



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Greg Macdonald, Senior Planner

DATE: November 1, 2023

REPORT NO.: PD-2023-074

SUBJECT: Recommendation Report for a proposed Zoning By-law Amendment to permit 3 industrial warehouse buildings at 0 Steeles Avenue & 8154, 8170, 8178 and 8192 Eighth Line (Premier Gateway Employment Area)

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2023-074, dated November 1, 2023, regarding a “Recommendation Report for a proposed Zoning By-law Amendment to permit 3 industrial warehouse buildings at 0 Steeles Avenue & 8154, 8170, 8178 and 8192 Eighth Line (Premier Gateway Employment Area)”, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the Zoning By-law Amendment, to amend Town of Halton Hills Zoning By-law 2010-0050, as amended, for the lands municipally known as 0 Steeles Avenue & 8154, 8170, 8178 and 8192 Eighth Line (Premier Gateway Employment Area), as generally shown in SCHEDULE 3 – ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT, be approved on the basis that the application is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, conforms or does not conflict with all applicable Provincial plans, conforms with the Region of Halton Official Plan and the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan, has regard for matters of Provincial interest, and represents good planning for the reasons outlined in Report PD-2023-074, dated November 1, 2023;

AND FURTHER THAT in accordance with Section 34 (17) of the Planning Act, no further notice is determined to be necessary.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- In June 2021 PLD Steeles Avenue Investment LP (Prologis), through their agent Mainline Planning Services Inc., submitted a Zoning By-law Amendment application (File No. D14ZBA21.012) proposing the development of 3 industrial warehouses at 0 Steeles Avenue & 8154, 8170, 8178 and 8192 Eighth Line (Premier Gateway Employment Area).
- The Statutory Public Meeting for the application was held on November 15, 2021; two members of the public spoke at the meeting, three other property owners requested to be notified of ongoing status updates on the application, and one other property owner via a retained planning consultant expressed concerns over the location of the East/West Collector Road.
- The review of all technical studies pertaining to natural heritage matters (a sub-watershed impact study), engineering (servicing and storm water management) and transportation have progressed sufficiently that all outstanding matters can be addressed through the required Site Plan Control process.
- This report recommends approval of the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment, subject to appropriate Holding (H) Provision.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

1.0 Location and Site Characteristics:

The subject property, known municipally as 0 Steeles Avenue & 8154, 8170, 8178 and 8192 Eighth Line, is located within the Premier Gateway Employment Area and abuts Steeles Avenue, Trafalgar Road and Eighth Line; see **SCHEDULE 1 – LOCATION MAP**. The lands have an approximate area of 29.6 hectares (73.1 acres) and contain 360 metres (1,181 ft.) of frontage on the north side of Steeles Avenue, 380 metres of flankage on Trafalgar Road (1,246 ft.) and 425 metres (1,394 ft.) of flankage on Eighth Line.

The property is currently vacant with natural heritage features located in the northwestern and southwestern portions of the lands (aquatic features and related floodplain). Of the total 29.6 hectares, approximately 22 hectares are proposed for development. Surrounding land uses include:

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|---------------|---|
| To the North: | Vacant future employment lands (currently used agriculturally); natural heritage features; and Hope Place Centre. |
| To the East: | Single detached dwellings; vacant future employment lands with site specific Official Plan permission for an indoor waterpark and related commercial and hospitality uses (currently used agriculturally); and a cemetery across Eighth Line. |
| To the South: | Toronto Premium Outlets and a gas station across Steeles Avenue. |

To the West: Future employment lands (currently agricultural with farm residences) and a gas station across Trafalgar Road.

2.0 Development Proposal:

In June 2021 the Town received a Zoning By-law Amendment application (File No. D14ZBA21.012) submitted by PLD Steeles Avenue Investment LP (Prologis), through Mainline Planning Services Inc. (the Applicant). The application is required to obtain the necessary land use approvals to develop the lands for 3 industrial buildings; see **SCHEDULE 2 – PROPOSED SITE PLAN & BUILDING ELEVATIONS**.

