



# Staff Report to Council - for Direction

**Title:** Draft New Bruce County Official Plan Recommendations and Options to Address Outstanding Issues

**From:** Jack Van Dorp, Director of Planning and Development

**Date:** April 23, 2026

**Report Number:** PD-2026-019

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## Staff Recommendation:

That Council direct staff to make the recommended changes outlined in Sections 1 and 3 in the attached 'Recommendations and Options per Report PD-2026-019';

That Council direct staff to make the recommended changes (rightmost column) in the attached 'Provincial Comment Matrix' and the attached recommended changes to Schedule 'A' and Schedule 'C' attached to Report PD-2026-019;

That Council direct staff to share the updated draft new Bruce County Official Plan and related materials with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing indicating intent to proceed with scheduling of the statutory Open House and Public Meeting.

## Report Summary:

The recommendations in this report are intended to complete the revision process and prepare a final version of the draft County Official Plan. Recommendations are informed by the extensive engagement undertaken to date, the detailed provincial review of the current draft, and the need to ensure conformity with provincial policy in the final document.

This report and attachments recommend changes to policies related to the Natural Environment and Mineral Aggregate Resources, Mineral Resources, Cultural Heritage policies, Agriculture and Rural Policies and Maps, Human Made Hazards, Source Water Protection, and other policies arising from the February 12 Council workshop. It also includes recommended changes based on follow-up discussions with municipalities, SON, and provincial comments.

In addition to the recommended changes, the report addresses outstanding matters where Council may wish to direct changes not recommended by Planning & Development staff or where the staff recommendation may differ from provincial comments. These include:

- Additional Natural Environment policy changes per section 2 of the 'Recommendations and Options per Report PD-2026-019;'
- Changes to policies related to Small Scale Development on Private Services per section 4 of 'Recommendations and Options per Report PD-2026-019;'
- South Bruce request for Mildmay Settlement Area Boundary Expansion which is discussed below.
- 4 items of provincial comments discussed below.

## **Background/Analysis:**

### Engagement on the Draft County Official Plan:

Since Council directed staff on December 5, 2025 to circulate the draft new County Official Plan for engagement, Planning & Development staff have been actively engaging with Council, municipalities, the province, Saugeen Ojibway Nation and the public. A comprehensive summary of engagement leading up to and including the proposed changes included in this report are summarised in the attached “Appendix -Engagement and Revisions to the Current Draft Bruce County Official Plan”.

This report provides Council with background and policy options to address all identified outstanding matters needed to complete the revision process and prepare a final version of the draft County Official Plan.

Recommended policy and mapping changes proposed to address matters identified through recent engagement are outlined in the following documents:

- “Recommendations and Options per report PD-2026-019”
- “Provincial Comments Matrix”
- “Updated Draft Schedule ‘C’ Resources and Constraints”; and
- “Maps Reflecting Recommended Changes to Schedule ‘A’ (Land Use).”

Detailed discussion of Natural Environment, Mineral Aggregate policies, and Small Scale Development on Private Services is included above the tables included in the ‘Recommendations and Options’ attachment.

Comments from Northern Bruce Peninsula and South Bruce Peninsula are discussed below, together with a summary of provincial comments.

### **Northern Bruce Peninsula Comments**

The Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula submitted comments on January 22, 2026 on several topics. Staff reviewed the comments with the Municipality over a series of meetings, through which:

- A Natural Environment policy change re: woodlands was identified (see attached ‘Recommendations and Options’);
- An opportunity for review of forest conditions on the peninsula was identified and completed;
- An opportunity for Land Use Planning Manager Morrison to be available in-person at the municipal office to meet with the public regarding the plan was identified, promoted, and completed.

Several topics covered in the municipality’s comments were addressed through Council discussions in previous revisions made by County Council to the draft Official Plan, and others were addressed through discussions and information sharing with Northern Bruce Peninsula staff. There are no further specific recommendations or options arising from these discussions.

“Northern Bruce Peninsula Official Plan Comments with County Staff Responses” and “Email Correspondence with Northern Bruce Peninsula regarding Official Plan Comments” are attached to this report.

### **Municipality of South Bruce Request for Consideration of Mildmay Boundary Expansion**

South Bruce Council has endorsed an additional request for consideration of the settlement area boundary expansion requested for the parcels marked as #31 and #32 of report [PD-2024-22](#) (pages 55-58 at that link).

