TOWN OF HALTON HILLS

Report

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Melissa Ricci, Senior Planner- Policy

DATE: June 5, 2020

REPORT NO.: PD-2020-0004

RE: Intensification Opportunities Study Update −Results and Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report PD-2022-0004 dated June 5, 2020, that provides a status update on the results and recommendations of the Intensification Opportunities Study Update be received;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be authorized to continue to work on the preparation of the draft Official Plan Amendment to implement the results and recommendations of the Intensification Opportunities Study Update;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Region of Halton for information purposes.

BACKGROUND:

In May 2019, staff brought forward report PLS-2019-0041 to provide an update to Council on the progress of the Intensification Opportunities Study Update. Since then, staff have worked on finalizing the technical assessments and design guidelines and have consulted with the Technical Advisory Committee, the Steering Committee and the public on the study's preliminary results and recommendations. Staff held a number of public engagement events including LEGO Workshops with seniors and youth groups and worked on refining the intensification inventory (number of units that can be accommodated in the Built Boundary of Acton and Georgetown) accordingly. The study resulted in a number of proposed recommendations to be implemented in the future through an Official Plan Amendment.

This Study, which is an update to the 2010 Intensification Opportunities Study, aims to develop and update policies and guidelines for intensification in the Built-up Areas of Georgetown and Acton to the end of the 2041 planning horizon. The Study allows the

Town to be better positioned to manage expected residential growth within the urban Built-up Area and to provide input into the Regional Official Plan Review, which is currently underway.

As the Region undertakes the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) program to bring the Regional Plan into conformity with provincial legislation, the Town's intensification potential will be a key factor to consider as part of the Regional Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS). The four growth allocation scenarios that are being carried forward by the Region for further analysis, distribute post-2031 residential and employment growth through variable combinations of intensification and greenfield development. The Town's current three pronged growth strategy also emphasizes balancing growth through intensification, moderate greenfield growth and employment growth. The Intensification Opportunities Study Update is an important component of the Town's growth management strategy and provides the basis for the development of Official Plan policies to implement the Town's intensification objectives to the year 2041.The Town's anticipated intensification potential as identified in this Study will be provided to the Region as local input into the MCR process. The timing for the final adoption and approval of an OPA will be very much a function of the ongoing Regional Plan Review.
The Regional Official Plan review is expected to be finalized in late 2021/early 2022.

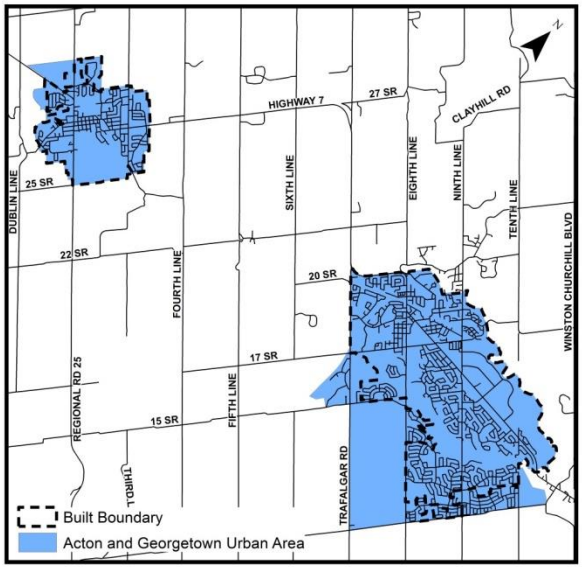
Provincial, Regional and Local Policy Framework

All municipal decisions affecting planning matters must adhere to provincial policy, which in the case of the Intensification Opportunities Study Update, includes the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019). The Growth Plan (2019) contains policies that direct a significant portion of new growth to urban built up areas through intensification (see delineated Built-up Area for Georgetown and Acton in Figure 1). The Provincial Growth Plan prioritizes intensification and higher densities in strategic growth areas to make efficient use of land and infrastructure and support transit viability.

The Growth Plan states that by the year of the next Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and every year thereafter, a minimum of 50 percent of all residential development within each upper-tier municipality (e.g. Region of Halton) must be within the Delineated Built-up Area[1]. The Delineated Built-up Area is defined as the limits of the developed urban area as of the effective date of the GGH Growth Plan (i.e. May, 2019). In order to implement the updated intensification target, the Growth Plan requires all Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities to update their intensification strategy and implement the strategy through amendments to their official plans.

[1] The 2006 Growth Plan minimum intensification target that was used through the last Regional MCR process was 40 percent.

