

Presentation to Council Regarding Millcroft Greens Application for Residential Development of the Millcroft Golf Course

March 2, 2021

Thank you to the Mayor, Councillors and members of the Planning Committee for the opportunity to speak at this meeting. The application, if approved, will have profound effects on our community so I welcome the chance to voice my concerns.

I've read the proposal and many of the supporting reports. There's 58 pages of justification and countless pages of expensive studies that try to convince us that this project is in line with the city, regional and provincial plans and of benefit to the community. Most of these reports are very technical and are only fully understandable to people with technical training. However, the main purpose of these reports is to convince us that the project is beneficial to the city and that there will be no negative side effects. It's easy to get lost in all the detail so I'd like to step back a bit so we can see the full implications of this project taken as a whole.

Council is being asked to approve significant variances and rezone open space to residential so that 98 single family homes can be built on the golf course. Ask yourself, are there any significant benefits to the community coming out of this project?

The Planning Justification Report mentions a number of things to present this proposal in a positive light but let's look at some of the points they try to make.

- The main premise is that the golf course needs to be redeveloped because it is not profitable and the housing development is simply a way to use surplus land. This is ridiculous. It is clear to even the casual observer that the project is driving the redesign. Although declining profitability of the golf course is their main justification for the project there is absolutely no evidence provided to support this. This is a unilateral declaration that it's not profitable. How do we know it's true? Will they unilaterally decide that the redesigned course is not profitable and use the same arguments for further housing development? This is a real risk. Approving this application

clearly opens the door to the complete development of the golf course and more undesirable changes to our community.

- The application talks about the need for diversification of housing options and intensification within Burlington. It tries to present this as another key reason the project should be accepted. Their own reports note that Burlington has exceeded its targets in these areas and is compliant with regional and provincial requirements. There are only 98 houses proposed. This will not have any noticeable impact, so what is the point? The disruption to the community far outweighs the benefit.
- As an aside, the application doesn't say how long the community will have to put up with the disruption from construction. According to a city traffic study, Country Club Drive is already over capacity with more than 6000 cars per day. It is likely to become a major entry point for heavy construction traffic. There is already difficulty getting in and out of driveways safely due to parking and heavy traffic flow. Construction traffic will make this even worse. It's not just the waiting time to get out of our driveways, the risk of damage and injury will be significantly higher. Furthermore, heavy construction traffic will damage our newly paved roads; yet another repair cost for the city.
- The planning consultant states that "intensification and density targets are minimums" and that there is encouragement "to go beyond these minimums" Even if there is encouragement, there is no requirement to do so. Furthermore, he expresses his opinion that the application is "reasonable, compatible and gentle". That is just an opinion, it is not fact and I would take issue with that description. This is not an inconsequential little infill project, this is a major disruption to the community with significant increases in potential risks.
- Site A covers an area which includes Appleby Creek. On the south west side along Country Club Drive, there are numerous homes, my own included, that back directly onto the creek. There are real concerns over the impact of this development on flooding and erosion. The Urbantech report makes a very definitive statement that "the proposed development cannot result in more flooding than presently exists today nor can it result in an increased risk to the public". Such a definitive statement is impossible to justify, but even if you accept it at face value, what if that's not the case?

The Titanic couldn't sink, pipelines don't leak. Please consider the following:

- The proposal requires building over the existing flood plain in section A. This is not normally allowed. It's not a good idea. There are numerous examples where building on flood plains creates potential and actual damage to the surrounding communities. Reducing the flood plain increases the risk of flooding and erosion and we are already subject to regular and often significant flooding. The Burnside report admits that the volume of surface water runoff will increase and surface water infiltration will decrease. Urbantech would have us believe this is all manageable but if this proposal is accepted it is our community that will bear the brunt of any issues. Neither Millcroft Greens or Urbantech or any of the authors of these supporting studies will have any ongoing responsibility if nature disagrees with them. Who will actually own the land surrounding Appleby Creek? Right now the golf course has the obligation to ensure that bordering properties are not damaged by the creek crossing property lines. Is Millcroft Greens planning to offload this responsibility by deeding the land to the city? Will Burlington taxpayers end up footing the bill for damages? Will homeowners be forced to pay increasing insurance premiums for flood risks if they can even get this insurance?
- The Urbantech report is an opinion, not a guarantee. It cannot definitively state that there is no increased risk of flooding or to the public. It is only modelled on available information and a stated methodology but nobody knows for sure, especially given the extra uncertainty associated with climate change. In the meantime the risk to property is increasing. These are real risks that cannot be understated by consultants' studies that promise "no negative impact".
- In looking at the application maps the current or future Stable Top of Bank Hazard is not identified. This is clearly marked on the Conservation Halton maps but the study simply says the project is outside the current hazard line. What are the changes that the project will bring? This hazard line currently runs dangerously close

to existing property lines so there is no margin for error. Any miscalculation or inaccuracy by Urbantech could have a significant impact on a number of homeowners.

- There has already been a lot of recent development north of Highway 5. Large numbers of condos and surface hardening. Do we have enough current information to fully understand the impact of this on Appleby Creek? Once again, if the studies have miscalculated or understated the risk, we feel the impact
- The Burnside report says that the proposed development will not negatively affect the natural environment around Appleby Creek with the proviso that recommended mitigation methods are implemented. They also have to be effective but that is yet another issue. One of the conclusions in the report is that the proposed channel modifications and taking the pond off line will provide marginal improvements to fish habitat and possibly water quality. However, their own report states that there are no intrinsically important fish in Appleby Creek. So can Millcroft Greens realistically say that all of this development activity and construction disruption is justified by an incremental improvement in the habitat for unexceptional fish species? The report also talks about removing roughly 400 trees and replacing them with new plantings. These will be small saplings that will take 10 to 15 years to produce meaningful canopies and efficient root systems. Saying that they are protecting our environment is a very weak justification indeed.

This whole application is submitted with the premise that Millcroft Greens can do this project. We need to consider whether they should. Is it really in the best interest of the community?

To summarize:

If this application is approved we face:

- Increased uncertainty and risk beyond current levels for flooding, erosion and safety
- Offloading financial obligations for erosion and flooding to the city and taxpayers

- Tremendous disruption to the community during construction
- Damage to newly paved roads from heavy trucks
- Probable elimination and development of the remaining golf course land
- Loss of green space and mature tree canopy

And the proposed benefits to the community?

- A few extra, unnecessary, houses
- Possibly marginal improvements to water quality and low grade fish habitats

This is not a balanced equation. The risks far outweigh the rewards. If you take the application as a whole, we cannot accept Millcroft Greens assertion that there will be no negative implications. This project is massively disruptive to our community for no benefit to anyone other than the proponents.

This development is not required, it's not needed and it's not wanted.

I urge Council to reject the application.

Thank you

Chris Skirrow

Country Club Drive