



REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Melissa Ricci, Senior Policy Planner

DATE: September 16, 2020

REPORT NO.: PD-2020-0035

RE: Regional Official Plan Review – Urban Structure Discussion Paper

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report PD-2020-0035 dated September 16, 2020, Regional Official Plan Review – Urban Structure Discussion Paper be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council's consideration of this report be deferred to the October 13th Council meeting;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse the discussion question responses submitted by Town staff, attached as Appendix B to this report, to be submitted to the Region of Halton in advance of the commenting deadline of October 30, 2020;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Region of Halton as input into the Urban Structure Discussion Paper and the development of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and Preferred Growth Concept being prepared as part of the Regional Official Plan Review Process; and,

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Local Municipalities of Burlington, Milton and Oakville, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation and the Grand River Conservation Authority

BACKGROUND:

The Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR) is ongoing and currently in Phase 2 of three phases. As part of Phase 2, the Region prepared five Discussion Papers on the following topics: Rural and Agricultural System, Natural Heritage, Regional Urban Structure, Climate Change and North Aldershot Planning Area. Landing Pages were

developed for all the Discussion Papers to provide a simplified summary of the Discussion Papers intended to facilitate consultation with the public. The Discussion Papers and landing pages were presented as part of a workshop to Regional Council on July 8, 2020 and released for public consultation on July 15, 2020.

Each Discussion Paper introduces a number of discussion questions aimed to be answered by the reader. Responses are to be provided to the Region as public input into the ROPR process. Staff was advised by the Region that the General Questionnaire was prepared for the public while the Technical Questionnaire was prepared for local municipalities, developers, special interest groups, etc. However, in mid-August the Region advised the local municipalities to comment on the General Questionnaire in addition to the Technical Questionnaire. Town staff provided responses to all discussion questions attached as Appendix B to this report.

Halton Region has engaged Halton Area Planning Partnership (HAPP) members including planning staff from the City of Burlington, Town of Halton Hills, Town of Milton, Town of Oakville, Credit Valley Conservation, Grand River Conservation Authority and Conservation Halton through the ROPR process. Town staff provided comments during the development of the draft Urban Structure Discussion Paper and appendices (i.e., MTSA Proposed Boundary Delineation, Employment Area Conversion Criteria, and Proposed Technical Revisions to Halton's Employment Areas). A summary of the key comments provided on the Urban Structure Discussion Paper are summarized below. It is understood that Town Staff will continue to be consulted as the ROPR process progresses and that the Region will continue to ensure that local municipal planning priorities and objectives are emphasized through this review.

This report provides an overview of the Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper (included as Appendix A to this report) and staff's key comments on the urban structure policy review. The Urban Structure Discussion Paper aims to explore elements of the Regional Urban Structure as a foundation for the development of Growth Concepts in the next stage of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS), leading to a Preferred Growth Concept. This preliminary analysis will set out the framework for how and where growth will be accommodated in Halton post 2031. Planning staff will continue to monitor this process and inform and consult with Council throughout. In addition, Appendix B provides staff's responses to the Urban Structure Discussion questions to be included as the Town's ongoing feedback into the ROPR process.

Provincial Amendment 1 and Updated LNA Methodology:

As the Region was finalizing the draft Discussion Papers, in mid-June the Province released proposed Amendment No. 1 to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and an updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology. Amendment No. 1 proposed to extend the planning horizon to 2051 and provided updated population and employment forecasts for all upper and single tier municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to that extended planning horizon. Amendment No. 1 and the Updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology subsequently came into effect on August 28, 2020.

Halton Region is forecast to reach 1.1 million residents and accommodate 500,000 jobs by 2051. Report PD-2020-0047 which Council will have before them on October 13, 2020 provides additional details regarding Amendment No. 1 and the updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology.

Reference to the new direction from the Province was added to the Discussion Paper and Landing Page. Given that Amendment No. 1 and the new Land Needs Assessment Methodology are now in effect, they will have to be properly considered through the next stages of the Region's Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

COMMENTS:

A key component of the Regional Official Plan Review is the Integrated Growth Management Strategy which examines options on how to address growth requirements as per the Growth Plan (2019) in Strategic Growth Areas, Employment Areas, and Settlement Areas.

The Urban Structure Discussion Paper provides an overview of the current Regional Urban Structure including Community Areas, Employment Areas and Settlement Areas.

