MHBC PLANNING URBAN DESIGN & LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Novmeber 27, 2024

City of Waterloo
100 Regina St. S
Waterloo, ON

Planning Justification Brief for 525 Conestogo Road
Zoning By-law Amendment
OUR FILE: 2417A

MHBC was retained by 65 Northfield Drive Inc. (the 'owner) to provide a planning opinion related to the occupation of an existing building on the property municipally known as 525 Conestogo Road in the City of Waterloo (hereinafter referred to as the "subject lands"). The subject lands contain an existing building, currently unoccupied, but transitioning towards a new tenant. The owner has leased the space to a new tenant, as previously discussed with City staff, that will manufacture pre-fabricated housing units within the building. No physical changes to the site are proposed. Although the lands are zoned Future Determination (FD) and the previous use of the lands was for manufacturing, this application is being advanced to align the zoning with the Official Plan and to clarify that outdoor storage is permitted.

This Planning Justification Brief assesses the planning framework relative to the proposed use of the lands and includes the following:

- An introduction and general description of the subject lands, surrounding uses and existing conditions to provide an understanding of the locational and policy context;
- Overview of the proposed development and application;
- Review of existing policy framework and assessment of consistency with the Provincial Planning Statement, Regional Official Plan and the City of Waterloo Official Plan; and
- Description of the proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment.

Site Context and Surrounding Land Uses

The subject lands are located on the west side of Conestogo Road West, south of Northfield Drive West and south of the property municipally addressed as 565 Conestogo Road West, as shown in Figure 1. The two municipally addresses (525 Conestogo Road West and 565 Conestogo Road West) are divided by an existing hydro corridor that traverses the lands. As staff is aware, 565 Conestogo Road West is currently being used for industrial purposes on the southerly portion of the lands, while the entire parcel is subject to planning applications that are before the Ontario Land Tribunal.

As noted above, the subject lands are developed with an existing building that has historically been used for industrial purposes, including for manufacturing. The site contains surface parking and truck parking areas, with the balance of the lands undeveloped.

The subject lands are generally surrounded by employment uses to the immediate north, east and south; and Highway 85 to the west. A broad range of commercial uses are located within walking distance to both the east and west, including the City's regional serving Conestoga Mall. Two ION LRT stations are also within walking distance: the Conestoga Station to the east and the Northfield Station to the west. Lands to the north are proposed for a mix of residential and non-residential uses, subject to the resolution of the above noted applications.

Proposed Development

As noted above, and discussed previously with City staff, the owner has leased the building as a new light manufacturing use that constructs prefabricated housing units. The Zoning By-law Amendment would align the zone on the lands (Business Employment) with the Official Plan designation (also Business Employment). No other changes are proposed. The Zoning By-law Amendment will both recognize past uses of the lands, with the proposed new tenant and allow them to operate in the same manner as other employment uses.

PLANNING ANALYSIS

Provincial Planning Statement (2024)

On August 20, 2024, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS, 2024) which took effect on October 20, 2024. The 2024 PPS replaces
both the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020.

The Provincial Planning Statement provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. As a key part of Ontario's policy-led planning system, the Provincial Planning Statement sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land province-wide, helping achieve the provincial goal of meeting the needs of a fast-growing province while enhancing the quality of life for all Ontarians.

Section 2.8.1 requires that planning authorities promote economic development and competitiveness by: a) providing for an appropriate mix and range of employment, institutional, and broader mixed uses to meet long-term needs; b) providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses;

The application to rezone the lands from Future Determination to Business Employment clarifies the permitted uses and regulations for the site and allows the future tenant to operate the business in the same manner as other surrounding employment uses with the Business Employment zone. The application supports economic development and competitiveness, allows a range of uses and widens the range of economic activities in the city. In our opinion, the application is consistent with the 2024 PPS.



Figure 1:

Aerial Site Location Plan

LEGEND

Subject Lands

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north

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525 Conestogo Rd W
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Region of Waterloo Official Plan

The Region of Waterloo's Official Plan (ROP) was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, with modifications, on December 22, 2010, and approved with amendments by Oral Decision of the Ontario Municipal Board on June 18, 2015. Regional Official Plan Amendment 6 (ROPA 6), which establishes the planning framework for accommodating forecasted population and employment growth within the Region to 2051, has been approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. ROPA 6 established a new policy framework for Chapter 2 – Where and How to Grow of the ROP as well as new housing policies in Section 3.A, among other policy matters.

