

Council approves MDM application to develop 600 Main Street

By Peter Richardson

Council Monday was dominated by a report from the Town planner, Steve Never, concerning the controversial development being proposed by MDM Developments for 600 Main Street.

All of the controversy revolves around the fact that 600 Main Street is a very oddly shaped tract of land, with no direct access to Main street and no access to surrounding streets either. This makes it a difficult project for a developer to tackle.

In the past, several attempts have been made to come up with a suitable plan, but none have come to fruition. Doug Grey and Muskoka Development Corporation are the first to present a comprehensive plan for Council's consideration, however, it has become a controversial one, due in large part to the nature of the development and the proposed density. Although the property is zoned for high density development, MDM is proposing only 58 townhomes, but these are to be freehold condominium homes built on privately owned and maintained streets, a project not seen before in Shelburne,

Part of the issues centred upon the numerous variances required by the development, but of more concern to Council were the proposed entrances and exits from the development, as well as the potential parking and maintenance problems foreseen by Council and Town staff.

One of the major points of concern, was entrance and egress, from the development, onto and off of Main Street. Traffic headed westbound, on Main was not seen as a problem, however eastbound required left turns onto Main, or from Main into the development and this was seen as a serious problem on an already busy thoroughfare. Added to this, was the issue of pedestrian traffic, especially school children having to cross Main Street, through four lanes of traffic.

The developer, at an earlier meeting, had stressed that this was to be an upscale development, aimed at seniors and retiring couples, who, reasonably, would not have young children of school age. Nevertheless the concerns still prevailed.

After consideration of many of the issues, including the density of housing, the developer suggested several changes, including reducing the number of residences from the original 60, to the present 58. To help assuage the concerns, a public open house was scheduled for early March, where concerned citizens and Councillors could voice their worries to the developer and the engineers. The meeting was well attended and a number of issues raised were discussed and resolved. The developer then prepared a revised plan, based on many of the concerns and opinions expressed and presented that to Council on Monday night.

In the newly revised application, it was decided that access to and from Main Street would be, what is referred to, as a right in, right out, route. This meant, that only right hand turns would be allowed onto or from Main Street.

To facilitate travelling in an easterly direction, residents would have to exit onto Route 124 and then proceed to the lights at the intersection of 124 and Hwy. 89. Although not warranted at the moment, the developer also plans to install all of the facilities and hydro necessary to install traffic lights at the intersection exiting the development, onto Centennial Road, to travel to 124. It was also stressed, that the condominium Corporation, would diligently enforce the prohibition of any parking on the developments street. Despite this, Council has requested that the developer adjust his plan to accommodate auxiliary baking within the development. Other concerns, expressed by members of Council, included the potential appearance of two units that would be located directly on Main Street, access to Greenwood Park, from the development, privacy fencing along the Main Street perimeter and the use of local trades and suppliers in the actual building of the project. The developer assured Council that, the chosen builder, Simcoe County's Farsight Homes, would be using at least 75 percent local resources when constructing the development. As to the the two Main Street units, Mr. Gray explained that only the backyards faced Main Street and that the units would be given an attractive rear facade, however, they could, in addition, be heavily landscaped to improve the visual appeal from Main Street and that privacy fencing would exist along the perimeter. As these units were located at the entrance to the development, he stressed that an attractive entrance was a paramount concern for all concerned.

There was a pedestrian bridge, proposed, to provide access to Greenwood Park, from the new neighbourhood, a location for which, would be determined later in the project.

Only one existing resident, of the area, Mr. Alex Coles, spoke to the meeting. Mr. Coles, is a passionate follower of this entire discussion and spoke to Council, at the gracious behest of Mayor Ken Bennington. His concerns we about the access and egress on to Main Street and the size of the development. In his mind, 30 to 40 homes was more suitable than the proposed 58 and was of the same mind, that access should be right in, right out, from Main Street. Mr. Coles also had a potentially brilliant idea for a second access point. He proposed that the developer purchase the vacant land behind the Petro Canada station, running off Greenwood and build a road from there into the development. Unfortunately, there is a small stream running through this area and the land in question is owned by the County and is protected under the Nottawasaga Conservation Authority.

Council decided after the discussions, to allow the application, with certain provisions and conditions and will now await the final detailed plans, from MDM prior to allowing construction to begin.