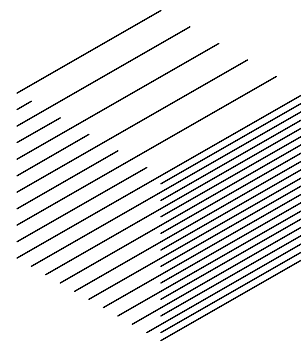


April 16, 2010

York Region
Corporate Services Department
York Region Administration Building
17250 Yonge Street, 4th Floor
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1



Attention: Denis Kelly, Regional Clerk

Dear Denis,

Re: Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Urban Growth Centre,

York Region Reports entitled: “Planning Coordination for the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Regional Centre and Provincial Urban Growth Centre – Summary of Process, Recommendations and Next Steps”; and “Richmond Hill Centre/ Langstaff Urban Growth Centre Transportation Study”

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We represent Condor Properties Ltd., the owner of the majority of the land located south of Highway 407, east of Yonge Street and west of the CN Railway tracks in the Town of Markham. The subject lands are located within the Langstaff Gateway portion of the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Urban Growth Centre.

Background

Since mid 2008, the Town of Markham and the major landowners in the Langstaff Gateway area have been engaged in a collaborative Master Planning exercise to develop a bold vision for the Langstaff Gateway area, commensurate with its status as a part of one of the key Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, as identified in Places to Grow – Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

To develop this Master Plan, several high profile firms were retained to produce detailed studies, and public consultation was undertaken leading to the Town's endorsement of the final Calthorpe “Langstaff Land Use & Built Form Master Plan” (the “Calthorpe Plan”) on December 14, 2009.

Concurrent to this process, the Town, collaboratively with area land owners, has been developing a Markham Official Plan Amendment and Secondary Plan for the Langstaff Gateway area, based upon the Calthorpe Plan. A public meeting relative to the proposed OPA and Secondary Plan was held on March 2, 2010. The final OPA and Secondary Plan are planned to be brought before Town Council for approval in June, 2010. The OPA and Secondary Plan would subsequently be forwarded to the Region, as the approval authority, for its consideration and approval.

Peter R. Walker, FCIP, RPP
Wendy Nott, FCIP, RPP
Robert A. Dragicevic, MCIP, RPP
Principals

Martha Coffey
Controller

York Region Staff Reports

We have recently reviewed two York Region staff reports entitled “Planning Coordination for the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Regional Centre and Provincial Urban Growth Centre – Summary of Process, Recommendations and Next Steps”, dated April 7, 2010; and “Richmond Hill Centre/ Langstaff Urban Growth Centre Transportation Study”, dated April 7, 2010. Both of these reports were brought before the Region’s Planning and Economic Development Committee, and Transportation Services Committee, respectively, on April 7, 2010.

The reports include several recommendations and statements with respect to the process for the approval of the Secondary Plans for the two portions of the Centre, and with respect to a proposed requirement for a Centre-wide Transportation Study. Our key comments (unless otherwise stated) pertain to the “Planning” report which includes similar recommendations as found in the “Transportation” report; our comments on the “Planning” report are as follows:

Overall Report Recommendations

Requirement for Additional Studies

With respect to Recommendations 1b), c), d), and e), we are concerned with the Region’s desire to require additional studies to be undertaken prior to its review and approval of the forthcoming Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan. As noted above in this letter, the Town has undertaken a detailed Master Planning exercise and is now undertaking a detailed Secondary Planning exercise. We are concerned that this Regional requirement for additional Regional studies would result in unnecessary duplication and delay of the final approval of the Secondary Plan.

Requirement for Adoption of Regional OPA

With respect to Recommendation 1f) and 3 we are concerned with the Region’s requirement to adopt a Regional OPA prior to review and approval of the Town’s Secondary Plan. The Master Planning and Secondary Planning process has involved extensive public and agency consultation and is in conformity with the Growth Plan and consistent with the planned transit enhancements proposed in the Metrolinx “Big Move” Regional Transportation Plan. This requirement would further delay the approval of the Secondary Plan and therefore its early implementation.

