

Council eases off finalizing Neighbourhood Plans for King City, Nobleton

By Mark PavilonsEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter

An update on the revitalization of two local neighbourhoods filled the King council chambers last week, as residents voiced their concerns about future development and intensification. Council, led by Mayor Steve Pellegrini, decided to ease off on pushing forward with the conceptual Neighbourhood Plans, for the Doctors Lane and Old King Road Study Areas. The plan will be pushed ahead for final review in 2025. Pellegrini told the audience council is not trying to rush the matter and with the help of the consultant, they will "get this right." He said everyone on council has the same dream and vested interests in the community as the public. He pointed out the Province is telling municipalities to plan out to 2051 and they have to come up with a plan. The Neighbourhood Plans are trying to create a vision. He also noted that 99% of King is Greenbelt, so it's off the table. That leaves only the urban centres for development. Councillor Jordan Cescolini said there seems to be a fundamental miscommunication on what the Plans are trying to achieve. It's difficult to plan out to 2051 and in the current form, the concept is not the best solution. He's asked for another open house to gather public input and suggestions on the plan. Councillor Debbie Schaefer said King has a lot of valuable land and we have to look at it all in context, in totality. Councillor David Boyd said we have to make the best use of our space with a long-term planning vision. He also supported taking extra time for the plan to avoid making mistakes. In the works for the past couple of years, the project is an "exciting opportunity to create forward-looking plans that will support place-making, provide necessary facilities to support complete communities, and facilitate growth in the Township's priority areas," staff said. But it was the intensity of growth, and potential for six-storey buildings that raised the eyebrows of the community. King City resident Kyle Tobin said some of the projections will see the heart of King City lost and its small town charm diminished. The community plan puts King City's intimate fabric at risk. The village, he predicts, will be "gutted" by high-density proposals. "Why expand if we lose the essence of King City?" he asked. He urged staff and council to go back to the drawing board with a new plan that allows for progress, but still keeps the community's "soul." He wants solutions that preserve the village's identity. In what he describes as a "vibe of disconnect," he wants more meaningful dialogue on the issue. These sentiments were echoed by Springhill resident Tony Gianbattista, who said large-scale development threatens the small town feel. Councillor Jennifer Anstey did point out that the Province dictates growth and says they're to be concentrated in urban areas. Bruce Craig, on behalf of Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT), noted a healthy community is a walkable one. CCKT supports the initiative by King Township to draft and implement Neighbourhood Plans for the core areas of King City and Nobleton. This is a very timely planning process as both King City and Nobleton are undergoing significant growth and redevelopment. While CCKT commends King policy planning staff and Dillon consultants for carrying out a robust process to engage the public and receive thoughtful input from residents, things need to be put in perspective. It's evident, he said, there's a need for more diversity in housing and commercial opportunities in King City and Nobleton. Recent planning policy and many comments from the public in this planning process clearly call for what are termed "complete" communities, with appropriate intensification, diversification in housing including "affordable housing," mixed uses, walkability, municipal public spaces for people to gather, retaining key heritage resources and the repurposing of municipal buildings and spaces. Housing diversification has been a major theme in the workshops, open houses and comments received in the planning process, and is well-reflected in the draft concept plans. "In our view housing diversification includes small-scale bungalows, duplexes, semi-detached units and small-scale townhouses clustered together around common green spaces with good walkable connections to amenities. The need for affordable units in King Township is apparent, so that young adults, seniors and others may stay and live in their home communities of King City and Nobleton. "How will we ensure that 25% of the newly built units are "affordable?" Diversified housing also includes both rental and condominium units, whether ground units or low rise multi-unit buildings, units that can accommodate a variety of households from singles up to families with several children. Mayor Pellegrini said residents may be "shocked" to hear just what "affordable" means in King. Staff noted according to data, \$610,000 per unit (likely a condo) is deemed affordable. But finding something in that price range in King is next to impossible. CCKT supports the inclusion of outdoor and indoor public gathering places that are attractive and inviting for people in all stages of their lives. A well-designed "commons" with safe connections helps to build a healthy community and supports local businesses. Transforming the King City Arena parking lot into a public "piazza" with activated commercial frontages and multi-unit buildings with residential units facing the open space is an excellent idea for creating a hub. King Road, especially through King City, is not a

