



## **CITY OF STRATFORD PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

A public meeting was held on Monday, March 24, 2025, at 7:07 p.m., in the Council Chamber, at Stratford City Hall, 1 Wellington Street. The purpose of the public meeting was to give Council and the public an opportunity to hear and consider comments from the public regarding Zone Change By-law Amendment Application Z01-25. The application affects the property with the municipal address of 963 O'Loane Avenue, Stratford.

**COUNCIL PRESENT:** Mayor Ritsma - Chair Presiding, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Biehn, Councillor Briscoe, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Hunter, Councillor McCabe, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Wordofa

**REGRETS:** Councillor Henderson

**STAFF PRESENT:** Joan Thomson - Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Taylor Crinklaw - Director of Infrastructure Services, Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Adam Betteridge - Director of Building and Planning Services, Neil Anderson - Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, Audrey Pascual - Deputy Clerk, Alexander Burnett – Intermediate Planner

**ALSO PRESENT:** Caroline Baker - Baker Planning Group, agent for the applicant, Daryl Pol – Pol Quality Homes, members of the public and media.

Mayor Ritsma called the meeting to order and stated the purpose of this meeting was to give Council and the public an opportunity to hear and consider comments from the public regarding Zone Change By-law Amendment Application Z01-25, affecting property with the municipal address of 963 O'Loane Avenue, Stratford.

The Mayor explained the order of procedure for the public meeting.

## STAFF PRESENTATION

Alex Burnett, Intermediate Planner, referring to a PowerPoint presentation, provided an overview of the application. Highlights of the presentation included:

- the application being submitted by Baker Planning Group on behalf of Pol Quality Homes;
- the subject lands being approximately 0.63 hectares in area with surrounding land uses including residential dwelling, agricultural lands and recreational sports fields;
- the application proposing a rezoning from the current Residential Second Density (R2(1)-1) Zone on the subject lands to a Site Specific Residential Fifth Density (R5(2) XX) Zone to permit apartment buildings and request site specific provisions including:
  - to reduce the front yard depth,
  - to reduce the southerly side yard setback,
  - to increase the maximum lot coverage,
  - and to reduce the minimum number of loading spaces,
- the requested provisions being to facilitate development of three two-story apartment buildings for a total of 38 apartment units;
- under the Official Plan the lands designated Residential Area permitting a variety of residential uses including apartment buildings;
- the current zoning of R2-1 permitting semi detached dwellings and group homes;
- the property currently occupied by semi detached dwellings;
- the application having been circulated to agencies on February 20, 2025 with no objections having been received to date;
  - the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) Source Water Protection advised the subject lands are located within a Well Head Protection Area A10 to which the policies of the Thames-Sydenham and Region Source Water Protection Plan apply,
  - the applicant having received the necessary Section 59 2(b) Notice permitting the application to proceed. Additional UTRCA approval condition

of fuel and road salt storage limited to set quantities to be implemented as part of any future Site Plan application,

- the application having been circulated to property owners within 120 meters of the subject lands on February 20, 2025, and notification having been published in the Beacon Herald, Town Crier on February 22, 2025, and a sign erected on the property with the following key issues raised:
  - removal of trees and impact to local wildlife,
  - ensuring sufficient screening be provided for existing residential area,
  - increased density in the neighbourhood,
  - increased traffic on O'Loane Avenue,
  - risk of increased parking on nearby streets,
- Staff being aware of these concerns and they are to be included in a follow up report to Council.

## **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCIL**

Councillor Sebben inquired if under the Private Tree By-law there will be adequate space to plant the required trees given the space occupied by the parking lot and buildings. The Intermediate Planner noted an arborist report was prepared and submitted as part of the application. The tree recovery being a combination under the Private Tree By-law of replacement on the subject lands and payment to the City to plant trees on other properties in the City.

Councillor Burbach asked if the requested set back of 4.5 meters compared to 7 meters would affect future road work and the possible widening of O'Loane Avenue in the future with this being an arterial road. It was asked if a traffic study was done as part of the application. The Director of Infrastructure Services noted this application being an initial planning stage with the application to be taken back for future consideration with staff to ensure adequate room to install necessary infrastructure in that area. Staff confirmed no traffic study was required as part of this application.

