

# Townhouse development on Keele deemed too dense

By Mark Pavilons

A proposed townhouse development on Keele will be going back to the drawing board, after recommendations from King staff and councillors.

The public had an opportunity to see the initial application by King Keele Developments (Stateview Homes) at a public meeting March 18. Local opposition centred around the density of the development, as well as traffic impacts.

The applicants are looking at building a 56-unit townhouse complex on Keele, just north of Dennison near King City.

The applicants are hoping to develop the 4.32-acre parcel, which currently supports five detached homes. They submitted an Official Plan amendment, zoning bylaw amendment and draft plans for the project. They are looking at 56 freehold units, in 11 blocks, with 34 rear-lane townhouses and 22 traditional townhouse units. The three-storey buildings will have two parking spots each, along with visitor parking. The property will have a re-naturalized environmental buffer.

A large portion of the development would run parallel to Keele and residents argued it would not be in keeping with the character of the community.

Staff had several concerns regarding the proposal, namely the density of the units and the small buffer zones. The Township is adamant about its 30-metre buffer zone.

The Township has consistently emphasized the 'environment first' principle of the KCCP and the need to reflect this principle in the planning and consideration of development,' staff wrote.

Staff also wanted the applicant to review the height of the buildings, with hopes of incorporating the third floor within the roof lines. Adam Grossi, of the Humphries Planning Group, represented the applicant. He noted the vegetative buffer is currently not serving its purpose and while the plan shows a small buffer, it would function much better than what's currently in place. He said they hope to have the application return to council for consideration approval some time in April.

A public open house on the matter was held last December and staff received many comments from residents. Their concerns included the overall number of the units, concerns with buffer encroachments, traffic congestion, the height of the buildings, and more.

Aside from the concerns, Councillor Jordan Cescolini was upset that units were already advertised for sale online, which is a contravention of the Planning Act. He asked Grossi directly if his clients had posted the information, but Grossi was unclear about the source.

The lands are currently zoned low density in the King City Community Plan, and that's why the proponents are asking to change it to medium density, which permits 10 units per acre. King's new Official Plan, which is nearing completion, will allow townhouses in this area.

The applicant submitted several studies supporting the bid, including an arborist report and traffic impact study. The traffic study indicates the development may generate 32 two-way trips during peak morning hours, and 37 trips during the afternoon rush.

Staff's concerns also included the width of the internal roadways, currently shown at 6 metres. The Township recommends 7.5-metre-wide internal roads.

More information is also needed regarding hydrogeology and stormwater management.

Based on these, staff has concerns that the proposed density of the site is too high and the applicant should look to reduce the number of units. The proponent is encouraged to explore all opportunities to alter the development to achieve a full 30 metres across the entire buffer area without any offsets.

Staff want to continue to work with the applicant to address all the concerns and staff will report back to council with their recommendations.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini said he hopes the applicant will work with the residents and find a 'workable middle ground.'

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said if the applicant works with staff to revamp the proposal, it could be 'something very positive.'

Councillor Bill Cober was concerned with the lack of parking, which is something they always take seriously.

A Humber Valley Crescent man said there are 'way too many' units in this plan.

A Norman Drive resident said he enjoys the community's green spaces and this will have negative impacts on the neighbourhood.

He added most townhouse garages simply don't accommodate average size cars, so the parking calculations are off.

A Clearview Heights homeowner said density, lot coverage, stormwater and traffic all need to be reviewed.

Bruce Craig, on behalf of Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT), said there's a need for collaboration and some give and take. There are opportunities for "things to happen" and CCKT has supported mixed housing options, including townhouses. He did, however, say there are too many units in this plan and he asked for a variety of unit sizes.

Another Humber Valley Crescent homeowner said the King and Keele intersection is already "dangerous," and this would exacerbate the problem.

"There's one chance to do the right thing," he told councillors.

A 44-year Dennison Street resident said this project will devalue existing properties, and will only increase parking woes on side streets such as Dennison.

Cescolini advised the applicant to work with the Township to "set the bar" and he wouldn't support anything shy of the highest community standards.