

September 26, 2020

To: Chair and Members,
Toronto Preservation Board

Re: PB 17.4 Intention to Designate 80 and 84 Queen's Park

You have before you a report (September 2, 2020) recommending the designation of the Edward Johnson Building at 80 Queen's Park Crescent and Wymilwood (Falconer Hall) at 84 Queen's Park Crescent. These proposed designations are coming before you in the context of a site-specific re-zoning application from the University of Toronto for 78-90 Queen's Park Crescent.

Among the many worthwhile reasons for the proposed designations, the "Contextual Value" in the "Statement of Significance" explains how these buildings fit into and support the current area context:

"The Edward Johnson Building is physically, functionally, visually and historically linked to its surroundings. Its physical link is evident in its location behind the two grand estate houses of Flavelle House and Wymilwood (Falconer Hall)... Visually it is linked to its surroundings as its low-rise form complements the adjacent buildings... As part of the 130 year evolution of this area, it is historically linked to its surroundings." (p.16) AND

"Located on the west side of Queen's Park, Wymilwood, at 84 Queen's Park, is valued as it defines and maintains the character of this section of Queen's Park between Bloor Street West and Hoskin Avenue. Its domestic typology, complex massing, form and details, representing early 20th century house-form architecture, and its setting with lawns, trees and shrubs are of contextual value as they maintain the residential character which represents the early history and development of this particular section.... Physically it contributes to the diverse architectural character and periods of its neighbours while contributing to and maintaining a low-rise scale and character." (p.21)

As you know, the current "Context" is to be altered significantly, as we speak, by U of T's proposed Centre for Civilizations, Cultures and Cities (CCC). The "Contextual Value" of these historic buildings will be affected negatively and permanently.

This is a difficult site and many previous proposals have not succeeded, because they would have overwhelmed this historic landscape. Unfortunately, the current proposal is no different.

In my opinion, the proposed building – like its predecessor proposals – is being shoe-horned into a site that is too small for the program requirements loaded onto it by the University. The proposed building will overwhelm the site and its heritage buildings. It may not be too high, but it is too massive and bulky leaving the heritage buildings no breathing room.

Heritage planning staff seem to say in their report that there is still time to affect the building design:

“Heritage planning staff will also continue to work with the applicant and other City Staff with regard to the project's design compatibility as it relates contextually with both on-site heritage resources and the greater site context..” (p. 36)

This seems an overly optimistic assessment. I am under the impression that the Final Planning Report on the rezoning application is on the agenda for the October 15, 2020 meeting of Toronto East York Community Council. That means the report has been finalized by the time you make the decision on designating these two buildings, and the building design is more or less complete.

There is definitely a need to study the “greater site context”, that is engage in a detailed examination of the rich history and heritage of the Queen’s Park Legislative Precinct. It is long overdue. If such a study existed, it would have been possible to assess the current site-specific University proposal in the context of all the other heritage buildings on both sides of Queen’s Park Crescent.

I would, respectfully, suggest that the proposed designations of 80 and 84 Queen’s Park be deferred, until such a study has been completed.

Sincerely,



Beate Bowron FCIP, RPP