



Staff Report to Council - for Direction

Title: Planning & Development Response to Town of South Bruce Peninsula Resolution

From: Jack Van Dorp, Director of Planning and Development

Date: October 17, 2024

Report Number: PD-2024-019

Report Recommendation:

- That Council direct the Clerk to circulate this report to each local Council in Bruce County for information.

Report Summary:

Bruce County Council, along with the other local municipalities in the County, were circulated a resolution (attached) from South Bruce Peninsula Council about the draft new County Official Plan. This report outlines the work Bruce County staff are leading to address the concerns raised by South Bruce Peninsula Council. This work includes:

- **Engaging the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:** Bruce County staff engaged with officials from the Building Code Development Unit and Community Planning & Development from the Western Ontario Municipal Services Office to understand the Ministry's expectation around the interaction of these two policy areas. Specifically, how the Building Code, official plans, and other legislations are intended to interact to protect groundwater and support growth. The Ministry understands the issues and is committed to providing a response.
- **Continued Engagement on the draft Official Plan:** the County has been, and continues, to seek input from the public, agencies, municipalities, Saugeen Ojibway Nation and the province on the proposed draft policies and mapping. County staff have held four public open houses, and have been attending local Council meetings to help Councils understand the structure and full scope of the policies included in the draft new County Official Plan.
- **Continued Engagement of Council and South Bruce Peninsula:** County staff are committed to reporting back to both Council and South Bruce Peninsula on the findings above to find a path forward that works to address the concerns expressed while providing advice on how to best protect groundwater and support growth.

Background/Analysis:

The following points outlined some key areas of consideration as Council reviews both the South Bruce Peninsula Council resolution, and this staff report:

- The 2024 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) recognizes municipal official plans like the County Official Plan and local Official Plans as “the most important vehicle for the implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement”. In drafting the proposed new Official Plan, the effort has been two-fold: to implement the PPS, and to reflect the Bruce County specific context.
- The County recognizes South Bruce Peninsula is unique in having a local Official Plan that covers the whole municipality. Whereas the other seven municipalities in Bruce County rely on the County Official Plan to act as their own local official plan outside of settlement areas. Providing detailed policies outside of settlement areas in the County Plan assists with ensuring alignment and streamlines planning approvals.
- The County Official Plan brings together provincial direction, laid out in the Planning Act, and within provincial plans like the Niagara Escarpment Plan/Greenbelt Plan, as well as the Provincial Planning Statement, and locally developed growth projections. The Plan applies provincial direction in a regional context that considers the issues and matters of importance across the County.
- The Provincial Planning Statement directs municipalities to protect, maintain, and where possible improve groundwater resources from negative impacts of single, multiple, or successive developments. The PPS establishes a servicing ‘hierarchy’ ranging from full municipal services to communal services to private services. Private services are only permitted when full services or communal services are not planned or feasible, and if site conditions are favourable for the long-term with no negative impacts.
- Groundwater is widely used for drinking water in Bruce County, including private wells in unserviced settlement areas and in the countryside. High nitrates levels in drinking water are a serious risk to human health.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

- The financial and legal considerations associated with a more permissive groundwater protection framework require further study.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

- Corporate Services - Insurance and Risk Specialist consulted on legal considerations.

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

- Growth and Innovation - Promote responsible growth

Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:

- The New Bruce County Official Plan is a department business plan objective to be completed in 2024.

Report Author and Departmental Approval:

- Jack Van Dorp, Director of Planning & Development

Approved for Submission:

Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

Attachments:

- Town of South Bruce Peninsula Resolution Re: Proposed Bruce County Official Plan