Figure 1- Built Boundary



The Region of Halton through their ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) will need to conform to the most recent Provincial intensification targets and prioritize the efficient use of land and infrastructure. The Town's Official Plan (OP) currently includes intensification policies and objectives. It also identifies minimum intensification targets and key intensification areas. The results and recommendations of the Intensification Opportunities Study Update will be implemented through a series of changes to the OP in order to provide updated policy direction for how and where future intensification in the Town is going to take place.

The Study

In 2017, the Town retained SvN as the lead consultant to assist in the completion of the Intensification Opportunities Study Update. The consulting team included two sub-consultants: Dillon to support with the transportation and servicing assessments and Hemson Consulting to assist in the preparation of a market assessment. Town staff developed an intensification inventory which entailed a parcel by parcel analysis in key intensification areas highlighting parcels with intensification potential, anticipated timeframe of development and potential densities that could be accommodated.

The intensification inventory was used by Dillon as the basis to prepare transportation and servicing assessments and by Hemson to complete a market assessment. Alongside these technical assessments, SvN prepared Infill Design Guidelines and updated the Guelph Street and Downtown Acton Design Guidelines to ensure that future infill development meets best design practices and fits well into the existing community. The key-findings of these technical assessments and updated guidelines are summarized below:

- The Servicing Infrastructure Assessment indicates that the majority of the parcels/blocks are classified as having capacity to support the proposed infill development, (i.e. the majority of Intensification blocks scored good or fair). The areas identified as poor, are properties that do not currently have sufficient infrastructure built nearby and will require a new service connection to support future development. The servicing assessment acknowledges that further detailed studies will be required at the development application stage to understand servicing capacity for individual intensification proposals. The Servicing Infrastructure Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix A.
- The Transportation Assessment concludes that the majority of the intensification property blocks within Acton and Georgetown can be reasonably well served from a transportation perspective. The assessment indicates that there are no major transportation network issues. However, improvements to the mobility network will increase the desirability for intensification in the identified intensification blocks. In addition, staff noted that the average score for the majority of intensification blocks is expected to improve with the implementation of the Town's Transit Strategy Service Strategy and Active Transportation Master Plan. The Transportation Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix B.
- Considering the number of sites suitable for intensification in the Urban Areas of Acton and Georgetown combined with market demand, the Market Assessment concludes that the updated target may not warrant much of an increase relative to the Town's existing target to the year 2031 (5,100 units). An overall unit potential of approximately 5,800 units is estimated (1,600 in Acton and 4250 in Georgetown) to the year 2041. The Assessment highlights the importance of planning for an available supply beyond the proposed target for intensification units to account for those sites which may not come to fruition by the anticipated timeframe. The Market Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix C.
- New Infill Design Guidelines have been prepared to ensure that new development within Mature Neighbourhoods, Contemporary Neighbourhoods and Nodes and Corridors fits within the existing and planned context. In addition, the Downtown Acton and Guelph Street Design Guidelines were also updated to include current urban design best practices. Both draft Design Guidelines have been attached as Appendix D to this report.

Intensification Inventory

As part of this Study, staff developed an intensification target ranging from a minimum of 5,171 units and a maximum of 7,575 units. A table highlighting the distribution of intensification units in the different Intensification Areas has been attached to this report as Appendix E. In general, the minimum target considers the average density permitted in the Official Plan, while the maximum target considers the maximum densities allowed as per the Official Plan, public feedback and the results of the market assessment. The maximum density permitted was considered for those areas that staff heard from the community should accommodate further intensification. These include Acton Downtown,

the Queen Street Corridor Commercial Area, Community Node, the Guelph Street Corridor Commercial Area and the Georgetown GO Station Area. Considering the difficulties of meeting intensification targets in Halton Hills, as highlighted in the Market Assessment Report, the maximum inventory number identifies a larger available supply to account for those sites which may not be developed within the 2041 planning horizon.

Results and Recommendations

An Official Plan Amendment (OPA) will be required to implement the results and recommendations of the Intensification Opportunities Study Update. In addition, the OPA will implement the recommendations of the Employment Land Needs Study and any potential additional modifications that are required as a result of the Regional Official Plan review process. The draft amendment will identify all Intensification Areas within the Town and update specific policies in the Official Plan to facilitate intensification in the key intensification areas.

