

December 10, 2024, Planning Council

Re: 8 Mitchell Street Proposed Zoning By-law Amendment File OZS24-011, 2024-445

Mayor and Members of Council:

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed development in our neighborhood at 8 Mitchell Street. While I support the use of this site for multi-unit housing, I believe that this project would have a detrimental impact on our community due to its unsympathetic design and additional pressure on an already stressed parking situation in our neighbourhood. **I believe it serves everyone's interests to send the current proposal back for reconsideration** and further planning.

I have lived in downtown Guelph for the past 35 years and was delighted last spring to find a house for sale on Arthur St N. that would allow me to treasure life in the beautiful Wolfond Park neighbourhood. Our home, an original cottage, was built in approximately 1880 and we are keen to retain its historic charm. I was delighted by the quiet, nature-filled environment and just love the historic character that has to date been primarily preserved.

Before any new developments happen in this neighbourhood, I want to make sure they fit with this historic character and do not damage any of the beautiful mature trees. The proposed units are not in keeping with the character of our historic neighborhood in several ways. The proposed site plan shows projecting garages and parking that dominates the front yard. Our neighbourhood has a special character that features buildings close to the sidewalk with side and rear driveways. We respectfully request that parking for the new development be contained and expanded into the side and rear yards of these units, avoiding the appearance of sub-urban driveways in our historic area.

I think there are better ways to increase density and provide much needed affordable housing for the downtown area. A wide, low-rising building with underground or side parking, coupled with a generous front garden, could achieve higher density while preserving the neighbourhood's character.

Parking is also a huge concern for this neighbourhood with many residents already struggling to find parking. Adding so many new residents without providing adequate parking is just a disaster in waiting. While the proposal meets minimum parking requirements according to the zoning by-law, it does not consider the heightened pressure it would place on an already over-taxed street parking. Properties directly adjacent the proposed development have no private parking, given their historic nature, and rely on street parking that is in demand not just by these residents, but those visiting the downtown and businesses on Eramosa Road. The addition of four parking spots to the rear of the units will not be enough to provide parking for the new residents and I request that alternative solutions be considered. Restricted on-street parking for residents should also be a tool considered by the City of Guelph to help alleviate parking concerns.

While elevation drawings are not available, I have seen other proposals by the same developers and am concerned that their buildings will be cookie-cutter developments that have not responded to the existing character of our neighbourhood. While the zoning by-law may not address the aesthetics of a proposed development, as there is no requirement for site plan for this property and therefore no other opportunities to participate in a public process regarding this development, I request that more information about the building designs be shared with the community with the intention to arrive at a design that contributes to the character of our neighbourhood, rather than detracting from it.

I believe that development on this property can be accomplished in a manner that works well for the community as well as providing increased density. The neighbourhood is willing to work with the developers to arrive at collaborative solutions to the issues raised.

I request that Guelph City Council defer the decision on this application to a future date to provide time for the developer and community to work together, rather than placing us in an adversarial position at the Ontario Land Tribunal. And to provide clear and consistent guidance for future development and to conserve our neighbourhood's unique character, **I support the undertaking of a heritage conservation district study for the Wolfond Park area and the passing of the study area by-law to restrict development for one year.** Please see below for my recommendations regarding this matter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marnie Benson and Pearl Van Geest

■ Arthur St. N.

Recommendations to Council:

1. That Guelph City Council defer the decision regarding the 8 Mitchell Street Proposed Zoning By-law Amendment File OZS24-011, 2024-445 and request the applicant work with the community to consider alternative solutions to issues related to building design, tree preservation and parking; and
2. That Guelph City Council restrict on-street parking on Arthur Street North to residents with permits only; and
3. That Guelph City Council undertake a heritage conservation district study to be led and funded by the Wolfond Resident's Association; and
4. That, in accordance with Section 40.1 (1) of the Ontario Heritage Act, Guelph City Council pass a by-law to designate the area bounded by Delhi Street, Eramosa Road, the Speed River and Spring Street/the Homewood property as a heritage conservation study area for a period of one year in order to halt the erection, demolition or removal of buildings or structures in the heritage conservation study area.