

Timberlane redevelopment moves forward following plan review

By Brock Weir

The redevelopment of Timberlane Athletic Club to a new residential neighbourhood cleared an important hurdle last week after studies were conducted to address concerns brought forward by surrounding businesses.

Council gave the green light on a 6 ? 2 vote for an official plan amendment to re-designate the site to pave the way for a cluster residential development of 56 homes, along with the water and sewage capacity required.

This recommendation was initially brought forward for Council approval earlier this spring, but was delayed by over a month following complaints from Van Rob Stamping, who requested an independent peer review of the application before Council to ensure, first, that vibrations from the plant would not be felt on the proposed redevelopment site and, most importantly, that whatever is built would not impede on their ability to do business under standards and approvals set out by Ontario's Ministry of the Environment (MOE).

This further review, carried out by Conestoga-Rovers, indicated that everything was in order.

?Their scope of the work really is to evaluate the principal report to ensure the methodology is sound,? said Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning. ?They did review the application, they are aware of some of the concerns and issues. They did ask for additional information [which was] traded back and forth between the two engineers and this final report essentially concludes the industrial activities of Van Rob are below MOE noise and vibration criteria in consideration of its location. They identified no issues and concurred with the noise and vibration study.?

Although representatives of Van Rob did not delegate to last week's Council meeting, Councillors wanted assurances on next steps, particularly whether they would be considering legal action or taking the matter to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). Warren Mar, Solicitor for the Town of Aurora, said their representatives are not threatening OMB action, but have provided comments regarding the study itself.

For some members of Council, including Sandra Humfryes, next steps should be considered from the municipal end including warning clauses to people moving into the new neighbourhood that noise could still be heard. Others, specifically two Councillors who voted against the application, had other concerns on their mind.

?I have issues with the density,? said Councillor Tom Mrakas. ?I think our official plan speaks to two units per acre and I don't understand why we're not following our guidelines and our regulations. We have rules and regulations in place when it speaks to density, and this is not just a little bit over ? it's double. To me, the density issue is the big issue. The noise is the side issue and I can't support this at all.?

Councillor Wendy Gaertner was of a similar view.

?We have a planning process in place for this area in Town. We have spent a lot of taxpayers' money to defend it at the OMB, we were successful, we have made exceptions where there are environmental features in place that we can do clustering. In this case there are no environmental features. There is no reason for clustering.?

A larger issue, she indicated was density originally allocated for the lands now occupied by Timberlane was transferred to the Falconwood Homes development, immediately west of the club, leading to a more intense density in that neighbourhood.

?We are double counting land,? she concluded. ?The density is very high and it is not because of the necessity to cluster. There are no environmental features. Even though it is so high, it is not taking into account land density that has already been transferred to another development. To me, this is very simple: do we want to protect the environment? If we approve this are we protecting the environment? Are we doing the best thing for our community? Or are we doing the best thing for developers? I think the answer to

that question is very simple.?

The answer was not so simple, however, to Councillor Paul Pirri, who questioned whether this would have any environmental impact on the area at all.

?We have a parking lot on this facility at this point in time and we have a recreation complex on this facility at this point in time,? he said. ?We're redeveloping a property. We're not talking about preserving the environment. There is already a large footprint on this building.?

Part of Mr. Ramunno's rationale in recommending the approval, he said, was notwithstanding the increase in density, the lands in question were already developed.

?The lot coverage is not changing based on what is there now, but the overall vision of the secondary plan document, which identified the type of growth we wanted to see in the long term here is in keeping with that,? said Mr. Ramunno.