The Regional Official Plan provides policy direction at the regional level (upper-tier), with the general objectives of supporting transit, developing complete communities, protecting the natural environment and resources, conserving cultural heritage, and respecting the scale, physical character and context of established neighbourhoods.

The lands are located within the Regional Employment Area, as shown in Figure 2, where employment uses are planned for and permitted. The Zoning Bylaw Amendment conforms to the Regional Official Plan by zoning the lands for employment uses.

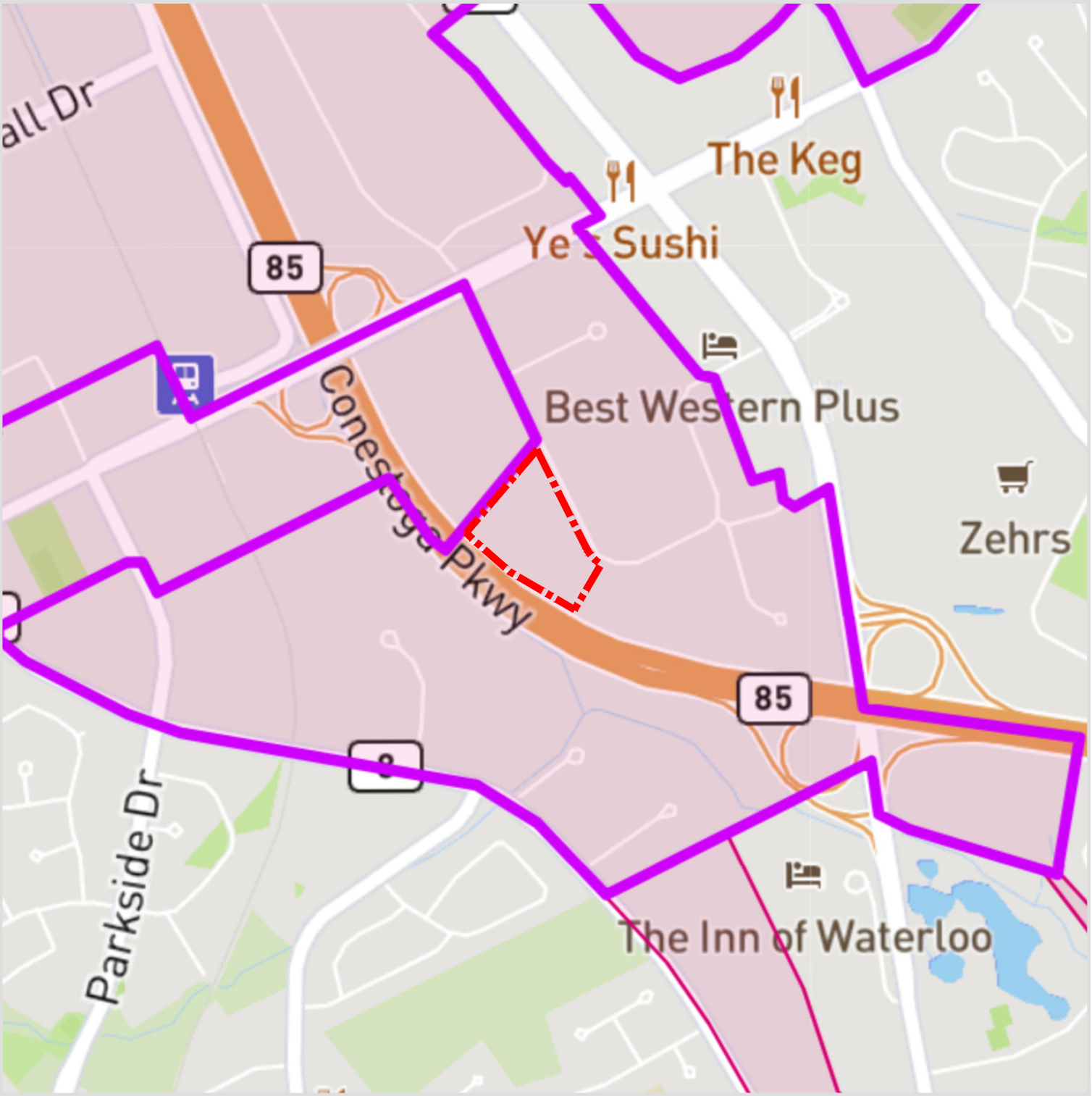


Figure 2:

