

Town supports future development in Beeton, with conditions attached

Flato Developments has put forward a Minister Zoning Order on 166 acres of its 226 acre property located southwest of Beeton.

In a report to Council, Flato Developments stated the lands would include 400 units for seniors' rental apartment buildings, 173 street townhouses, 40 semi-detached units and 297 single detached homes.

The land development also includes a neighbourhood commercial area, community urban agriculture area and gathering space, a central un-programmed park, a network of trails and environmental areas.

Ward 6 Councillor Stephanie MacLellan strongly opposed the Minister Zoning Order (MZO) application, noting that proposed developments outside of Beeton's settlement boundary are prohibited in Section 8 of the Town's Official Plan until a Drainage Master Plan and the Collingwood water pipeline agreement is approved by Council.

"The County and Town Official Policy says development should be directed to fully service settlement areas, this area is neither services nor within the settlement boundaries," MacLellan noted.

"These are huge infrastructure projects [being proposed] and we do not need additional pressures of development outside of the settlement boundaries, we are under enough pressure as it is to support our present residents and as for our future residents, both Beeton and Alliston, we currently have 1,852 units on the books approved but with no servicing allocation."

MacLellan said Flato's development is "too much too fast," since other future developments don't have water distribution and that should be their focus first.

She pointed to Section 9.2.2 under general policies of the Town's Official Plan which states, "extension of municipal sewer and water services should only support development within the settlement area."

"It is our responsibility as a Council to grow responsibly and follow our Official Plan, our Zoning Bylaws and follow our Master Plans," noted MacLellan.

"If this gets Council support and is approved by the Ministry it will essentially leave our Town's planning documents, like our Official Plans, Zoning Bylaws and our Master Plans null and void," she warned.

"It will set a precedent for developers and we will have a lineup at the door with MZO applications. Our town will essentially lose control of how and where we develop."

MacLellan also noted MZOs are rarely used in municipalities that already have zoning bylaws, they're primarily utilized in unorganized townships within northern Ontario. She added that MZOs were never meant to establish principal of development for a proposal such as Flato's, which is nearly 2,000 units.

"This is essentially an end run on local planning and transparent decisions that are made in public interest. This approach circumvents the technical report preparation and review process that every developer needs to undertake to establish the principal of development," said MacLellan.

"I believe affordable housing and seniors housing is of the utmost importance and should be addressed through our zoning bylaw update we are currently in the process of completing. There are policies and processes to follow to uphold the integrity of our local planning to grow our community responsibly."

MacLellan later proposed a motion that Town staff be directed to provide comments to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and

Housing that oppose Flato's request for a MZO, highlighting the Town's insufficient infrastructure, lack of technical report preparation and public review process.

Ward 2 Councillor Michael Beattie seconded the motion, however it was shot down 7-3.

Ward 8 Councillor Alan Lacey, who opposed the motion, said the Tottenham pipeline is of great concern to himself and his constituents and asked Director of Engineering Rick Vatri how Flato's development might impact the water supply.

Vatri noted that at this point they don't have sufficient information because modelling hasn't been done as part of Flato's submission, but it would be conducted through their detailed design to determine how to get additional water to those areas.

?Here's an area where they're wanting to put in almost 50 per cent housing for seniors which is greatly needed in this area. I've spoken to a few seniors and they fully agree they don't want to move out of this area but they need affordable housing as they're growing older and it's becoming very difficult,? said Lacey.

Ward 4 Councillor Fran Sainsbury, who also opposed the motion, said Flato's request is solely for land use and it took Alliston's Treetops development 17 years since it started in 2003, so this is seen as long-range planning.

Beattie said letting the MZO go forward without Council submitting comments objecting the order would create a precedent for other developers and they could expect several more MZO's in the future, which circumvent the Town's planning documents.

He said when municipalities submit comments objecting an MZO the Province tends to rule in its favour.

Meanwhile, a motion to support the MZO in principal and provide specifics on the conditions of the development at their November 2 Council meeting was approved 7-3.

Some of the conditions discussed include zoning for the provision of affordable or attainable housing as well as a demographic study to ensure they're actually providing attainable housing for seniors. However, the official conditions will be brought forward on November 2 before they're sent to the Province.

By Sam Odrowski Local Journalism Initiative Reporter