## **AGENT PRESENTATION**

Caroline Baker, Agent from Baker Planning Group, representing the applicant Pol Quality Homes, referring to a PowerPoint presentation provided the following information regarding the application:

- the site having frontage on O'Loane Avenue which is a defined arterial road with a size of 0.63 hectares and an existing single family home;
- Bell Court being to the north with a cul-de-sac and a combination of single and semi detached dwellings;
- the neighbourhood context being a range of residential uses predominantly low density residential;
- the Official Plan for this western portion predesignating a significant amount of O'Loane as medium density towards a low and medium density corridor;
- the site being near the high schools and outdoor recreation amenity areas, and within walking distance to the O'Loane and Huron commercial area;
- the proposal being three apartment buildings each with 12-14 dwelling units per building with 1 to 2 bedrooms per unit;
- the request for increased lot coverage being to allow the buildings to be two levels to conform with the surrounding area and as a result requiring a wider base;
- the permitted use and number of units conforming to the Official Plan;
- setbacks along the property line adjacent to Bell Court complying with the requested R5 zoning to ensure appropriate setback and buffering to Bell Court residents;
- the requested increase to the rear yard setback on the east side of the property to provide separation and compatibility to surrounding low density residential uses, with the applicant open to working with residents regarding landscape buffer or fencing;
- the 1.25 parking spaces per unit with accessible parking and consolidated driveway entrance to O'Loane complying with the Zoning By-law;
- the applicant proposing 2 of the 38 units be affordable housing units;
- the O'Loane elevation being designed to appear like a single family home;

- allowable height in low density zones being 10.5 metres with the proposed height of the two- story buildings being 9.3 metres;
- the request to reduce the yard setback along O'Loane being in addition to a 5 metre road widening dedicated for future widenings or upgrades to O'Loane as part of the development, bringing the total set back to 9.5 metres;
- the request to reduce the interior side yard being for the south side adjacent to the municipal fields and not applying where the site abuts existing residential development;
- the request for no loading spaces being due to the size and manoeuvrability on the site and consistent with other recent developments;
- the development complying with minimum landscape open space, setbacks to low density residential and with stormwater management having been prepared for staff review to ensure all water is contained on the development site;
- a special provision having been requested to allow for the condominium to be registered in phases as each building is constructed to allow for the units to be bought and with the zoning to apply to the entire site;
- MTE having prepared a stormwater management report to review water quality and quantity;
- the development property currently receiving water from Bell Court with the design graded to continue accepting this water and retaining it on the site, directing it towards O'Loane;
- sanitary and water to be connected to Bell Court municipal services;
- the applicant having retained MTE Arborists which concluded 66% of the trees are non-native, with the remaining being native and 77 trees to be replaced either on site or through cash in lieu;
- the arborist work having reviewed at risk species and bat habitat, and finding no wildlife, bat habitat or species at risk in the clusters of trees;
- an Open House having been held on March 6 with 30 area residents attending;

- a discussion regarding buffering looking at boundary trees, which would be appropriate to move and identifying a solid wood fence that is 1.8 metres high as a preferred buffer with residents,
- the applicant committed to meeting with neighbours to ensure any concerns raised are heard and buffering preferences for residents are addressed,
- concerns regarding overflow visitor parking onto adjacent streets with existing parking challenges on Bell Court related to the high school, noting the proposed development meeting zoning by-law requirements which require dedicated and assigned visitor parking on site,
- resident concerns regarding pedestrian overflow with the proposed walkway from the development onto Bell Court with the applicants keeping with the Transportation Master Plan goal to encourage pedestrian connectivity and walkability,
- confirming the proposal is for a condominium development,
- concern with drainage, water and road salt being addressed through the site grading towards O'Loane and working with Source Water Protection Agency regarding salt application,
- the application being consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, providing intensification within a service area and transit available and conforming with the Official Plan permitted use and density, as well as supporting alternative modes of transportation, and diversification for attainable and affordable housing units.

## **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCIL**

Councillor Hunter inquired whether the units will be accessible. The Agent for the Applicant noted the intent is for the development to be slab on grade providing the opportunity for accessible units on the ground floor.

## **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Eric Sanson advised they have no concern with the development but do have concerns about the scale, inadequate green space and inadequate number of parking spaces with overflow parking going onto Bell Court. Bell Court having preexisting parking issues and concerns being expressed with emergency vehicles accessing the site. The development will only work if everything runs smoothly but this is not realistic. Concern for the wild animals

and birds and where they will go with everything being paved. It being questioned whether there can be a compromise of 30 units to retain green space and have adequate parking.

