcony space for some units, it is very very small, with hardly room for a chair. This raises the matter of allowable second and third floor projections into a required yard setback which would be specific zoning to this project. In addition, private outdoor space could help further the resident's interests in their own food security by growing some food or tending a small flower garden ... a great way to relieve stress, by the way. In addition, where would residents and their guests securely store their bicycles and e-transport devices?

And, it is also healthier and more cost effective to hang laundry outside to dry. All units, not only selected ones, need their own washer/laundry facilities. Imagine you are a hard working single parent, multi-tasking and doing chores while making dinner for a young family ... the last thing you want to do is leave the children and stove unattended while you go (should you lock the door to your home unit?) downstairs to the shared basement to check on the washing.

And, finally. Are those real windows on the third floor? I hope those are habitable roof spaces with usable space beneath the roof, like an extra bedroom. Aging in place can be for any stage in life, like having options for extra space for a growing family. The rezoning to R4 allows a third storey and needs to permit, possibly even require, the proposed design of building envelope to accommodate habitable roof space for this project of stacked townhouse development. Otherwise, it would be a shame to waste so much space within the building envelope.

Sincerely,

Miriam Mutton
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Cobourg, Ontario