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D. Menard

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2011: 5:30 p.m.
FROM:	J. M. FLEMING DIRECTOR, LAND USE PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	DEMOLITION APPLICATION S. COPP 13-15 YORK STREET

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Director, Land Use Planning and City Planner, with the advice of the heritage planner, the request for the demolition of the listed heritage property at 13-15 York Street **BE DENIED** at this time, pending an application for rezoning of the property at 19 York, further discussions with respect to streetscape issues and a possible transfer of ownership of the subject building, it being noted that the Applicant's conceptual site plan indicates that demolition is not required to allow for the proposed parking lot and loading arrangement.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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July 28, 2011: Report to BNEC- Demolition Application -13-15 York Street

BACKGROUND

As previously reported on July 28, 2011, an application to demolish the structure at 13-15 York (Appendix 1) was received on May 11, 2011. As a property listed on the Inventory of Heritage Resources, its demolition required Council approval following consultation with the London Advisory Committee on Heritage and a public participation meeting at the Built and Natural Heritage Committee. At its meeting in June, the LACH recommended that Council issue a notice of intent to designate the building under Section 29 (1) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The LACH provided a proposed statement of significance describing the heritage significance of the property. (Appendix 2)

At the public participation meeting of the Built and Natural Environment Committee on July 18, 2011, the applicant confirmed his intent to seek demolition of the property, and, possibly, the adjacent property at 17 York Street. He identified that the building at 13-15 York had been vacant for a number of months, required rehabilitation and was economically inefficient. He brought forward at that time both a description and assessment of the property at 13-15 York and a drawing showing the configuration of a parking corridor to assist in the unloading of product material for the adjacent warehouse at the rear of the various land parcels. (Appendix 3). The Applicant's concept plan clearly shows that the proposed demolition of the property at 13-15 York Street is not necessary to allow for the parking, loading and storage on the site as proposed by the Applicant.

In the ensuing discussion, questions were raised with respect to the impact of the removal of one or both buildings currently contributing a significant positive component of the visual experience on an important streetscape providing an approach into the downtown from the west. At that time, and with the applicant's consent, BNEC suggested that staff meet further with the applicant to discuss these matters. The following week, on BNEC's recommendation, municipal Council resolved:

43. That, with the concurrence of the applicant, the following actions be taken with respect to the request for a demolition permit for 13-15 York Street:

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- (a) Consideration of the demolition permit request **BE REFERRED** to the Civic Administration to allow the applicant and the Civic Administration an opportunity to discuss possible streetscape opportunities and options for the subject property; and,
- (b) The Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to report back on this matter at the September 12, 2011 Built and Natural Environment Committee meeting;

Discussion with the Owner

On Monday, August 22, 2011 the applicant, Steve Copp, met with John Fleming, Jim Yanchula and Don Menard. Also present at this meeting was Andy Spriet, a consultant for the applicant. In the course of the discussion, a number of matters were raised and clarified:

- The applicant confirmed his intention to seek the demolition of the semidetached residence at 13-15 York Street as there was no commercial value to maintain the property and to provide necessary rehabilitation for its continued use.
- Although suggested in the initial application, the demolition of the property adjacent to the east, at 17 York Street, was not seen by the applicant as being immediately necessary. Currently, this property is leased and the property is more economically viable for business use in the near term.
- The proposed use for the rear of the various parcels of land owned by the applicant in this block is to facilitate the unloading of, and the movement of, large transport trucks into and from the site. (Appendix 2) The proposed traffic flow is intended to facilitate the operation of the existing business operation and allow for its future expansion. Large transport trucks (53 foot trailers) will not be stored on the site but will enter from York Street, unload at a new loading dock to be constructed, and will exit onto Thames Street. It was clarified for staff that the location of the existing buildings does not interfere with the proposed traffic flow shown in the Applicant's conceptual site plan.
- It was noted by staff that such a use as an accessory parking operation located at the rear of the various parcels, would likely require a planning department, as it may represent an expansion of the Copps' Build-All store's legal non-confirming use. Staff indicated they would seek a confirmation of this requirement from Zoning officials.
- In the future, the applicant foresaw the eventual removal of #17 and, possibly, the building at #5-7-9 York, of which the applicant owns #7. It was clearly stated by the applicant that the corner property is not currently under discussion for removal.
- The applicant indicated an intent would be to provide some degree of screening the frontage of the site of #13-15 York when the building was removed. It was thought that a wall made of reclaimed brick would be suitable and a plaque might be placed upon it to identify any heritage significance for the site. In the event of further removals over time, an extension of the wall would be considered.
- City officials noted a brick wall, while potentially screening the pedestrian/street view of an interior parking lot, would not, in itself, address the street façade gap left by the removal of a two and one half storey building. Noting other nearby downtown precedents such as the caliber of the 4-season landscaping along the Ridout Street frontage of Copps' and the decorative metalwork incorporated along the Richmond Street west side of the pedestrian approach to the CN Railway viaduct, Staff suggested a combination of built and landscaping elements with greater height and decorative /creative expression would be more effective in addressing a streetscape gap left by a potential demolition or demolitions.
- City officials indicated that the removal of the rear addition of the building at 13-15 York could be accepted as that portion did not have architectural heritage significance.
- Concept computer generated images provided by the City showed two options – the removal of one building, and of two buildings, both retaining the corner properties – and a possible method of addressing these removals with landscaping and walls. These

