

Planning and Building Services
City of Guelph
1 Carden Street
Guelph, ON N1H 3A1

Attn: Eric Rempel

As long-time Guelph residents whose property backs onto the lot at 105 Elmira Road North, we are writing to provide comments on File No. OZS25-003, legal description Plan 61M-68, Block 180, City of Guelph. An application has been made for an Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment to increase the zoning density of the property so that a 126-unit apartment building can be constructed. Our review of the documents, as well as conversations with many neighbours in the area, have identified the following concerns.

1. Residents who bought properties close to the site scrimped and saved for years to be able to buy a house in a quiet, family-centered neighbourhood of single family dwellings. Those who bought properties close to the site did their due diligence and bought their residence based on the fact that the site was designated Neighbourhood Commercial Center with a restriction in building height. Many would not have bought their property if they had known that the site would one day be designated with a different zoning classification allowing for a six-storey apartment building and the influx of hundreds of neighbours into a quiet area. The zoning change is unfair to current residents who bought their properties based on the current zoning of the site.
2. The change of zoning will result in a loss of desirability and value of surrounding properties. Many impacted properties will experience significantly decreased privacy and enjoyment of their back yard and/or front yard. Properties directly facing or backing onto the property will have their views blocked by a large apartment building. They will also experience increased noise and traffic volumes from cars entering and leaving the parking lot, snow plowing of the parking lot in the winter, garbage truck pick up, noise from a significantly increased concentration of neighbours, etc. No amount of landscaping buffer, fences, trees, etc. will restore privacy to the affected properties from a six-storey building. How will the City of Guelph compensate those home owners who will experience decreased property values as a result of this change of zoning? Will property taxes reflect changed property values?
3. The Planning Justification Report indicates a parking reduction request from 163 spaces (including 33 visitor spaces) to 144 spaces (including 8 visitor spaces). This is a significant reduction in parking that is likely to result in vehicle overflow onto surrounding streets.
4. The Planning Justification Report addresses visual screening of the parking lot from surrounding areas. As stated in the report, the parking lot will be effectively screened from cars driving along Willow or Elmira Road by the building itself. These cars driving by would have only a fleeting visual of the parking lot. For properties that back onto the site, whose permanent views will be a parking lot, a three meter landscaping buffer is proposed. The proposal indicates that many current mature trees will be removed. Will an effort be made to plant mature trees and plants in the landscaping buffer (small plants will take many years to mature before they will be an effective visual barrier to the apartment building/parking lot)? Will current residents have any input on what types of plants are planted between their property and the building/parking lot?

5. Will there be lights in the parking lot that will shine into neighbouring properties? If so, what measures will be taken to prevent excessive nighttime light exposure? Many homes have bedroom windows facing the proposed complex.
6. Properties near the facility will be subject to exhaust fumes from vehicles in the parking lot.
7. A large paved parking area will generate much heat in the summer months. An underground parking garage would alleviate this concern, as well as concerns 3, 4, 5 and 6 above, and allow for more green area on the site.
8. What will be the impact of increased traffic at this site that is so close to an elementary school? There is already much traffic congestion during school pick up and drop off. A 126-unit apartment building will significantly add to this congestion, putting children at risk.

This proposed project is looking for several specialized zoning regulations, including a 30% increase in the number of units allowed per hectare (increased from 100 to 130), a large decrease in the number of parking spots required, a much smaller common amenity space based on number of units, an increase in allowable angular plane measurements, etc. It seems that no specialized zoning regulations would be required if the apartment building was a floor or two shorter. With fewer floors in the apartment building, there would be fewer units, and therefore the requirement regarding units allowed per hectare would be met. There would be no specialized parking regulations required, the common amenity space would better reflect the number of units in the building, and no specialized regulations would be required with regard to angular plane measurements.

Not only that, fewer floors in the apartment building would help to address several concerns of local residents. Parking would be adequate, so there would be no fear of overflow of cars onto neighbourhood streets. For properties backing onto the site, it would be easier to screen the view of a lower-rise apartment building with trees. Although there would still be a large influx of neighbours into a quiet area, there would be fewer. Although traffic congestion, especially during school drop off and pick up times, would still be worse, it wouldn't be as bad as with a larger building. The privacy of neighbouring properties would improve slightly.

We understand the need for increased housing in Guelph and support housing initiatives. Given the location of this lot, the character of the surrounding area, and the number of site-specific zoning regulations requested, it seems the proposed project is slightly too big to fit on the site. We feel a smaller-rise building, or some townhouses, would blend in better with the surrounding properties, while still providing needed housing units.

Thank you for considering these concerns.

Dan and Cheryl Madill
■ McLachlan Place
Guelph, ON