

COMMUNICATION – C22
ITEM 4
Committee of the Whole (Public Meeting)
April 7, 2021

From: Adelina Fisher [REDACTED] >
Sent: Tuesday, April 06, 2021 2:27 PM
To: Clerks@vaughan.ca
Subject: [External] comments for committee of the whole April 7

This is in regard to OP.17.006 and Z.17.015 which is set to be commented on during the April 7, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting.

I am submitting this document for Lawrence, and he asked to give this additional comment directed to the city and not per se for the meeting.

Please understand that all I was furnished with was a two page announcement of which one page was a very low detail black and white map. As I am unable to go to the city hall to see more details (because it is closed to residents) or go to the local library where a computer with internet access would have been available to me, this is all I have to go on. I did request by phone on the week of March 22 that more details be sent to me by mail (and I was told they would be sent), but as of today (two weeks later) I still have not received them.

This is in regard to Official Plan Amendment File OP.17.006 and Zoning By-law Amendment File Z.17.05 for a Committee of the Whole Meeting on April 7, 2021.

My main focus is on the livability of the proposed structure for the people living in it as well as for the people living in the immediate vicinity. Creating a building in which a developer can sell all the units within it is one thing (people buy what is available, which often is not the same as what they want) – creating a building that is pleasant to live in for the occupants and their neighbors over the coming decades is another.

Point 1: Road widening taken into account

I am very happy to see that now the plan for the building does take into account possible future Highway 7 road widening. I would like to confirm that the city engineers that would actually be responsible for this widening are the ones that have given the location of the edge of the road we are now seeing in the plans. It might not be so simple to just add one lane to each side of the current road and perhaps 1.5 lanes might be needed to be added to the north side of Highway 7 and only 0.5 lanes on the south side and I want to make sure this has been figured out by the engineers prior to any blessing of a potential building. This assumes that you have given up on the bus express way in which case 4 lanes (not 2) would need to be added.

I have also noted that the setbacks of newly built buildings (Highway 7 and Wigwoss) as well as older constructions are substantial (7-8 meters) which allows for green space and trees to be planted; will this setback also be used for this new building from Highway 7? After all who wants a major roadway to be just 2 meters away from your building?

Point 2: Front facade of the building

The building seems to be 44m long with 42m of it being very close to the sidewalk. There seems to be very little green space (other than the landscape planter) and not even enough space to plant a tree in the front of the building which I find very sad and depressing. Two driveway access points, the primary street access and a bicycle rack take up 20+ meters of the frontage which leaves very little room for anything green. Just the scale of the building does not fit in with what is on Wallace St once you pass south of the initial buildings close Woodbridge Ave. It will dramatically change the character of the street.

I also find it a bit odd that the refuse and recycling bins are put out onto the front corner of the building so anyone walking down Wallace St or are walking on the north side of Highway 7 are presented with this view and potential odor. This needs to be much better addressed.

I don't understand the bicycle racks. For 15 years I actually rode a bicycle to work or walked when the weather made it too dangerous to ride. I can tell you I would never chain my bicycle outside my house for it to be in the elements during the night or be tampered with or stolen – it was always brought inside. This means the racks outside are meant for people visiting this building who took a bicycle to the location – is this really needed?

Point 3: Area between west side of building and retaining wall

Having two high vertical structures (the actual back side of the building and a retaining wall) in close proximity to each other can create an echoing of any sound which makes it seem much louder and/or sounds are funneled and amplified along its length (think of an alley). This is a problem for this building in two ways.

Canada Pacific Railway is located behind this structure and is actually on a hill (which brings the requirement of the gabion basket retaining wall to keep the hill from shifting). Trains tend to produce a lot of noise as they move and the sound is always louder if you can physically see the wheels as it goes past. The problem here is that as you make the building taller and taller you become more likely to directly be able to see the entire train and get the full impact of its noise. A lower building would allow the angle to be greater and as such you would see the top part of the train but the wheels would be blocked and the sound hitting the structure is greatly reduced. At ~18m high has the building gotten too tall and now has this problem? It is made worse for everyone since the retaining wall will reflect the sound back to the building and then it reverberates back and forth till it dissipates so all floors are affected not just the top levels.

The back of the building (west side) is located right before a large hill and vehicles tend to accelerate at that point to help on going up Highway 7. Unfortunately this creates a bit more road noise than would be expected if the road was flat. The alley that is being created (the area between the vertical retaining wall and the back of the building) will amplify and funnel this sound along its length. This will increase the road noise for the people with units along the back of the proposed structure, and even worse will funnel the sound to the current residents which live north of the proposed building (which seems quite unfair).

Some of these problems might be able to be mitigated by having the upper floors of the building slanted away from the railroad tracks to reflect this noise upward (in the style of a traditional slanted roof on most houses) and/or by filling the area between the retaining wall and the building with deciduous and coniferous trees. Having east-west running fences on the both the north side of the property as well as the south will help with the road noise from getting in and also add another layer so any noise does not adversely affect residents north of the building. Realistically the train noise is best dealt with by not allowing the property to get too high.

Currently I see no plans for any tree planting (is it even possible given constraints from CPR?) in the back of the building or any noise blocking/deadening fences which needs to be addressed.

Point 4: Parking

Four visiting parking spaces seem to be incredibly small number for 27 units (I guess the plan is to have only people living here which are very unsocial?). I understand that people can park on the east side of the Wallace St as well, but since you are not allowed to park on the street during the night that overflow visitor parking only works during the day. The number of visitor parking spaces needs to be increased.

The number of actual parking spaces for the residents also seems abnormally low and will create problems for the residents. One parking space for every bed room in the building already would seem to be way too few and they are not offering close to those numbers (something closer to 1.25 parking spaces per bed room might start to make sense). Having someone magically wave their hands and say people will take mass transit or every couple who purchase into the building will be fabulously happy to only have one car between the two of them to explain away the incredibly low number of parking spaces is short sighted and does not help with the livability of the building for the residents.

A substantial increase in residential parking spaces needs to take place (or a reduction in the number of units/bedrooms being built which could also solve the problem).

Point 5: Future proofing parking

Like it or not, electric vehicles are coming. Some automobile manufactures have pledge to sell only electric vehicles by 2030 while others have pledge to have 50% of their offerings be electric by that date. As we get closer to 2030 it will become harder and harder to purchase petrol vehicles and by 2040 it might be nearly impossible.

Any residential building being planned should take into account these upcoming changes since it really is not that far in the future. The most natural (and easiest) place to charge an electric vehicle is at a person's home where they can be charged at night (when electricity is cheapest), so every parking spot needs to have the capability of having a charger installed. If charging stations take a meter of space, then all parking spots should be an additional 1 meter deep to account for a future charger being installed. It is a lot simpler to add that space to an underground parking structure in the planning and building phase, then needing to add it after it has been built.

[Please note I am not advocating that the developer be installing the chargers at the time the building is built, but that they make sure there is room and empty duct work available for them to be easily installed in the future]