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were presented as concept drawings serving to illustrate the streetscape concerns. (Appendix 4)

- In the course of the discussion, the applicant mentioned a possible willingness, subject to further consideration, to donate the heritage building to the city upon receipt of a tax credit.
- The meeting concluded with an indication that a report would be prepared for the September 12th meeting and shared with the applicant and Mr. Spriet in advance. The time span for the consideration of the demolition would remain suspended until September 12, at least.

Planning Application Requirement

Communication with Building and Zoning officials confirmed staff's question as to whether the proposed traffic flow through the site as described in the concept drawing, would require a *Planning Act* application. It was identified that the existing Copps Buildall business operation is an existing legal non-conforming land use which cannot expand its parking area as of right onto the abutting lands. It was further suggested that a Zoning by-law amendment is the most appropriate amendment since the intent is to add a parking use to the Zone.

Streetscape / Opportunities / Options

In terms of Council's direction to discuss possible streetscape opportunities and options for the subject property, staff has identified several options:

Option 1- Removal of the Building at 13-15 York Street

With respect to the streetscape, the removal of this property would leave a gap in the existing streetscape on the street facing frontage on the western half of the block. A wall / landscaping feature might be used to screen the views into the interior. (Concept drawing 1) While this option would satisfy the owner's economic concerns, such an option would also see the loss of an identified heritage resource. It may hasten the further removal of other properties in the future, especially the property at the corner and raise the question as to whether the subsequent gaps could see an extension of a brick wall.

Option 2- Removal of the structures at both 13-15 York and 17 York

The owner has indicated that in the near future the building at 17 York (not a listed heritage property) might be vacated and eventually be removed to facilitate the expansion of the existing Copps' business. Depending on a proposed use, future development will affect the streetscape and will need to be evaluated at a future site plan discussion. Removal of the building to facilitate expanded interior parking on the site will require remediation along the streetscape. (Concept drawing 2)

Option 3- Removal of all existing buildings

It has been stated that the corner property (7-9-11) is not under consideration for removal. A logical consequence of the removal of the adjacent properties is the greater likelihood of the loss of the structure, an identified heritage resource, currently "anchoring" the corner. The removal of all properties would create the need for a significant effort to address the streetscape as it is an important vehicular and pedestrian entry into the downtown. (Concept Drawing 3)

Option 4 – Retention of the Building at 13-15 York

This option, although not desired by the owner for economic reasons, would see the retention of a heritage resource and perhaps its designation either individually or as part of a downtown heritage conservation district. It would provide an opportunity for the existing building to be reused either by the current owner or by a new party if one can be found and the owner being willing to consent to a donation or sale of the property. Such an option




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would provide a stronger anchor for the corner property in terms of both heritage structures remaining an integral part of the streetscape. It should be noted that the retention of all of these structures will not prevent the owner from addressing his traffic flow needs as he desires assuming he has the required zoning approval.

