

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Application for Official Plan Amendment OP 24-07-8 – County of Oxford

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Community Planning

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Oxford County Council approve Application No. OP 24-07-8 submitted by County of Oxford, for lands described as Part Lot 1, w/s of Light Street, Plan 10, in the City of Woodstock, to redesignate the subject lands to create a special policy area within the Central Business District designation, to permit an eight storey, freestanding residential development, without a commercial component;
2. And further, that Council approve the attached Amendment No. 324 to the County of Oxford Official Plan;
3. And further, that the necessary by-law to approve Amendment No. 324 be raised.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Official Plan amendment proposes to redesignate the subject lands to create a site specific special policy area within the Central Business District to permit an eight storey residential development that does not contain a commercial component within the Pedestrian Predominant Area, in the City of Woodstock.
- The proposal is consistent with the relevant policies of the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement and supports the strategic initiatives and objectives of the Official Plan and can be supported from a planning perspective.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

The application will be implemented in accordance with the relevant objectives, strategic initiatives and policies contained in the Official Plan.

Financial Impact

The approval of this application will have no financial impact beyond what has been approved in the current year's budget.

Communications




In accordance with the Planning Act, notice of complete application regarding this proposal was provided to surrounding property owners on June 21, 2024 and notice of public meeting was issued on July 29, 2024. At the time of writing this report, no correspondence from the general public has been received. A letter was submitted by the Downtown Woodstock BIA raising concerns about the lack of a ground floor commercial component in the proposed development, which is included as Attachment 4 to this report.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council's vision of "Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future." These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendations in this report supports the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
<p>Goal 1.1 – 100% Housed</p> <p>Goal 1.2 – Sustainable infrastructure and development</p> <p>Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being</p>		

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

DISCUSSION

Background

Owner: County of Oxford c/o Rebecca Smith
21 Reeve Street, Woodstock, ON N4S 7Y3

Location:

The subject lands are described as Part Lot 1, w/s Light Street, Plan 10 in the City of Woodstock. The lands are located on the north side of Dundas Street, between Vansittart Avenue and Light Street and are municipally known as 385 and 387 Dundas Street.

County of Oxford Official Plan:

Existing:

Schedule 'W-1'	City of Woodstock Land Use Plan	'Central Area'
Schedule 'W-2'	City of Woodstock Central Area Development Plan	'Central Business District'

Proposed:

Schedule 'W-1'	City of Woodstock Land Use Plan	'Central Area'
Schedule 'W-2'	City of Woodstock Central Area Development Plan	'Central Business District' with special Policy Area

City of Woodstock Zoning By-Law 8626-10:

Existing Zoning: Special Central Commercial Zone (C5-16)

Proposed Zoning: Amended Special Central Commercial Zone (C5-16)

Proposal:

Applications have been received by the County of Oxford and the City of Woodstock for amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law to redesignate and rezone the lands to facilitate the development of an 8-storey, 36 dwelling unit stand-alone residential apartment, with no ground floor commercial component, on the subject lands.

The application for official plan amendment proposes to redesignate the subject lands from 'Central Business District' to Special 'Central Business District', and the associated zone change application proposes to amend the provisions of the existing site specific 'Central Commercial Zone' (C5-16), to facilitate the proposed residential development. The applicant is proposing parking on the first and second storeys, with 32 parking spaces, where a minimum of 18 parking spaces are required in the General Provisions of the Zoning By-law.

The subject lands are approximately 941.8 m² (10,137.8 ft²) in area and are comprised of vacant land that previously contained the Capitol Theatre and an existing multi-use building that will be

demolished. Surrounding uses are predominantly commercial with accessory residential units in the upper level.

Plate 1 - Existing Zoning and Location Map indicates the location of the subject site and the existing zoning in the immediate vicinity.

Plate 2 - Aerial Map (2020) provides an aerial view of the subject property and surrounding area.

Plate 3 - Applicant's Sketch- Renderings provide the lot configuration of the subject lands.

Comments

2020 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. Under Section 3 of the Planning Act, where a municipality is exercising its authority affecting a planning matter, such decisions “shall be consistent with” all policy statements issued under the Act.

The policies of Section 1.1 state that sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for the planning period. Within settlement areas, sufficient land shall be made available through intensification and redevelopment and, if necessary, designated growth areas.

The policies of Section 1.1.3 state that settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development, and their vitality and regeneration shall be promoted. Further, Section 1.1.3.3 states that planning authorities shall identify appropriate locations and promote opportunities for intensification and redevelopment where this can be accommodated by taking into account existing building stock or areas, including brownfield sites, and the availability of suitable existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities required to accommodate projected needs.

