

Staff, public concerned about plan for 88 homes

By Mark Pavilons

A plan for 88 homes near King City drew concerns from both Township staff and residents.

Bushland Heights Ltd. is looking for amendments to both the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw to permit their plans for 88 detached homes, east of Jane Street and north of King Road. The applicant is looking for relief to increase residential density and reduce environmental buffer zones on the property.

This was the first public meeting in the council chambers, and a mandatory public open house has yet to be held. Yet, the applicant has already appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board. Planning staff will continue to work with the applicant to review and address issues expressed by councillors and the public; gather input and agency comments and report back to council with their recommendations. They are also reviewing the OMB's appeal documents.

Staff pointed out there are several concerns relating to this proposal, including a potential connection to the Mansions of King development to the east.

The property, currently used for agriculture, contains various environmentally sensitive areas.

Concerns with the proposal include a potential road connection to Manitou Drive in Kingscross; increased traffic; impacts to groundwater and wells and a reduction in environmental buffers.

Staff noted that estate residential policies permit one house per hectare and this plan is looking at nine homes per hectare. Current minimum vegetative buffers are 30 metres, and in some areas of this plan, the applicant is asking for only 10 metres.

Staff is opposed to reducing buffers because the Township has consistently emphasized the 'environment first' principle of the King City Community Plan and the need to reflect this principle in the planning and consideration of new development.

Both the KCCP and draft Official Plan include significant environmental protection policies and overall sustainable development.

Staff pointed out York Region and Toronto Region Conservation Authority have yet to comment on the application.

The Bushland Heights plan as it stands has only one access to Jane Street. There is a potential connection to King, via the Mansions of King development.

Glen Lucas, of Lucas & Associates, spoke on behalf of the applicants. He admitted there are several key areas on the property that include habitat, wetlands and water courses. All have been mapped and he said the plan generally provides the 30-metre setback from these sensitive features. Some points do, however, drop to 20 metres and even 15 metres.

The proponents have been in discussions with Mansions of King to try to coordinate some of their plans.

Lucas said the decision to go to the OMB is a 'friendly appeal,' albeit a bit unusual. This, he said, shouldn't be taken as an unwillingness to work with the municipality, but rather a strategy to deal with the uncertainties contained in Bill 139, which replaces the OMB with a new tribunal.

Local ratepayers came armed with a lot of information in opposition to these plans.

Mary Muter, co-chair, Kingscross Ratepayers Association, presented findings in a report by consultant Garry Hunter. The report was paid for by the KRA.

She pointed out neither the Mansions of King nor the Bushland Heights projects have prepared a formal hydraulic analysis to determine the Regional Flood Line for the East Humber River Valley and the principal local tributaries passing through the site. The East Humber is considered a major river within the region and carries floodplain restrictions.

Bushland's plan of subdivision will require extensive landform cut and fill grading and deep sanitary sewers to transform the existing East Humber Valley steep slopes to urban uses. Extensive filling will be required in the west part of the plan to achieve road grades conforming to Township design criteria.

The applicant, she said, has proposed a deep sanitary sewer about 6 to 7 metres below existing grade and the deep sewer trench will interfere with shallow groundwater flow and natural seepage discharge to the adjacent wetlands. The environmental effects of deep sewer trenches have not been considered. Slope stability and especially erosion may also be issues.

KRA also expressed concern with impacts to wells on nearby Jane Street.

Muter said this application is 'incomplete' and does not comply with the Oak Ridges Conservation Plan or King's OP policies.

The issue of a connection to Manitou, and access to Kingscross, was a point of contention.

Manitou Drive resident Hans Martin said runoff and flooding caused by the development make him fearful of future consequences.

Ian Hilley, who also lives on Manitou, said this road isn't designed to handle any more traffic. He too, is concerned about impacts on

wells and these should be monitored now, to determine their sustainability.

A Jane Street resident said he was concerned about the elevation and the fill needed for the project. Jane Street is already a busy commuter route and this development will only add to the traffic woes.

Another Manitou homeowner said the road is not conducive to more traffic.

Debbe Crandall, of Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM), said the ORMP is designed to protect ecology, hydrogeology and maintain environmental integrity of the Moraine.

Planners and developers, she said, have to do things differently and be cognizant of the environment with every new project.

Council, she said, has the power to demand more from developers and the private sector.

Resident Bruce Craig, of the Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT), said the KCCP specifically mentions environmental protection. He urged the developer to build something that's more compatible to the environment.

Another Manitou Drive resident said she finds this proposal 'invasive' and will cause a lot of collateral damage.

A Kingscross resident said he's worried about water quality and reminded councillors 'it's okay to say no.'

Councillor Avia Eek said natural heritage features do perform a very real function, and what's needed is a balance. She would not support any reduction in buffers.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer would like a peer review of hydrogeology in the area. She is also concerned about a future access via Manitou.

Staff explained at this point, the case will go before the OMB. The actual hearing, according to staff, will likely not take place until the end of 2018.

When staff returns to council with a report, it will narrow the scope of the issues.