



Report to Committee of the Whole

To: Mayor Linton and Members of Council

Report: PLN2019-15

Prepared By: Brett Salmon, Managing Director of
Planning and Development

Date: 19 Feb 2019

RE: Amendment No. 1 to the 2017 Growth Plan

Recommendation:

THAT the Council of the Township of Centre Wellington authorize Township staff to submit comments in support of proposed Amendment No. 1 to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Summary:

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing have released a proposed Amendment to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The proposed changes to the Growth Plan address concerns expressed by the Township and County with the 2017 Growth Plan and its implementation.

Report:

The previous Provincial government adopted a new Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe which took effect on July 1, 2017 ("The 2017 Growth Plan").

The 2017 Growth Plan made several significant changes from the previous 2006 Growth Plan, including:

- 1) An increase in the greenfield density target from 40 persons and jobs per hectare to as much as 80 persons and jobs per hectare
- 2) An increase in the residential intensification target from 20% of new residential development to as much as 60%.
- 3) Urban expansion limited to a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) to be completed only by the upper tier, considering all designated lands in the upper tier. Urban expansion resulting in oversupply would require excess lands to be frozen. Urban expansion would require significant investment in master plan studies that would typically be completed after urban expansion was approved.
- 4) Requirement for an Employment Land Strategy as part of the MCR.
- 5) Adoption of Agricultural and Natural Heritage Systems mapping at the Provincial level.
- 6) Vacant lands in rural hamlets ("undelineated built up areas") would become be counted towards the greenfield density target.

Many municipalities, including Centre Wellington, expressed concern about the 2017 Growth Plan, believing them to impact the character of our communities and our ability to meet our future local employment needs.

Since the change in government this past spring, Municipal Affairs has been holding workshops with local municipalities to hear concerns about the 2017 Growth Plan and its implementation. As a result of these workshops, as well as sessions with other stakeholder groups, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is proposing Amendment No. 1 to the 2017 Growth Plan. Growth Plan Amendment No. 1 has been posted on the Environmental Registry and the deadline for comments is February 28, 2019. There are related postings regarding transition provisions and a proposed framework for Provincially Significant Employment Zones.

Employment Policy Changes

- Introduction of provincially significant employment zones identified by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that must be protected and cannot be converted outside the municipal comprehensive review. Provincially Significant Employment Zones have been identified in but none in Wellington County.
- A new policy that creates a one-time window to allow municipalities to undertake some conversions between the effective date of the proposed amendments and their next municipal comprehensive review, where appropriate and subject to criteria. Includes requirement to maintain a significant number of jobs on those lands
- Removal of prime employment area designation
- Modified language that requires municipalities to set multiple density targets for employment areas rather than a single target and that removes requirement for an employment strategy
- Modified language regarding direction on locating and preserving employment areas adjacent to major goods movement facilities and corridors
- Clarification that upper- and single-tier municipalities can designate employment areas at any time before the next municipal comprehensive review, including adding existing lower-tier municipal designations
- A new policy that requires municipalities to retain space for a similar number of jobs when redeveloping employment lands
- Clarification that within existing office parks, non-employment uses should be limited
- Modified language that requires municipalities to provide for an appropriate interface to maintain land use compatibility between employment areas and adjacent non-employment areas

Staff Comment: These changes are positive for the Township in that they will better enable us to meet the demand for employment areas in the Township, as well as to transition to mixed use areas in some cases. There is some concern that these changes might result in development pressure to convert employment land to residential use.

Settlement Area Boundary Expansions:

- Clarifying policy to focus on outcomes rather than specifying types of studies to justify the feasibility and location of settlement area boundary expansions

- A new policy that allows municipalities to adjust settlement area boundaries outside the municipal comprehensive review if there is no net increase in land within settlement areas, subject to criteria
- A new policy that allows municipalities to undertake settlement area boundary expansions that are no larger than 40 hectares outside the municipal comprehensive review, subject to criteria
- Removal of requirement to de-designate excess lands when undertaking settlement area boundary expansions

Staff Comment: These changes are positive for the Township. The 2017 Growth Plan contained very onerous requirements for master plans to be prepared in advance of urban boundary expansion. As well, it is understood there is an oversupply of employment land in the County of Wellington, so the 2017 Growth Plan requirement to identify excess lands would make it difficult for the Township to add to its shortage of industrial and commercial land.

Small Rural Settlements:

- Introduction of a new defined term “rural settlement” as a subset of “settlement areas” and removal of “undelineated built-up areas”
- Specification that rural settlements are not part of the designated greenfield area
- A new policy that allows minor rounding out of rural settlements in keeping with the rural character of the area, and subject to other criteria

Staff Comment: These changes are positive for the Township. They will restore the current policy framework for the hamlets as set out in the County Official Plan.

Agricultural and Natural Heritage Systems:

- Specification that the provincial mapping of the agricultural land base and the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan does not apply until it has been implemented in upper- and single-tier official plans
- During the period before provincial mapping is implemented in upper- and single-tier official plans, the Growth Plan policies for protecting prime agricultural areas and natural heritage systems and features will apply to municipal mapping
- Specification that municipalities can refine and implement provincial mapping in advance of the municipal comprehensive review
- Specification that once provincial mapping of the agricultural land base has been implemented in official plans, further refinements may only occur through a municipal comprehensive review

Staff Comment: The 2017 Growth Plan language made the Agricultural and Natural Heritage Systems mapping effective on the day they were released. The County of Wellington noted several inaccuracies with both the Natural Heritage and Agricultural systems mapping. For example, in Centre Wellington, existing approved development areas were identified as Prime Agricultural and Natural Heritage by the Provincial mapping. Amendment No. 1, if approved, means that locally derived mapping can be reflected in the Agricultural and Natural Heritage systems mapping.

Intensification and Density Targets:

- The City of Kawartha Lakes and the Counties of Brant, Dufferin, Haldimand, Northumberland, Peterborough, Simcoe and Wellington will establish a minimum

intensification target based on maintaining or improving upon their current minimum intensification target

- The City of Kawartha Lakes and the Counties of Brant, Dufferin, Haldimand, Northumberland, Peterborough, Simcoe and Wellington will have a minimum designated greenfield area density target of 40 residents and jobs per hectare
- Clarification that intensification should be prioritized around strategic growth areas while also being encouraged generally throughout the delineated built-up area

Staff Comment: The proposed amendment will enable the County of Wellington to retain its current greenfield density and intensification targets. The Township and County had significant concerns that it would not be able to meet the density and intensification targets set out in the 2017 Growth Plan.

Corporate Strategic Plan:

Healthy Growth - The Township will plan now for its inevitable growth, so that we retain a vibrant and accessible community and our high quality of life in the future.

Approved By:

Andy Goldie, Chief Administrative Officer