The policies of Section 1.1.3.6 state that new development taking place in designated growth areas should occur adjacent to the existing built-up area and shall have a compact form, mix of uses and densities that allow for the efficient use of land, infrastructure and public service facilities. Further, Section 1.4 Housing, specifically subsection 1.4.3, states that planning authorities shall provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing types and densities to meet projected requirements of current and future residents of the regional market area by:

- Establishing and implementing minimum targets for the provision of housing which is affordable to low and moderate income households;
- Permitting and facilitating all forms of housing required to meet the social, health and well-being requirements of current and future residents;
- Directing the development of new housing towards locations where appropriate levels of infrastructure and public service facilities are or will be available to support current and projected needs;
- Promoting densities for new housing which efficiently use land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities, and support the use of active transportation and transit in areas where it exists or is to be developed; and

- Establishing development standards for residential intensification, redevelopment and new residential development which minimize the cost of housing and facilitate compact form, while maintaining appropriate levels of public health and safety.

Official Plan

The subject lands are currently designated 'Central Business District' according to the Land Use Plan for the City of Woodstock in the County Official Plan. The Central Business District in Woodstock is intended to be the most intensive, functionally diverse and dominant business, cultural and administrative centre in the County and the full range of commercial, entertainment, recreation, institutional and open space and accessory residential uses are permitted.

Within the Central Business District, medium and high density residential development is generally permitted without the requirement to provide a commercial component. However, free-standing residential development is not permitted on lands having frontage on Dundas Street between Vansittart and Beale Street (Pedestrian Predominant Area). Section 7.2.7 of the Official Plan further deals with the High Density Residential policies in stating that the height and density limitations applicable to the various forms of development shall be determined on the basis of the nature, character and scale of adjacent land uses. The net residential densities will not normally exceed 150 units/ha (60 units/ac).

Additionally, the policies indicate that buildings within the Pedestrian Predominant Area will range in height from 2-6 storeys, while buildings throughout the balance of the Central Business District will range in height from 2-8 storeys. Council may consider variations to the maximum building height, where consistency with the applicable design principles of the Woodstock Central Area has been demonstrated. All development within the Central Business District will be subject to site plan control to ensure site planning and urban design considerations are appropriately addressed.

Further, the Official Plan's Central Area Strategy includes policies to increase the residential population living within and in the vicinity of the Central Area. These policies specifically encourage medium and high density residential development throughout the Central Business District without a ground floor commercial component except for lands falling within the Pedestrian Predominant Area (as defined in Section 7.3.2.3.1). The subject lands are located within the Pedestrian Predominant Area which are identified as the section of Dundas Street between Vansittart Street /Broadway and Beale Street/Bay Street. The Pedestrian Predominant Area is intended to be the most vibrant commercial and pedestrian oriented area of the Central Business District.

Zoning By-law

An apartment dwelling house is a permitted use in the 'C5' zone. The applicant proposes to rezone the subject lands from 'C5' to 'C5-sp' to include special provisions to remove the requirement for commercial on the first storey of the building and to permit a maximum of 8 storeys where 6 are permitted in the Zoning By-law.

The Zoning By-law requires properties along this portion of Dundas Street (Pedestrian Predominant Area) to have commercial spaces on the first floor of any structure; this provision is intended to ensure that this area of the Central Business District is characterized by pedestrian oriented commercial uses with a consistent façade of storefronts.

The purpose of the parking provisions of the By-law are to ensure that adequate off-street parking is provided for customers and residents of the downtown area, while recognizing that patrons of the downtown do not have to rely on vehicles to travel throughout the downtown and that additional parking may be provided by public facilities.

The Zoning By-law permits an apartment in the C5 Zone to be 8 storeys, except along a specific section of Dundas Street where the maximum height is 6 storeys. This exception was established to create a consistent and compatible streetscape in the downtown core.

Agency Comments

The City of Woodstock Engineering Department (Building Division) provided the following comments:

1. Relief is not required for parking. The site is located within Schedule E of the Zoning By-Law and the parking space requirement is one space per unit (36 units x 0.5 = 18 spaces). The site is providing 32 spaces.
2. Visitor parking spaces are exempt.
3. As noted above, the special provisions shall permit an 8 storey apartment dwelling house with 36 dwelling units that includes parking on the main floor.
4. The site is subject to site plan approval.
5. The proposal is considered a change to a more sensitive land use and requires the Record of Site Condition according to the RSC provisions under the Environmental Protection Act before a building permit can be issued.
6. Currently under the C5 zone provisions, relief is required to increase the building height to 8 storeys from 6 storeys. It should be noted the 8 storey does not fill the entire site, a podium is proposed and the upper 6 stories are projected in to create roof top patios on the 2nd floor roof. Relief is also required to permit the parking of vehicles on the main floor.

The City of Woodstock Engineering Department (Development Division) indicated that a detailed engineering review will be completed at the time of site plan approval.

The County Public Works Department has indicated that they have no comments regarding the zone change application; however, will provide further comments during the site plan control process.