Provincial Engagement

With respect to Recommendation 1g) we are concerned with the potential delays that could result from Provincial engagement regarding specifics related to delivery of the transit infrastructure. The Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan is being carefully phased to allow for an initial phase of development utilizing the existing area infrastructure. This density will help to create the “critical mass” of

people and jobs that will start to “make the case” for greater transit investment. Moreover, the Town and major landowners have been actively engaging the Province and its agencies (Metrolinx) throughout the Master Planning and Secondary Planning process.

Requirement for Further Scoping and Analysis

With respect to Recommendation 2 and 4, we are concerned that the requirement for “further scoping and analysis of the unresolved issues by Richmond Hill and Markham” and that the “planning coordination process ... continue as necessary” will result in further potential delays in the approval and implementation of the Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan. As noted, the Master Planning and Secondary Planning processes for this area have been ongoing since the fall of 2008. Throughout this process the plan has been refined based on comments and collaboration that has been requested from the Region and Richmond Hill.

Additional Statements Made in the Report

Land Use, Urban Design and Implementation Policies

With respect to the Planning and Design sub-group’s Recommendation 1 on page 8, we are concerned with the implications of the suggestion that the secondary plans incorporate land use, urban design and implementation policies that are generally compatible across the Centre. While we agree that general compatibility between the two portions of the Centre is desirable, the process of approval of the Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan should not be delayed in attempting to co-ordinate these matters.

Several fundamental factors should be considered including:

- the Langstaff Gateway lands are ready for development in the near term, whereas we understand the Richmond Hill lands are subject to lengthy leases on the present commercial uses which we understand will delay redevelopment opportunities for decades;
- the Calthorpe Plan is complete, and provides a detailed land use, urban design and implementation framework for the development of the Langstaff Gateway portion of the Centre, elements of which could be adapted to any future Master Plan on the Richmond Hill lands, if desirable;
- the Langstaff Gateway is physically separate from the Richmond Hill portion of the Centre by significant infrastructure elements including Highway 407 and 7, and the hydro corridor. Both portions are also in different municipalities, each subject to the evolving policy framework unique to each of the municipalities; and
- the build-out period for the Centre will be measured in decades over which time period it is likely that aspects relative to urban design, land use and

implementation will evolve to address the issues, policies and needs of the day which are presently unforeseeable.

Given these factors relative to timing and geography, the Langstaff Gateway and Richmond Hill Secondary Plan areas will develop their own distinct character over time both internally and as between themselves; however, both areas will also remain fundamentally complementary in terms of providing a high density development approach that is transit-dependant. This type of “natural diversity” is also desirable in order to avoid a ‘cookie-cutter’ approach to what is to become a dynamic urban node for the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Given the foregoing, any attempts to co-ordinate or control the process with respect to detailed aspects of the two areas at this point would result in unnecessary delay in the implementation of the Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan, which is necessary to start to “make the case” for the development of the transit infrastructure required to realize the transit-dependant vision for the Centre.

Issues with Respect to Density, Employee-to-Resident Ratio, and Phasing

With respect to Planning and Design sub-group’s Recommendation 2 on page 8, which are further expanded upon on page 9, we are concerned with the suggestion that the proposed density, mix of people and jobs and phasing is an issue.

Density

With respect to density and phasing, as noted above, the early implementation of the Langstaff Gateway is needed to start “making the case” for the extension of the subway, the creation of the 407 Transitway and other transit improvements planned for this area, without which the vision for either portions of this Centre will not be realized.

As further noted above, the Langstaff Gateway portion of the Centre is ready to start developing in the immediate term, whereas the majority of the Richmond Hill portion of the Centre will not likely be ready for redevelopment for decades. As such, the “burden” of starting to “make the case” for the necessary transit expansion to this Centre will fall almost entirely on the Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan area, which is well positioned to accommodate such densities given its location away from sensitive land uses such as stable neighbourhoods. Even if the Richmond Hill portion of the Centre was available for early development, it faces more significant challenges to implementing higher densities and height given its closer relationship to existing low rise residential areas.

