



Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council Report

Item 4

Subject: Official Plan Review Update: Phase 2 Consultations (D08)

Staff Report No. DS-011-21

Department: Development Services

Date: April 6, 2021

Recommendation:

- 1) That Council direct staff to proceed with the Official Plan Review: Phase 2 Public Open House to consult on the Draft Discussion Papers.**

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with an update on the status of the Town's Official Plan Review (OPR) and to seek Council direction for staff to proceed with the Phase 2 Public Open House to consult on the Draft Discussion Papers.

2. Executive Summary:

The Town's Official Plan Review (OPR) was formally initiated on June 18, 2019, with a Special Meeting of Council, in accordance with Section 26(3) of the *Planning Act*, to solicit public input on the issues that should be addressed through the OPR.

The OPR will address the opportunities and challenges of planning and building in the Town and will result in a new Official Plan that implements Provincial and Regional planning policies in a locally appropriate manner. The new Official Plan will establish a unified community vision and policy directions for managing growth and development in the Town to the year 2051.

Staff have undertaken Phase 1 consultation activities that included work associated with establishing the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles to support the preparation of the Town's new Official Plan. A virtual public workshop was held on September 23, 2020,

and culminated in the presentation of the Draft Community Vision Report Summary to Council on November 3, 2020.

Since that time, Staff have been advancing work on Phase 2 of the OPR work program which includes background research and the preparation of four Discussion Papers to identify key issues and preliminary policy directions to be considered in the new Official Plan. Section 4 provides an overview of the key issues and policy directions outlined in the Draft Discussion Papers.

The four Discussion Papers, and a one-page summary, have been prepared for consultation, and include the following:

- Planning for Growth Discussion Paper (Attachment 1);
- Planning for the Natural Environment Discussion Paper (Attachment 2);
- Planning for Complete Communities Discussion Paper (Attachment 3); and
- General Technical/Housekeeping Updates Discussion Paper (Attachment 4).

The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with an update on the status of the Town's OPR and seek Council direction for staff to proceed with the Phase 2 Public Open House to consult on the Draft Discussion Papers.

The Town's OPR is being undertaken iteratively with the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). It is anticipated that the Town's new Official Plan will be available for Council adoption in Q2 2022.

3. Background:

The Town's Official Plan Review (OPR) was formally initiated on June 18, 2019, with a Special Meeting of Council, in accordance with Section 26(3) of the *Planning Act*, to solicit public input on the issues that should be addressed through the OPR. Council endorsed an Introductory Discussion Paper, a Communications Plan, a preliminary Work Program and Schedule, and a list of Planning Principles and Directions to guide the OPR process, as outlined in [Staff Report No. DS-003-19](#).

The OPR will address the opportunities and challenges of planning and building in the Town and will result in a new Official Plan that implements Provincial and Regional planning policies in a locally appropriate manner. The new Official Plan will seek to direct and manage growth in a sustainable manner, promote a more complete and healthy community, and continue to protect and enhance our natural environment, and agricultural and rural resources. The new Official Plan will establish a unified community vision and policy directions for managing growth and development in the Town to the year 2051.

In March 2020, the Town retained a consulting team lead by WSP Group Canada Inc. (WSP) to assist in undertaking the Town's OPR. On May 5, 2020, Town Staff brought

forward a report outlining a revised Work Plan Schedule and next steps for advancing the OPR in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff have undertaken Phase 1 consultation activities that included work associated with establishing the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles to support the preparation of the Town's new Official Plan. This included online public and stakeholder consultations, and virtual meetings with the OPR Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC). A virtual public workshop was held on September 23, 2020, and culminated in the presentation of the Draft Community Vision Report Summary to Council on November 3, 2020. Throughout January 2021, staff undertook additional online consultations and surveys to receive feedback on the draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles.

Since that time, Staff have been advancing work on Phase 2 of the OPR work program which includes background research and the preparation of four Discussion Papers to identify key issues and preliminary policy directions to be considered in the new Official Plan. The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with an update on the status of the Town's OPR and seek Council direction for staff to proceed with the Phase 2 Public Open House to consult on the Draft Discussion Papers.

The Town's OPR is being undertaken iteratively with the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). The Region's new Official Plan was anticipated to be adopted by the end of 2020, but due to recent changes in Provincial direction, the Region's new Official Plan is now tentatively anticipated to be available for consultation in Q4 2021, and adoption by Regional Council by the end of 2021. The extended timeframe was largely contingent upon the Province finalizing the Land Needs Methodology, pursuant to the Growth Plan, to determine land needs over the planning horizon; and the approval of Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan 2019, which included updated population and employment growth forecasts to the year 2051.

