

372 Cedar Avenue  
London, Ontario, N6G 1E7

November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012

Mr. Charles Parker  
Senior Planner – City Planning & Research  
The Corporation of the City of London, Planning Division  
206 Dundas Street  
London, Ontario, N6A 4L9

Dear Mr. Parker:

**Re: File 11 NEI e b – Beaufort/Irwin/Gunn/Saunby/Essex Street  
BIGS Neighbourhood Plan**

Thank you for your time recently and also for providing extra copies of relevant documents for distribution to neighbours.

As a long-time resident (40 years) of Cedar Avenue, I wish to express my deep concern about the proposed intensification of this particular area and about the “Urban Village” concept in general.

I happily brought up my family here, now grown and flown, and am still happily living here and intend to be here for a while yet. I love this area and this unique street and cannot understand why it would be lumped in with an aggressive development plan. Cedar Avenue is a hidden gem of varied single family housing types from the 1950's, substantially built with lots of “green breathing space”. It has already absorbed considerable intensification – there are three absentee landlord student rental properties on the street itself, scattered among the owner occupied residences; there is a large (six buildings) student townhouse development at the corner of Cedar Avenue and Western Road (Western Pines, formerly Cobblestone Court) which directly backs onto my property and that of four other neighbours; and there are three student “red bricks” on the other corner of Cedar and Western. Enough already! Our neighbourhood can certainly not be accused of “nimbyism”. Please help us to protect and preserve a special place, not destroy it.

As I indicated at our meeting, the list of owner/occupiers for Cedar Avenue is inaccurate and consequently misleading (page 63). All four houses which back onto the river are owner/occupied, as is the house at the corner of Cedar and Wharncliffe N. There are also “orange dots” missing along Wharncliffe N. When all these dots are included, it will give a very different picture of the make-up of the neighbourhood.

In the planning documents, there is a reference to “diverse residential neighbourhoods” (Executive Summary 1st para) which I would presume would include single family; “Single family and converted dwellings are also among the potential housing types ...”

(item 3.3 page 22). In the Recommendations and Directions section in the City Planning document, page 4, it states “The Plan provides opportunities for intensification but recognizes different character areas” (item 3) and “Provides for a diversity of dwelling types.” (item 5). Yet in the Detailed Urban Village Design Plan (page 20) and Future Land Use (page 21), there is NO provision for single family ANYWHERE in the study area. The lowest density is duplex. For Cedar Avenue it appears that zoning would be for Rowhouses and Fourplexes. This is simply unacceptable and I request that the zoning remain as it is at present.

Over the years I have welcomed many students into my home, so I feel that I do have some practical experience in the matter. I have offered accommodation to undergraduate, graduate, international, as well as professional schools students and have found them to be delightful and considerate. They only leave when they graduate. My experience has been positive. Absentee landlords may not be so fortunate and I see this as a major problem in any intensification where there is no controlled management.

I have also observed recently an increase in the number of “For Rent” signs which have appeared in this area. This is particularly unusual for this time in the academic year. They cover all housing types - student rental houses, the Oak Park apartment complex on Western Road, even one of the “red bricks” on Cedar Avenue. Western University itself is increasing its residence capacity with the new building on Sarnia Road and the new residence at Brescia, both scheduled to open in Fall 2013. With the new rental buildings already underway in the study area, especially the large privately owned “residence-type” building opened this Fall on Wharncliffe opposite McDonald Avenue and another similar building under construction immediately behind it - this leads me to consider an economic fact. Excess of supply over demand would not be in the interests of any landlords in this area – small, medium or large – or of the permanent residents. We are not the only game in town. Students have many other choices on campus itself, in other near-campus neighbourhoods, and beyond.

I worked at Western for most of my career, so I understand there is a push to increase graduate and international enrolment. These students will have specific requirements. At this stage of their studies they are serious and focused, preferring one-bedroom or two-bedroom small and inexpensive units which offer a quiet place to study. Students with families will prefer a safe, child-friendly environment, similar to what Western already offers at Platt’s Lane Estates.

As for the whole “Urban Village” concept, I am skeptical. The BIGS plan is obviously student oriented and developer friendly. For a community to work, it must be balanced. Students are transient, busy with their studies and other activities, and I very much doubt that they would have either the time or the inclination to invest in what to many is just a convenient place to stay while at Western. I am not including the married students population in this observation as I do believe that Platt’s Lane does have a sense of community as many are resident for two or three years at a time. For an example of real

community involvement, I would suggest looking at Wortley Village, a successful urban village with mixed housing stock, heritage features, vibrant main street with commercial and artisan businesses, a diversified and interested population where the majority are permanent residents, many with young families.

Another concern has to do with the proposed widening of the arterial road to four lanes in 2020. This has been talked about for as long as I can remember. Until the CP railway underpass at Wharncliffe north of Oxford is widened, it is senseless to consider widening the road. CP is notoriously uninterested in this kind of expensive reconstruction which provides little or no benefit to the railway. This certainly is a challenge.

My final comments concerns the process. I attended both community participation meetings in May and June and I am extremely surprised, in view of the statistical charts presented on page 77 regarding density, that the Village Model was selected to be fleshed out into a draft plan. If one examines the statistics, it is clear that the majority favoured the "Preserve Model". This model did not mean keeping the status quo, but rather did allow for considerable intensification along the arterial roads as well as Essex Street and the Platt's Lane area, while "backing off" on the other side streets which were feeling the pressure of uncontrolled development. I ask the question now, why was this preferred direction not followed?

My last comment is perhaps the most important and obvious one as it concerns the students themselves. Has there been or will there be a mechanism for gauging student interest and gaining input into such a grand sweeping project which directly involves them? In other words – "If you build it, will they come?"

I plan to be at the meeting on November 26<sup>th</sup>, along with other interested neighbours, and I look forward to having my concerns and questions addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Scott