

DATE: April 27, 2022
REPORT NO: PD-48-2022
SUBJECT: **Technical Report - Proposed Smithville Urban Boundary for Growth to 2051 and Official Plan Amendment No. 62.**
CONTACT: Brian Treble, Director of Planning & Building

OVERVIEW:

- The Township of West Lincoln Master Community Plan consultants (Aecom/GSP and Wood) have been working hard on the Natural Heritage System mapping, the urban systems planning and Master Servicing Plans for Smithville. This has resulted in the proposed urban boundary expansion as shown in the Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 62 as found in Attachment 1.
- Three Public Information Centers have been held (January 2020, February 2021 and October 2021) prior to the Public Information Centre and formal Public meeting on April 27, 2022.
- A virtual open house was also held on the PlanSmithville.ca website from April 13 to April 20, 2022.
- On October 12, 2021 staff presented Planning Report PD-115-2021 entitled 'Recommendation Report, Proposed Smithville Urban Boundary for Growth to 2051 to be included in New Regional Official Plan' which endorsed the inclusion of the majority of the Smithville Urban Expansion Study Area in the new Regional Official Plan and the inclusion of a proposed new Escarpment crossing transportation connection.
- Council also directed staff and the study team to proceed on the development of a corresponding Official Plan Amendment to bring a portion of the expansion lands into the urban boundary and set land use plans and policies for the urban area of Smithville.
- Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 62 has now been drafted which would bring a portion of the study area (540 hectares in area) into the urban boundary of Smithville.
- A future Official Plan Amendment (No. 63) is currently being drafted which would provide land use designations and policies for the proposed expansion lands.
- Official Plan Amendment No. 62 is being processed as a conformity exercise to conform to the new Regional Official Plan, once Approved.
- Official Plan Amendment No. 62. would require Regional approval following approval by Township Council.
- Planning Staff are proposing that a recommendation report be prepared for presentation at a future Committee Meeting once all agency and public comments have been received and once the Region has adopted their new Official Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That, Report PD-48-2022, regarding “Technical Report, Proposed Smithville Urban Boundary for Growth to 2051 and Official Plan Amendment No. 62”, dated April 27th, 2022, be RECEIVED; and,
2. That, a Recommendation Report be presented at a future Planning/Building/Environmental Committee meeting following the receipt of any additional public or agency comments and the adoption of the new Regional Official Plan by Regional Council.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme #3

- Strategic, Responsible Growth

BACKGROUND:

The Master Community Plan work in West Lincoln officially began in late October of 2019 with the passing of the Authorizing By-law 2019-96 and By-law 2019-97 and with the signing of contracts to hire Aecom and Wood to undertake the Master Community Plan work, Urban Structure work, and Natural Heritage system assessment work. All of this work in turn will be fed into the Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review, which is part of the new Regional Official Plan project. In order to do so, and to ensure compliance with the Planning Act and the Environmental Assessment Act, Public Information Centres (PIC) have also been held as required. To date, three have now occurred, on January 30, 2020 (PIC 0), February 11th, 2021 (PIC 1) and on October 6th, 2021 (PIC 2). A fourth PIC combined with a statutory public meeting is being held the same night that this report is being presented, April 27, 2022.

Additionally, the Township in 2021 retained MHBC Planning to complete a review of the Township’s rural settlement areas to see if there were any opportunities for limited growth, rounding out of boundaries and locating a rural employment park. This study work is also feeding into Official Plan Amendment No. 62 as it relates to changes to a number of Township Rural Settlement areas.

Official Plan Amendment No. 62 has been drafted and circulated for review to the public and applicable agencies. Notice was circulated over a period of a number of weeks which included four newspaper notices, direct mailing to residents (nearly 1000 households) within the study area and within 120 metres of the study area, and through email based on the study contact list.

