

# COUNCIL APPROVES ONCE-DENIED ACTON TOWNHOUSES

## PLANS MET WITH OPPOSITION FROM AREA RESIDENTS

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It's not something local residents see every day — plans for a housing development that were turned down by council earlier this year are back on the table and forging ahead.

During its Dec. 13 meeting, Halton Hills council endorsed revised plans for nine townhome units at 20 Ransom St. — down from the 10-unit proposal previously denied by the local politicians after hearing concerns from the community. Coun. Clark Somerville voted against the motion.

The developer appealed the original council decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) and recently proposed a settlement with the town to avoid a hearing, with plans to increase visitor parking and backyard sizes, and prohibit second-floor decks and balconies on the property that's currently occupied by one house.

But the revised plans still don't sit well with nearby residents, who turned out to the virtual council meeting to voice their opposition to the development.



Sovereign Ransom St. Ltd. photo

Above: a conceptual rendering of the townhouses being planned for 20 Ransom St. in Acton. Left: Clark Somerville was the lone member of council to vote against the revised townhouse plans.



Alexandra Heck/Metroland

"I cannot emphasize hard enough to turn this proposal down because it's such a beautiful area for us," said Jaspal Brar, who just moved back to Acton to retire.

He outlined concerns about increased parking congestion in the area and the potential loss of enjoyment of his backyard, which will face the development.

"One of the selling features for our family was the backyard. It gives us peace and serenity."

While the developer has taken out one townhouse to

increase the number of visitor parking spaces from four to nine, with two residents parking spaces per house (one in the driveway, one in the garage), those in the neighbourhood contend it's not enough, and that most people don't use their garages for parking.

"The main issue is the volume of parking that this development brings to such a small area," said Sean Thompson, pointing to the parking woes that already exist around the corner at the Kingham Road town-

houses.

Other issues raised include the removal of trees on the property to make way for the houses, increased traffic, and the impact the development could have on the character of the neighbourhood.

For Somerville — the lone councillor who voted against the settlement offer — parking was also a concern, in addition to the development's distance from stores and the GO transit system.

"To me, it's not the right

"I cannot emphasize hard enough to turn this proposal down because it's such a beautiful area for us."

- Jaspal Brar

location for that type of development," he said.

The other Acton councillors around the table — Mike Albano and Jon Hurst — made it clear they wrestled to make a decision on the plans that are so clearly opposed by their constituents.

"Based on the staff recommendation (to approve the settlement offer), it is difficult to say no to this," said Albano.

"I don't like it. I didn't like it originally, but it's going to be difficult not to approve it."

Hurst shared similar sentiments. Both men pointed to the fact it would be challenging to successfully defend council's position at an OLT hearing, in light of staff's recommendation for approval and the ef-

forts put forth by the developer to revise the plans.

Town solicitor David Germain, who advised that council should approve the settlement as it "addresses the most significant concerns raised by members of council and the public," estimated such a hearing could cost the municipality up to \$35,000.

Coun. Moya Johnson said the addition of visitor parking spots satisfies her initial parking concerns. She noted there's already medium- and high-density development in the neighbourhood, and the provincial government has directed municipalities to make way for intensification developments.

Coun. Jane Fogal said she's in favour of the settlement for the same reasons.

"The people who live in the neighbourhood will not be thanking us at all, but I don't think we've got a lot of choice here," she said.

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With Acton residents continuing to oppose this townhouse development, we wanted to take a closer look at what the revised plans call for and why council ultimately approved them.*



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