Region of Waterloo Regional Employment Areas

525 Conestogo Rd W
City of Waterloo
Region of Waterloo

LEGEND

- Subject Lands
- Regional Employment Area - Endorsed Draft
- Other Lands Designated for Employment

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Z:\2417A 565 CONESTOGO RD. W, WATERLOO\RPT\WATERLOO EMPLOYMENT AREA PLAN.DWG

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City of Waterloo Official Plan

The City's Official Plan sets out policies that direct growth and change until 2031. The City of Waterloo is currently undertaking a phased review of its 2012 Official Plan.

As shown in Figure 3 & 4, the subject lands are designated Employment on Schedule A and Business Employment on Schedule A2 of the Official Plan. The lands are also designated Medium Density Employment 27 metres on Schedule B1.

The Business Employment designation permits a range of employment and ancillary commercial uses, including light manufacturing. The previous and proposed uses of the lands are permitted in the Business Employment designation. The Zoning Bylaw Amendment seeks to zone the lands Business Employment to implement the existing Official Plan land use designation. No other changes are proposed.

In our opinion, the Zoning By-law Amendment to rezone the lands from Future Determination (FD) to Business Employment (E2-27) conforms to the Official Plan.

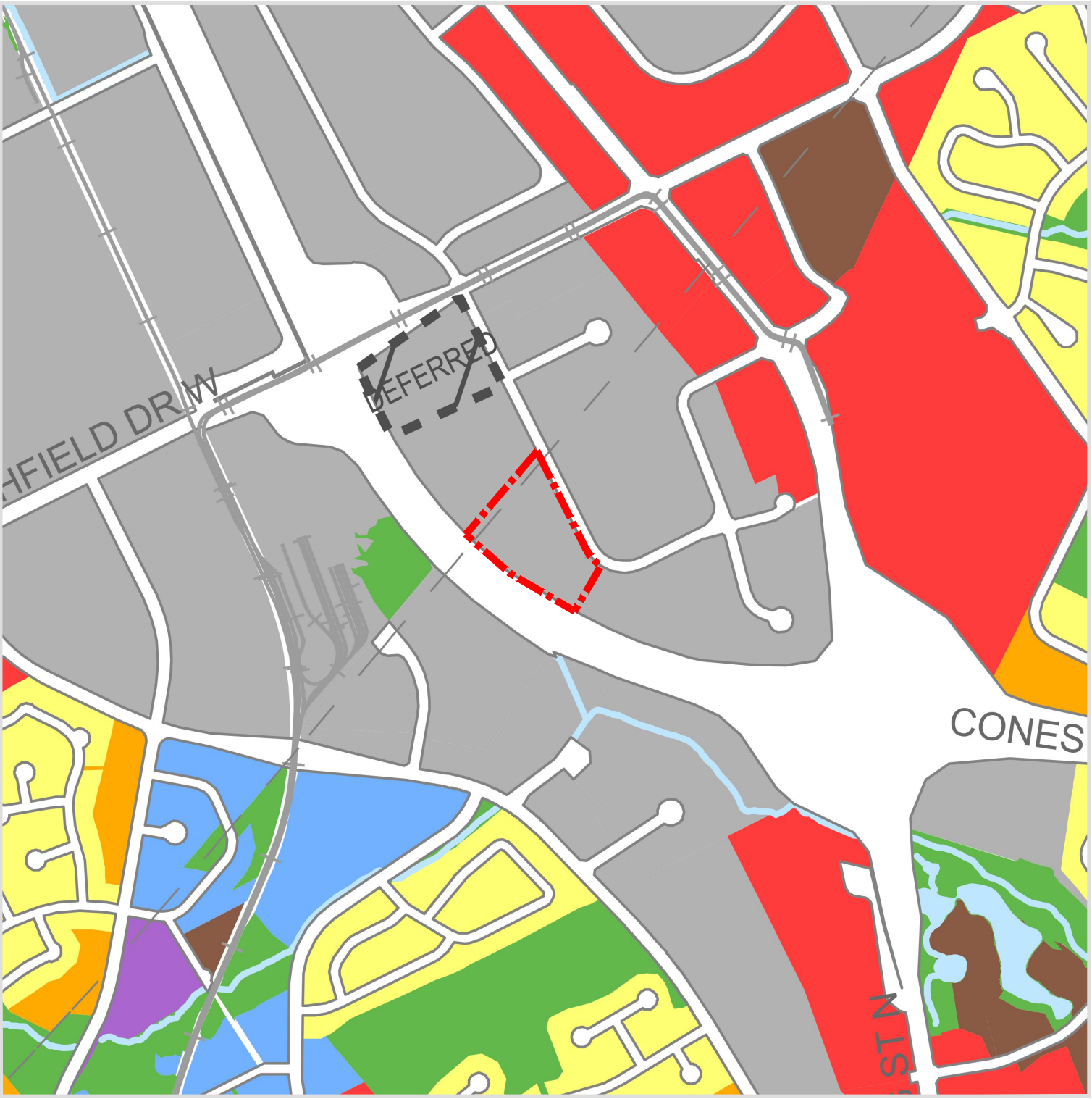


Figure 3:

The City of Waterloo Official Plan Schedule 'A' Land Use Plan

525 Conestogo Rd W
City of Waterloo
Region of Waterloo

LEGEND

Subject Lands

- Low Density Residential
- Mixed-Use Medium Density Residential
- Mixed-Use Medium High Density Residential
- Mixed-Use High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Employment
- Major Institutional
- Open Space
- Rural
- Urban Area Boundary
- Uptown Waterloo Urban Growth Centre
- Future Node

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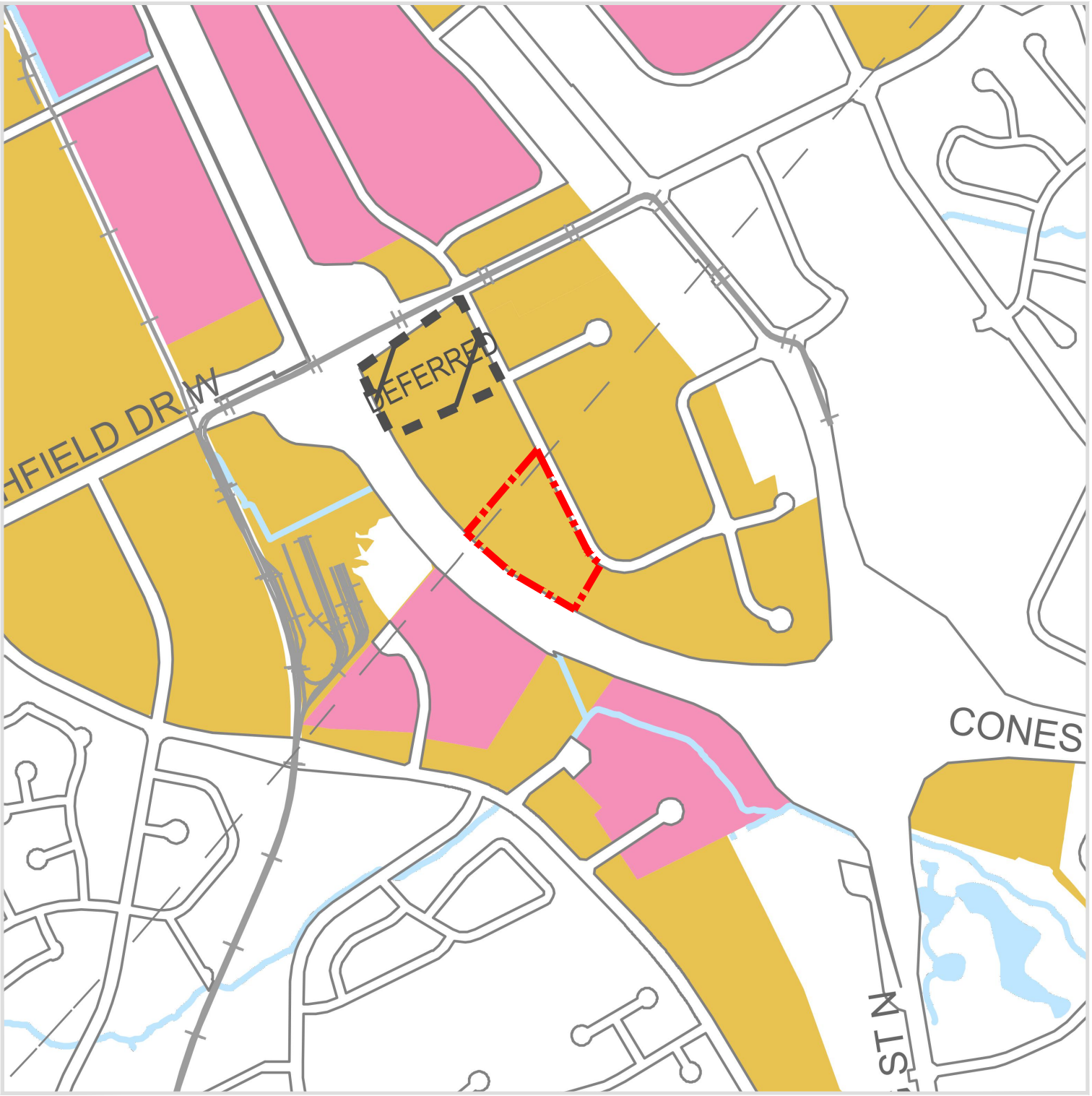