The key requirements for the review of the Regional Urban Structure include:

- Undertaking integrated planning to accommodate the growth forecasted for Halton Region in the Growth Plan;
- Developing an intensification strategy to achieve a minimum of 50 percent of annual residential development within existing built-up areas;
- Identifying Strategic Growth Areas, including Urban Growth Centres and Major Transit Station Areas, and setting minimum density targets for those areas;
- Designating Employment Areas, setting minimum density targets, and evaluating requests for conversion of Employment Areas; and,
- Determining the need for expansion of the Settlement Areas of the Region.

Community Areas

Community Areas are the lands which accommodate most of the housing, population related (i.e. commercial and institutional) and office jobs. This section of the Discussion Paper provides information on: Urban Growth Centres; Major Transit Station Areas; Corridors; and other potential strategic growth nodes identified through local municipal urban structure or intensification studies.

Key topics include the delineation of proposed boundaries for Major Transit Station Areas, so that minimum density targets for those areas can be determined, and the consideration of Priority Corridors as an element of the proposed Regional Urban Structure.

Employment Areas

Employment Areas accommodate most employment land employment (i.e. industrial, manufacturing, warehousing/logistics), as well as some population-related and office jobs. This section of the Discussion Paper considers the lands that should be protected as Employment Areas in the Regional Official Plan, and how the Regional Official Plan can support planning for employment.

Key topics include:

- The Provincial policy framework for Employment Areas (including Provincially Significant Employment Zones) which in the Town includes the Premier Gateway Employment Areas on the north and south sides of Steeles Avenue;
- A methodology for the evaluation of employment conversion requests (i.e. removal from the Regional Official Plan Employment Area overlay) building upon Growth Plan and Regional Official Plan policy; and,
- Appropriate Regional Official Plan policy to support employment growth inside and outside Employment Areas, including permitted uses and ancillary uses in Employment Areas.

Settlement Areas

Settlement Areas are the Region's urban areas and rural settlement areas, which include the built-up areas where development is concentrated, or have been designated in an official plan for future development.

Key topics include:

- The delineation of Settlement Area boundaries in the Regional Official Plan;
- The Growth Plan policy requirements for Settlement Area boundary expansions, including the completion of a Land Needs Assessment to determine the need for additional urban land, and the Growth Plan criteria for determining the most appropriate location for a Settlement Area boundary expansion;
- The setting of a minimum density target for the new Designated Greenfield Area created by Settlement Area boundary expansion; and,
- Potential locations for new employment and residential/mixed use Designated Greenfield Area (as introduced through the Growth Scenarios Report in June 2019).
 - The paper introduces locations in Milton and Halton Hills that will be considered for potential new employment and residential/mixed use Designated Greenfield Area boundary expansion if deemed required to accommodate population growth to 2051 (see map included as Appendix C to this report).

Town of Halton Hills Comments:

MTSAs and Key Intensification Areas

- Overall, Town staff acknowledges the efforts by the Region to consider local planning studies and priorities through the development of Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs). We also appreciate the need to as much as possible apply a consistent methodology through the identification of MTSAs within the Region. The Town has also identified additional key nodes and corridors adjacent to and beyond the MTSA boundaries through the Intensification Opportunities Study Update (e.g., Guelph Street, from Maple Avenue to Hall Road, in Georgetown and Queen Street, from Tanners Drive to Eastern Avenue, in Acton) as having high intensification potential and will continue to recognize these key intensification opportunities through a future Local Official Plan Amendment.

Density Targets

- In our view, the Regional Official Plan already provides appropriate policy direction regarding intensification areas. For example, Part III, Section 81 (2) requires Local Official Plans to identify intensification areas with detailed boundaries in accordance with the objectives and policies of the Regional Official Plan. Section 81 (3) requires local municipalities to prepare area specific plans for the development of new intensification areas or the redevelopment of an existing intensification area. Section 81 (7) requires local municipalities to establish minimum densities for intensification areas, prohibit density reductions and promote densities that will support existing and planned transit services.
- Based on the foregoing, staff does not see the need for the Region to identify additional intensification corridors and nodes in the Regional Official Plan. We are particularly concerned about the introduction of prescriptive targets and densities at a regional scale. In our view, such matters are more appropriately incorporated in local municipal studies and official plan policies. Such an approach would also be consistent with Part II, Section 44 of the Regional Official Plan which states as follows:

The Region's primary role is to provide broad policy directions on strategic matters such as the management of land and natural resources, growth strategies, housing, economic development, water and wastewater services, solid waste management, transportation, and health and social services. Recognizing the above, the Local Municipalities are to deal with their local environments to best express their own individualities. The structuring of communities and neighbourhoods and the internal configuration of each of the Local Municipalities, for instance, are the responsibilities of the Municipalities as long as the overall planning vision for Halton and policies of this Plan are adhered to.

