

Bid for large complex in King City met with trepidation

By Mark PavilonsEditorLocal Journalism Initiative

A revamped proposal for an apartment complex in King City — much bigger than a previous bid — has been met with some trepidation by members of the public and council alike. A virtual public meeting was held recently, to hear about the plans by 2472498 Ontario Inc. to build a six-storey, 161-apartment building at the corner of Elizabeth Grove and Keele Street. The plan also calls for 281 square metres of ground-floor commercial space. Parking will be provided in three underground levels, along with 12 spots at grade. Access to the site will include two full-turn driveways, one from Clearview Crescent and another from Elizabeth Grove. The owners first applied in 2016, for a plan that included 48 stacked townhouses in two, four-storey buildings. This meeting was the first time residents had a chance to comment on the newest proposal. This application presents some challenges, largely because previous amendments to the Official Plan and zoning bylaw were appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. While this proceeds through the process, the new plan was set in motion through the mandatory public meeting. The lands are designated 'core area' and existing commercial in the King City Community Plan. This allows for developments of this nature, with a maximum height of three stories. King's new Official Plan, however, does permit a six-storey maximum in certain circumstances. Also, under the new OP, this area will be designated as 'Transit Station Area,' which encourages residential development with limited amounts of commercial and others uses. Staff is currently reviewing the plan, and will update council on the LPAT hearing. While residents like the idea of replacing the existing garage with residential development, this new bid isn't remotely close to the original one. This new application is treated as any proposal to the Township and will be dealt with separately from the LPAT matter. Murray Evans, consultant for the applicant, noted the appeal was submitted under the former OMB rules. He noted the application has changed significantly since that appeal was filed. The applicant purchased more land in the area, and that's why he increased the magnitude of the project. They will include mostly 1- and 2-bedroom units of roughly 500 square feet. Evans pointed out that council did, in fact, approve a 6-storey complex nearby so there is a precedent. He admitted, though, that every proposal is reviewed on its own merits. Resident Daiana Silvestre said King City is experiencing exponential growth. The grandeur of this particular building doesn't fit in with the surrounding community and it will bring in many more residents, putting more pressure on the village. She questions whether King City can accommodate such new growth. She doesn't feel this building is aligned with the vision for King City. Resident Dennis Mooney said the first was rejected by council and this new one will be larger than anything existing in King City. It's simply too big and too intrusive. Intensification aside, Mooney argued it's too close to Keele and the impact to traffic it will bring will be enormous. A Clearview resident said the mass and scale of this new plan will be detrimental to the community. Local streets aren't designed to handle the increased traffic. Bruno Artenosi said while residents want the site redeveloped, this is an 'anomaly.' Provincial policy, he said, doesn't give developers 'carte blanche to build to the extreme.' He would like the applicant to meet with area residents to discuss the proposal. 'They can do better,' he said. 'We want and deserve better attention.' Mayor Steve Pellegrini told Evans since the residents are willing to meet, he urged the applicant to take them up on the offer. This would be a good opportunity to 'mend some fences' and talk about the design. Councillor Jordan Cescolini, too, urged Evans to ask his client to meet with residents and address their concerns. He wanted a firm commitment, but Evans couldn't provide that during the virtual meeting. Councillor Debbie Schaefer observed that all of King City is concerned about this development and its potential impacts. Other developments, she pointed out, have made an effort to fit in and complement the streetscape.