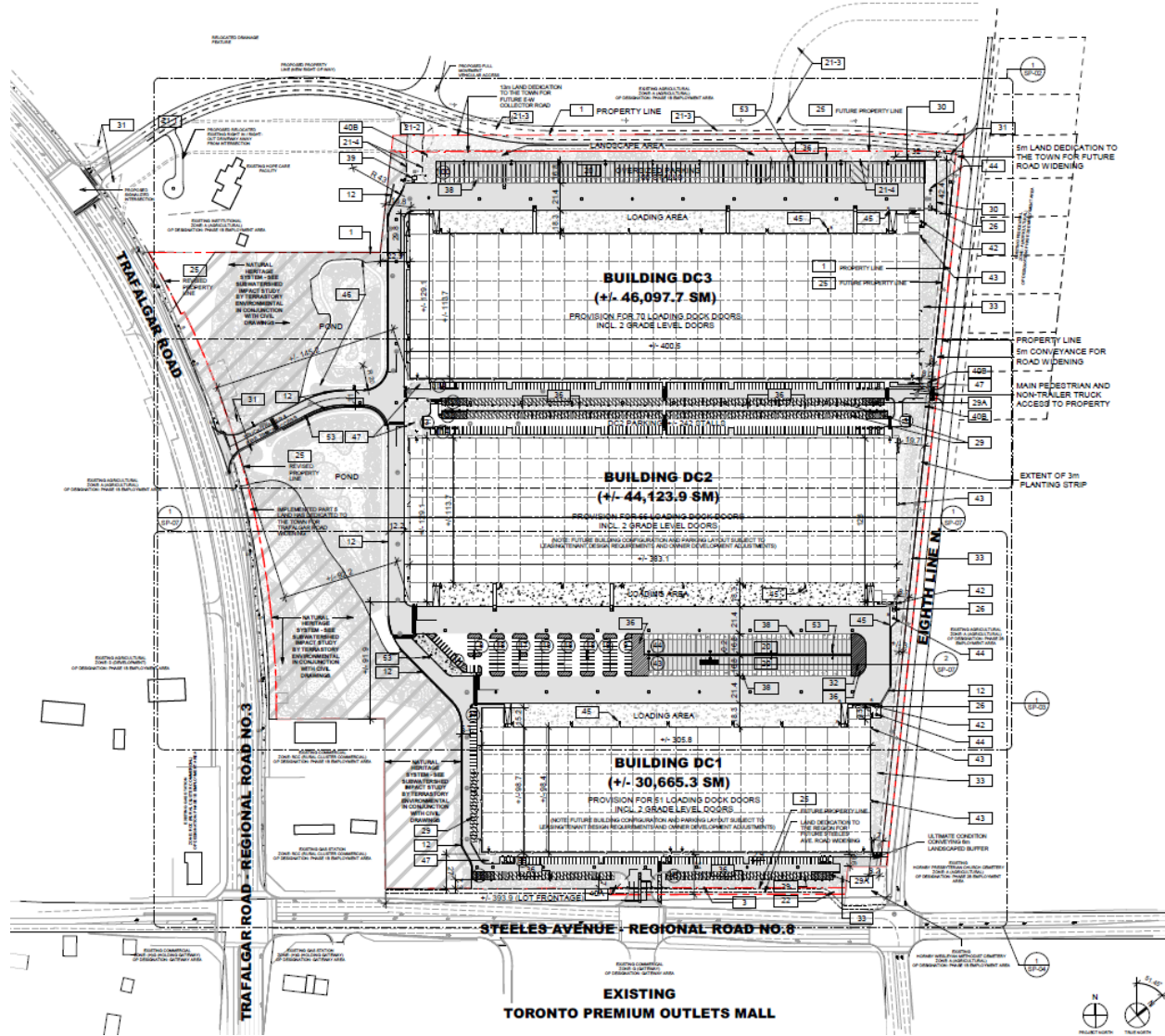


Figure 1: Proposed Site Plan

Further details about the development are outlined below:

