

Residents challenge 256-home development

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BEAMSVILLE

Loretta Manners, who lives on a street that will be extended if a new development plan is accepted in downtown Beamsville, told the town's planning committee at a public meeting Monday night that she bought her house a few months ago because she wanted to live on a quiet, dead-end street.

"I'm not objecting to the development; I always figured it would happen," she said. "But keep our street a dead-end ... The impact on the residents is going to be a big adjustment. I think there are a lot of issues here to look at."

A plan to build 256 new houses has made some residents upset with a local developer. The subject land is located at the intersection of John Street and Bartlett Road in Beamsville, comprising an area of about 21 hectares, or 51 acres. In their plan, the joint developers, Van Fab Ltd. and Arber Developments Inc., aim to build 172 single detached houses and 84 townhouses, extend existing roads in the area to link adjacent streets and create thoroughfares, and allow for parklands along Bartlett Creek.

About a dozen residents who live next to the proposed subdivision attended the meeting to express concerns over how the surrounding area would be affected. A few complained the planned extensions to

roads would increase traffic and decrease parking space in the area, despite assurances from the developer that the redesigned roads would not alter traffic patterns.

"This is very confusing to me," Tammy Watson of Beamsville said. "I've been living in the area for nine years and parking is a huge issue on our street.... I can't even imagine what would happen with rows upon rows of new houses."

"There are some serious problems with this plan. I think it needs to be looked at again and again before anything starts."

Kathleen Dale, the town's director of planning, explained that once the form of the subdivision is given approval, public works will look at how road layout can best be incorporated.

Planning committee chair Rob Foster assured that, "As far as traffic patterns and everything else goes ... it is a top priority on our list."

Other residents worried about what could happen to animals inhabiting nearby wooded areas. Some parts of the proposed site are protected under environmental conservation laws, but the developer has designated others for "open space and recreational" uses.

"I don't know how you get off saying there aren't a lot of animals in the area," Hilda Ferrell challenged, adding that owls, cranes, turtles, frogs and coyotes

can often be seen around her house. "I'll send my son to you because he knows them all by name.... Where will these animals go?"

"They will find refuge in other areas," said Lisa Campbell, an ecologist and environment consultant who studied the area for seven months and compiled an environmental impact report on behalf of the developers. Campbell found the subdivision would pose no threat or endanger any of the indigenous animals.

Local resident Steve Eagles questioned how schools would be affected with so many new families moving into the subdivision.

"We already have a problem with not having enough classrooms," he said.

Noting his experience working with school boards, Mayor Bill Hodgson stated that the population of Lincoln students has been declining in the last few years. He estimates that it takes about 10 new homes to generate 1 new public school student.

"We have limits to our growth that other areas of the province do not have," he said. "Crowding is not going to be an issue."

A draft application, along with a notice about the public meeting, were distributed to all residents living near the area, as well as to relevant government agencies and town departments for comment.



HODGSON

