

Residents concerned about density, access and traffic from two new developments

By Mark Pavilons

Kingscross residents are united in their concerns over two proposed residential developments.

Citizens showed up en masse at the May 13 King council meeting, to express their concerns that these projects will forever affect local water resources and impact residents and environmentally sensitive features.

Led by members of the Kingscross Ratepayers' Association (KRA), residents presented comments and expert evaluations on the impacts of two adjacent projects in the King and Jane area ? Mansions of King and Bushland Heights.

The staff reports were presented to council for information only, and outlined the applications and issues. Staff pointed out that proponent for Mansions of King has already filed an appeal to the LPAT for a hearing this coming August.

Mansions of King proposes 313 residential units of single and medium density units and staff have been working with the developer on several issues. They include consideration of King's current OP?review; density; environmental buffers; well impacts; coordination with neighbouring developments, and more.

Staff admitted the applicant vows to continue to work with the Township before the LPAT?hearings, to revise the project and address outstanding issues.

That was echoed by Bruce Ketcheson, representing his client, Mansions of King. He said his client takes all of the issues raised seriously and they're trying to avoid disputes by working together with staff and residents. Their cooperation is clear in the number of revisions made since the public meeting and he said progress has been made. He stressed they're prepared to sit down with members of KRA and discuss the concerns, including well protection, natural protection and access via Manitou Drive.

He said the applicant is fully aware of the need to protect the environment and the importance of the buffer zones.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini pointed out that since the matter will head to the LPAT in August, in some ways the Township's hands are tied. Public input, like that provided at the May 13 meeting, will definitely be included in staff's submission. He stressed that King is only one layer of government and mandates from the Province impact planning decisions. There's still work to be done and expert views from conservation authorities, MNR, etc. will provide direction.

Councillor Avia Eek pointed out any development is about ?balance? and she's adamant that natural heritage areas and wetlands should not be tampered with.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer noted these two projects are unique compared to other developments in King City.

Bushland Heights proposes 88 single detached houses and staff have also been working with the applicant since the 2018 public meeting. Again, the applicant has appealed it to the LPAT, and hearings are slated for this November.

Issues with Bushland are similar to those with Mansions, and include density, buffers, well impacts, etc.

Unlike Mansions, the Bushland proponent has not submitted any revisions to address concerns raised by staff or the public.

Staff believe that both developments should be coordinated in some way. The draft plan for Mansions of King proposes a connection to Manitou and this is a major issue with residents.

Ian Hilley, of KRA, said the group is dead set against any access via Manitou. The existing roads in Kingscross are hilly and winding and there are no sidewalks. They simply can't accommodate more traffic.

The Mansions development occupies the land directly behind Manitou Drive and Champlain Crescent. It slopes down to the south and west toward the East Humber River.

There have been issues post-construction for the established homes on Chelsea Lane along the boundary of Kingscross. Such issues need to be avoided should Mansions proceed, he observed.

If Manitou Drive sits within the flood plain of the East Humber River, and given today's growing frequency of weather events it is not beyond anyone's imagination that there could be serious issues with flooding.

He presented a petition signed by 196 residents in Kingscross.

Mary Muter, chair of KRA, quoted environmental consultant Bob Bowles:

?The new high contraction of the housing development to the east will now flush fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, pet waste, road salt, sand and silt, oil and gas spills and other contaminants involved with development into the Provincially Significant Wetland on the property. ?

She noted KRA called upon former Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller for his evaluation. Miller said this location is a biodiversity hot spot and is a hub of a broader landscape feature, providing a linkage to Mary Lake and the core of the East Humber Valley natural heritage corridor from east to west.

Of major concern is the fact that these lands are the centre of a three directional natural heritage system, which extends to the east, west and north up to Mary Lake, all of which are natural ecological and wildlife corridors. If development is permitted as proposed, it may result in the removal of the core of the natural heritage system.

Manitou Drive resident Rosalind Elson said in no really meaningful way do the Mansions and Bushland Heights plans reflect present or future reality. They reflect the past.

As a minimum, buffer zones have to be respected because they are there to protect natural features. They may be inconvenient but they must be non-negotiable. The same goes for densities. There is land that can take more than 7 dwelling units per hectare, but this particular piece is not it.

Elson contends these lands are porous and hilly. Water flows into it from the large wetland systems north of it. Building on this alters the landscape and changes the Moraine itself.

The time to start acting differently from the old, thoughtless ways of abusing the earth, is now. These developments represent huge changes to the land, the water, the trees, the animals, fish, amphibians and birds that live on it. The drainage, the ecosystem, will be there is no other suitable word harmed.

Manitou Drive resident Hans Martin said he already sees the impacts of runoff in his own back yard, stressing it will only be compounded by the new developments.

Bruce Craig, representing Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT), said we need to have big-picture planning that includes a high level of stewardship. Grid planning, he said, totally overlooks the natural environment. These proposals are a classic example of tailoring the development to the land that's there.

He pointed out the King City Community Plan supports the highest and best use of the land.

Aurora resident Susan Walmer pointed out municipalities can choose and enforce their own densities. Townships like King should ensure that development does not negatively impact the Oak Ridges Moraine. Municipalities have stood up to developers to protect the ORM and we should respect our ecological integrity.