The Downtown Woodstock BIA has provided a letter outlining concerns with no commercial use proposed. This letter has been included as Attachment 4 to this report.

City of Woodstock Council

City of Woodstock Council recommended support of the proposed Official Plan amendment and approved the proposed zoning by-law amendment 'in principle', at the City's regular Council meeting of August 15, 2024.

Planning Analysis

The application proposes to add a special policy to the Central Business District designation to permit residential development within the Pedestrian Predominant Area without a commercial component. The applicant also proposes to amend the provisions of the Special Central Commercial Zone (C5-16) applying to the lands to similarly permit a residential development with no commercial component. The purpose of the applications is to facilitate the development of an eight-storey 36-unit apartment dwelling house with parking on the first and second storeys. The proposed structure will be a mix of affordable and market rent dwelling units. Special provisions are requested to remove the requirement for commercial on the first storey of the building and to permit 8 storeys where a maximum of 6 storeys is permitted in the Pedestrian Predominant Area of Dundas Street.

The proposed development of the subject lands is considered to be an efficient use of lands, municipal services and infrastructure. Additionally, staff are of the opinion that this proposal will assist in providing a mix of housing types to accommodate current and future residents of the regional market area. It is the opinion of this Office that the subject application is consistent with the policies of the PPS.

The subject lands comprise approximately 941.8 m² (10,137.8 ft²) and the applicant's proposal is to develop 36 residential units on the site. As such, the proposal constitutes a net residential density of approximately 382 units/ha (155 units/ac), which exceeds the high density range provisions of 150 units/ha (60 units/ac). That said, site specific increases to density may be considered through the official plan amendment process, where it has been determined to be appropriate.

The Official Plan recognizes the importance of increasing the supply of affordable housing within Woodstock and directs that the City may consider the use of reduced municipal infrastructure requirements and lot standards on a site-specific basis to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing provided that the use of such measure continues to meet the overall objectives of the Plan.

With respect to the elimination of the requirement of first floor commercial space, the applicant has provided a concept plan (Plate 3) showing a first floor with large windows that attempts to mimic surrounding commercial uses and provide a façade that is still in keeping with the existing aesthetic of the surrounding buildings in the downtown. Further, there would not appear to be a shortage of available commercial space in the downtown core at this time, and it is the opinion of staff that exempting this site from the requirement to provide commercial space on the ground floor in this location in exchange for affordable rental units can be considered acceptable in this instance, as it supports the City's and Oxford County's goals of increasing the number of affordable residential units within Woodstock.

The proposal has requested an increased building height from 6 storeys to 8 storeys. Proposals to increase the Building Height may be considered by Council where they are consistent with the applicable design principles of the Woodstock Central Area Design study; these principles typically identify qualities of character like massing, stepbacks, recognition of heritage, signage, building materials and streetscaping. The applicant has provided a concept plan that shows the

building will be ‘stepped back’ from the adjacent properties to provide a meaningful transition to a taller height. Although the proposal appears to generally address many of the applicable design criteria, specific building design considerations will also be reviewed in greater detail through the site plan approval process. For Council’s information, the immediately adjacent properties are approximately two storeys (west) and three storeys (east).

The applicant has identified that due to the limited size of the subject lands, finding a viable commercial tenant while also effectively developing the site for housing with a mix of affordable units, is likely to be difficult. As such, in exchange for the typically required commercial component, the County is able to provide additional affordable housing opportunities and parking in the City’s Central Area that significantly exceeds the minimum standard in zoning. The applicant is providing parking in excess of the required minimum (0.5 spaces per dwelling unit/18 spaces) on the ground floor and second floor of the building with access to Opera House Lane. The municipal parking lot located on Light Street can also be used for visitor parking and permits can be purchased for additional vehicles that tenants may own.

Detailed matters such as lot grading, access, stormwater management, and servicing will be addressed through the site plan approval process, to the satisfaction of the City and County.

Planning staff are of the opinion that the proposal is consistent with the policies of the Provincial Policy Statement and supports the strategic initiatives and objectives of the Official Plan respecting development within the Central Area. As such, staff are satisfied that the applications can be given favourable consideration.

CONCLUSIONS

Planning staff are of the opinion that the proposal is consistent with the policies of the Provincial Policy Statement and supports the strategic initiatives and objectives of the Official Plan respecting residential intensification within the Central Area.

SIGNATURES

REPORT AUTHOR:

Report author:

Original Signed By
Justin Miller
Development Planner

Departmental Approval:

Original Signed By
Paul Michiels
Director of Community Planning

Approved for submission:

Original Signed By _____

Benjamin R. Addley

Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Plate 1, Existing Zoning & Location Map

Attachment 2 – Plate 2, Aerial Map (2020)

Attachment 3 – Plate 3, Applicant's Sketches

Attachment 4 – Downtown Woodstock BIA Letter

Attachment 5 – Official Plan Amendment 324