Design Elements	Application Proposal
Gross Floor Area	Building DC1 – 30,665 m ² (330,075 sq. ft.) Building DC2 – 44,124 m ² (474,914 sq. ft.) Building DC3 – 46,097 m ² (496,184 sq. ft.)
Height	1 storey (17 m)
Parking	821 spaces
Loading Spaces	187 loading bays and 187 commercial vehicle waiting spaces
Vehicular Access Points	1 access to Eighth Line for smaller vehicle access only (no large trucks). 1 temporary signalized access to Trafalgar Road for trucks (to be converted to right turn in and right turn out only upon access being available to the East/West Collector Road). 1 access to Steeles Avenue for smaller vehicle access only (lines up with existing signalized access to Toronto Premium Outlets). Future access driveway to the East/West Collector Road at the north end of the site for truck access.

The subject lands are currently zoned Agricultural (A). The Zoning By-law Amendment proposes to rezone approximately 22 hectares (the portion to be developed for industrial uses) to a 401 Corridor Prestige Industrial Zone (M7); the remainder of the property (the westerly most portion of the lands) that is proposed for a storm water management pond and natural heritage protection areas would be rezoned to a Conservation Special Zone (O3-1); see **SCHEDULE 3 – ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENT**. The site-specific provisions that are designed to facilitate the current proposal are outlined and evaluated within the Halton Hills Zoning By-law discussion under Section 3.0 “Planning Context and Policy Framework” of this report.

The Town has also been reviewing a Site Plan application (File No. D11SPA21.005) for the proposed warehouses concurrently with the Zoning By-law Amendment application. Should the Zoning By-law Amendment be approved, the Applicant will need to obtain Final Site Plan approval before construction of the industrial buildings can begin. It is also through the Site Plan Control application that the design, final location, securities, and construction details for the East/West Collector Road will be finalized. It is noted that through the Town’s Site Alteration Committee, a Site Alteration Permit was granted in November 2022 to Prologis to allow the import and/or or export of fill as well as various grading activities to occur on-site, all of anticipation of the future industrial development of the subject lands.

3.0 Planning Context and Policy Framework:

The purpose of this section is to evaluate the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment application against the relevant Provincial, Regional and Town policy framework to determine conformity with the applicable policies and guidelines.

Provincial Policy Statement:

The 2020 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides broad based policies that promote an appropriate range and mix of employment, including industrial and commercial uses, to meet the long-term needs of residents and make appropriate use of infrastructure to support the development of healthy communities. Policy direction pertaining to employment areas are set out in Section 1.3 of the PPS.

Section 2.1 of the PPS addresses the protection of natural heritage features including a requirement that development not be permitted on adjacent land without studies to determine that there would be no negative impact to the subject feature. As discussed in further detail in an ensuing section of this report, a Subwatershed Impact Study (SIS) has been prepared that appropriately addresses such matters.

Planning staff is of the opinion that the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment application is consistent with the policies of the 2020 PPS.

Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe:

The Growth Plan directs new growth to locations that make efficient use of transportation and servicing infrastructure and sets out general policies for employment and commercial lands. Under the 2019 Growth Plan (with 2020 amendments), the subject lands fall within a Provincially Significant Employment Zone, which is considered an area of high economic output that is strategically located to provide stable, reliable employment across the Region.

The Growth Plan also contains policies to support the protection of natural heritage features (although Natural Heritage System policies only apply outside of urban areas and the subject lands are within an urban area).

Planning staff is of the opinion that the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment application is in conformity with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Region of Halton Official Plan:

The 2009 Regional Official Plan (ROP) designates the subject lands as Urban Area with an Employment Area overlay. Section 76 of the ROP states that the range of permitted uses and creation of lots within the Urban Area are to be in accordance with Local Official Plans and Zoning By-laws.

The ROP includes several objectives that speak to providing an appropriate range and balance of employment uses including industrial, office, retail, and institutional uses to meet the long-term needs. More detailed policies for Employment Areas are set out in

Section 77.1 of the ROP. Section 89 of the ROP requires all development within the Urban Area to be on full municipal services.

