



Town of  
**East Gwillimbury**

**DEVELOPMENT & LEGAL SERVICES REPORT P2009-85**

To: Committee of the Whole Council

Date: August 10, 2009

Subject: Draft Consolidated Official Plan

Origin: Development & Legal Services – Policy Planning Branch

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **THAT** Development & Legal Services Planning Policy Branch Report P2009-85, dated August 10, 2009, regarding Draft Consolidated Official Plan, be received;
2. **THAT** the Draft Consolidated Official Plan be received by Council for the purposes of circulation and consultation with statutory agencies, the Province, the Region of York and other interested parties, stakeholders and service providers including school boards;
3. **THAT** the Draft Consolidated Official Plan be posted on the Town's website and circulated for consultation to the interested party list, external agencies, the East Gwillimbury Developer Group, the general public and various stakeholders;
4. **THAT** staff initiate a comprehensive Secondary Plan process for the proposed Community Area urban expansion along the Green Lane corridor and report back to Council with a proposed workplan;
5. **THAT** staff continue to develop and finalize the Consolidated Town Official Plan and proceed with the work plan to conduct statutory public meetings and Council adoption in the fourth quarter of 2009.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to present Council with the Draft Consolidated Official Plan and receive authorization to proceed with stakeholder and agency consultation and move towards statutory public meetings and adoption of a new Official Plan in the fourth quarter of 2009. In addition, the purpose of this report is to summarize the status of any outstanding issues and background studies associated with the Official Plan and address Council's concerns regarding flexibility with respect to future urban expansions.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Town's New Consolidated Official Plan builds on the five (5) Strategic Pillars of the Town's Strategic Plan of 2005 and advances the comprehensive *Thinking Green!* Strategy. The new Official Plan is intended to bring the Town's planning documents into conformity with more recent Provincial legislation including the Provincial Growth Plan, the Provincial Policy Statement, the Greenbelt Plan and the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, among others.

## **DISCUSSION**

One of the primary objectives of the new Consolidated Official Plan is to standardize the land-use planning and policy framework for all areas within the municipality. From a development planning and growth management perspective, the policies of the Plan are intended to be applied equitably to all new growth areas within the municipality. The principle of sustainable development and an "Environment First" approach has been adopted with the preparation of the Official Plan. The associated policies are designed to be progressive and forward-thinking to address the increasing concerns and issues with environmental protection, livable communities, energy conservation and the impact of urban development and growth generally.

The following are highlights which are to be noted as the fundamental elements of the Town's new Official Plan.

1. Planning and growth policies are based on the Town's long-term Infrastructure Master Plans which project the required services for the 2031 planning horizon of the Plan and beyond.
2. The Plan places a specific focus on the development of employment corridors including an Employment Area urban expansion along the Highway 404 corridor for the purpose of increasing the Town's activity rate and creation of jobs.
3. The identification of a Community Area urban expansion along the Green Lane corridor is required to achieve the Town's strategic Growth Management objectives and to respond to the Region of York's Growth Management exercise and the Provincial Growth Plan.
4. The introduction of an urban structure consisting of transit – supportive Centres and Corridors which will be the focus of the highest intensity of land uses and densities.

5. A consolidated and consistent Natural Heritage System and policy framework which places a high degree of focus on environmental restoration, enhancement and securement.
6. A progressive set of policies designed to ensure the development of sustainable communities including policies associated with the proposed Community Energy Plan and associated elements of sustainable community design, incorporating the application of the made in East Gwillimbury Sustainable Development Evaluation System.

### Outstanding Issues and Status of Background Studies

The Draft Official Plan has been prepared on the basis of numerous Background Studies and Master Plans which have been prepared over the last two (2) years in support of the Consolidated Official Plan process. Several of these studies and Master Plans have yet to be formally adopted and approved by Council; however, the recommended policy approach and findings of these studies have been incorporated into the Draft Official Plan to assist with the on-going consultation process. Of particular note are the following:

#### *Growth Management*

The Town's Growth Management work has been undertaken in conjunction with the Region's Planning for Tomorrow exercise. The primary objective of this work is to establish a land budget and settlement area expansion approach in order to conform with the Provincial Growth Plan, determine the need and direction for proposed urban expansion and to recommend a policy framework for Growth Management aspects of the new Official Plan.