Recommendations

The owner requires a rezoning application to accommodate his proposed use on the adjacent site but that reuse, as described, does not require the removal of any properties. The removal of one, or more, properties will have an impact on the streetscape. Furthermore, the Applicant's conceptual site plan shows that demolition is not required to accommodate the new accessory parking lot and loading facilities. At this time, it is recommended that the demolition request currently under consideration be denied, pending the completion of a rezoning application, further discussion with urban design staff and the owner with respect to streetscape issues, and efforts to investigate or promote the sale or donation of the property, including any necessary consents, to allow for its rehabilitation and reuse. With respect to the rezoning application, staff should be directed to work with the owner to facilitate the implementation of his business plan. A denial of the request to demolish the property at this point does not prevent the owner from reapplying at a later date, and provides the decision required by Council within the time frame required. With the consent of the owner to withdraw the present application, a denial of the request to demolish would not be needed. Council may also recommend deferral of the request to designate the property until a future date.

PREPARED BY:	SUBMITTED BY:
	
D. MENARD HERITAGE PLANNER CITY PLANNING AND RESEARCH	G. BARRETT, AICP MANAGER CITY PLANNING & RESEARCH
RECOMMENDED BY:	
	
J. M. FLEMING, MICP, RPP DIRECTOR, LAND USE PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER	

August 31, 2011

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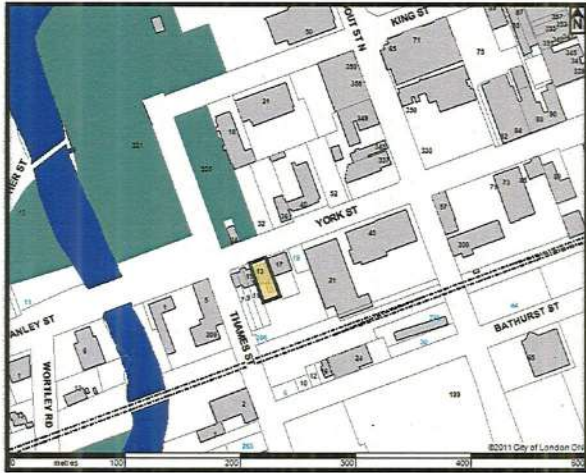
Attach:

- Appendix 1-Location and Photo -13-15 York Street
- Appendix 2- Draft Statement of Significance
- Appendix 3- Proposed Concept Site Plan from Owner
- Appendix 4- Building Condition Report from Owner
- Appendix 5-Site Concepts

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Appendix 1 – Location map and Photo – 13-15 York Street



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Appendix 2: Draft Statement of Significance -13-15 York Street

13-15 York Street is a two-storey white brick double-house located on the south side of York Street east of Thames Street and listed as Plan Nil, Lot 25, SW York in the City of London. There is evidence that the building was originally identified at the municipal address of 7 York Street.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Interest or Value

13-15 York Street is recommended for designation under Section 29 (1), Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* as a property of cultural heritage value. The building exhibits strong Georgian style architectural influences and may be dated to 1874 or earlier. The building has been primarily residential until late in the twentieth century. An early resident was Thomas Stevens, first noted circa 1880 as a plumber and brass worker who went on to found the Empire Manufacturing Company (EMCO), in 1903. Now Emco-Wheaton, the industry has been significant in London’s economic development.

Description of Cultural Heritage Attributes

The exterior architectural elements of this Georgian influenced double-house worthy preservation include:

- Uncoursed rubble stone foundation
- Low pitched gable roof with central chimney
- Bilateral symmetry on the front façade
- The first storey contains a single window (replaced but using original opening) and door with simple transom and side lights (replaced but using the original opening) duplicated on the eastern and western house sections
- The upper storey contains two single windows (replaced but using original openings) duplicated on the eastern and western halves of the front elevation
- Wooden window sills on all windows are visually supported by double width protruding brickwork under either side
- Brick voussoirs cap the openings for each window and door
- The features of the front façade are framed by brick pilasters on either end and in the centre which are complimented by a protruding brickwork course separating the upper and lower storeys and a simple, unadorned brickwork frieze under the roofline above the second storey
- The exterior pilasters exhibit corbelling near the roofline
- There are visible tie bars between the upper and lower storeys when viewed from the western side providing stability for a building that was perhaps originally located on marshy land
- Behind the main building is a small extension which is visible in early insurance maps but has probably been replaced over the years

Interior Elements of note include

- Uncoursed rubble stone is highly visible in the unfinished basement area
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Contextual Elements

- Together with 7-11 York, 13-15 York forms a 19th century anchor for the corner of Thames Street and York Street as one enters downtown London from the west and shows early residential influences before approaching the warehousing and commercial buildings further to the east.

