

Royal Road residents get partial exemption from new Stable Neighbourhood rules

By Brock Weir

Residents of Royal

Road living between Edward Street and Cameron Avenue will be exempt from new rules governing Aurora's Stable Neighbourhoods.

The exemption was made

at last week's Council meeting, which saw a series of changes made to the kinds of new builds that will be allowed in Regency Acres, Aurora Heights, and the community surrounding Town Park.

Requests for the

exemption came at the previous week's General Committee meeting where resident Sina Daniell made her case.

Due to the unusually

wide properties of the nineteen lots in question, this section of the neighbourhood was an anomaly, she said, and should be looked at separately.

Our unique and

special pocket of Royal Road consists of 19 homes, all with consecutive lot frontages of 78, 80, 90 and up to 100 feet, said Ms. Daniell. I am asking to be exempted from the proposed zoning bylaw changes as we are the outliers. We will not have the vertical massing issues for the very simple reasons that all of the 19 consecutive lots have large lot frontages. The proposed unprecedented and unreasonable changes to our pocket were either an oversight or a mistake which needs to be corrected immediately. We do not have issues and will never have issues based on the current zoning bylaw, which bylaw we relied upon when purchasing our large frontage homes.

This proposed zoning

bylaw is capping our maximum footprint to 2,540 square feet, inclusive of garage. A reasonable person cannot argue that the maximum footprint on two completely different lot frontages be exactly the same. All of the homes in our pocket have 50 to 100 per cent wider lot frontages and are not consistent with the other lots in the study. By reducing the coverage and also capping it, is in fact reducing our coverage by 35 per cent, compared to what we are allowed today. In addition, you are taking away our rights to a three-car garage on such large frontages. Where else in the GTA are residents with comparable lot frontages prohibited from having a three-car garage? I could not find one. This is extreme and excessive and takes away our rights and enjoyment of our properties. It also takes away the possibility of building a decent-sized bungalow, which is discriminatory.

Also speaking in

favour of an exemption was fellow Royal Road resident Neil Asselin, who said although he lives on the other side of Royal Road, he saw Ms. Daniell's

concerns as an example on how the Stable Neighbourhood Study before Council failed to capture the nuance of the Town Park neighbourhood [and] the different architectural styles.?

Council members did not formally pass a resolution addressing the Royal Road residents' concerns at the Committee level, but it proved a factor the following week when the new rules were up for final ratification.

The motion to exempt the specified section of Royal Road was made by Councillor Sandra Humfryes, who agreed the area was an unusual situation.

There are a number of lots that aren't quite similar in terms of the large, large size, she said. They should be removed from the area.?

Councillor Humfryes echoed the comments made by Mayor Tom Mrakas last week where he said he was worried an exemption might lead to exceptionally large homes in the area, but said the exemption fit in this case.

I understand there might be a need on this street and I can't disagree, but Councillor Thompson made a recommendation last week to have a more comprehensive study after all this [to look at possible exemptions] and just have a more comprehensive examination of all the neighbourhoods, said Councillor Harold Kim, adding if Royal Road was used as a benchmark he was not in favour of the amendment because there was no rush in this situation.

I think we can take a little bit of time [for] a more detailed examination to see if there are other streets that might require an exemption, he concluded.

While Council pushed through the exemption for Royal Road, they opted to go down this path of waiting for a more comprehensive evaluation when faced with a similar request for homes on Metcalfe Street.

Homeowners on Metcalfe Street living close to the GO Station were asking for an exemption of their own, said Councillor Humfryes, as their proximity to both the GO Station and nearby industry put them just outside of what would be considered a stable neighbourhood.

David Waters, Planner for the Town of Aurora, said there was some validity to removing the properties from the Stable Neighbourhoods study, but said the properties in question are being examined by the Region of York as part of their MTSA (Major Transit Station Area) study and there might be more questions down the road.

?It is important to wait and see what happens with the Regional Planning or the MTSA to see where the boundary is and if they include it,? said Mr. Waters. ?At this point, they can decide whether they move forward or not with any kind of redevelopment scenario.?