The timing for completion of the Region's MCR and Official Plan Update has a direct impact on the Town's OPR, as the Town's new Official Plan is required to conform to the Region's new Official Plan, once approved. The Town's Official Plan is required to be updated within one year following the approval of the Region's new Official Plan. It is anticipated that the new Official Plan will be available for Council adoption in Q2 2022.

4. Analysis and Options:

Since the presentation of the Draft Community Vision Report Summary to Council on November 3, 2020, staff and the consulting team have been advancing work on Phase 2: Background Research and Discussion Papers of the OPR work program. The following provides an overview of the consultation activities undertaken to date and a summary of the Draft Discussion Papers which are proposed to be made available for public consultation.

4.1 Overview of OPR Consultation and Engagement Activities

The following table provides an overview of the OPR consultation and engagement activities, status, and anticipated timing.

Table1 – OPR Consultation and Engagement Activities

Task	Description	Status / Timing
PHASE 1 - VISIONING AND CONSULTATION		
1.1 Communications Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Communications and Engagement Strategy provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the project team, engagement activities and tactics, and our approach for engaging the public and stakeholders. The engagement tactics will be further refined as the OPR progresses. 	June 2020
1.2 Project Kick-Off Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Project Kick-Off Meeting was held with the Steering Committee (SC) to review the OPR work program and schedule, engagement activities, and discuss issues to be addressed through the OPR. 	April 15, 2020
1.3.1 TAC/SAC Meeting #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual meetings were held with both the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) to review the OPR work program and solicit input on the vision and guiding principles that should inform the new Official Plan. 	August 13, 2020
1.3.4 Community Visioning Workshop #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An interactive online Community Visioning Workshop was held to solicit input on the draft vision and guiding principles. 	September 23, 2020
1.3.5 Council Meeting #1 and 1.6 Visioning Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A presentation was provided to Council on the draft Visioning Report (Task 1.6) which outlined the findings of the Phase 1 consultation activities, presented the draft vision and guiding principles, and identified key issues to be addressed through the OPR. An online survey was subsequently made available in January 2021 to present the draft vision and guiding principles and receive further input. 	November 3, 2020
PHASE 2 - BACKGROUND STUDIES AND DISCUSSION PAPERS		
2.3.1 TAC/SAC Meeting #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual meetings were held with both the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) to review and receive feedback on the Draft Discussion Papers. 	March 10, 2021

Task	Description	Status / Timing
2.3.4 Public Open House #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An interactive virtual Public Open House will be held to solicit input on the Draft Discussion Papers. 	Early May 2021 (tentative)
2.3.5 Council Meeting #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Council meeting will be held to present the revised Draft Discussion Papers based on the feedback from the Phase 2 consultations activities, and receive Council endorsement. 	June 2021 (tentative)
2.4 Finalize Discussion Papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to Council direction and comments, Town staff will finalize the Discussion Papers. 	June 2021 (tentative)

For the Phase 2 Public Open House (tentatively scheduled for early May, 2021), Town staff will use similar consultation techniques and meeting advertisements/notifications as used for the first Public Open House, including but not limited to:

- A virtual online Public Open House including online polling and interactive questions and discussions.
- Updates to the project website (www.cometogetherws.ca/opr) to make the Draft Discussion Papers publicly available and receive feedback on the Papers through an online survey.
- Notifications and advertisements for the meeting will be distributed through the Town's social media networks, local newspaper, On The Road, and the OPR Interested Parties list (e-newsletter).
- A dedicated email address is available to provide comments on the OPR (opreview@townofws.ca) or to be added to the interested parties list.

4.2 Draft Discussion Papers

The purpose of the Public Open House is to consult on the Draft Discussion Papers that have been prepared which are intended to identify the key issues and preliminary policy directions to inform the preparation of the Town's new Official Plan.

The four Discussion Papers, and a one-page summary, have been prepared for consultation, and include the following:

- Planning for Growth Discussion Paper (Attachment 1);
- Planning for the Natural Environment Discussion Paper (Attachment 2);
- Planning for Complete Communities Discussion Paper (Attachment 3); and
- General Technical/Housekeeping Updates Discussion Paper (Attachment 4).

The following provides a brief overview of the four Discussion Papers.

