

Residents vocal in opposition to drive-through plan

By Mark Pavilons

Residents in King City made it clear that a proposed Starbucks drive-through is not welcome in their neighbourhood. Increased traffic, congestion and safety were all cited as major reasons this drive-through would have a negative impact on the neighbourhood.

Resident after resident appeared before councillors recently to voice their opposition, following a presentation on the plans for the drive-through at the corner of Spring Hill Drive and King Road, west of Dufferin.

Springgreen Holdings Ltd. is asking for a zoning bylaw amendment to permit the commercial use on the .78-acre property at 10 Spring Hill Drive. This parcel is a bit of anomaly, left over from the subdivision. Previously, a plan has been submitted for a townhouse development on the site, but staff deemed this inappropriate for this spot.

The plan is to build a 2,800-square-foot Starbucks with a drive-through, patio, garbage enclosure, loading space and 36 parking spots. Access would be a right-in only on King Road, and full entry/exit on Spring Hill.

Staff noted the property is currently designated low density residential in the King City Community Plan. The property was then placed in a transitional zone as a development placeholder which would require further approvals to establish an appropriate use for the land.

This parcel is presenting some challenges, since its small size limits its flexibility to accommodate any residential housing. While it's located across the road from the King's Ridge Marketplace, it's at the end of a residential subdivision, and would cause added congestion and traffic woes for residents.

The property is surrounded by a wide variety of land uses, including residential, commercial, open space and environmental protection lands.

Township staff noted the exterior concept has been reviewed and they want the siting and layout of the drive-through to be hidden and screened. The irregular shape of the parcel limits the location of the drive-through.

Staff will continue to review the application and public comments with the applicant and report back to council.

According to Don Given, president, Malone Given Parsons, on behalf of the applicant, Starbucks differs from other coffee shops in that its customers tend to stay longer, upwards of 40 minutes. Their drive-through isn't expected to be as busy as others. He said they will work to make it an attractive gateway in King City and return to staff with something appropriate.

One King City resident said there is already a traffic problem on Spring Hill, with high volumes at peak times. Speeding and pedestrian safety are real worries, he said.

Another resident commented that this proposal is far worse than townhouses. Starbucks won't contribute to a safe neighbourhood and it's not conducive to the community look and feel.

A Lilly Valley resident said it's already a challenge to navigate the traffic in the area, and this will only add to the problems.

A Spring Hill Drive resident called the current situation "crazy," and asked the Township to do a traffic and speeding analysis.

Another called the current situation on Spring Hill "ridiculous" and finds the Starbucks plan shocking. She said it can't just be about money.

Another Lilly Valley resident called it "insane," adding they moved to this quiet neighbourhood to enjoy all that King City has to offer. She asked councillors to respect King's rural nature.

A Lavender Valley resident said her children can't play on the front lawn because of the traffic. The street is a "runway" and residents have asked for traffic calming measures in the past.

A drive-through would cheapen the neighbourhood, one resident said, adding there must be a better place for it.

Collard Drive resident Judith Tenebaum said the residents have it abundantly clear they won't want or need a drive-through. This "spot zoning" benefits the landowner, not the neighbourhood and area children deserve a safe path. Crossing a drive-through, she contends, is never safe for kids.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti said he was surprised to hear of the pre-existing traffic woes on Spring Hill and he asked staff that all resident correspondence on the issue be provided.