These changes include:

- An updated Intensification Table specifying the new intensification targets
- The delineation of updated intensification areas and of the updated Major Transit Station Areas
- The removal of hamlets from the inventory since they are no longer considered areas for intensification per the Growth Plan (2019)
- The incorporation of new Infill Design Guidelines and updates to the Guelph Street Corridor and Downtown Acton Design Guidelines
- The creation of new policies permitting mixed uses including commercial and residential along the Guelph Street Corridor, from McFarlane Drive to Sinclair Avenue, in Georgetown and the Queen Street Corridor, from Tanners Drive to Eastern Avenue in Acton.
- The following changes to the High Density designation which will apply to areas designated as High Density on Schedule A3 and Schedule A6 of the Official Plan:
    - a) a maximum floor space index (FSI) of 1.5 will be permitted;
    - b) the maximum building height permitted will be eight (8) storeys, excluding any mechanical penthouse

In addition, the Employment Land Needs Study Phase 2 Report[2] recommended that three properties (one located at 344 Guelph Street in Georgetown and two existing sites in Acton, located at the intersection of Perth Street and Wallace Street) be converted to allow mixed use development including residential and commercial uses in the future.
It is important to note that the re-designation of these properties will not in any way impede current permitted uses. To allow the employment conversion to take place, Town staff is recommending that the Region considers these properties for conversion

[2] The Employment Land Need Study final Report was presented to Planning, Public Works and Transportation Committee on January 28, 2020 (refer to report PL-2020-0006).

through the ongoing MCR process. If the Region proceeds with the conversion of these properties, the Intensification OPA will need to include their re-designation.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report is closely aligned with the following Value contained in the Strategic Plan:

Achieve Sustainable Growth
To ensure that growth is managed so as to ensure a balanced, sustainable, well planned community, infrastructure and services to meet the needs of its residents and businesses.

The report also directly aligns to the following Council Strategic Plan 2019-2022 theme and focus area:

1. Shaping Growth.
    - Continue to provide input into the Halton Region Official Plan review including the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, establishing the Town`s position on population and employment growth on the basis of a moderate scale and pace of growth to 2041.
    - Committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing in the community leveraging the formation of the Affordable Housing Working Group.

Looking out to 2041, this report aligns with Council's vision as entrenched in our Strategic Plan such as:

- maintaining fiscal sustainability as a local municipality;
- enhanced economic development opportunities including leveraging and enhancing our strategic location vis a vis Highway 401 and the 407 ETR;
- continuing to develop our Climate Change strategies;
- promoting an adequate supply of housing and range of housing choices including affordable, accessible and seniors housing;
- fostering and enhancing our existing community structure; and
- providing for a moderate scale of growth that enhances the Town's urban and community structure and protects its' rural character as directed by the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no financial impacts associated with this report. The Region of Halton had previously committed to provide the Town with $75,000 to undertake the Intensification Opportunities Study Update. Staff has initiated the process for processing the funds. Upon receipt of funding from the Region of Halton, the funds approved by Council can be returned to the appropriate reserves as was recommended in Report P&I-2017-0036.

CONSULTATION:

Staff has engaged other Town Departments and Regional staff during all phases of the Study through the Technical Advisory Committee. In addition, the Study results have been shared with the Town's Senior Management Team.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff conducted extensive public consultation, giving the community the opportunity to learn about the Study and provide feedback. Last summer, staff held two steering committee meetings, two Public Open Houses, and prepared additional online and in-person interactive engagement activities. In addition, Town staff coordinated public outreach at the Framer's Markets and the Fall Fairs in Acton and Georgetown and held five LEGO workshops with Seniors, Youth Groups and Steering Committee members (for a complete summary of all consultation and engagement activities see Appendix F).

The Study follows the Mayor's Public Engagement Charter which is built on three pillars; Transparency, Notification, and Participation.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The recommendations outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation. Updating the Intensification Opportunities Study and completion of supporting studies (infrastructure assessment and urban design guidelines) will ensure that intensification is being directed to areas where infrastructure can accommodate the growth and that the scale of intensification is appropriate in specific areas. This directly relates to the Land Use goals in Imagine Halton Hills under the Environmental Health pillar.

Overall, the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is: Excellent.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Upon Council approval of this report, a copy should be forwarded to the Region of Halton.

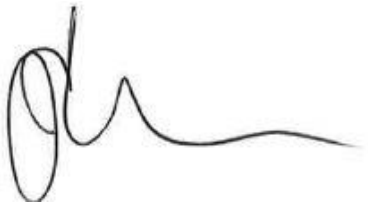
CONCLUSION:

This report presents the results and recommendations of the Intensification Opportunities Study Update. Staff will continue to work on preparing the draft Official Plan Amendment to be presented at a Statutory Public Open House as per the requirements of the Planning Act and the Town's Official Plan, prior to being released to the public and interested agencies to review. Following the review and consideration of public and agency comments, staff will prepare a report addressing any comments and providing recommendations for Council's consideration. As previously mentioned, the timing for finalizing the Intensification OPA will be contingent on the ongoing Regional Plan Review program schedule.

Reviewed and Approved by,



Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy



John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Development



Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer