

CEAC Report 2007-05

Report to: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Neil Morris, Chair, Caledon Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC)

By: South Albion-Bolton Community Plan Subgroup (Gavin O'Brien, Bryon Wilson, Bill Wilson, Cat Cybulski, Katie Altoft)

Date: June 27, 2007

Re: CEAC Comments on Official Plan Amendment 215/Commercial Policy Review

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Caledon Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC) recommends to the Corporation of the Town of Caledon:

1. That Council receives CEAC report 2007-05;
2. That more specific direction be given toward inclusion of low impact environmental design;
3. That all efforts be made to minimize the scope and the impact of the boundary expansion for the North Hill grocery store;
4. That retention of employment lands continues to be a priority for the Town of Caledon and that both quantity of available jobs, as well as quality be considered to minimize the need for transportation and its impacts;
5. That completion of the BAR be a priority for the Town to improve traffic flow and accessibility to shopping throughout Bolton; and,
6. That development in the Core Business Area provides for adequate parking from which pedestrians can access all downtown businesses, and does not further disrupt traffic flow in downtown Bolton and have negative impacts for air quality.

INTRODUCTION

CEAC has prepared the following briefing report as per CEAC's Work Plan. Given the significant environmental implications of the decisions made throughout the South-Albion Community planning process, CEAC has carefully monitored the Commercial Policy Review, and the resultant OPA 215 throughout its development. We support Council's decision to consider this review together with the Population and Employment

numbers and the Employment Land Needs Study, because we feel that they are inextricably linked.

DISCUSSION

OPA 215 is designed to reorganize and update the commercial policies of the Official Plan and to expand the Bolton Community Shopping Area to address the needs of Caledon's expanding population.

Low Impact Environmental Design

Given the densification of commercial development within each of the areas affected by OPA 215, the minimization of environmental impact throughout the expansion is imperative. Impact minimization is almost always most easily achieved during the design phase, as opposed to an add-on. Amendment 215 speaks to "high quality landscape and streetscape features", a "high standard of design", "pedestrian friendly orientation", etc., but it lacks more specific direction in the policy for low impact environmental design, such as:

- parking garages, either above or below ground, to reduce the asphalt expanses and resultant impacts and make better use of land area;
- green roofs on large commercial buildings and on the parking garages to reduce heat islands and water run-off;
- significant sized green "islands" around the commercial buildings and within parking lots (use Husky as an example) and not little stick trees in a small hole in the concrete;
- create improved pedestrian access and attractive walkable links to and between commercial centres to encourage more pedestrian movement;
- utilization of innovative technologies to increase storm water retention following precipitation events; and,
- utilization of innovative technologies to increase soil volume under hard surfaces to improve urban tree growth and maintain natural drainage patterns.

CEAC would be pleased to provide further information on potential design specifications to assist in this process.

Limiting the Scope of Boundary Expansion on the North Hill

CEAC is supportive of the boundary expansion to permit a grocery store on the North Hill. We feel that this will help alleviate congestion in the downtown core and provide the North Hill residents with the opportunity to walk for conveniences that in the past have forced them to drive to the South Hill. We remain, however, very concerned that

that the expansion stay limited to a grocery store and limited essential retail, and not include either residential or further commercial development – i.e. the North Hill does not become another shopping node as part of Bolton’s Commercial Strategy. Should shopping expansion occur, that then attracts South Hill residents through town, we feel that any environmental benefits realized through the proposed expansion would be lost. In addition, such an expansion would result in a loss of agricultural lands to further residential development and encroach on the Clod Creek subwatershed.

Retention of Employment Lands

Given the significant impact that commuting has on the environment, CEAC has a strong desire to maintain and expand employment opportunities within Bolton. Noting that commercial land is not recognized as employment lands, we therefore have a strong desire to maintain the prestige industrial lands currently designated in Bolton, and are supportive of the strategy to maintain these lands along Highway 50 to Mayfield Road. In addition to the quantity of employment, however, we would request that the quality of employment also be considered. Minimum wage jobs provided in many of the commercial/retail spaces do not provide people with sufficient income to live in Bolton, and will not prevent them from commuting from and through our community to other destinations.

Development of Bolton’s Core

OPA 215 provides some guidance for the development of Bolton’s Core Shopping Area, which we support. Traffic continues to be a significant challenge in the downtown core, both from a quality of life and an air quality perspective. The truck turning restrictions have made an improvement to the traffic flow, but in the absence of the BAR, further development in the core will have a negative impact on the environment by increasing the already long idling situations in the valley, and encouraging people to drive further on smaller arterial roads to avoid the congestion. A North Hill supermarket and the introduction of the BAR should serve to lessen the burden on the Core and make it a more attractive area for shoppers, which will in turn attract high quality businesses. We strongly encourage the Town to proceed as quickly as possible with the construction of the BAR.

We recognize the need for ample parking downtown to allow for the viability of businesses, but strongly encourage the Town to only permit further development in the context of providing adequate parking that is off of Highway 50. This will ensure that the traffic flow in the Core does not worsen, and is shared by core businesses to encourage pedestrian movement around the downtown. Low impact environmental design should also be encouraged in new development or retrofits in the core area.

CONCLUSION

CEAC is supportive of OPA 215. We appreciate the thought that has gone into the South Albion/Bolton Community Planning Process and the 3 part approach that considers

population growth at the same time as employment and commercial lands. We feel that the recommendations outlined in this report will further ensure that the environmental impacts of continued expansion in Bolton will be minimized, and provide for opportunities to enhance the quality of life. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of our recommendations in further detail, or provide additional support materials for Council's consideration.