Growth Scenarios Greenfield Density

- The characterization of each of the growth scenarios should clearly stipulate the greenfield density assumptions that underpin the same. Scenario 4, for example, assumes 65 residents and jobs per hectare in new DGA, which is well in excess of the 2019 Growth Plan requirements. Scenarios 1 and 2 are predicated on 80 residents and jobs per hectare. This would not be obvious to the reader.

Employment Conversions

- The Employment Land Needs Study (2020) included a review of all of the designated employment lands in the Town on a site-by-site basis to determine if potential conversions to non-employment uses are appropriate and justified from a planning and economic development perspective. In total, six potential conversion sites were assessed. The Study recommended considering the conversion of one site in Georgetown totaling 1.7 ha (4.2 acres) and two sites in Acton totaling 2.3 ha (5.6 acres). The site identified for long-term re-designation in Georgetown is located at 344 Guelph Street and is a developed industrial parcel. The site is surrounded by commercial corridor uses and offers limited opportunity for expansion of the existing use. The two sites in Acton form a mature industrial area near the intersection of Wallace Street and Perth Street. This industrial area is independent of existing or planned Employment Areas within Acton and in close proximity to the Acton GO Station. Conversion of these lands to provide for a broader range of uses over the long term would support the Town's MTSA objectives.
- The conversion of these sites should consider a wide range of permitted uses that would enable the area to develop as a mixed-use area over the long-term. These sites may provide opportunities for office (a range of office uses, including multi-tenant office buildings smaller than 20,000 sq.ft.) retail and commercial services, and high-density or live-work residential uses. Conversion of these lands to provide for a broader range of uses over the long term would support the Town's intensification objectives.
- Further discussion with the Region will be required on whether the Gateway designations located south of Steeles Avenue in the Halton Hills Premier Gateway should be examined as potential conversion sites given the existing development and/or land use permissions which align with the Town's vision to attract a broad range of employment uses to the area.

Next Steps in the ROPR Process:

Upon release of the Discussion Papers and Landing Pages, the Region will record and respond to input received through public engagement, and present it to Regional Council in a Consultation Summary Report. The input related to the Urban Structure Discussion Paper will also be used through the refinement of growth concepts in the next stage of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS).

The comments the Region receives on the Discussion Papers and Landing Pages will be used in determining 'policy directions' that will be presented to Council in advance of preparing amendments to the Regional Official Plan. It is anticipated that the Region will provide additional opportunities for public engagement, such as Public Information Centres (PICs) and stakeholder meetings, in the forthcoming Phase 3 of the Regional Official Plan Review in 2021. Phase 3 will involve presenting draft ROP policy directions for public and stakeholder group comment and finalizing any necessary Regional Official Plan Amendment(s). Further public consultation on policy directions for each ROP component will take place in 2021. Town staff will continue to keep members of Council informed on any developments and engagement opportunities associated with the ROPR, including:

- Regional Council workshops on ROPR components (including the Integrated Growth Management Strategy);
- Any public outreach including Town Halls, Public Information Centres, or any online consultation;
- Any planned presentations to local Councils by Regional staff on the progress of the ROPR;
- Any reports to Regional Council on the progress of the ROPR;
- Any future opportunities for Town staff to engage in and provide comment on the ROPR; and,
- Future Town staff reports on the progress for the ROPR.

The Region is proposing to introduce a separate ROPA to address local municipal planning priorities related to urban structure and to facilitate a special meeting of Council by year end 2020. The proposed ROPA will include the following planning matters: Urban Growth Centres, Major Transit Station Areas (including boundaries and density targets), Strategic Growth Corridors (potential identification and density targets) and limited Employment Land Conversions of those properties identified by local municipalities as having strategic importance in advancing elements of the local urban structure.