4.2.1 Planning for Growth Discussion Paper (Attachment 1)

According to the 2016 Census, the Town was the third fastest growing municipality in Canada and second fastest growing in Ontario. The Town's four settlement areas of

Stouffville, Ballantrae-Musselman Lake, Vandorf Preston Lake and Gormley are envisioned to accommodate projected growth over the next 25 years. With over 90% of the Town falling within the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt, infill growth and intensification within these settlement areas, in particular the Community of Stouffville, will be critical in the protection and enhancement of the Town's natural environment.

Importance of Planning for Growth to the new Town Official Plan

The Province, through A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 directs municipalities to prioritize intensification and higher densities in identified settlement areas to make efficient use of land and infrastructure, support transit viability and support a range and mix of housing options. This in return is intended to provide flexibility to capitalize on new economic and employment opportunities. These objectives must be integrated with planning and investment in infrastructure (servicing, and roads) and public service facilities.

Planning for Growth Considerations

The OPR will identify opportunities for the Town to plan for expected growth and investment, while promoting economic development opportunities. Key policies to be explored include the following:

- Directing Growth to Built-Up Areas – Ensure that growth and development will occur in settlement areas that can support increases in population and promote a wide variety of employment and economic opportunities.
- Providing Housing Options – Promote the adequate provision of a full range of housing options, including affordable housing, to support the needs of all socio-economic backgrounds.
- Employment and Economic Development – Promote economic development and competitiveness by making more efficient use of existing employment areas and vacant and underutilized employment lands.
- Transportation System – Encourage growth through new development and intensification that is transit-supportive and sustainably designed to promote alternative modes of transportation.
- Infrastructure and Public Services – Plan for and support development that makes effective use of investments in infrastructure and public service facilities.
- Environmental Sustainability – Promote growth to occur in an environmentally sustainable manner that is well-designed, encourages a sense of place and provides high-quality public spaces.

4.2.2 Planning for the Natural Environment Discussion Paper (Attachment 2)

The natural environment within the Town is encompassed by vast natural features and areas such as wetlands, woodlands, valleylands, lakes and water courses mainly located within the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt. The Town also features important and productive farmland that cannot be duplicated elsewhere.

Importance of Natural Environment to the new Town Official Plan

The abundance of natural areas in the Town presents a unique opportunity to balance, and integrate, a high-quality natural environment as part of the projected growth in the Town. The protection and enhancement of the natural environment, and its economic, social and health benefits, is viewed as a significant priority for residents, businesses and community organizations alike.

Planning for the Natural Environment Considerations

The OPR will identify opportunities for the Town to plan for the protection and enhancement of its natural environmental features. Key policies to be explored include the following:

- Provincial and Regional Policy Direction – Ensure consistency and conformity with Provincial and Regional legislation including the Greenbelt Plan, Source Protection Plans, etc.
- Environmental Sustainability – Implementation of sustainable design elements and ensuring the ongoing availability of natural resources essential to the sustainability of the Town.
- Climate Change and Air Quality – Ensure mitigation efforts against greenhouse gas emissions and provide for adaptation opportunities for a changing climate, as well as increasing resiliency.
- Agriculture and Economic Vitality – Support the continuation of all forms of agriculture and related uses as an important part of the Town’s rural heritage and a major economic contributor.
- Preserving Water – Protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water through identifying water resource systems and maintaining linkages.
- Accessible Nature – Ensure growth is supported by natural and open spaces that are high quality, safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant.
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing – Promote strong, liveable and healthy communities that support and enhance human health and social wellbeing.
- Environmental Stewardship – Recognize that the protection and enhancement of the natural environment is a shared responsibility among a variety of community stakeholders.

4.2.3 Planning for Complete Communities Discussion Paper (Attachment 3)

What is a Complete Community?

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 (Growth Plan) defines complete communities as:

“Places such as mixed-use neighbourhoods or other areas within cities, towns, and settlement areas that offer and support opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to conveniently access most of the necessities for daily living, including an

appropriate mix of jobs, local stores, and services, a full range of housing, transportation options and public service facilities. Complete communities are age-friendly and may take different shapes and forms appropriate to their contexts”.

Importance of a Complete Community to the new Town Official Plan

The concept of a complete community is implemented as a best practice with the goal of shaping communities to be places where homes, jobs, schools, community services, parks and recreation facilities are easily accessible to everyone. This ensures that communities can support people throughout all stages of life.

