

Development should reflect character of Hambly House

By Mark Pavilons



Continuing the heritage look in Nobleton is important to residents.

Preserving and enhancing the iconic Hambly House, and carrying the theme through to new developments, are paramount. Residents voiced their opinions recently, on preliminary plans for a residential development adjacent to the historic house. Nobleton Heritage Development Inc. is looking for a zoning amendment to allow for mixed use development on the 1.8-acre property. Their plan is to build two, three-storey buildings with 45 apartments, and 2,565 square feet of commercial space. The plan is to maintain and improve Hambly House itself, and hopefully use it for office space. The plan also calls for 75 above-ground and 45-below ground parking spaces.

Phase one includes restoring the Hambly House and building a 5-unit residential structure, with 458 feet of commercial space, fronting onto King Road.

Township staff noted the lands consist of five lots, anchored by the Hambly House. The other lands are currently vacant.

The Nobleton Community Plan allows for a wider range of housing options and while servicing is limited, it can accommodate some development on a phased-in basis. There's enough water/sewer capacity to accommodate the first phase, but the second phase would have to be on hold until sufficient servicing is available. This proposal would be twice the recommended density level.

Staff pointed out they are concerned about maintaining the character of the village.

‘The guidelines consist of recommended design concepts that are based on several principles, including promoting a high quality of built form while recognizing the unique qualities found within Nobleton,’ the staff report noted. ‘New buildings should reflect the scale and form of the historic qualities of the village with structures generally being two to three storeys with pitched roofs, dormer features, windows, eaves and front entrances ...’

Emphasis is put on making the new development complementary to the Hambly House. The entire property is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, so the proponents are asking for an amendment to protect the Hambly House and its immediate surroundings. Staff concerns include the density and the sheer size of the second building. Staff recommends it be split into smaller buildings and attention be paid to a more architecturally pleasing facade. Staff is asking that the applicant revisit some of the engineering and layout details of the site.

Mark McConville, Humphries Planning Group, noted this development will benefit Nobleton and provide employment opportunities. The client will preserve the Hambly House, which will enhance its visual attractiveness.

Councillor David Boyd said there's a general willingness to see this property redeveloped, ‘but we have to get it right.’ He, too, is concerned with traffic, and the scale of the large building.

A Hawman Avenue resident, who recently completed his 4,500-square-foot home is concerned about the new project. He's worried the new development will overpower his home and neighbouring homes. He'd like to see more of a buffer, with added trees. The Hambly House, he argued, should be the highest building on this parcel, and not be dwarfed by this project.

Another Hawman resident said all the homes on this street will be impacted and existing homeowners should be afforded some privacy.

Jennifer Sanginesi, who sits on the Heritage Advisory Committee, is concerned about the impact of the streetscape in Nobleton. It's a fantastic opportunity, she pointed out, to leave a mark with a creative facade.

Sanginesi took the liberty of creating some amazing sketches, presenting an alternative redesign of the building. It provides a beautiful rendition, while maintaining the interior size and number of units. In her concept, she included visual elements that exist on the exterior of the Hambly House.

She and others are very passionate about how Nobleton evolves. "We want the next Kleinburg," she said.

Resident Susan Beharriell said the "devil is in the details," and she'd like buffer zones and setbacks increased in this prime location.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini pointed out this is the first proposal and now is the opportunity for staff and the proponent to sit down and work on the details. Hopefully, they will come back "with something we can all be proud of."