The portion of the subject property that contains natural heritage features is identified as forming part of the Regional Natural Heritage System (RNHS). The goal of the Natural Heritage System is to increase the certainty that the biological diversity and ecological function within Halton will be preserved and enhanced for future generations. ROP policies direct that there should be no alteration of any component of the RNHS, unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impact on the natural features or their functions. Section 116.1 of the ROP allows for the boundaries of the RNHS to be refined through the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which could result in additions, deletions and/or boundary adjustments.

Regional staff has confirmed that the application is in conformity with the ROP and supports the refinement of the boundaries of the RNHS as demonstrated through the various environmental studies submitted in support of the application. While further minor amendments to the Sub-Watershed Impact Study (SIS) may be needed, this can be completed through the Site Plan Control application process and is also secured through a Holding (H) Provision.

Town of Halton Hills Official Plan

Under the Town's Official Plan, the property is located within the Premier Gateway Employment Area Phase 1B Secondary Plan area. This plan identifies most of the subject lands as being designated "Prestige Industrial Area" which permits a wide range of employment related industrial uses including warehouses. This designation generally covers the portion of the property proposed for industrial development.

Additional parts of the property are identified as "Natural Heritage System", "Wetland and Headwater Drainage Feature – Potential Relocation", and "Residential Special Policy Area". Policy H5A.8 notes that a Subwatershed Impact Study (SIS) is required in support of any complete development application. The natural heritage system limits are permitted to be refined without an Official Plan Amendment through review of a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment or similar study (including an SIS). The SIS submitted with the application has been reviewed and approved by the Town of Halton Hills and Conservation Halton, with only further minor revisions considered necessary in order to address Region of Halton comments.

A new Collector Road that would connect Trafalgar Road to Eighth Line is also identified as running generally along the northerly limits of the subject lands under the Secondary Plan. The Secondary Plan allows for refinement and modification in the orientation of the East/West Collector Road without an Official Plan Amendment. The final design and location of the East/West Collector Road will be completed through the Site Plan approval process, in conjunction with the on-going review of the Zoning By-law Amendment application submitted by the landowners to the north (BentallGreenOak), who will share access to the road with Prologis.

The Official Plan also states that all new development requiring Planning Act approval shall conform to the Urban Design policies in Section F2 of the Plan (Section D1.4.1). The proposal must also demonstrate conformity with Section H5A.14 of the Secondary Plan and the Premier Gateway Employment Area Urban Design Guidelines.

The proposed rezoning to a 401 Corridor Prestige Industrial (M7) Zone on most of the lands is considered appropriate and would implement the “Prestige Industrial Area” designation applied through the Secondary Plan process. A drainage feature and portions of a wetland are proposed to be relocated within lands congruent to existing natural heritage features, which is also contemplated within the Phase 1B Secondary Plan. Existing and relocated natural heritage features are being protected along with the introduction of suitable buffers that will contain naturalized plantings.

For the reasons above, Planning staff is of the opinion that the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment will allow for the development of the subject lands in a manner consistent with the Official Plan and Phase 1B Secondary Plan.

Town of Halton Hills Zoning By-law:

Under Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2010-0050, the subject lands are zoned Agricultural (A). The Zoning By-law Amendment proposes to rezone approximately 22 ha of the site (the portion to be developed for industrial uses) to the 401 Corridor Prestige Industrial Zone (M7), which permits employment related industrial uses including warehouses, manufacturing and offices. The remainder of the property (the western most portion of the lands) that is proposed for a storm water management pond and natural heritage protection areas would be rezoned to a Conservation Special Zone (O3-1). The environmental and engineering studies submitted in support of the application have demonstrated the appropriate limits of the two proposed zones.