CURRENT SITUATION:

On August 11, 2021, Regional Planning Committee endorsed Regional staff report PDS-033-2021 entitled “Niagara Official Plan: Land Needs Assessment and Settlement Area Boundary Review Update”. The proposed growth targets for each lower tier municipality were provided in PDS-033-2021. For West Lincoln, they are as follows:

West Lincoln	2021	2051
Population	16,370	38,370
Households	5,330	14,060
Employment	4,460	10,480

It should be noted that population and employment growth in Smithville over the next 30 years is projected to be gradual and sustained and as a result, the urban growth area will increase in a phased approach with agriculture continuing in other parts of the proposed boundary until the lands are needed for urban purposes. Growth will need to be tied to the availability of Municipal services from the Region and the Township.

Over this same time period the Region of Niagara is projected to grow from 491,120 population (2021) to 694,000 (2051), representing a 40% increase in growth while West Lincoln population is projected to more than double in 30 years.

These allocations are generally consistent with the work that the Township's Consultants have been working towards, notwithstanding the fact that the target growth was originally being planned to 2041, but was extended by the Province to 2051 on August 28, 2020 through Amendment 1 to *A Place to Grow, the Provincial Growth Plan*.

In order to achieve this growth while planning to maintain the character of Smithville, the following targets have been assigned by the Region:

- West Lincoln needs to achieve a 13% intensification rate
- West Lincoln needs to protect natural heritage systems and will require in the range of up to an additional 370 hectares of land for community needs and 45 additional hectares of land for employment needs.

These targets are only achievable through an urban boundary expansion, which is being proposed in draft Official Plan Amendment No. 62.

In October of 2021, Council endorsed several recommendations outlined in Planning Report PD-115-2021 entitled 'Recommendation Report, Proposed Smithville Urban Boundary for Growth to 2051 into the Smithville Urban Boundary; to be included in New Regional Official Plan' which endorsed the inclusion of the majority of the Smithville Urban Expansion Study Area in the new Regional Official Plan' and endorsed the preparation of an Official Plan Amendment to implement the urban expansion.

The Smithville Master Community Plan and Subwatershed study, and associated urban expansion has been split into two separate Official Plan Amendments. Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 62 is proposing to bring in the lands required to accommodate future growth to 2051, while future Official Plan Amendment No. 63, which is still being drafted, will implement specific land use designations and policies regarding the urban expansion lands and affects infill and redevelopment opportunities within the existing urban area of Smithville.

The purpose of draft Official Plan Amendment No. 62 is to revise the Township Official Plan by doing the following:

- Update the population and employment growth forecasts to the 2051 planning horizon
- Add land to the boundary of the Smithville Urban Area by implementing the settlement area boundary recommended through the Smithville MCP process and corresponding to the expanded settlement area boundary for Smithville delineated in the new Niagara Region Official Plan.
- Designate the land to be added to the boundary of the Smithville Urban Area as “Future Greenfield Area” corresponding to the limits of the Designated Greenfield area delineated in the new Niagara Regional Official Plan
- Identify the land to be added to the boundary of the Smithville Urban Area as a Secondary Plan area being the Master Community Plan for Smithville; and
- Establish interim policies for the Smithville Master Community Plan Secondary Plan area to reserve these areas for appropriate future urban land uses, public service facilities and infrastructure, transportation and natural heritage systems based on land use mapping and policies to be incorporated in the Official Plan through a future and separate Township initiated Official Plan Amendment to implement the Smithville Master Community Plan.

The original study area from 2019 was approximately 685 hectares, however, through the Master Community Plan and Subwatershed Study process, Official Plan Amendment No. 62 recommends the inclusion of 540 hectares into the Smithville Urban Boundary. The proposed expansion area is mainly to the north, south and west of the current urban boundary for Smithville. An area north of the Hydro One corridor, west of the employment park and south of Young Street was not included in the proposed expansion area mainly due to its proximity to existing livestock operations.