Figure 4:

The City of Waterloo Official Plan Schedule 'A2' Employment Areas

525 Conestogo Rd W
City of Waterloo
Region of Waterloo

LEGEND

Subject Lands

Uptown Waterloo Urban Growth Centre

Employment Areas

- Academic
- Business Employment
- Flexible Industrial

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City of Waterloo Zoning By-Law 2018-050

The subject lands are currently zoned 'Future Determination' in the City of Waterloo Zoning By-Law 2018-050 as shown in Figure 5. The 'Future Determination' zone only permits a use, building or structure that legally existed on the lands on the effective date of the By-law. As previously discussed with the City, the lands were used for manufacturing at the time the 2018 By-law was approved, and as such, the use is permitted.

However, the FD zone is otherwise a restrictive zone and does not allow for growth or change, nor does it allow for the staging and/or outdoor storage of finished products manufactured within the building, unless that staging/storage occurred prior to the passing of the By-law. In order to address this uncertainty, clarify the permitted uses (including outdoor storage) and allow for growth and change of the lands, a Zoning By-law Amendment is required to rezone the lands to the Business Employment-27 (E2-27) zone.

No site-specific provisions are proposed, as the building exists. It is acknowledged that outdoor storage is permitted, subject to other regulations including location within side or rear yard and screening from the street.

In our opinion, the Zoning By-law Amendment is a straightforward implementation of the existing Official Plan land use designation and will allow for the new light manufacturing tenant to both occupy the building and operate their business within a more appropriate zoning framework.