suitable or safe place for pedestrians. CCKT is encouraged to see the inclusion of new pedestrian walkways that connect residential and commercial buildings in the core areas of King City and Nobleton away from major roadways, and the promotion of ?active transportation.?The group is concerned, however, to see virtually all proposed buildings in the core areas potentially at six storeys in height.?We would like to see a variety of heights and attractive tiering on buildings be incorporated into the plans.?CCKT??heartily? support the strong focus on retaining heritage structures, adaptive reuse, and incorporating them into the design, site plan and construction of new buildings in the core areas.?Along with countless residents and businesses in King, CCKT shares the vision for creating complete communities that offer diversified housing, attractive well-used public spaces, a variety of helpful amenities, sustainable businesses and extensive landscaping with trees and shrubs that are well-integrated in the core,? Craig said.Nobleton resident Tony Varanese said the plan seems to be rushed, and that six-storey buildings should not be the norm in that village.Ivan Rappa, head of the King United Soccer Club, expressed concerned for a lack of consultation regarding current and future recreation facilities. The club uses the outdated Dome at The Country?Day School, and is also looking to the future, when soccer fields may be added to the grounds at the Zancor Centre.Following spring 2024 open houses, the Study Areas for each Neighbourhood Plan were revised to include additional lands based on feedback received from landowners, the community and council.Public consultation sessions (Community Open Houses) on the draft Neighbourhood Plans were held Sept. 10 and 12 to seek additional community feedback on the draft conceptual plans, prior to their presentation to council.The conceptual Neighbourhood Plans are proposed to be implemented through a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS), which requires an Official Plan Amendment and Community Planning Permit By-law (CPP By-law).Back in 2023, the Township retained Dillon Consulting to assist with the development of the Doctors Lane and Old King Road Neighbourhood Plans Study and the development of a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS).Council previously made decisions regarding the municipal lands in Nobleton which are included in the Study Area. The Old King Road Study Area includes the Dr. William Lacey Community Centre & Arena and, the Nobleton Lions Community (NLC) Park. The NLC Park is subject to a redevelopment plan which was presented to council in March 2023. The Old King Road Study Area also includes the Nobleton Community Hall (NCH). The retention of the NCH in its present location and as a property designated under the Ontario Heritage Act was council in February 2024.The Doctors Lane and Old King Road Neighbourhood Plans Study, and the development of the implementing CPPS, is structured as five (5) phases. Phase 1 concluded in Q1 2024 with the public launch of the SpeaKING project page and introductory video. Phase 2 finished in May 2024 with the presentation to council of the draft Directions Report and draft Study Areas.Staff pointed out that public engagement is vital to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plans are reflective of the desires, wants and needs of the community. Engagement has occurred, and will continue to occur, in each phase of the Project.The draft conceptual Neighbourhood Plans are presented in a Storymap format. This includes an overview of what a Neighbourhood Plan is, what has informed the Neighbourhood Plans, the final Vision Statements for each Study Area and, the Key Themes that were heard through the community engagement.Neighbourhood Plans help to shape new and existing neighbourhoods by planning for the future core elements that make up a community, including:Existing and potential future land use; open space; design elements; transportation and active transportation networks, and municipal servicing.The concept provides several opportunities to facilitate adaptive reuse of existing and heritage buildings, and looks to protect and enhance natural heritage features.The concept looks to promote and prioritize the movement of non-motorized vehicles for visitors, walking, cycling, etc.Pedestrian zones and pedestrian crossings are identified.The concept looks to prioritize and promote mixed use developments with strategic ground floor commercial and retail uses to activate the streetscape.The concept looks to provide a variety of housing options to allow for more affordable and diversified options for residents. Locations with development potential up to 3 storeys, primarily in the form of low-rise apartments and townhouse dwelling units are identified to provide a transition in built form between the Village Core and Established Neighbourhood.Locations for parking, parking with permeable pavers, potential locations for underground parking, and loading connections are identified through symbology. New parking areas with access from King Road, Parkview Drive, and Janet Avenue are shown.Potential locations for community space and a potential community square abutting Doctors Lane are noted. Locations are identified for flexible outdoor event spaces, public art, and other community amenities, including playgrounds, outdoor fitness areas and potential privately owned public spaces (POPs).The concept looks to promote and prioritize non-motorized vehicle movements for visitors to walk, cycle, etc. Pedestrian routes are shown between Doctor Lane and Fisher Street, as well as areas that are proposed to form a pedestrian zone.Gateways are identified at King Road and Keele Street, and at King Road and Dew/Fisher Street.The concept looks to prioritize and promote mixed use developments with strategic ground floor commercial and retail uses to activate the streetscape.Buildings for adaptive re-use and locations that may be appropriate for lower density development of up to three storeys, particularly along Fisher Street, Patton Street and Kingslynn Drive are shown. These are primarily envisioned in the form of townhouse dwelling units to provide for a transition in built form between the Village Core and Established Neighbourhood.The concept looks to improve the overall pedestrian safety and

connectivity in the neighbourhood while also providing adequate parking for the mix of uses.