

From: ANGUS JOHNSON

Sent: Sunday, June 2, 2024 10:15 PM

To: Council Agenda <councilagenda@london.ca>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] addition to the agenda of the June 4 council meeting meeting

Please add the following letter to the agenda of the upcoming meeting (June 4)
You have my permission to publish the letter as part to the public record

It relates to the 8th Report of Planning and Environment Committee

#9 (3.4) 530 Oxford St. W.

530 Oxford

Sprawl Crawl? Vertical Sprawl? or Crawl Towers?

Recently at PEC, we were unsuccessful opposing the development at 530 Oxford. The vote “for” was 5-0. An argument for 530 Oxford proposed that it is after all, infill, not sprawl, and people who live ‘here’ will be able to walk to some amenities.

The development certainly won’t look like housing spread over a treeless landscape. The emissions effect however will be the same. In an area where is no transit, now or probably ever, to get people to work, 646 cars (our count), will increase GHG emissions there and wherever they have to go. It’s true, you can walk to Sobeys to get groceries, and if you work at Sobeys, walk to work. However that case will be a small exception to the general pattern governing mobility in this community.

Ironically, traffic from 530 Oxford will just add to the ‘sprawl crawl’, created when traffic moves back and forth through this area going to and from ‘actual’ sprawl areas to the south, west and north. only making congestion worse.

With 735 Wonderland, this is the second area development with this profile and more could be in the works (ESAM/ Mudcreek, Rand Tract on Oxford, Rona Site). The resulting risk, is this all could become a degraded, emission generating heat island, intensified by slow, congested traffic. Stopping 530 Oxford could mean nipping this and further cases of ‘vertical sprawl’ in the bud.

If you have some conceptual reservations about ‘vertical sprawl’, as my wife did, How about ‘crawl towers’? Imagining the buildings presiding over a mass of slow moving vehicles spewing emissions in all directions.

Another point for the necessity of 530 Oxford went... 'We have to build 40000 new homes to increase the supply and make housing more affordable and (hence) build developments 'like?' 530 Oxford.'

The comment makes one wonder just how many more developments of this profile this PEC member thinks we 'have to' build?

If all 40 000 homes are like this, the consequences in terms of emissions are, well, ominous. Because that means 100 000 people give or take, spawn 66 000 more cars, cause a 20% increase in GHG car emissions over current levels. Matching that possibility with our commitment to reduce overall emissions to net zero by 2050 would look mighty difficult.

The economics 101 approach does seem to produce results for lowering prices in the rental market, at least in the short term.

But while creating housing of this profile is virtually certain to increase emissions it is by no means certain that building even greater amounts will lower sales prices. Too many other uncertainties play into the costs of building these developments, cost of land, materials, labour, interest rates. Embedded issues of income inequality may prevent the market from ever providing affordable housing for large parts of the population. And if you lose this gamble on the market you wind up with both unaffordable and unsustainable housing.

A gamble on building sustainable housing lowering prices is no better a bet on the pricing side. If you build enough it may help lower prices. It may not. But if you lose on the pricing gamble you still have that sustainability.

(Send a 'like' to your councillor for Sprawl Crawl? Vertical Sprawl? Crawl Towers?...or Sprawl Towers?...or suggest ?)

Angus Johnson, Greenspace Alliance