

November 28, 2013
Greg Locke

FINAL

Deputation to King Township Council at Special Council Meeting held at Country Day School on:

Planning Department Report Number P-2013-68

Re: Official Plan Review: Special Meeting of Council & Introductory Discussion Paper

Greg Locke, Schomberg resident at 344 Main Street
Representing CCKT as Chair .

Introduction

CCKT, with our 40-year history advocating, educating and supporting actions that maintain the rural character of King, and to protect our environment, is one of several organizations and indeed, individuals, who have helped King maintain and grow our rural community flavour, with respect for our environment, our sustainability, and the health, character, and “completeness” of our villages and hamlets.

What started over 40 years ago with residents advocating to preserve the best of King, we have seen most notably the adoption of secondary Community and Hamlet Plans, Community Design Guidelines, the ORMCP and Greenbelt legislation, the PPS and Places to Grow. In recent times we’ve participated in and seen the adoption of our community-driven ICSP, that CCKT fully supports as a key component of our Official Plan.

As a result, CCKT, with our environmental and rural preservation goals, supports appropriate economic growth and the necessity for development that compliments our heritage and scale of our existing communities. We advocate for development to be planned and administered in a respectful, integrated fashion that is well described in the ICSP and backed by strong over-arching legislation (the Moraine and Greenbelt plans).

As a “community of communities” King is indeed a leader and a unique example of a thriving rural, environmentally-aware Township. It’s a result of the commitment and participation of our residents and local government to ensure King stays green, rural, environmentally-sound, and above all, sustainable.

Let’s remember that Save The Oak Ridges Moraine group, or STORM, started as an off-shoot of CCKT. And Dorothy Izzard was a key instrumental factor in identifying the need for government protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine, lobbying tirelessly for what is now the ORMCP and Greenbelt legislation.

And I need not detail the efforts and accomplishments of our recently departed Board member and community activist, Fiona Cowles.

Going forward, with this timeline in mind, it will be no surprise to you that we are very pleased to see our Official Plan undergo this significant review, for the reasons detailed and work plan recommended in this Planning Report.

Our OP will be in full conformance with Provincial legislation as well as be integrated with the various planning tools we have been advocating for more legitimate “voice”.

And to have our recently approved, and King’s first, Economic Development Strategy and to-be-completed Transportation Master Plan, included as Official Plan documents, well, this is icing on the cake.

Quoting the Staff Report, “Strengthening King’s planning legislation and by-laws to reinforce environmental protection and public health and safety” and, “Develop a strategy for intensification and infill” are very positive goals that we wholeheartedly support.

We realize that this all won’t happen at once; this is too large a project and it must be phased. There will also be the necessary consultations and indeed, formal challenges that we hope won’t delay its adoption unnecessarily.

Our compliments to Sarah and to Stephen, for once again producing such a thorough, understandable perspective on the needs for this review and how it will integrate the other key planning tools that will guide the Township, residents and developers for decades to come.

It should also come as no surprise to you that we have a short list of 5 specific areas of concern concerns I’ll outline here, and we’d be most willing to discuss with you in more detail at your convenience. We also have 1 question I’ll ask following.

1. ORMCP + Greenbelt Review

We are watching and will be engaged with the upcoming 2015 review of these two key pieces of legislation that protect our environment.

As an aside, we anticipate and expect that Council and Staff will fully support and actively participate in the renewal of all key provisions of these plans. Most importantly, development must continue to be directed to our village cores, to minimize its impact on our environment and burdens on our rural communities.

Development on designated Moraine and Greenbelt lands must be restricted.

One of the goals of our OP Review is to make it fully conform with these plans, and toward this end we are supportive.

However, we are concerned that should the Review of these key acts result in the erosion of some protections (and let's remember that about **70%** of King is on the Moraine), we fully anticipate and expect that Council and Staff will use its powers identified in the ORMCP and Greenbelt legislation to make up this difference, to strengthen via the use of OPA's and bylaws, whatever requirements are necessary to make them at least, if not more, stringent than what is in force today.

In addition, I'll make the point here that we are not supportive of any NEW settlement areas or hamlets.

We encourage growth and intensification only within the defined settlement boundaries, to move them further toward being "complete" and to minimize the overall impact of growth on our environment and rural nature.

2. Community Design Guidelines

In February, 2012 our Co-Chair, Bruce Craig, made a detailed Council deputation to you regarding our policy that it is not sufficient for these to be merely a "guideline" and not something required by developers to seriously consider and integrate into their site plans.

We've been relying too many times on quality developers to leave voluntary legacies that in the end, only disappoint.

We are very encouraged that our Community Plans will be properly connected to the core OP, to provide greater harmony between them where appropriate and most importantly, more legitimacy as planning tools.

We want to encourage you, as much as is possible, to do the same with our Guidelines: take their salient points and include them in a new bylaw to provide them a similar weight to be applied to development applications.

What's unfortunate is that the landscapes of virtually all our villages is changing right now, before our eyes. We wish these tools could be in place, with this level of integration and power, right now.

All we can say is, the earlier these Guidelines can be given the teeth they deserve, the better.