The Planning & Development staff does not recommend this change because the Good Growth study did not identify a need for additional employment or residential land in Mildmay. The Municipality has noted the intended use of these lands for employment, and the municipal report (attached) notes that the municipality’s priority is to request expansions to increase supply of employment lands.

The “Municipality of South Bruce Report regarding Mildmay Boundary Adjustment Request” is attached to this report.

### **Provincial Comments, Recommendations and Options**

On March 16 the department received comments from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing through their ‘One Window’ service which coordinates comments by provincial ministries on the draft plan that was forwarded to the province per County Council’s direction on December 4, 2025.

Planning & Development staff have reviewed provincial comments and added a column in the matrix that summarizes the staff response and recommendation regarding these comments.

The ‘Provincial Comment Matrix’ is attached to this report.

Most changes recommended by the province relate to focused changes that align the plan with provincial direction.

Most changes recommended to be implemented as requested or through alternatives that we reviewed with the province.

There are a few comments regarding mineral aggregate resources and natural heritage where we have identified alternative approaches and provided them to the province for consideration. In the event the province does not agree with these approaches, we will implement the provincial recommendation. These items are discussed in detail in the attached “Recommendations and Options” document, along with other Provincial Comments for the Natural Environment, Mineral Aggregates, and Small Scale Development and Private Services themes.

There are four areas (line 2,5,10 and 29 in the ‘Provincial Comment Matrix’) where staff’s recommendation is different than the provincial comments. These are discussed below, with reasons, and details are in the attached ‘Provincial Comment Matrix’

## ITEM 2: CULTURAL HERITAGE

The recommendation is to implement the requests by the province and add additional information to the 'Indigenous Engagement and Interests' section regarding SON's relationship with Cultural Heritage.

This recommendation arose from reviewing the province's requested changes regarding cultural heritage resources with SON EO staff who expressed concerns with the provincial broader framing of cultural heritage as a resource rather than a relationship.

In discussions with SON EO staff, we identified the possibility of adding a statement regarding SON's relationship to cultural heritage in Part 3 (Indigenous Engagement and Interests) of the plan, and to also implement the changes recommended by the province. At the time of writing this report we are awaiting confirmation from SON of the approach.

## ITEM 5: GROWTH FORECAST

The province noted that there are new growth forecasts as of fall 2025 and encouraged the County to consider using them. Staff recommend proceeding with the growth forecasts that were recently (2024) approved by the province for the purpose of completing the plan, recognizing that:

- The province produces forecasts annually
- We have also initiated new growth management work that will occur through 2026-2027 that will provide for updated forecasts and
- We can amend the plan to include this update if necessary, when that work is complete.

## ITEM 10: EXISTING AGRICULTURAL USES IN NATURAL HERITAGE AREAS

Previous versions of the PPS protected 'existing' agricultural uses in natural heritage areas; however, this is removed from more recent versions of the PPS. SON has requested, and staff recommends, that 'existing' remain in this policy to balance natural heritage interests and agricultural interests. The policy would not apply to any current agricultural uses in natural heritage area designation but provides an opportunity to consider impacts of significant changes in agricultural activities. Staff anticipate this dialogue could continue through the provincial approval process for the plan.

## ITEM 29: SCHOOLS SERVING COMMUNITIES USING HORSE-DRAWN TRANSPORTATION

The province suggests that while schools may be permitted in agricultural areas that serve communities reliant on horse-drawn transportation, they request the County consider not permit consents to be located on newly created lots. Staff consulted local horse-drawn transportation communities and recommend:

- Maintaining the current consent policies that would allow a separate lot to be created for schools only after consideration of alternatives including long-term lease, and requires the consent make it as easy as possible to merge the school site back with the farm; and
- Removing the maximum duration (21 years) from the lease criteria, as land leases may be longer than this if they are given consent.

Two letters were provided and one survey response was submitted in reply to a survey that was prepared and distributed through the community earlier this month. All 3 submissions express preference for retaining option to create lots for schools.

## PROVINCIAL CHANGES TO MAPS/ SCHEDULES

Items 35 and 37 in the “Provincial Comments Matrix” relate to adding provincial data for abandoned / unknown petroleum wells and abandoned mine sites and buffer areas to the County Official Plan. While these sites are small in scale and long out of use, adding them to the map is consistent with the PPS and provides an opportunity to identify them and manage potential risks from land use changes. These points are included in the attached recommended changes to Schedule ‘C’.