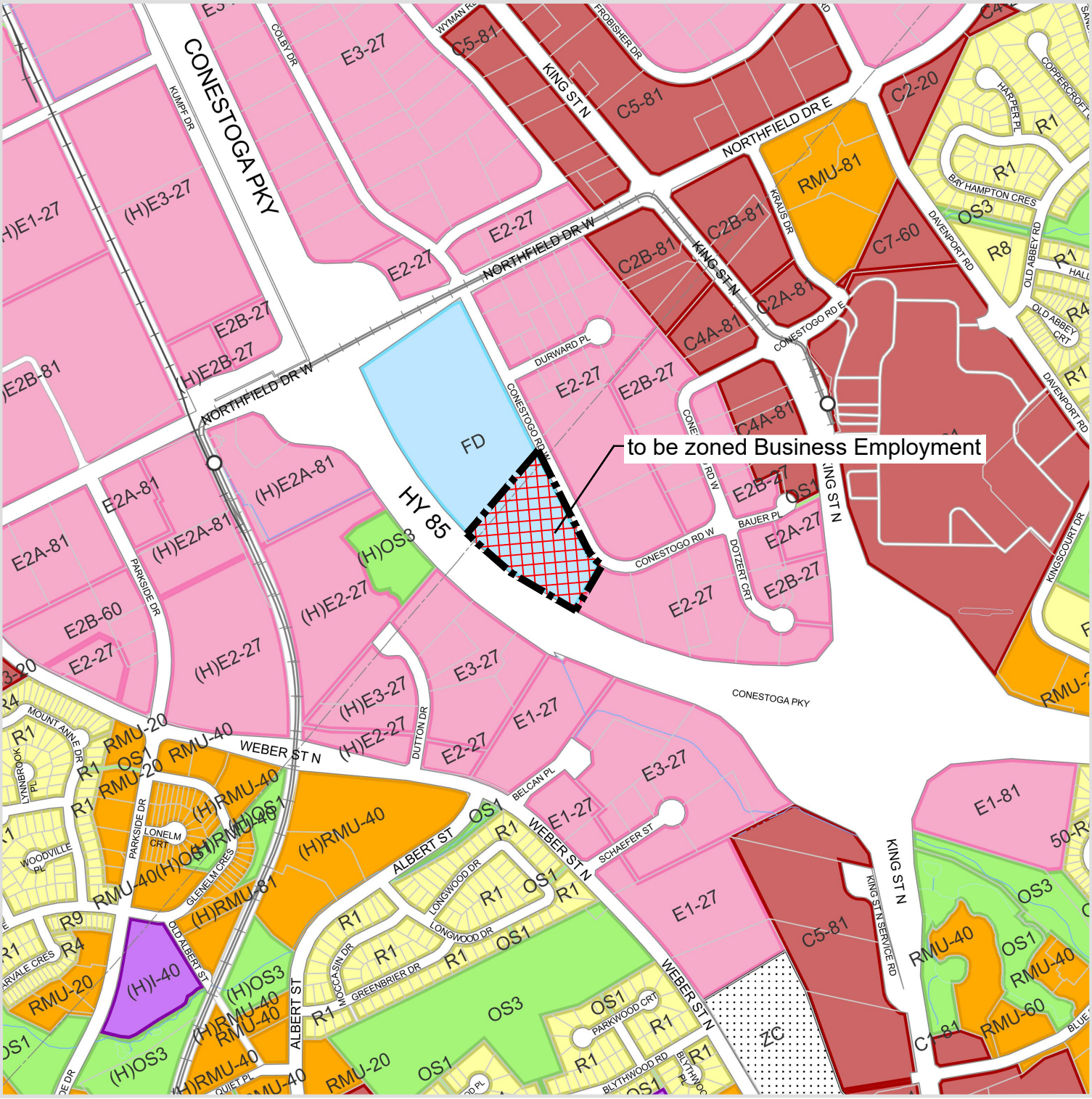


Figure 5:

The City of Waterloo Official Plan Schedule 'A2' Employment Areas

525 Conestogo Rd W
City of Waterloo
Region of Waterloo

LEGEND

Subject Lands

- Academic
- Institutional
- Educational Institution
- School
- Residential
- Residential Mixed-Use
- Residential Northdale
- Open Space
- Environmentally Sensitive Landscape
- Commercial
- Uptown
- Employment
- Waste Management
- Future Determination
- Zone Change

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CONCLUSION

In summary, the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA) is appropriate and represents good planning for the following reasons:

- The ZBA considers the planning objectives and policies outlined in the 2024 PPS and supports the policy direction of promoting economic development and competitiveness by allowing for a mix of employment uses within the proposed area.
- The lands are located within the Region of Waterloo Employment Area where employment uses are planned for and permitted.
- The ZBA conforms to the City of Waterloo Official Plan and implements the Business Employment land use designation.
- The ZBA will allow the light manufacturing tenant to operate their business under a more appropriate zoning framework and allow for growth in the future.
- The application will facilitate the occupation of a vacant employment building, with a new user that will both contribute jobs towards the Station Area target and produce housing units that can assist with the provision of housing in the City and Region.

Yours truly,
MHBC



Trevor Hawkins, M.PL, MCIP, RPP
Partner