Moreover, and fundamentally, this Urban Growth Centre will be at the crossroads of one of the most important transit hubs in the Greater Golden Horseshoe; as

such, it is appropriate to maximize these significant opportunities to capitalize on these public investments, wherever possible.

Given these facts, any potential “recalibration” of the densities in order to meet only the minimum requirements for a transit supportive community (as opposed to a transit-dependant community) as suggested at the bottom of page 9, is a significant concern.

Resident-to-Employee Ratios

With respect to employee-to-resident ratios, the proposed mix will provide for a significant amount of jobs (15,000). This level of planned employment is nearly equal to what is proposed for the Richmond Hill portion of the Centre’s proposed 16,000 jobs, even though the Richmond Hill portion has 33% more land area (70 hectares whereas the Langstaff Gateway portion is 47 hectares).

As such, while the amount of residential in the Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan will exceed the amount of jobs, it will not do so at the expense of employment given that, as noted in the report, the proposed density of the Secondary Plan will be in the order of 1,000 people and jobs per hectare which exceeds the minimum thresholds for Urban Growth Centres significantly, and exceeds what is planned in the Richmond Hill portion of the Centre. The additional residential uses will serve to bring a critical mass of people to this Centre thereby starting to “make the case” for increased transit investment and development throughout the Urban Growth Centre.

Moreover, the amount of planned transit will facilitate travel to and from the Centre, thereby allowing access for persons living in Langstaff Gateway to other areas of York Region for employment.

Phasing

With respect to phasing, the Calthorpe Plan and emerging Secondary Plan provides a detailed, balanced, and realistic implementation framework that includes timing and triggers for delivery of key infrastructure elements of the plan. We believe this level of detail is not available for meaningful implementation of the Richmond Hill portion of the Centre given the existing long term leases on much of the existing commercial uses which will preclude redevelopment of the area for decades.

The phasing for Langstaff Gateway distributes development between both the east and west ends of the Secondary Plan area in the first phase, which development can proceed without the requirement for the subway extension. During this phase, local transit service will be established to serve the development as explained in the Calthorpe Plan. During Phase I, no portion of the Secondary Plan will likely have access to rapid transit other than the GO train, which is at the centre of the Secondary Plan area and will therefore be relatively equidistant to both the east and west portions of Phase I. The second and third phases will not be allowed to proceed without completion of the subway

extension; however, as noted, the densities in the first phase will assist in starting to “make the case” for the subway (and other transit) extension to the Centre. In the final analysis, all portions of the Secondary Plan area will be well served by various forms of rapid transit within a short (10-15 minute) walking distance, and thus will maintain the “transit first” principle, as noted in the report.

In summary on these points, the Calthorpe Plan provides a detailed framework and compelling case for the proposed approach to density, mix of residents and jobs, and phasing. As such, we would be concerned with any additional process that would delay the approval of the Langstaff Gateway Secondary Plan.

Mobility Hub Location

We would like to clarify the statement made on page 9, paragraph 3, which notes Markham’s “issues regarding the location of the Mobility Hub” and that it proposes to “reposition the hub further south”. We would also like to address the Transportation Report’s “Council Attachment 2” which includes an aerial map of the Langstaff Gateway area and shows the “Mobility Hub” as being a limited area, well north of Highway 407.

According to Metrolinx in its “Big Move” plan, a Mobility Hub includes and encompasses the area within approximately 800 metres of a Major Transit Station, which area would include the majority of the Urban Growth Centre given the number of various rapid transit modes and their access points, and would not, therefore, be limited to the small geographic area as suggested in the report and associated map.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and look forward to working with you to address these matters.

Yours very truly,

Walker, Nott, Dragicevic, Associates Limited
Planning, Urban Design



Peter R. Walker, FCIP, RPP
Senior Principal and President

copy: Sam Balsamo, Condor Properties
Roger Beaman, Thomson, Rogers
Bryan Tuckey, MCIP, RPP, York Region