The growth targets set by the Region of Niagara for the Township of West Lincoln is to grow from a population of 16,454 (2021 census population) to a total population of 38,370 people and a total employment of 10,480 jobs to the year 2051. The majority of this growth will occur within Smithville and the proposed expanded study area.

The specific land use designations and policies regarding the expansion area will be forthcoming in a future Official Plan Amendment No. 63. Official Plan Amendment No. 63 will also provide revised policies for lands within the existing boundary of Smithville to ensure that the existing urban area is well blended with development in the urban expansion area, if approved.

The Region of Niagara is the approval authority for Official Plan Amendment No. 62 and they are currently working through the process to approve the new Regional Official Plan. Public Consultation for the new draft Regional Official Plan, which includes the Smithville Expansion Area, was held on April 7 (Public Open House) and a public meeting is scheduled for April 28th.

It is expected that a recommendation to approve Official Plan Amendment No. 63 will not be brought forward to the Township Planning Committee and Council until Regional Council has approved their new Official Plan, as Official Plan Amendment No. 62 is a conformity exercise with the Regional Official Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This project is being front ended by the Land Owners group who have been an important partner in this project along with the Regional Planning and Public Works staff.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

This project is a substantial undertaking that includes the Niagara Region Public Works and Planning Departments, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Land Owners representatives along with Township Planning and Public Works staff, our consultants and our consulting facilitator, Mr. Richard Vandezande.

Several Technical Advisory meetings have occurred throughout the length of this project, as well as meetings nearly every week with different stakeholders.

Notice for draft Official Plan Amendment No. 62 was circulated to agencies and at the time of writing this report the Township has not received any formal responses from agencies regarding this notice.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Notice for draft Official Plan Amendment No. 62 was circulated in four separate newspaper additions as well as mailed to all landowners within the study area and within 120 metres of the study area. This resulted in nearly 1,000 notices being mailed. Additionally, members of the public on the study contact list were emailed a copy of the notice and draft official plan amendment.

At the time of writing this report, the Township has received three written comments from members of the public. One of the written comments is in respect to a suggested re-alignment of Port Davidson Road to align with Canborough Road. The landowners of 6392 Canborough Road have indicated they do not wish to have a future road go through their property. This comment has been sent to the consultant transportation engineer for review and comment.

Two additional comments have been received in relation to the protection of existing woodlands behind Harvest Heights and the support for restoration areas in that area.

The three public comments received so far are attached to this report at Attachment 2.

CONCLUSION:

For over two and a half years the Township and its consulting teams, AECOM, GSP and Wood, as well as the Township project manager for this project, Mr. Richard Vandezande, have been working on the Smithville Master Community Plan project and Smithville Subwatershed Study. This work has been underway to provide additional lands to the urban boundary of Smithville to accommodate residential and employment growth to the year 2051, as allocated to the Township by the Region of Niagara.

Township Council endorsed the expansion area in October 2021 and also directed staff and the consulting teams to prepare a draft Official Plan Amendment to facilitate the expansion. This process has been split into two Official Plan Amendments. Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 62 proposes to align the Township's Official Plan with the draft Regional Official Plan by expanding the urban boundary of Smithville and several rural settlement areas to accommodate residential and employment growth to the year 2051.

A future draft Official Plan Amendment No. 63, which is still being drafted, will provide secondary planning for the expansion area including land use designations and policy. Official Plan Amendment No. 63 will also address policy for the existing urban area of Smithville to ensure there is an appropriate transition from existing to new development. A future and separate public meeting will be held for proposed Official Plan Amendment No. 63.

Planning Staff are recommending that a recommendation report be prepared and presented at a future Planning, Building and Environmental Committee meeting once all agency and public comments have been received and reviewed, and once the Region of Niagara has adopted their new Official Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 63
2. Public Comments as of April 24, 2022
3. Previous Planning Report PD-115-21

Prepared & Submitted by:



Brian Treble
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Approved by:



Bev Hendry
CAO