

Possible GO?rail determines Bolton expansion plans

By Bill Rea

The possibility of a GO?train station on Humber Station Road has guided consultants addressing the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES).

It still is, and Town councillors Tuesday adopted their recommendations, but the vote wasn't unanimous. Councillor Richard Whitehead voiced his opposition, stating an option involving lands on the village's north hill wasn't given enough consideration. There were consultants representing land owners on the north hill who also called for those lands to stay in contention., Bolton has to grow by 190 hectares, with the expansion being part of the Town's compliance with the Province's growth plan. The growth expected in Caledon is going to be aimed mainly at Caledon East, Mayfield West and Bolton, meaning the extra land in Bolton needs to be set aside.

Six options were examined for some months as to where this expansion area could go, and Nick McDonald of Meridian Planning last year recommended an area on Humber Station Road, between the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks and The Gore Road, north of King Street, also known as Go Station Focus option or Option 3. But at the same time, there was a push to consider lands on the north hill, straddling both Regional Road 50 and Duffy's Lane, also known as Option 1.

The consultants reported to council in February that they were still in favour of Option 3, and that was reiterated again Tuesday. As well, council approved the recommendation to include three smaller parcels of land as rounding out areas. Two are on the north side of King Street, near Duffy's Lane, and the third is on the west side of Regional Road 50, opposite Columbia Way.

McDonald told councillors BRES has been a planning process aimed at accommodating some 10,300 additional residents in the village and about 2,600 jobs. There have been a number of consultations with council and the public over the last couple of years, and McDonald stressed all input was considered.

?There is a variety of opinions of this,? he remarked.

He added a lot of factors were involved in the process, including planning principles, evaluation criteria and analysis.

He said the conclusion was that Option 3 was the most logical location, with one of the consideration being that it supports the establishment of the GO station. Other factors he cited included the opportunity to establish a broader mix of residential uses, and it would help encourage the Province to give the proposed station a higher priority.

Another advantage McDonald noted was the option is basically a square piece of land, while Option 1 is of an unusual shape, owing to the proximity of the Provincial Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine.

He also said Option 3 can make use of available capacity on other roads, minimizing the cost of upgrading local Regional roads. He also said the development will be close to the station, meaning the number of car trips to get there will be reduced. As well, he said it will reduce the immediate need for grade separations at the rail crossings on King Street and Coleraine Drive, although they will come eventually.

In addition, McDonald said it will allow for maximum use of existing water and wastewater infrastructure.

McDonald also stressed there was nothing wrong with Option 1, but that Option 3 is the most appropriate at this time.

Whitehead wondered about the impact Option 3 would have on the West Humber River. McDonald told him there have been meetings with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and no issues have been raised.

Whitehead, who sits on the TRCA?board, said he had heard nothing about that, adding such an issue should have been addressed in the staff report.

He also raised water and wastewater issues, but Chris Hamel, of BluePlan Engineering Consultants Limited, said both options would use the same infrastructure.

Whitehead also pointed out the new fire hall for Bolton is being envisioned for the north hill. But McDonald said this will take some years to implement, and Town staff will keep looking into emergency issues.

Another issue Whitehead raised was over the soft services near the north hill lands, such as two high schools and recreation facilities. McDonald told him that was taken into account too. He added the Parks and Recreation Department is working on a Town-wide facility to the west.

McDonald told Councillor Rob Mezzapelli that when the grade separation is planned for King, they would probably be looking at four lanes.

Councillor Nick deBoer observed that environmental issues might get in the way of that.

Lawyer Steven Ferri said he was representing seven members of the Bolton North Hill Land Owners' Group. They own about 97.7 hectares.

Ferri stressed this was an important issue, and he urged the decision not be made lightly or in haste. Among other things, he said the final report on the matter should be peer reviewed.

He also said the advantages of the north hill option had not been adequately considered, and he asked the matter be deferred to allow for a robust two-way discussion.

T.J. Rinomato, a principle with Country Homes, said they went to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) 19 years ago to make sure lands on the north hill were included in development plans.

"I'm here to discuss common sense, dollars and cents and the needs of residents of Bolton," he said.

Rinomato commented the population of Bolton is slated to double by 2041, and he wondered how that can be accommodated without more consideration of Option 1. He argued these lands would be ready for development before Option 3, adding the delay would mean the growth coming in too fast.

He added Option 1 would generate more activity on Regional Road 50, which he said would benefit the shopping areas to the south. Planning consultant Alan Young raised the issue of transit support, pointing out it could be many years before the GO station is built, adding no one is likely to move into Option 3 just because a train station might be coming. He said the GO bus service can already handle Option 1.

"It's too early for Option 3," he declared.

He too raised the issue of the two local high schools and the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness near Option 1.

"Option 1 is the family-friendly option," he said.

Councillor Patti Foley commented on the potential impact on natural features, especially the Greenbelt, pointing development cannot abut the Greenbelt without some impact. She pointed out much of Option 1 abuts the Greenbelt.

Whitehead was still not sold on that option.

He pointed out the rail line will be running right beside the lands of Option 3. McDonald told him that had been considered, adding this will involve new development, meaning there will be flexibility for mitigating features, like berms, etc.

"There's no railway on the north hill," Whitehead countered.

He added that beyond 2031, public transit is going to be centred around Regional Road 50, meaning there's not much difference between the two options. McDonald said there will be a lot of things happening that will impact on transportation, like the completion of the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR), and building out of Brampton, which will impact on north-south travel.

"This is not a simple recommendation that we're making," he remarked, pointing out it's almost a chicken and egg issue. Density is needed to bring the GO train, but that won't happen until the train comes. He added bringing more people to the area will have an effect on the way Metrolinx looks at what's needed.

Manager of Policy Haiqing Xu said the Regional Transportation Plan deals with many issues, like the widening of Regional Road 50 and the Highway 427 extension.