Council approved the Growth Management Recommendations Report from Malone Given Parsons (MGP) in principle on May 19, 2009, which discussed growth forecasts, land budget, urban expansion, growth management strategies, development phasing and a general policy framework for the Town's urban structure, which are reflected in the draft Official Plan.

A final Growth Management Strategy will be presented to Council for approval prior to a presentation of a new Official Plan for adoption in the fall.

#### *Urban Expansion*

Staff submitted recommendations as to where an urban expansion should be identified in order to best address conformity with the Growth Plan while achieving the strategic

growth objectives of the Town. Staff recommended a settlement area boundary expansion that is consistent with the work prepared by MGP. Council approved an urban expansion along the Yonge Street, Green Lane and Highway 404 corridors on July 13, 2009. Given the sewage servicing constraints for residential development, this expansion focuses on employment opportunities and has been incorporated into the Draft Official Plan for discussion and consultation with the public.

The proposed urban expansion is designed to be the first stage of settlement area boundary expansions in the Town's Urban Area and will help provide for certainty of land uses, facilitate the securement of necessary infrastructure and provide opportunities to advance and facilitate non-residential and employment growth. The recommended urban expansion represents a logical extension of existing urbanized areas and takes advantage of existing infrastructure and investment in transit along Yonge Street and Green Lane. The expansion provides the best opportunities for employment growth (both employment land and population-related types of employment) outside of existing community plan areas, and is consistent with the Town's prior study of these areas to stimulate employment growth dating back to Watson and Associates Employment Corridors Study concluded in 2005.

The policies of the draft Official Plan anticipate Town Council being able to expand the settlement area boundary prior to the mandatory five-year review, so long as the expansion is within the land use budget prepared by the Town and Region. Town staff support the notion of establishing a Community Area reserve through monitoring the outcome of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan and seeking more extensive environmental protection of the proposed Natural Heritage System (including Levels A, B, and C and associated buffers) through the Secondary Plan process. Through the Secondary Plan process, environmental studies will determine the limits of environmental features and the amount of developable land. Once this more detailed work is complete, the Town will be in a position to quantify the need for additional developable land to meet the 2031 land needs under Provincial legislation. In this regard, the potential reduction in developable land from more extensive environmental protection than anticipated in the Draft Official Plan/land budget would be used to form a Community Area reserve, which Council could use at any time to facilitate additional urban expansions within the 2031 growth forecasts.

The Community Area reserve could be a mechanism whereby the Town could advance opportunities or facilitate projects which would meet such preliminary criteria as:

- The provision of necessary municipal facilities and infrastructure, where such development has planning merit and is contiguous to sustainable built-up areas;
- To facilitate infill projects and community linkages which help contribute to complete community development;
- Projects which demonstrate innovation and high perform in sustainable design and energy efficiency;

- Consideration of projects that may respond to unforeseen circumstances and conditions which may arise throughout the planning period and in advance of a 5-year review.

Outside of the Town’s land budget exercise, all settlement area boundary expansions must occur following a future comprehensive official plan review. The Town is required by the Planning Act to update its Official Plan every five (5) years, at which time the Town can review and update growth projections and identify the need for additional urban expansions. As part of the mandatory 5 year review process, Council would be in a position to re-evaluate and consider the need for additional urban expansions within the central growth area to planning horizons that are longer than 2031, and to account for growth that may occur at a faster pace or larger scale than anticipated in the current growth management work. The Town will review its plan every 5 years, ensuring that a 20 year land supply is accommodated within the Urban Area. The next 5 year review should examine, and if required, provide for the land needs of the municipality to 2036 as per the projected growth forecasts outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. 2031-36 Growth Forecasts

	<b>2031 to 2036</b>
<b>Population</b>	+ 88,000 - + 103,000 people
<b>Employment</b>	+ 34,400 - + 44,000 jobs