Through the Zoning By-law Amendment, the Applicant is also proposing to modify two of the M7 zone standards. Town staff are recommending approval of the proposed site-specific modifications for the following reasons:

Increase in Maximum Height from 14 metres to 17 metres;

- The actual height of the proposed buildings is closer to 16 metres; however, a height of 17 metres is being sought to allow for flexibility in the final design at the Site Plan stage and due to grade changes on site. The 17 m height also allows the Applicant to provide parapet features that would reduce the visual impact of any rooftop mechanical equipment. It is also noted that a 17 m height is more closely aligned with new industry standards that allow for increased ceiling heights interior to the building.
- The proposed site design ensures a setback from the Steeles Avenue and Eighth Line Street frontages that would equal or exceed 17 metres, which thus provides a 45-degree angular plane from the building to the street line. Due to the orientation of the east lot line, the buildings only approach the minimum required 7.5 metre setback at the southeast corner of each building. Therefore, staff are

satisfied that the buildings will not dominate or overpower the streetscapes. Substantive landscape features are proposed along all street lines.

Increase the Percentage of Parking Permitted in a Yard Abutting Steeles Avenue from 20% to 23%:

- The purpose of only allowing 20% of required parking in a yard abutting Steeles Avenue is to maintain the prestige nature of the Premier Gateway Employment Area and discourage large parking areas from dominating the streetscape. The main reason for the amount of parking proposed along Steeles Avenue is to separate employee parking from truck parking. Truck loading bays are located at the rear of the building facing Steeles Avenue and the Applicant has attempted to separate wherever possible truck loading/parking areas from vehicular parking in the interest of pedestrian safety.
- The increase from 20% to 23% is considered a modest change. Additionally, the streetscape along Steeles Avenue would remain predominantly the same (i.e., two rows of parking and a single drive aisle with parking on each side), regardless of the percentage increase. It is also noted that the planned landscape design for the site includes substantive landscaping along Steeles Avenue including a decorative entrance feature on either side of the driveway entrance.

Also included in the By-law is a site-specific Holding (H) Provision containing conditions related to:

- securing land and financial commitments for the future construction of the East/West Collector road;
- securing agreements for pedestrian improvements on Eighth Line as per a recently completed town initiated Environmental Assessment; and,
- finalizing any last need addenda to the Sub-Watershed Impact Study (SIS).

It is noted that the Holding provision conditions have generally been structured to allow for the site to develop in phases due to the timing of securing and constructing the East/West Collector Road, as construction of that roadway requires co-operation, coordination and land of the abutting property owner to the north (BentallGreenOak).

4.0 Department and Agency Comments:

Zoning Amendment application D14ZBA21.012 was circulated to Town departments and external agencies for review and comment. Staff from the various departments and agencies have completed their review and have indicated that they have no concerns or objections with the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment being approved subject to various Holding (H) Provisions conditions, which are outlined above. Several technical comments remain outstanding, mostly pertaining to engineering, servicing, landscaping, green development standards, as well as the final design and orientation of the East/West Collector Road. These matters will continue to be addressed through the on-going Site Plan Control application review process.

5.0 Public Comments:

The proposed Zoning By-law Amendment was presented to Council and the Public by way of Report No. PD-2021-0068 through a Statutory Public Meeting on November 15, 2021. Two members of the public spoke at the meeting. Since that time another nearby property owner has also submitted written correspondence. Other property owners in the area have also written to the Planning Department only to request to be notified of any meetings and decisions made on the application. A summary and response of the public comments is located below:

Flooding Concern from Adjacent Property

The owner of the property abutting the subject lands on the southwest corner (that fronts onto Steeles Avenue) spoke at the 2021 public meeting noting that the property experiences periodic flooding from the Prologis lands during storm events.

Staff Response

Staff note that the flooding concern is due to existing natural drainage in the area from the drainage feature and wetland located on the Prologis lands. Staff have reviewed the Prologis development to ensure no additional drainage or runoff will be directed to the abutting property as all on-site drainage would be directed to the storm water management facility being constructed on-site.

Height of Buildings and Landscaping

A property owner further to the north of the site spoke at the public meeting wanting to ensure that a high-quality landscape design is implemented and expressed a concern over the height of the proposed building.

Staff Response

While the final landscape design will be approved and implemented through the Site Plan Control stage of development, staff are generally satisfied that the proposed landscaping meets all Town standards and the Phase 1B Secondary Plan urban design guidelines. The landscaping will serve the purpose of both animating the streetscape and buffering of parking and loading areas from the public realm. With respect to height, the Applicant agreed to reduce the previously requested height of 18 m to a 17 metre maximum. Planning staff have also worked with Prologis to make several improvements to the façade of the building. Additionally, given the buildings generally have a generous setback from Eighth Line, the minor increase in height should not dominate the streetscape or be imposing on the public realm.

