

Staff Report

Report From: Jay Pausner, Supervisor, Development Services

Meeting Date: September 26, 2022

Subject: Proposed County Official Plan Amendment – Growth Management

Attachments: Proposed Draft Amendment

Recommendation

That Council endorse the comments contained herein and direct staff to forward them to the County of Bruce.

Report Summary

The County has circulated for comments an amendment to the County Official Plan that proposes to update the growth forecasts and growth management policies. This report highlights key elements, relevant considerations for Saugeen Shores, and provides eight recommended Town comments to be submitted to the County.

Background/Analysis

The following points are taken from the preamble and basis sections of the County Official Plan Amendment (“the Amendment”):

- The purpose of this Official Plan Amendment is to update the Bruce County Official Plan by revising the growth management policies and establishing a growth management framework to the 2046 planning horizon for Bruce County.
- Adoption of the amendment by County Council would conclude Phase 1 of “Plan the Bruce”, the Bruce County Official Plan Review (OPR) project. The amendment would be consolidated into the new County Official Plan, which is currently being developed for County Council adoption in 2023, through Phase 2 of the Official Plan Review project.
- There are two principal reasons for this Amendment.
 - First, the County is required to undertake a Comprehensive Review of the 2010 Official Plan pursuant to Section 26 of the Planning Act. The County’s permanent population, household, and employment base is forecasted to increase over the planning horizon to 2046. Updating growth-related policies ensures that the local municipalities can begin to undertake important growth management processes,

such as growth management analyses, and infrastructure and servicing planning, to accommodate for anticipated growth.

- Second, the County Official Plan is required to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS, 2020). The growth management forecast established through this Amendment thereby brings the Bruce County Official Plan into conformity with the growth policies of the PPS, 2020. On this basis, the amendment allows the County and the local municipalities to proceed with necessary growth-related planning processes while the comprehensive new Official Plan is brought forward for adoption by County Council in 2023.
- The Bruce County OPR will introduce a new Official Plan to guide long-term growth and development in the County to 2046. This Amendment satisfies Phase 1 of the County's Official Plan Review project. The amendment implements recommendations from the Good Growth work program. Growth forecasts prepared by the County as documented in the "Plan the Bruce: Good Growth Discussion Paper" (2021) form the basis of this amendment.
- The Good Growth work program developed population, employment, and housing projections for the County. Over the planning horizon, the County's permanent population, household, and employment base is forecast to increase. By 2046, the County's population is expected to reach a total of 93,600 by 2046, increasing **by (from)** approximately 73,500 from 2021. The County is also forecast to experience an increase of 9,600 households and 9,200 jobs by 2046.
- The implementing amendment is a result of the comprehensive work program undertaken by Bruce County to ensure that the County and local municipalities plan for growth to the 2046 planning horizon.

Where we are in the process:

The County is holding an On-line Open House on September 29th and an In-person and On-line Public Meeting on October 6th. The comments in this report are offered as the basis for the Town's formal input on the amendment for County Council's consideration.

It is also worth noting that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is the approval authority for this amendment. Accordingly, if adopted, the amendment would be submitted to the Ministry for their Decision which can include changes (referred to as Modifications).

Why the Amendment Matters

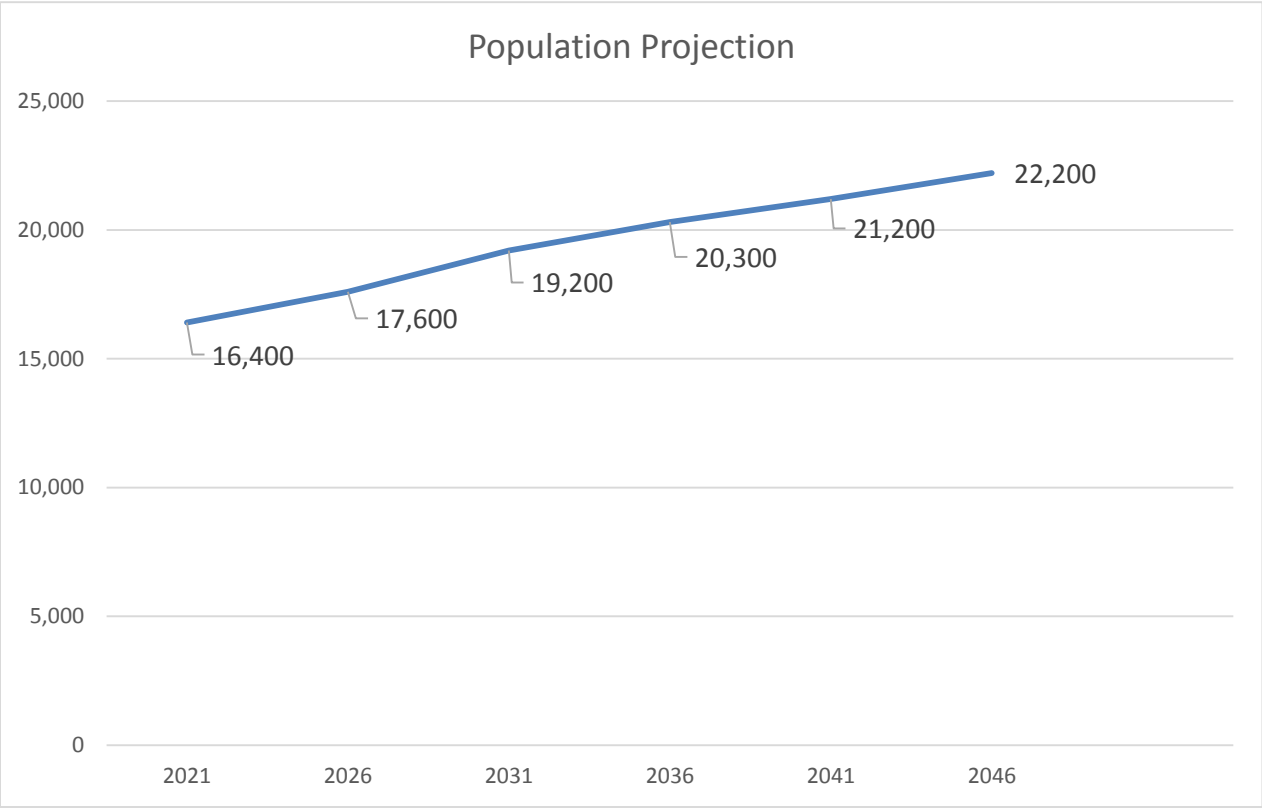
Growth forecasts and growth management policies matter to the Town as we are a community that has been, and will continue to experience, substantial growth. The County's [Good Growth Discussion Paper](#) notes that Saugeen Shores is expected to accommodate the largest share of the County's permanent housing growth over the 2016 to 2046 forecast period. The County Official Plan forecasts and growth management policies affect the Town's land use and infrastructure planning for growth (i.e. our ability to be future ready).