As Council may recall, Regional Council previously directed that the four growth concepts based on the "Local Plans and Priorities Growth Scenarios" be carried forward for further refinement and analysis. It is our understanding that further work is being undertaken by the Region on the concepts to respond to the revised growth forecasts and extended planning horizon contained in Amendment No. 1 to the Growth Plan. The

exact timelines to present the revised growth concepts and ultimately select a preferred growth concept have yet to be finalized.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report directly aligns to the following values in the Strategic Plan 2019-2022 including:

Foster a Healthy Community

To maintain and enhance a healthy community that provides a clean environment and a range of economic and social opportunities to ensure a superior quality of life in our community.

Preserve, Protect and Enhance our Environment

To preserve, protect and enhance our natural environment for the health benefits and enjoyment it provides to present and future generations.

Foster a Prosperous Economy

To maintain and enhance the economic vitality of the Town through the provision of a wide range of opportunities for economic development.

Achieve Sustainable Growth

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

The report is also closely linked with a number of Focus Areas/Priorities including Shaping Growth.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

CONSULTATION:

Planning staff will continue to consult with the different Town departments including, Transportation and Public Works, Recreation and Parks, Economic Development, Climate Change, Finance and Fire and continue to update the Senior Management Team and Council through the ROPR process.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

The Region will conduct consultation primarily through online engagement. An expanded 75 day consultation period from July 15 – September 28, 2020 will include:

- Discussion Papers and Landing Pages, which summarize the Discussion Papers, being posted on halton.ca/ropr
- People will be able to provide their responses to questions posed and/or general comments using an online survey tool;
- Presentations to local municipal Councils on the Discussion Papers, as requested;
- Meetings with Advisory Committees;
- Public Information Centres, which will be held virtually, but following the same outline as a traditional Public Information Centre with an introduction, staff presentation and question/answer session. A technical moderator and a process facilitator will be utilized. People who do not have access to the virtual meeting because they do not have the technology, are not comfortable with the technology, or have accessibility issues will be accommodated;
- Public Information Centre meeting materials and questions, which will be posted on halton.ca/ropr to allow people to provide input and comments after the sessions;
- Stakeholder meetings, which will be held using a virtual meeting format;
- Indigenous people's engagement undertaken on a case-by-case basis depending on the preferences of those communities; and
- Receipt of comments to the Regional Official Plan email account at ropr@halton.ca.

Public notification of future engagement opportunities will be promoted through the Region's website, newspaper advertisements, signboards, mailing lists, social media, stakeholder groups, and other means. Given that part of the engagement period is during the summer, most engagement activities will be focused in the month of September. Recognizing that the engagement plan may have to be adjusted in light of changes to COVID-19 restrictions, Regional staff will continue to monitor restrictions and make adjustments as needed.

Virtual Public Information Centre

The Virtual Public Information Centre (PIC) regarding the Urban Structure Discussion Paper was held on September 10, 2020 from 7:00-9:00 pm. Town staff attended the virtual PIC which included a presentation by Regional staff along with a Question and Answer period where members of the public could e-mail questions in advance to Regional staff or provide them via the chat function during the PIC. The presentation can be found on the [Regional Official Plan Review webpage](#).

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report 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:
GOOD

COMMUNICATIONS:

Upon Council approval of this report, a copy will be forwarded to the Region of Halton, the Local Municipalities of Burlington, Milton and Oakville, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation and the Grand River Conservation Authority.

CONCLUSION:

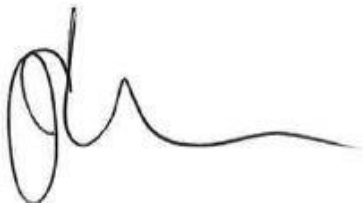
The Urban Structure Discussion Paper provides a framework that will be utilized when determining how and where population and employment growth will be allocated in the Region of Halton. As previously mentioned, it is understood that Growth Plan Amendment No. 1 (now in effect) will be considered as part of the next stage of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

Town staff provided responses to the discussion questions attached as Appendix B to this report. The responses emphasize the Town's strategic goals and objectives, the unique character of Halton Hills and how planning for future growth must consider the different local contexts and stages of growth for each municipality in Halton. Town staff looks forward to on-going discussions through the public consultation phase and to continuing to participate in the development of updated policies through the Regional Official Plan Review process.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Bronwyn Parker". The script is cursive and somewhat informal.

Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "John Linhardt". The signature is stylized with a large initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Development

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Chris Mills". The signature is stylized with a large initial 'C' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer