

Alton residents don't want Queen as haul route

By Bill Rea

Alton residents want something other than Queen Street used as a haul route for the Thomas Farm development.

A delegation of residents appeared before Caledon council Tuesday, armed with a petition with some 100 signatures, calling on councillors to make sure Queen is not used as the route to get construction equipment on or off the site.

Director of Public Works David Loveridge will be bringing a report to council to address any options.

"I'm going to try to do it sooner than later," he said.

The development plan calls for 111 homes to be developed on the property at the southeast corner of Queen Street and Mississauga Road, just west of the Alton Legion hall.

Barbara McDiarmid and Pamela Stratton made their case about the concerns of high truck traffic volumes on the street.

At a public meeting in February, Loveridge had said the plan was to use Queen Street to connect with the intersection of Main Street and Regional Road 136, which are both Provincially approved haul routes.

McDiarmid said the main concern is safety.

"There is a lot of pedestrian traffic in Alton," she said, adding a lot of tourists visit the area, looking for a quiet rural setting. There's also a lot of traffic visiting Alton Mill Arts Centre for weddings and other events. She said these motorists don't expect to have to deal with a lot of truck traffic.

As well, she said there are a lot of homes and commercial buildings close to the road along Queen.

"This presents a liability to everyone," she argued, adding there was an occasion when 18-month-old twins narrowly escaped an accident involving a truck. "We know that trucks cannot stop of a dime, and we don't want to see pedestrians and children become a statistic."

There are also noise concerns regarding trucks. "They rattle and rumble down Queen Street," she said, adding it starts at 6:30 a.m. and goes well into the evening.

McDiarmid also mentioned vibrations, expressing concern over the damage that could do to some of the historic buildings in the area. She said they were not build to handle that.

Speeds were a concern too. While a lot of truck drivers obey the speed limits, McDiarmid said there are a lot who don't.

As well, she commented on air quality, pointing out that the trucks stir up a lot of dust and dirt. That impacts on people's health, as well as their quality of life, as they have to close their doors and windows.

McDiarmid also said residents were never consulted about Queen being used as a haul route.

Stratton said she had been told by a former councillor that Mississauga Road was going to be the haul route, and residents were never told that had changed.

"I can certainly relate to this," Councillor Annette Groves told the women, observing there are similar concerns regarding truck traffic in the main intersection in the Bolton core. "There are appropriate routes for them and coming through a community is not the appropriate route we want them to take."

McDiarmid agreed, citing the serious accident in Bolton in June, involving 12 vehicles.

"It's just a question of time before something happens," Stratton added.

"This is a tough one," Councillor Doug Beffort observed, commenting the development is just starting and will go on for a while.

Loveridge told him the general rule is to use the closest access to the nearest approved truck route, and that's Main Street and 136. He added Mississauga Road is not an authorized truck route.

Beffort agreed, pointing out Highpoint Sideroad to the north is hilly and covered with gravel. Mississauga Road has a tar and chip surface in that area, and wouldn't be able to handle the trucks.

He added they've looked at various options. "We're trying everything we possibly can," he told the delegates. "If you have a better solution, please let us know."

Councillor Barb Shaughnessy wondered if a Mississauga Road haul route might have been the result of a development agreement or Ontario Municipal Board ruling from the 1990s. She asked Loveridge to look into that.

She also appreciated the safety concerns, pointing out Queen Street is a lot narrower than the streets in the Bolton core.

She also observed that six or seven geese have been killed by trucks on the road.

"That could just as easily have been a child," she said.