

August 11, 2013

To: Mr. Bud Polhill, Chair Planning Committee, S. White, N. Branscombe, P. Hubert, D. Henderson

Re: Application by Pen Equity re Rezoning Dingman Dr. & Wellington Rd.

It is my understanding that there has been an application for re-zoning for a 9.88-acre parcel of land for a Retail Mall, which, if approved by Council, would result in the loss of a woodland and wetland eco-system in South London. It is also my understanding that even the proponent's consultant identified the area as meeting the City of London's criteria as being a "Significant Woodland".

The Official Plan Policy on identification of "Significant Woodlands" was tested and survived appeals all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Since that Policy would apply to this woodlot, under what grounds could cutting down all those trees ever be approved? At a very minimum, the City's Official Plan (Section 15.5.2(b)) requires that the Applicant complete an Environmental Impact Study.

If Council does not follow its own Official Plan, and enforce that requirement, anyone would have a clear case against the Municipality before the Ontario Municipal Board.

London currently has retail stores closing – we do not need more retail development on this scale. It becomes an "Economic Blight" on our Cityscape which affects all aspects of Community Life. The latest closure is the RONA store on Commissioners Rd. East (accessible via 401 at the Highbury South exit) – that store will be closed in October of this year; and 80 of the employees will be laid off with no opportunity to transfer to any other RONA location (according to one person with whom I spoke personally.) The phrase "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul" does come to mind when large retail malls often result in loss of some of the smaller retail stores or even closure of "big box" competitors.

There is already some unused land space in that Mall, and now there will be one empty "big box store" there as well. Just over the bridge on Commissioners Rd. (East of Highbury near Pond Mills) is another very large Retail Mall (the centre of which was demolished some time ago due to empty stores) which now has a large empty department store (previous Zellers). Of course this land has already been serviced and is currently available well within the Urban Boundary of the City of London. As well, there is a strip mall a bit further west on Commiissioners with boarded-up storefronts and much litter.)

The Policies of the Official Plan in the matter of the Natural Heritage Systems are crystal clear. Any decision by Council in favour of this rezoning for Commercial Retail space may be contrary to the Provincial Policy Statement regarding draining of the wetland and clearing the trees.

Also, The Provincial Policy Statement expresses strong preferences in their Planning Policies regarding rezoning for retail where empty commercial spaces already exist.

Thank you for considering my letter. Please add it to the Agenda for the next Planning Committee Meeting when this proposal will be considered.

Please vote "NO" to this rezoning proposal. I would appreciate notification of any action taken by Planning Committee or Council on this matter.

Sincerely,

Carol Richardson