

From: Mark Tovey

Sent: Wednesday, June 29, 2022 9:00 AM

To: Council Agenda <councilagenda@london.ca>; PEC <pec@london.ca>; clerk@london.ca

Subject: [EXTERNAL] The Kent Brewery building at 197 Ann Street and the Brewer's House at 183 Ann Street

"Along with back bacon, winter and hockey, beer practically defines Canada." — Stephen Beaumont

Dear Mayor and Members of London City Council,

I give permission for this to appear on the Council Agenda.

Please keep in mind that this developer (York Developments) is the same developer that owns the Middlesex County Courthouse building. This is not incidental, but material to the circumstance. If Council sends the signal that a developer can have their way with an 1859 brewery, why would that developer not feel that they can similarly have their way with the Courthouse?

A brewery, especially a brewery in Canada, is not simply another industrial building. There is a reason that we care about breweries. Beer is an important part of the Canadian identity.

The early brewing history of London ON in particular is one of the most important in Canada. The Kent Brewery building, as a unique artifact of that time and place, helps to tell that story. This building is important not simply because it is rare, but because of the national importance of the brewing history of London, ON.

And it has a story to tell. The Kent Brewery is unusually well documented, in both regional and national newspapers.

There has been historical interest in the Kent Brewery, and this brewery building, long before this property was up for development.

Indeed, the reason for strong heritage pushback on this file has been *because* there has been such a wealth of historical information written up long before there was any thought of development.

These properties have been known to local historians since a comprehensive study of London-Middlesex brewing history was published in the year 2000 (Glen Phillips' *On Tap: The Odyssey of Beer and Brewing in Victorian London-Middlesex*), which devoted pages of information to the history of the Kent Brewery, and further pages on the history of the brewers themselves. Phillips noted that "the main [Kent Brewery] building is the largest surviving brewery artifact from Victorian London-Middlesex."

The brewery building at 197 Ann Street and the Brewer's House at 183 Ann Street were listed in London's inventory of heritage properties long before the current development. In 2017, that listing prompted a detailed Evaluation of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest for 197 Ann Street conducted by Hayley Caldwell, concluding that the building merited designation. Caldwell's report was written before the property was being considered for development.

Don't let its humble appearance fool you, or bias you towards thinking that this building is insignificant. The case for its retention could not be stronger.

This is one of the oldest industrial buildings in the City, the oldest remaining brewing artifact in London-Middlesex, and one of the oldest intact purpose-built breweries in Canada. There are only a handful of intact mid-19th-Century brewery buildings in the United States. All of those are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Although the building has been designated, the plan before you is little changed from the developer's last plan. The building now proposed is slightly bigger than before. The reduction of height on St. George Street did not meet the four stories required. Don't be tempted to see six stories as a reasonable compromise. For a comfortable transition to street level, six stories feels very different to four stories.

A hydrogeological study is essential. If you look at old maps, you will see that this is being proposed on the site of a former swamp.

Please don't accept the developer's plan simply because you are tired of seeing a similar plan come back to you again and again.

Instead, please support the staff recommendation to reject the developer's current proposal, but not in the spirit of killing the project. As staff have shown, there is an honourable compromise to be had here, one that respects heritage, policy, and technical concerns, as well the developer's desire to create an interesting and profitable structure.

And you have the power to ask for it.

Sincerely,

Mark Tovey, PhD