

17 September 2014

Judy Bryant,
Councillor, Ward 13,
City of London
300 Dufferin Avenue,
London, N6B 1Z2

Dear Ms. Bryant:

I am writing you, as our councilor, in regard to the proposed redevelopment of 50 King Street (in Ward 13) as proposed by the Middlesex County Council to the City. On June 27, 2014 I sent a letter to the city, directed to Mr. Brian Turcotte, expressing serious reservations, indeed objections, re the proposed development. I regret that business takes me out of town for the Sept. 17th meeting on this matter. The objections in my letter of June 17 were, essentially, the following:

1. HERITAGE AND AESTHETICS: Any structure should blend with its surroundings and respect the historic adjacent buildings - an important part of London's heritage. This alone would dictate a major height restriction that precludes a high rise tower. Ivey Park and the Forks should not be blocked from downtown and kept in shade throughout the morning. The structure should "step down" towards the river providing a transition from the high rise towers to the East. It should not raise an even higher wall between the river and the city.
2. TRAFFIC: The proposed development would add unsupportable traffic demands to the King/Thames Street, which is a narrow, 2 lane road, much used by pedestrians, families with children and cyclists. The pedestrian-friendly atmosphere is underlined by the footbridge to Becher Street which links the west side neighbourhoods and river walks to downtown. This would be put at risk!
3. WIND EFFECTS: The section of King Street West of Talbot is already known as a "wind tunnel". Placing a high rise tower (over 100 metres?) diagonally opposite the existing Renaissance Tower at the intersection of Ridout and King would severely intensify the wind.
4. CONTRIBUTION TO DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION: King Street should provide a pleasant pedestrian link between the business district and the Forks. It is the only street that can do this. The development should be a public space that anchors Ivey Park, the historic Court House and Museum London and transitions effectively toward the next section of King and Dundas. Public input into the use of this publicly owned land is needed. Careful design is also needed (a design competition?) to provide a structure that Londoners can be proud of. A high rise parking garage, office space and condos does not qualify.

Since then I have been able to study in detail the County's proposal: "Justification Report for 50 King Street" dated April 30, 2014. Far from allaying concerns such as those listed above, this report presents a design concept that goes far beyond our worst fears and reflects the worst aspects of 1970's urban planning that would create a "tombstone" blocking off the parklands along the river from the downtown core.

The proposed “phase 1” would more than double the footprint of the existing structure. Two additional phases are envisaged that would remove even more space from the current open area, but no details are provided. The “mid block connection” {mapped on page 13 of the report} would be a narrow alley way where now there is parkland. It would become another concrete wasteland in permanent shadow much like the unused pedestrian corridor behind the Dundas Street Court House (another failed attempt at urban renewal). In any case, as a resident in the neighborhood I can attest with certainty that access to Ivey Park and the Thames River Trail system by pedestrians, joggers, mothers with strollers and cyclists is NOT off Ridout Street between the old Courthouse and 50 King, but overwhelmingly along King Street itself, a relatively quiet 2 lane road complete with cycle lanes.

The other three access roads: Dundas, York and Ridout are all multi-lane thoroughfares that carry heavy traffic and are NOT pedestrian friendly. Plans to use King Street as the parking entrance and for all “Back House Functions” [page 17 of the report] would seriously damage the last pedestrian friendly access to Ivey Park and the Forks by turning King Street into a high traffic service road where now we have the gateway to the Forks!

Two other points: First, the “shadow diagrams” on page 15 are meaningless without taking into account the seasonal variation in the sun’s path, and without looking at the impact on the splash pad and Ivey Park.

Second, the entire design sections 2.0 to 6.0 warrant very careful review. They include many statements of good intentions, but most detail is lacking and where detail is present it usually is quite counter to a people friendly civic space.

There are numerous other problems with the proposal, which time and again claims good intentions to be consistent with City plans for downtown revitalization, but gives little detail; and where detail is supplied runs contrary to the spirit and letter of existing city planning documents:

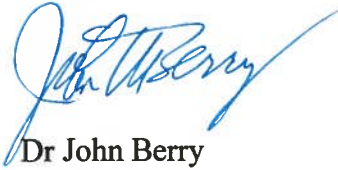
- The Bicycle Master Plan;
- The London Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan;
- London's Cultural Prosperity Plan and Profile; and most importantly
- The Draft Downtown Master Plan.

With regard to the Downtown Master Plan, we strongly support action 2: “Reconnect with the Thames River”. It is critically important, however, that this be done in a people-friendly way that respects the environment and heritage of this historic area. A 30 story tombstone, a memorial to a lost opportunity and a failed vision for London is NOT the way to proceed.

I do urge you and your colleagues to review the proposal very carefully in the context of those earlier plans and visions that have been generated through extensive consultation and which, if

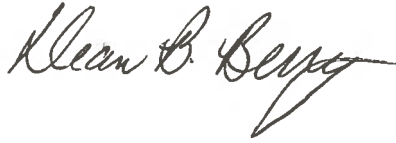
implemented, could lead to a dynamic and exciting urban core for London., and which the present proposal would seriously sabotage!!!

Sincerely,



Dr John Berry

Dr. Dean B Berry



Original sent by post and copy by e-mail

cc. by e-mail:

Brian Turcotte, City of London Planning Division

All City Councillors and Acting Mayor