Growth Forecast for Saugeen Shores

The amendment includes a forecast that the number of households in the Town will increase from 6,940 in 2021 to 10,180 in 2046. In terms of growth, this would mean 3,240 added

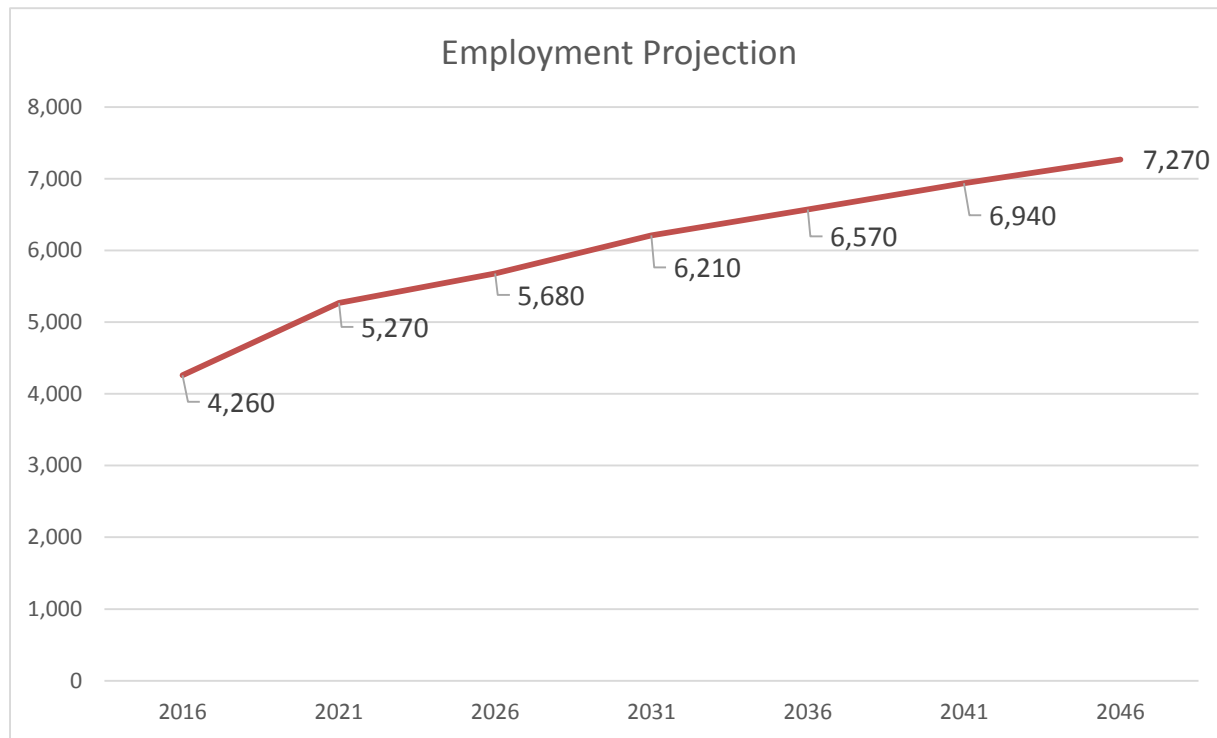
households over the 25-year period. The amendment also forecasts that the Town population will increase from 16,400 in 2021 to 22,200 in 2046. In terms of growth, this would mean 5,800 more persons over the 25-year period (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 – Saugeen Shores Population 2016-2046