Diana Reynolds advised the proposed rezoning and site specific exemptions and densification are excessive and not appropriate for the location. A suggestion was made to remove one building and replace it with a naturalized area. It was noted the subject property is a former fruit farm / orchard and home to over 100 mature trees, including fruit, which is a source of home and food for animals, birds and insects. The arborist report outlining 105 of the 114 trees are to be removed. No mandatory Environmental Site Assessment, but a fulsome assessment being essential with concern for loss of native pollinators. It being noted that at the Climate Conversations on March 27 they looked at the pollinator workforce, with this population having dropped 80% globally. Concern for the impact of densification on the human population with the green living environment contributing to human health. Critical to look at approach to building housing stock and maintaining well being. The subject property located on an aquifer contributing ground water for Stratford, with a vulnerability score of 10 under Source Protection Plan, also well head protection area and a drinking water protection zone. Concern with impact of salt and sand and the risk of contamination with more people. Looking at a possible creation of permeable surface area to support the aquifer recharge. Diana Reynolds questioned what the specific plan is to protect the groundwater and noted parking is an issue and that there are no loading spaces.

Brian Wilson stated the development may not be ideal but is better than many alternatives. The spruce trees being retained are home to many families of birds. The trees being removed being primarily invasive species. It was noted this is a condo development with a condo organization that can be dealt with and who will care for the property. It was questioned whether the fences could be increased to 6ft and well screened with native trees to replace. Concern was expressed for the kids who cut through the dead space that meets with the property line going to the ball park as they will not be able to get through.

Leanne Feeney stated they are interested in retaining privacy, would like to see trees be replanted and hoping for a fence/buffer to be added early in the development so dogs and young child will be safe.

Will Wellington spoke to the larger housing ecosystem and noted they are in favour of the development. Housing affordability being difficult for young people and families with many workers commuting into town. To achieve housing affordability and abundance there is a need for more units, condo's and apartments. Increasing density being a great way to achieve this goal. Affordable unit inclusion being helpful, but all units will help lower demand. Will Wellington stated they were impressed by the thoughtfulness of the

neighbours, and with staff hoping to meet concerns through the planning process and also trade offs that come with change.

Richard Daniel expressed concerns with the walkway spilling onto the street on Bell Court. It was noted there are 3-4 houses located off the walkway with four driveways and issues being foreseen with pedestrian mobility. A solution was presented to route the walkway east to Matilda, with a crosswalk across Matilda to reach the sidewalk on the other side. High number of shipment trucks on Bell Court with high likelihood of an accident if the crosswalk is routed that direction.

Jay Core noted Bell Court is a nice quiet place which has been important to some people's decision to move there and understanding life will change with more noise etc. To mitigate some of the degradation of the quality of life it was suggested the walk through be removed. It was noted that parking is said to be adequate but concern was expressed that people will park on Bell Court and take the walk through to the development. Jay Core noted they spoke with residents in neighboring developments who said overflow vehicles park on the road and questioned why this development would be different. Not having a walkthrough would minimize this possibility.

The Agent for the Applicant provided the following information in response to the questions and comments made:

- the site not identified by the City or UTRCA as having significant natural resources with the size of the subject property being smaller;
- the arborist report having identified no species at risk or habitats on the site;
- Pol Quality Homes being open to transplanting fruit trees either to be maintained on the site or transplanted to neighbouring properties if they would like;
- Source Water Protection Agency having been contacted with the review providing criteria for Site Plan Approval related to winter salt and the application with no objection having been indicated with residential not being a concern in this area regarding source water;
- Confirmation being provided that the fencing will be a 6 ft solid wood fence or 1.8 metres with agreement for temporary fencing to ensure security or safety of back yards; and
- being willing to work with staff on the walkway location.



Councillor Burbach noted on the south side of O'Loane there is a multi-use path and asked if it is possible to connect to this. The Agent for the Applicant noted it is the intention that there be pedestrian connections along O'Loane in front of the development as part of Site Plan approval and they will speak to staff regarding a connection to the multi-use trail.

Responding to Councillor Wordofa's inquiry about public transportation access, the Director of Building and Planning Services noted the file planner will address transit connectivity in a future report to Council with commentary on the transit system and bus stop location.

Councillor McCabe noted the tone and professionalism of the presenters being appreciated, with a fulsome idea of the resident concerns being a benefit to all.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

The Mayor advised that City Council intends to consider this application at a future Regular Council meeting where members will have an opportunity for full discussion after reviewing comments received from the public at this time. Anyone who would like to receive further notice of this matter can email [clerks@stratford.ca](mailto:clerks@stratford.ca). A video of this meeting will be posted to the City's website.

The Mayor adjourned the public meeting at 8:08 p.m.

There were no requests from members of the public to receive further information about this application.