

Protection of "stable neighbourhoods" to be considered next week

By Brock Weir

An interim control bylaw to protect Aurora's 'stable neighbourhoods' for up to one year could be in place by the end of the month. Next week, sitting at the Committee level, Council will consider an interim control bylaw, which would put a one-year moratorium on new housing builds in established neighbourhoods that are outside the norm of existing bylaws and building standards.

The move comes just over a month after Council tasked staff with carrying out a study on current zoning provisions and regulations already on the books when it comes to infill housing in stable neighbourhoods.

A one-year moratorium on builds outside these already-existing conditions would, according to Development Planning Manager Glen Letman in his report to Council, allow for further study on existing framework and best practices throughout the Greater Toronto Area to ensure the best policies are in place here at home.

'The Town's Official Plan is the primary tool in managing development and growth for both the short and long term and setting the vision, principle and supporting policies to guide growth within the Town,' says Letman. 'As noted by Council, protecting stable neighbourhoods, both older and newer, are not only a defining element of Aurora's character and urban structure, but also an asset and attractor for new residents and investment interests.'

'The Official Plan seeks to ensure stability and vibrancy of these existing neighbourhoods by protecting them from the negative impacts of potential incompatible development and growth pressures. Infill is to be compatible with the established community character, building scale and urban design. 'Compatible' refers to development that may not necessarily be the same or similar to existing buildings in the vicinity, but nonetheless enhances an established community and coexists with existing development without causing undue adverse impact on surrounding properties.'

'Conducting a study, as directed by Council, will further examine a background assessment of the Town's existing policy framework, existing zoning provisions, and a review of best practices undertaken by other GTA municipalities.'

If approved at the January 23 General Committee meeting, and ratified the following Tuesday by Council, the study will look at defining and establishing boundaries for the study itself, identifying unique qualities and characteristics within each defined stable neighbourhood, identifying the impacts of infill development (with an emphasis on large-scale development 'concerning to residents') and, in the end, outlining possible policies and amendments that can govern infill moving forward.

'It should be noted that the internal control bylaw is intended to restrict larger scale developments that are out of character in a neighbourhood but [the bylaw] will also have the effect of restricting even minor forms of development that would not conform with the provisions of the Town's Zoning Bylaw. There will likely be instances where minor variances will be appropriate, such as minor setbacks to accessory buildings, such as garden sheds, or due to the historic nature of an existing building, a variance to recognize the condition which has long existed and has no impact.'

'In these instances, staff propose a Variance Proposal to be brought forward for Council consideration to allow the processing of an exception to the bylaw.'