*Short-term Servicing Constraints*

As Council is aware, short-term growth and development in the Town is generally subject to servicing restrictions in terms of capacity of the York Durham Sewer System (YDSS). It is acknowledged within the draft Official Plan that build-out of existing community areas and any new urban expansion areas requires the completion of the Upper York Servicing Solution (UYSS), for which an Environmental Assessment is anticipated to be completed by 2014. Until the UYSS is confirmed, the Town has to be conservative with respect to residential development. The Secondary Plan process for the proposed Community Area expansion along the Green Lane corridor should therefore focus on developing mixed use employment areas within key nodes as a priority. Up to and including the commissioning of the UYSS, the Official Plan will be subject to ongoing review, including at least one mandatory five year review.

*Consultation with Proponents Outside of Proposed Settlement Areas*

It is acknowledged that several detailed submissions and development concepts have been presented to staff and Council for a variety of areas within the whitebelt. Green Earth Village has submitted a lengthy policy document that is under consideration and it is anticipated that other whitebelt stakeholders will also suggest policy changes. Town

staff will consult with whitebelt development stakeholders to establish a policy framework and process that will allow for consideration of whitebelt lands subject to growth management and development phasing criteria and provide Council with the flexibility to prioritize future growth management and urban expansion decisions.

Based on the comments and submissions received as part of the circulation of the draft Official Plan, Town staff and their consultants will provide Council with a summary of the potential of new areas of the whitebelt to achieve the policies and intent of the Official Plan within the 2031 planning horizon. This summary will be provided in the final Growth Management Strategy report in the Fall of 2009.

### *Queensville Town Centre*

On July 13, 2009, Council received a presentation on the Queensville Town Centre from Joseph Bogdan Associates Inc., outlining past and present concepts for the area. Council inquired into the possibility of increasing the densities in the Town Centre area and requested a table-top workshop to be held in September in order to review the Queensville Community Plan in greater detail. As part of the Official Plan consolidation process, Town staff have re-introduced the existing approved policies and land use permissions outlined in the existing Queensville Community Plan (OPA 89 and 115) for the Town Centre into the draft Official Plan. In addition, Town staff have identified the area as a Major Local Centre in the new draft Official Plan, with policies that would provide opportunities for higher densities in this area. Town staff will work with Queensville landowners to identify any opportunities for increased densities in the Town Centre and what implications this may have on the Town's growth management work and other background studies.

### *Major Local Centre located at Mount Albert and Second Concession*

One of the matters raised by Council as part of detailed discussions with staff following the June 15<sup>th</sup> Committee of the Whole Council meeting, was the rationale for identifying the intersection of Mount Albert Road and Second Concession as a Major Local Centre. As part of the overall urban structure of the Central Growth Area, this area has been identified as a Major Local Centre in order to recognize the opportunity to establish a central focal point that could serve the major recreational and community needs of the Town. The policies in the Draft Official Plan recognize existing and draft approved residential development on the west side of Second Concession and it is a general policy in the Draft Official Plan that any future development shall account for and be sensitive to adjacent existing uses. Subject to future urban expansions, the draft Official Plan contemplates a range of uses in this area, such as park, community and institutional facilities; mixed use development and medium-high density residential development.

### *Transportation Master Plan*

As Council is aware, the Transportation Master Plan has been designed in such a way that the process is integrated with the Official Plan Review. This allows for redundant steps in the traditional Environment Assessment Process to be avoided in the future. Preliminary findings and recommendations from the draft Transportation Master Plan were presented to Council in February of 2009. They will continue to be considered in the context of joint public open houses and public information centres as required by the integrated process of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment.

### *Community Energy Plan (CEP)*

The Town's Community Energy Plan (CEP) process is being undertaken as a significant element of the overall approach to address energy conservation, climate change and to ensure sustainable development. A Preliminary Summary of the CEP has been presented to Council in draft form and will be subject to further public consultation in the fall of 2009. The preliminary elements of the CEP, including the overall targets for energy conservation, greenhouse gas reductions, have been incorporated into the Draft Official Plan for discussion purposes. Elements of the Official Plan which relate to the CEP can be finalized following public consultation in and Council's formal adoption of the CEP in the fall.