Items 38 - 44 of the Provincial Comments Matrix relate to changes to the ‘Agriculture’ designation to more closely align with the ‘Land Evaluation Area Review’ completed by the province. These comments related to inclusion of small (under 250 ha) ‘Rural’ areas within the Agricultural designation, addition of some ‘agriculture’ lands to ‘Rural’ areas, identifying ‘Rural’ areas adjacent to settlement areas, and identifying ‘Open Space’ Areas smaller than 250 ha that are surrounded by ‘Agriculture’ areas. The province provided examples related to these items that were not a comprehensive inventory of areas of concern.

Staff re-examined reviewed areas where the recommended ‘Agriculture’ area maps differ from the LEAR, together with prior analysis that led to the draft maps and resources developed through prior engagement with provincial staff, and reviewed with the Municipalities of Brockton, Arran-Elderslie, and Huron-Kinloss where the greatest potential for changes were identified.

The attached ‘Maps Reflecting Recommended Changes to Schedule A (Land Use)’ illustrate areas that we recommend be changed and areas where we recommend no change to the draft plan. Areas where we do not recommend a change could be modified by the province through its approval process.

## SUMMARY OF SON REVIEW OF PROVINCIAL COMMENTS

Through regular engagement with SON Environment Office on the draft Official Plan, and in recognition of provincial recommendations regarding cultural heritage policies, Planning & Development staff provided SON the provincial comments regarding the draft Official Plan.

SON raised specific concerns with provincial comments on:

- Framing Cultural Heritage as ‘Resources’
- Redesignating ‘open space’ lands in Agriculture areas to ‘agriculture’
- Mapping more Mineral Aggregate Resource areas, facilitating mineral aggregate resource extraction relative to natural heritage / open space area protection, not requiring County Plan Amendments for new mineral aggregate resource operations.
- Removing statements on natural heritage policies not being intended to impact ability of ‘existing agricultural uses’ vs the broader ‘agricultural uses’ to continue).

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPTIONS**

The attached 'Public Comments Log February to April 2026' details comments received since the February 12 workshop with Council. The department's recommendations for how to address the comments are included in the attached Public Comments Log document.

Public comments received are reflected in recommendations discussed above.

One public comment noted 3 parcels in the Shoreline and Seasonal Recreation Area that were misidentified as 'Open Space.' Staff will correct this error.

## **STAFF INITIATED CHANGES**

Section 8 of the draft plan has been updated to include special policies consistent with previous direction from Council to add employment area to Teeswater and apply special policies for the recently established small hamlet of Sutherland, in the Municipality of Brockton, to the larger area proposed to be part of that hamlet in the new plan.

### **Next Steps:**

Once staff implements Council's final direction regarding recommendations and options for change to the draft new Bruce County Official Plan Planning & Development staff can share the latest version of the Plan with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for review of the latest changes. MMAH has indicated willingness by the province to continue with focused meetings to review changes arising from Council direction, which is preferable to a further full 90-day provincial review. We intend to provide the province with materials that reflect the changes directed by Council and advise of our intent to schedule final open houses and a public meeting prior to Council adopting the New Plan.

### **Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:**

The New Bruce County Official Plan is in the 2026 budget.

### **Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:**

Growth and Innovation - Promote responsible growth

Community and Partnerships - Build a strong and inclusive community

### **Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:**

The New Official Plan is part of the Planning & Development workplan for 2026.

### **Report Author / Departmental Approval:**

Jack Van Dorp, Director of Planning & Development

**Approved for Submission:**

Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

**Attachments:**

- Recommendations and Options per report PD-2026-019
- Provincial Comment Matrix
- Public Comments Log February to April 2026
- Updated Draft Text of New Official Plan with Changes Noted
- Updated Draft Schedule C Resources and Constraints
- Maps Reflecting Recommended Changes to Schedule A (Land Use)
- Municipality of South Bruce Report regarding Mildmay Boundary Adjustment Request
- Northern Bruce Peninsula Official Plan Comments with County Staff Responses
- Email Correspondence with Northern Bruce Peninsula regarding Official Plan Comments
- Appendix -Engagement and Revisions to the Current Draft Bruce County Official Plan