3. Severance Policies for Nobleton and Schomberg

This is yet an example where we support the logical harmonization of our Community Plans.

In this instance, we support the restrictive severance policies adopted in the King City plan being brought into the Nobleton, Schomberg, and Hamlet Plans.

As you know our policy on severances is that they alter the character of our communities in negative ways and should only be approved in rare circumstances.

The character of existing neighbourhoods within our communities needs to be kept intact and not eroded through these practices.

4. Roads

We applaud the commencement of the Transportation Master Plan and we are pleased that this relevant planning tool will be included in the OP.

Roads are such a large proportion of our infrastructure and have such potential to impact on our rural character.

As you know, we have a history resisting losing control of our roads through uploading to the Region, as well as resisting major arteries that will negatively impact our communities and environment.

We need to at least mention how critical it is that the Province finalize exactly where its plans for the GTA West Corridor will go, which will set the stage for another 400 series bypass to connect the Highway 427 extension with the 400.

We fear that the Region will support this new 400 series connector corridor being placed within King's boundaries. Also, we fear that the Province will order a new interchange within King.

Please encourage these significant new pieces of infrastructure to be located in North Vaughan which will in addition have the significant benefit of providing effective bypasses King City and Nobleton.

We would much appreciate our policy on Regional and 400 series roads being reflected in the OP to the extent that it can.

And we'll be watching for and hopefully participating in the Transportation Master Plan development process.

5. King Road/Hwy 400 Development

Both the Economic Development Strategy and the ICSP identify and in fact, recommend consideration for Highway 400 corridor development, and specifically, the King Road/400 interchange area.

[Sources:

- ICSP Financial Pillar section 2.3(4) page 23 calls for 400 series highway assessment.
- Economic Strategy see page 43 Draft Final Report: "Identify a Strategic Employment Area"]

- We believe it's premature to identify new serviced lands for growth unless and until there is a clear and identified need. We don't see this occurring within the 20-year planning horizon.
- Instead, it's more appropriate to pass an OPA at that time. Please don't state this need in the revised OP, including its supporting documents.

This topic was well-discussed about 16 years ago when the Big Pipe was being pushed by our then Council to service King City, and the King Township Official Plan was being updated at the time (1997), but never approved by York Region. King City Preserve the Village and CCKT both addressed concerns about King Rd/400 at the time.

This area is clearly identified as Greenbelt, surrounded by Moraine. It runs from Jane Street in the east over to Weston Road, encompassing King Road and north to the 15th Sideroad.

We are most concerned that these planning tools even mention this potential development (and 400 "corridor development" in general). We recognize that per the ICSP, King needs to broaden its tax assessment in order to strengthen our financial pillar. Economic objectives have included identifying lands for future commercial and industrial development, beyond what we have in our current inventory.

However, we encourage you to please take note of these 5 points:

- 1) These lands are currently within the Greenbelt, and they should stay within the Greenbelt.

Doing otherwise would violate our ICSP, which per section 2.4 states that we should in fact be identifying ways to GROW the Greenbelt:

“Consider playing a role in advocating for the expansion of the Greenbelt boundaries within King Township”

We cannot advocate for the expansion of the Greenbelt while at the same time its reduction.

2) We have a policy of maintaining servicing for development within our community boundaries, as per the ICSP.

3) We have more “available” lands for development than we think.

Besides our stock of serviced industrial and commercial lands, we have vacant lands scattered throughout the villages that are ready for repurposing that should be included in the inventory. And let’s acknowledge that agricultural lands are also employment lands!

We find it difficult to believe we will exhaust our “inventory” of lands suitable for development and redevelopment within the 20 year planning horizon.

4) We are suspicious of the economic and financial impacts that opening up these lands would provide.

Would we attract head offices or research facilities to these lands? Would opening up the Highway 400 corridor attract more valuable functions than mere warehousing and storage services?

5) The need for data.

How do we know what we’ll need until we’ve conducted a proper study on the capacity for new industrial and commercial development to meet our growth targets?

And these targets should include growth opportunities that require minimal infrastructure that are not counted, including, for example, the Koffler Centre and the Seneca Collage expansion.

With our 40+ years of experience as a community-based advocacy group defending our environment and rural nature, we believe strongly that bringing the Big Pipe to 400 would open up all the surrounding lands and Laskay.

The King Rd/400 interchange will likely become another one of the big, commercial interchanges along 400, perhaps with some form of big box stores.

King Township will be well on its way to becoming an "urbanized" municipality, and the area around King City will simply become a northern extension of Vaughan.

In conclusion, and to reiterate our position on this point:

- We believe it's premature to identify new serviced lands for growth unless and until there is a clear and identified need. We don't see this occurring within the 20-year planning horizon.
- Instead, it's more appropriate to pass an OPA at that time. Please don't state this need in the OP.

Thank you all for your patience and ears to this rather long and detailed deputation.

I'm more than happy to answer any questions you may have at this time, but first I have just one tonight for your consideration from our Board:

QUESTION:

Regarding the Secondary Plan process, will there be community input and review to the same degree as if the Plans were being reviewed separately?