### *Natural Heritage System Update and Restoration and Securement Strategy*

The Restoration and Securement Strategy associated with the Natural Heritage System Update was presented to Council on June 1<sup>st</sup> and received for the purposes of consultation. Notwithstanding that the final restoration approach has yet to be fully canvassed with the statutory agencies involved, staff have incorporated the recommended policy approach into the new Official Plan, again to enable full discussion with regulatory agencies and stakeholders.

### *Lake Simcoe Protection Plan*

The Province released the Final Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (LSPP) effective June 2, 2009. As with several other major pieces of Provincial Policy, the Town's Official Plan must conform to the LSPP. Town staff have previously provided a report to Council to form the basis of East Gwillimbury's comments to the Province on the Draft LSPP when it was released earlier this year. The Draft Official Plan contains some policies which were developed by staff based on the Draft LSPP. This work will need to be reviewed against the policies of the Final LSPP in addition to input from the LSRCA and the Ministry of Environment prior to Council's formal adoption of the new Official Plan.

### *Green Lane Corridor Secondary Plan Process*

Town staff recommend that the Town initiate a comprehensive Secondary Plan process for the proposed Community Area urban expansion along the Green Lane corridor and report back to Council with a proposed workplan. The Town, through its Growth Management work and as identified in the Draft Official Plan, is requesting an urban expansion along the Green Lane corridor area to accommodate Community Area uses. Until the UYSS is confirmed, the Town has to be conservative with respect to residential development. The Secondary Plan process for the proposed Community Area expansion along the Green Lane corridor should therefore focus on developing mixed use employment areas within key nodes as a priority. Town staff propose to begin the preparation of the Secondary Plan now, in order to review growth projections, take-outs, densities, land uses and phasing in greater detail, which will help provide input into the next 5 year Official Plan Review. It is important to note that Planning Branch Report P2009-83 on this agenda, outlines the process for the preparation of a Secondary Plan for the Highway 404 Employment Corridor.

### *Next Steps*

In order to work towards the fall target date for Council adoption of the Town's new Consolidated Official Plan, it is important for the Town to initiate and undertake a comprehensive consultation and review process where the Town's Draft Official Plan is formally circulated to adjacent municipalities, commenting agencies, stakeholder and interested parties as required under the Planning Act.

In addition, Town staff will report back to Council in the fall with respect to undertaking a Municipal Commercial and Retail Needs Study that will help establish a framework for commercial retail uses within the municipality.

### **NEED FOR PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION**

The Town's Official Plan Review process incorporates an extensive public and stakeholder consultation process. The Interested Party List will be advised that the draft Official Plan document is available for review. The draft Official Plan document will be formally circulated to statutory agencies and stakeholders in accordance with the Planning Act.

As with all matters associated with the Official Plan Review process, this report and draft Official Plan document will be made available to all interested parties and posted on the Town's website.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The consulting costs associated with the work performed as part of the Official Plan Review and associated background studies have been included in the Development and Legal Services Department 2009 budget for growth-related projects and are recoverable through future Development Charges.

### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

This report is aligned with the fourth Strategic Pillar of the Strategic Plan, for Managing Growth to Ensure a Sustainable Community. It specifically refers to involving the public to ensure growth occurs in a way that benefits the Town and developing a healthy economic base.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix 1 – Draft Consolidated Official Plan (under separate cover)

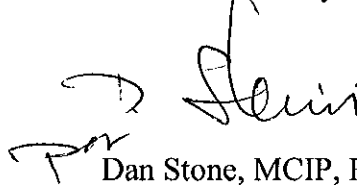
This Report has been reviewed by the senior management team.

Prepared and Recommended by:



Robin Skinner  
Environmental Planner

Recommended by:



Dan Stone, MCIP, RPP  
Manager of Policy Planning

Reviewed and Recommended by:



Don Sinclair, General Manager  
Development & Legal Services

Approved for Submission:



Thomas R. Webster  
Chief Administrative Officer