The amendment also includes a forecast that employment in the Town will increase from 5,270 in 2021 to 7,270 in 2046. In terms of growth, this would mean 2,000 more jobs over the 25-year period (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2 – Saugeen Shores Employment 2016-2046



While we note that the forecasts for Saugeen Shores in the amendment are lower than the forecasts in the Town's Development Charges Background Study, the differences are mainly in the residential forecast (the employment forecasts are reasonably well aligned) that appear to be the result of methodology differences. While having differences between County and Town forecasts is not ideal, we note that Official Plan and Development Charge forecasts are not developed for exactly the same purposes, so we are not concerned that this will create problems for land use or infrastructure planning in the short term; however, we do offer the following comments in this regard:

Comment 1:

The Town recommends that the County and Town work together to develop and implement tools to harmonize the forecasting, tracking, and reporting on growth.

Comment 2:

The Town recommends that footnotes be added to the population and household forecast tables in the amendment that specify whether and how Census undercount and seasonal households and populations are incorporated, to aid in interpretation relative to other forecasts.

Regional Market Areas for Long-Range Land Needs

A broad concern shared by the County and the Town is that the County is bound by Provincial policy direction that the County is to be used as the geographic basis for determining whether and how large a settlement boundary expansion is justified. This is normally based on a land budgeting exercise that relates the forecast demand with the amount of designated (i.e., in the Official Plan) land supply to meet that demand.

In the case of Saugeen Shores, the County's land budget analysis that was undertaken to inform this Amendment found that:

- there is enough land planned for residential uses in the existing settlement boundaries in Saugeen Shores to accommodate the population and household forecasts; and
- there will be a deficit of designated employment (7 hectares) and commercial (8.5 hectares) land to accommodate the employment forecast – while the specific timing of when the Town would not have enough employment or commercial lands is difficult to predict, the analysis indicates that it is not expected in the first 10 years of the forecast.

The policies in the amendment do provide a path for the Town to address this potential constraint in the future; however, we are concerned that such an analysis will be required to consider the entire County, such that the sum of large surpluses elsewhere in the County could undermine the argument for an expansion in Saugeen Shores. Accordingly, the following comment is offered:

Comment 3:

The Town supports the County's continued efforts with the Province to establish alternatives to the regional market area approach and find ones which better reflect the unique growth pressures of Bruce County and Saugeen Shores.

In terms of the specific policy language in this regard, we are concerned with the wording in Section 7.8 through 7.11. Since 'shall' and 'will' are often read interchangeably, this may be seen as a County policy direction stating that the Town shall be constrained. Based on our understanding that this is not the intent, the following comment is offered:

Comment 4:

The Town recommends revising policy 7.9 (and similar policies) as follows - "If growth proceeds in accordance with the forecasts contained in this Plan, the Saugeen Shores Primary Urban Settlement Area ~~will be~~ is expected to become constrained with respect to employment and commercial land supply over the 25-year plan horizon.

Potential to use Local Official Plan Growth Analysis and Forecasts

It would be beneficial to the County and the local municipalities to have the ability, if an opportunity arises where there is a more current local forecast and growth analysis approved in a Local Official Plan than was adopted for the County Plan, the local forecast could be used. This is the thinking behind the following comment:

Comment 5:

The Town recommends revising provision 7.13 as - Where it is not feasible or appropriate to accommodate forecasted growth within existing Settlement Area boundaries, and where local Official Plan forecasts and growth strategies identify that the Settlement Area boundaries are not sufficient to accommodate the forecasted growth, local municipalities may propose Settlement Area boundary expansions or adjustments.

Infill and Intensification (proposed policy 9)

The amendment proposes an infilling target whereby a minimum of 15% of growth would be directed to existing built-up areas. The current Town Official Plan policy is 10%. Combined with the other policies contained in the amendment, the higher proposed intensification target would strengthen our ability to direct housing which is more diverse, and to reduce the pressure for sprawl and inefficient use of infrastructure. We also note that reporting on the current County and Town intensification targets is not consistent or coordinated and recommend that this be addressed in order for the target to be more meaningful.

Comment 6:

The Town supports the proposed minimum intensification target of 15%.

Comment 7:

The Town recommends that the County and Town work together to develop and implement tools to measure and report on intensification to Councils on an annual basis (at a minimum).

Nitrates (proposed policy 11)

The amendment updates the policies about nitrate study requirements for development on private sewage systems. While such development is a very small percentage of the Town's growth, we note that the policies are generally aligned with recent amendments to the Town Official Plan for additional residential units and staff are supportive of the change.

Comment 8:

The Town supports the clarifying policy to ensure the appropriate use of Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks guidelines in the implementation of development on lands that utilize private sewage disposal systems.

Linkages

- Corporate Strategic Plan Priority #1: Facilitate Appropriate Growth in our Communities

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

None

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