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Appendix 4: Building Condition Report from Owner's Consultant

INTRODUCTION

Our Firm was requested by Steve Copp of Copp's Downtown to investigate the existing building known as 13 and 15 York Street, to assess its condition and the merits of refurbishing and restoring the building with a view to making it financially viable given its location and surrounding principal uses.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Attached is an excerpt from a private compilation of historic buildings in downtown London. As you can see the building was built circa 1850 and the current address of 15 York Street was formerly 7 York Street, the home of Thomas A. Stevens (circa 1880), a plumber and brass worker who created Empire Brass which eventually became E.M.C.O. in 1903. This semi-detached home was typical of many that once dotted the downtown area.

PHYSICAL INSPECTION

Both the interior and exterior of the building known as 13 and 15 York Street was inspected. The present interior bears no relation to the residential purpose for which they were constructed. It appears that they were converted to offices some years ago. The offices are industrial in appearance and nature lack any curb appeal and would be considered less than desirable. The areas are cut up and modified from residential to office use with minimal washroom facilities and limited handicap accessibility. In their present state they are not appealing. From a structural viewpoint there does not appear to be any major issues. The building has a small basement area which houses a furnace; however, the bulk of the area is basically a crawl space. Most of the interior structural features are hidden by plaster and drywall.

The exterior of the building as shown on the attached photographs has only one façade which could be considered to have any architectural merit and even that is a matter of taste. The back and two sides of the structure have absolutely no merit from any perspective, being neither historically or architecturally significant.

The front appearance shows a side by side duplex each with three double hung windows and a front entrance door with narrow side lites and a small transom above. The entrance doorway transom and side lite is the only feature that could be described as having any architectural merit.

From a structural perspective the building has stood for some 160+/- years. The roof has a slight dip in the centre of each unit between the outside bearing walls and the interior bearing wall separating the two units. The sag is not unusual. There are areas of the exterior walls which have shown signs of distress and movement, particularly the brick over the entrance doorway and the window above it. The movement has been both vertical and horizontal but not alarmingly so. There is no doubt the remedial work would be required. The ~~attached~~ photographs show conditions on site.

At the second floor height the structure as part of the original design, was reinforced with tension rods running the full width of the frontage and at the rear of the structure. These tension rods are designed to literally hold the building together, preventing the walls from separating from the floor structure. The ~~attached~~ photograph shows one of the ties (left rear corner) to be under undue stress, causing the tie end to crush the existing brick. For some reason there is a structural issue here which would need to be investigated and repairs made.

It is anticipated and probable, that the restoration work required will be expensive since there are very few trades familiar with restoration work. Even after restoration the finished product lacks any architectural appeal and is hardly historically significant.

FUTURE USE POTENTIAL

Unless a building can be made commercially viable, its demise is only a matter of time. The building is located in an older mixed use commercial and industrial area. Its only potential future use is commercial. To attempt to bring the building up to residential standards with universal appeal would be too expensive, let alone the fact that the location has no residential appeal. Commercial use as offices is a logical use. Commercial use as a retail shop would require the modification of the only wall which could be considered to have some historical merit. One is only limited by one's imagination. The appeal of third class offices is limited at best, having slightly more appeal than second storey offices over retail stores below. Major renovations and restoration for office use would be a labour of love with minimal financial return. The location is simply just not appealing or desirable in today's market. Thirty to forty years ago it was more the norm.

CONCLUSION

We see no merit in restoring 13-15 York Street. Financially it would be a disaster; historically it has some significance; architecturally it is a nothing. Take a picture and put it in the archives. The area is better suited to total redevelopment at the Fork of the Thames River.

Respectfully submitted,

A. M. Spriet, P. Eng., OAA

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Appendix 5: Site Concepts



Concept Drawing 1



Concept Drawing 2



Concept Drawing 3