Building a Complete Community

The OPR will identify opportunities for strengthening the Town’s position as a complete community that maintains its unique rural character, manages growth and promotes physical, mental and social wellbeing. Key policies to be explored include the following:

- **Attainable Housing** – Ensure existing and future residents have access to a diverse range of housing options and forms, including affordable housing and secondary units.
- **Cultural Heritage** – Distinguish and enhance unique built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources.
- **Urban Design** – Enhance the form, shape and character of the built environment to contribute a functional and attractive community.
- **Parks Open Spaces and Trails** – Ensure readily available access to outdoor recreation.
- **Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Conservation** – Promote resiliency against climate change through promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices.
- **Healthy Communities and Community Services** – Create opportunities for people to socialize and connect within the community to promote and enhance human health and social well-being.

4.2.4 General Technical/Housekeeping Updates Discussion Paper (Attachment 4)

General technical / housekeeping updates, including the incorporation and application of major Provincial planning policy tools that need to be considered when preparing the new Official Plan for the Town. General technical / housekeeping updates will improve the overall readability and clarity of the Official Plan, modernize definitions and terminology, update pre-consultation and community engagement requirements, and expand development approvals and supporting study requirements.

General Technical Housekeeping Components

Key policies/tools to be explored include the following:

- **Planning Tools** – There is an opportunity for the Town to incorporate and implement recent planning tools to guide the Town’s land use and development

decisions over the planning horizon. These tools may include Inclusionary Zoning and Community Planning Permit System.

- Implementation and Interpretation of Policies – Over the last few years, the Province has introduced legislation modernizing public consultation requirements, providing clearer direction related to consultation with Indigenous Communities and clarifying requirements related to complete applications. These matters will be considered as part of the OPR process, and will be addressed by updating the Implementation and Interpretation Sections of the Official Plan.
- Organization/Structure – There is a desire to make the Official Plan easier to read and more intuitive. Care shall be taken to ensure the text and mapping is prepared to be accessible to the broadest possible audience. The aim is that this Review results in a user-friendly, graphically-enhanced Official Plan which is accessible to all users.
- Definitions Review – A review of the definitions will be undertaken to ensure that they are clear, contemporary, contain accessible language and are in conformity with Provincial legislation and the Regional Official Plan. A substantial number of new definitions will also be added to the Official Plan.
- Consistency and Consolidation – The Town will use this OPR as an opportunity to undertake a Secondary Plan consolidation exercise with the objective of streamlining the Official Plan. This will include the removal of repetitive designations, policies, definitions and mapping.

4.3 Next Steps

Following the Phase 2 consultations, the Draft Discussion Papers will be revised and updated as required and brought back to Council for further comment and endorsement, prior to finalizing the Papers.

Phase 3 will involve the identification of preferred policy directions and the development of new Official Plan policies through a series of Policy Direction Reports which are anticipated to be available in Q3 2021.

Phase 4 will involve the drafting on the new Official Plan which is anticipated to be available for Council endorsement in Q2 2022, subject to the timing of completion of the Region's MCR and the Region's new Official Plan.

Town staff will continue to provide regular updates and briefings to Council and seek further direction at key milestones throughout the OPR, including the release of major deliverables and community and stakeholder consultation activities.

5. Financial Implications:

None

6. Alignment with Strategic Plan:

2. Expanding the tax base through a growing, diversified economy
Building and maintaining a tax base that supports the highest quality program and service delivery.
 - Focus on servicing and development of Provincially Significant Employment Zones
 - Identify expansion areas for Industrial / Commercial growth

4. Asset Planning, Maintenance and Development
Successful stewardship of the infrastructure and facilities required to support a growing community and vibrant economy.
 - Address / plan for maintenance of existing assets & infrastructure; Create new infrastructure

7. Attachments:

Draft Discussion Papers (Including One-Page Summary):

Attachment 1 - Planning for Growth, March 2021

Attachment 2 - Planning for the Natural Environment, March 2021

Attachment 3 - Planning for Complete Communities, March 2021

Attachment 4 - General Technical / Housekeeping Updates, March 2021

8. Related Reports:

[DS-033-19: Official Plan Review – Introductory Report, June 18, 2019](#)

[DS-001-20: York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review Update and Major Transit Station Area Delineation, January 21, 2020](#)

[DS-017-20: Official Plan Review Update, May 5, 2020](#)

[DS-017-20: Official Plan Review Update, August 25, 2020](#)

[DS-049-20: Official Plan Review: Draft Visioning Consultation Report, November 3, 2020](#)

Authors: Randall Roth, Senior Policy Planner
Meaghan Craven, Manager Policy Planning

For further information on this report, please contact the Department Head: Haiqing Xu, Director of Development Services at 905-640-1910 or 1-855-642-8697 ext. 2431 or via email at haiqing.xu@townofws.ca