



Staff Report to Council - for Information

Title: Draft New Bruce County Official Plan Settlement Boundary Adjustments

From: Jack Van Dorp, Director of Planning and Development

Date: November 21, 2024

Report Number: PD-2024-022

Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

Report Summary:

County staff have been engaging in public and municipal consultation on the draft new County Official Plan through the Fall of 2024. In October 2024 Planning staff hosted four public open houses throughout the County. Public engagement has been ongoing throughout October and into November 2024. Staff attended Council meetings at each local municipality to present the draft new County Official Plan through September and October 2024, as well as continuing to have on-going engagement with local municipal staff.

Through public and municipal engagement on the draft New County Official Plan, the County received a number of boundary adjustment requests that are being evaluated for consideration for inclusion in the final draft of the County Official Plan. Boundary adjustment requests are reviewed against the results of the County's land needs analysis, policies of the proposed official plan, and the Provincial Planning Statement 2024.

Boundary adjustments that meet the criteria for consideration will be included in the final draft of the County Official Plan that will be brought forward for consideration by County Council at a future meeting.

Background/Analysis:

The new Bruce County Official Plan represents an opportunity to ensure settlement areas across the County are appropriately identified to accommodate growth within the County for the timeframe of the plan (to 2046). The County Official Plan establishes settlement area boundaries and directs that settlement areas can have more detailed policy direction through local Official Plans.

As part of the Plan The Bruce project to develop a new Official Plan for Bruce County, a [land needs analysis](#) and [commercial market study](#) were conducted by Watson and Associates. The findings were incorporated into the Good Growth Amendment to the Bruce County Official Plan, which was adopted by Bruce County in October of 2022 and approved by the Province of Ontario in August 2024.

The land needs analysis found that on a County-wide basis there is an adequate supply of residential land already designated for future development. However, some settlement areas have a projected shortfall of land for residential, employment and/or commercial uses.

Through the public engagement phase of the draft new County Official Plan, thirty-three requests for boundary adjustments have been received by the County to date. Requests have been submitted by members of the public, municipalities and identified by planning staff. Several requests propose to enlarge settlement boundaries. Other requests propose to rationalize settlement boundaries, by removing lands that have limited development potential due to servicing constraints or have environmental constraints.

In addition to reviewing these requests against the County land needs assessment and the policies of the Official Plan, these boundary adjustment requests are also required to be reviewed against the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) 2024, which took effect on October 20, 2024.

In allowing a settlement area boundary expansion, the PPS 2024 states planning authorities shall consider the following:

- a) the need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses;
- b) if there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities;
- c) whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas;
- d) the evaluation of alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas and, where avoidance is not possible, consider reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in prime agricultural areas;
- e) whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation formulae;
- f) whether impacts on the agricultural system are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance; and
- g) the new or expanded settlement area provides for the phased progression of urban development.

A significant change in PPS 2024 is that the Province now permits boundary adjustment applications to be submitted through site-specific official plan amendments at any time. Under Provincial Policy Statement 2020, boundary expansions were limited to only be considered at the time of an official plan update, when a comprehensive review was being completed. The additional flexibility in PPS 2024 allows for future consideration of site- or community-specific boundary expansion applications that may be premature at this time, or that may require additional assessment, such as confirming the municipality's ability and capacity to service a boundary expansion.

Staff have completed a review of the 33 settlement boundary area adjustment requests that have been received through the engagement process for the draft new Official Plan. Results of the assessment are attached for Council's information. These requests have been

reviewed with reference to the land needs analysis and the proposed policies for settlement area boundary expansions in the draft new Official Plan, and the criteria of the PPS 2024.

Of the requests for settlement area boundary adjustments received to date, staff have identified 11 boundary adjustments that appear to meet the criteria for a boundary expansion or that represent an appropriate rationalization of a settlement area boundary. Pending final review of potential agricultural impacts these 11 requests will be brought forward in a final draft of the new Bruce County Official Plan.

Other requests may be better addressed through a site-specific amendment to the Official Plan when land needs and municipal servicing information is sufficient to substantiate the request.

As the County works towards concluding the current public consultation phase of the draft new County Official Plan, it is anticipated further requests may be received. Staff will evaluate any additional requests as they come in.

Staff will bring forward additional information and propose a final draft of the County Official Plan to Council prior to requesting Council direction on the next phase of public engagement.

Staff will provide a brief overview of the boundary adjustment requests at the November 21st, 2024 Council meeting, highlighting the adjustments that meet criteria for inclusion in the final draft County Official Plan.

Next Steps for the Official Plan:

Staff propose to bring a report to a December Council meeting summarizing engagement and feedback that has been received to-date on the draft new Bruce County Official Plan.

Staff propose to present to Council final draft land use schedules that include the boundary adjustments, along with proposed changes to draft schedules and draft text that staff recommend, which arose from the engagement process. At this time staff anticipate seeking direction from Council at the December Council meeting to proceed to a statutory open house and a public meeting early in the new year based on the revised schedules and text.

Council would be able to consider adoption of the final County Official Plan following the statutory open house and public meeting. Following adoption of the new County Official Plan, the Plan is forwarded to the province for approval.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

This work falls within the 2024 budget.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

Transportation and Environmental Services and Emergency Management Services staff were consulted regarding impacts of possible boundary expansions on County functions and services delivery.

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Growth and Innovation - Promote responsible growth

Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:

The Bruce County Official Plan is part of the department work plan for 2024.

Report Author:

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Departmental Approval:

Jack Van Dorp, Director of Planning and Development

Approved for Submission:

Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

Attachments:

Attachment 1- Municipal Settlement Areas Boundary Adjustments