East/West Collector Road Orientation

The Town is also in receipt of written correspondence from a planning consultant representing a large rural property located immediately northeast of the subject lands, on the opposite side of Eighth Line. These lands are currently designated as Employment Area by ROPA 49 as modified and approved by the Province in November

2022.¹ That property owner has no concerns with the Prologis development but rather has requested that the future East/West Collector Road be constructed in the location conceptually indicated in the Phase 1B Secondary Plan, which is different than Prologis' configuration for the road. Their desire for this configuration is to accommodate a potential further extension of the roadway easterly beyond Eighth Line to service that property.

Staff Response

The Phase 1B Secondary Plan includes a conceptual road alignment for a new East/West Collector Road that is planned to connect Trafalgar Road with Eighth Line in this area. The alignment shown in the Secondary Plan identifies the new road to run approximately along the northerly property line of the Prologis lands from Trafalgar Road until approximately the mid-point of the site, where the road would then jog northeasterly until its connection with Eighth Line. The road would connect to Eighth Line just north of the existing rural residential lots situated on the east side of Eighth Line. This alignment was chosen to both avoid existing residential lots on the west side of Eighth Line (which have since been purchased by Prologis) and so that the road would not intersect Eighth Line immediately across from existing residential lots on the east side of Eighth Line.

Both Prologis and BentallGreenOak (the owner of the lands to the north) prefers an alignment that would not include this northeasterly jog. Their preferred alignment would result in the roadway continuing straight along their mutual property line until it intersects with Eighth Line. Prologis and Bentall have indicated that this alignment is preferred as it will avoid orphaned property (i.e., if the jog was to occur, a portion of Bentall's property would be split on either side of the road) which creates uneven property limits for both landowners, making planned industrial development on that portion of the lands difficult. There are also road and municipal servicing design issues with the jog in the road, especially as the road must already have a curve in it to avoid the Hope Place lands and a regional woodlot adjacent to Trafalgar Road. It should be noted that the Phase 1B Secondary Plan contains policy language permitting alternative configurations for the East/West Collector roadway without an Official Plan Amendment.

As referenced earlier in this report, the Zoning By-law Amendment serves to establish the appropriate zoning to facilitate the development of the Prologis lands in a manner consistent with the Secondary Plan. It is not the mechanism by which the final design and alignment of the East/West Collector Road is being undertaken. The alignment of the road will be finalized through the current Prologis Site Plan Control application (as well as through a future Site Plan Control application for the BentallGreenOak lands).

¹ On October 23, 2023, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced that he will be introducing legislation to roll back changes the Province made in late 2022 and early 2023 to upper and single tier municipal official plans. This includes Halton Region Official Plan Amendment No. 49. Municipalities have until December 7, 2023, to consider the Provincial modifications and provide input with respect to the same.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to foster a healthy community that provides a clean environment and range of economic and social opportunities to ensure a superior quality of life in our community.

This report also identifies shaping growth as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report impacts and/or helps address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target through climate mitigation.

The Green Development Standards (GDS) checklist submitted by the Applicant proposes to include several environmental initiatives that should help reduce climate change impacts from the development including a possible LEED certification. The checklist indicates sufficient initiatives to meet the GDS standards of the Town. Further confirmation of this and clearance of the GDS requirement will occur through the Site Plan Control application stage of development.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement has been conducted as follows: A Statutory Public Meeting was held on November 15, 2021. This meeting fulfilled the requirements for public participation under the Planning Act, and provided for Transparency, Notification and Participation, as defined in the Town's Public Engagement Charter.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Planning staff have consulted with the appropriate Town Departments, the Region of Halton and Conservation Halton in preparation of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have any financial implications.

Reviewed and approved by,

Jeff Markowiak, Director of Development Review

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning & Development

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer