

39-250 North Centre Rd

London On N6G 5A4

Chair and Members of PEC

City of London

Dear Members of the PEC Committee:

**OZ 9157 435-451 Ridout St North**

I am writing today to express my dismay at this Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments for the above properties.

I am mainly concerned with the detriment to the historic properties – often named ‘Bankers’ Row’ - that will be in front of this huge, inappropriate, badly-sited and incongruous proposed development.

This, as you know, is the site of London’s first development as a city and these buildings, along with the adjacent, and almost adjacent, properties of the Old Courthouse and Gaol, and London’s oldest historic home at Eldon House, along with the Forks of the Thames itself, constitute the historic heart of London. The buildings of Bankers’ Row are not slated to demolished, but their setting, viewscape, and ambience will be diminished and trivialized by being totally overwhelmed by this modernistic 40-storey tower.

These buildings are protected by being Designated as part of the Downtown Heritage Conservation District and individually Designated (Part V and Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* respectively) and are also a National Historic Site. All of these designating documents cite the importance of the historic context, architecture, streets, landscapes and other physical and visual features. The DHCD additionally ranks the site as ‘A’ and ‘H’ which requires the most stringent protection. New construction should ‘respect history’ and character-defining elements should be conserved and should be ‘physically and visually compatible’.

Thus the buildings may remain but the tower will still be a visual barrier. The height and mass of the overscaled development (the 40-storey tower would be the highest in London – is this really the right place for this?) will obstruct views and diminish any sense of an important historic streetscape. In the past these Bankers’ Row buildings have been the focus of conservation efforts and are of immense importance to the people of London as living, tangible and visual proofs of their history.

In addition much effort has been applied to connecting London’s Downtown to the river – to obliterate the view and connectedness in this overbearing way would be to deny Londoners their enjoyment of their own history.

This proposed development will abut directly onto the gardens at Eldon House, very definitely harming views, landscape and any sense of history or ‘special place’.

Because the site is so restricted as to footprint (being right up to the Flood Plain line – surely UTRCA have something to say about this?) it has to compensate by being much too high – completely taking over and ‘owning’ the view that should belong to all of us.

And I’m pretty sure this will not constitute ‘affordable housing’.

To sum up: *this is not the place for this!*

Thank you for your attention.

Maggie Whalley