



Development Services Staff Report

Report Number: DS41-2023
Report Title: Zone Change Application 9/2023 – 76 Howard Ave. (Elmira Photo Lab)
Author: Jeremy Vink, Manager of Planning
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Reviewed By: Deanne Friess, Director of Development Services
Final Review: Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report DS41-2023 respecting Zone Change Application 9/2023 – 76 Howard Ave. (Elmira Photo Lab) to amend the General Industrial – Urban (M-2) with site-specific provisions (Section 26.1 267) to permit the addition of a commercial recreation use in accordance with the by-law in Attachment 3 to this report.

Background:

Patterson Planning on behalf of the property owner submitted a rezoning application to amend the site-specific provisions for the property at 76 Howard Ave.

The subject property is approximately 6,361 square metres, located at 76 Howard Avenue in Elmira, is designated Industrial in the Township Official Plan and is zoned General Industrial – Urban (M-2) with site-specific provisions in Section 26.1 267. The site-specific provisions allow additional uses on the property including data service operation; free standing non-accessory office; research and development facility; studio; and theatre for the performing arts.

The property is developed with two multi-tenanted buildings.

The applicant is proposing to amend the site-specific zoning provisions to add a wellness and training centre as a permitted use on the property.

The wellness and training centre is currently located in the existing two-storey building along with the theatre. There are no changes proposed to the exterior of the buildings or property.

The applicant submitted the following studies in support of their application:

- Concept site plan
- Planning Justification Report
- Functional Servicing Brief/Memo

A public meeting was held on October 3, 2023.

Comments:

The lands are within the serviced settlement of Elmira. Both the Provincial Policy Statement (“PPS”) and A Place to Grow contain policies around supporting appropriate development in such serviced communities, to use such lands wisely, that the vitality as well as long term economic prosperity addressed, ensuring servicing is available, as well as addressing appropriate separation between land uses to maintain the long-term economic viability of the planned uses and function of an employment area. The key policies relevant to this application can be found in Section 1.1 and 1.3 of the PPS and Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.5 of A Place to Grow.

The Region of Waterloo Official Plan (ROP) speaks to 15-minute communities and considers development within the policies of Chapter 2, especially Section 2.D Urban Development, but also Chapter 3 with respect create a vibrant livable community, appropriate servicing (Chapter 5), source water protection (Chapter 8). Most importantly, Chapter 4, and especially 4A, outlines the policies for Employment Areas.

The Township Official Plan (OP) policies regarding urban areas are contained in Chapter 7 with specific policies for Elmira (Section 7.29), but also general Industrial policies (Section 7.4.1.6). As per the general industrial policies, the predominant use of the land in the area is to be for industrial purposes, however other uses are permitted that will in no way detract from the area for sound industrial development.

The proposed additional use within the existing building can be serviced adequately by existing municipal services, does not result in any issues related to transportation or traffic, and any issues related to parking, lighting etc. are elements that are addressed in the site plan approval process. The property is not within a well head protection area should not result in any source water protection issues.

The key question with the introduction of the proposed wellness and training centre is whether the introduction of such as use will impact the surrounding employment area in any way so as to impact the function of the area or the long-term economic viability. This element is required to be considered at all policy levels as the introduction of all such non-employment uses should not underline the predominate industrial function of the area. Notably, in this situation the proposed use is not more sensitive than some of the other site-specific uses already permitted, such as the free standing non-accessory

office; studio; and theatre for the performing arts. Based on this, staff is satisfied that the use will not impact the function of the area or the long-term economic viability.

Staff note that if the use was proposed in a location more central to the employment area, and if the site did not already have similar uses, it would be unlikely that such a use could be supported.

As noted, the use is similar to the other site-specific uses permitted on the property and will not result in any increased compatibility issues. As an indoor use, the use is not sensitive to noise, dust or odour from surrounding industries. Furthermore, it is noted that the site-specific zoning also prohibits any heavy industrial uses on the property to help address compatibility.

Staff is satisfied that the use is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and A Place to Grow, and conforms to the ROP and the OP.

Zoning

The applicant has proposed to permit a wellness and training centre as an additional use within the site-specific zoning. Specifically, the applicant is proposing the use be added to the site-specific zoning as a “Commercial Wellness Facility” along with an associated definition, which would generally be identified in the current zoning bylaw as a Commercial Recreation Use. As the additional terminology and definition are similar and consistent with the current definition of Commercial Recreation Use the need for new terminology and definition is redundant and unnecessary. The definition also grants the greater flexibility than that of a proposed “Commercial Wellness Facility”. It is recommended that the site-specific zoning be amended to add a Commercial Recreation use, to permit the operation as proposed.

The proposed zoning by-law attached to this report reflects the items noted above and allow for the appropriate development of the use consistent with the policies.

It is noted that as the property is located along an industrial side street, unlike many commercial areas with frontage on or near a more major roadway, which may raise challenges for directing and attracting people to the use.

Comments Received

- Region of Waterloo has no objection to the development. In the future a salt management plan will be required as part of any site plan process.
- Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) has no comments as the site is not regulated.
- The Waterloo Region Catholic School Board notes that the development is required to pay the applicable development charges.
- Enova Power has no concerns.
- Township Building Division provided comments relative to any building permit.
- Township Fire Department indicated no issues.
- Township Development Engineering Division has no issues.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

None.

Financial Impacts:

None.

Strategic Plan Impacts:

The proposal is consistent with the strategic plan objective of Planning for Growth and Exploring Economic Development Opportunities. The site-specific zoning will allow for the development of a site in a manner consistent with the applicable policies which will provide an economic opportunity while ensuring compatible and appropriate development of the site.

Conclusion:

It is staff's opinion that the proposed development is consistent with the Provincial Policies and Guidelines and conforms to the Regional Official Plan and the Township Official Plan and are appropriate uses for the subject property.

Therefore, staff recommend that Council of the Township of Woolwich approve Zone Change 9/2023 for the property at 76 Howard Ave to amend the site specific industrial zoning to add commercial recreation as a permitted use, in accordance with the by-law as attached in Attachment 3 to this report.

Attachments:

1. Location Map and Site Plan
2. Minutes of October 2, 2023 Public meeting
3. Proposed Zoning By-law