



## **MUNICIPALITY OF THAMES CENTRE**

### **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**REPORT NO:** PDS-41-22

**FILE:** O4-22

**TO:** Mayor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Marc Bancroft, Director of Planning and Development Services

**MEETING DATE:** July 11, 2022

**RE: OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW 2021/2022**

**AMENDMENT NO. 27 TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF THAMES  
CENTRE OFFICIAL PLAN**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to consider changes to the Thames Centre Official Plan to implement the Official Plan Review process through the adoption of Amendment No. 27. This report includes a series of Discussion Papers with a focus on key planning issues, proposed policy changes, a summary of agency and public comments received as well as a recommendation for Council's consideration.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

As mandated by the Planning Act, municipalities are required to update their official plans every five years to ensure conformity with the upper tier official plan, applicable provincial legislation as well as consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS). The last official plan review for Thames Centre was completed in 2015 hence the need for this current exercise.

Initiated last fall, a consultation and review process was conducted in-house by planning staff. This included a special meeting of Council in October 2021 to discuss revisions that may be required to the Official Plan followed by a statutory open house and statutory public meeting both held in May 2022, which included the presentation of Discussion Papers and draft policy changes for consideration. The proposed policy changes to the Official Plan are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Once the proposed amendment is adopted by Thames Centre Council, the document will be forwarded to the County of Middlesex for consideration of approval. Being the delegated approval authority, the County will review the amendment to ensure conformity with provincial policies and plans as well as the County of Middlesex Official

Plan. Once the amended Official Plan takes effect, the Municipality will need to review and update its comprehensive zoning by-law within three (3) years to ensure conformity with the Plan.

### **3. ANALYSIS**

To ensure consistency with the PPS and conformity with the County of Middlesex Official Plan, a series of Discussion Papers were prepared representing five (5) key themes which formed the basis for proposed policy changes to the Thames Centre Official Plan. Those key themes included Housing, Employment, Agriculture, Natural Heritage and Climate Change. Attached to this report as Appendix 2 are those Discussion Papers.

For each Discussion Paper, a policy framework was provided in respect of provincial, county and municipal implications followed by various related topics of interest and concluded with recommendations for proposed policy changes to the Official Plan which were presented at the statutory open house and statutory public meeting held last May.

Based on the public submissions received during the consultation process and provided under Appendix 3 and 4 to this report, additional policy changes are proposed to the Official Plan in respect of the following key areas (in no particular order):

#### **a) Housing Accommodation for Farm Labour**

It would be appropriate to provide policy direction for permanent farm labour accommodation beyond the current framework of allowing temporary accommodation such as a mobile home and subject to a temporary use rezoning approval.

New policy direction is proposed including evaluation criteria for zoning by-law amendments to consider permanent housing to support farm labour through a converted dwelling or bunk house for example. Evaluation criteria includes justification for the need for the additional accommodation, rationale to demonstrate existing housing is insufficient, location, size and type, servicing, vehicular access, and minimum distance separation (MDS 1) conformity. For permanent farm labour accommodation that is larger in scale and exceeds the foregoing criteria, an amendment to the Official Plan would be required along with a zone change.

#### **b) Residential Densities**

Council will recall that as part of the Housing Visioning Session conducted last February, a housing mix of 65% for low density residential (singles and semis) and 35% for medium density residential (townhouse and apartment dwellings) was recommended by staff and included in the proposed amendment. For housing density, it would be appropriate to include no more than 20 units per gross hectare for low density residential and 20 to 50 units per gross hectare for medium density residential. (Gross density includes roads, parkland, stormwater management facilities etc.) These targets are vital to ensure that development opportunities demonstrate a more efficient use of



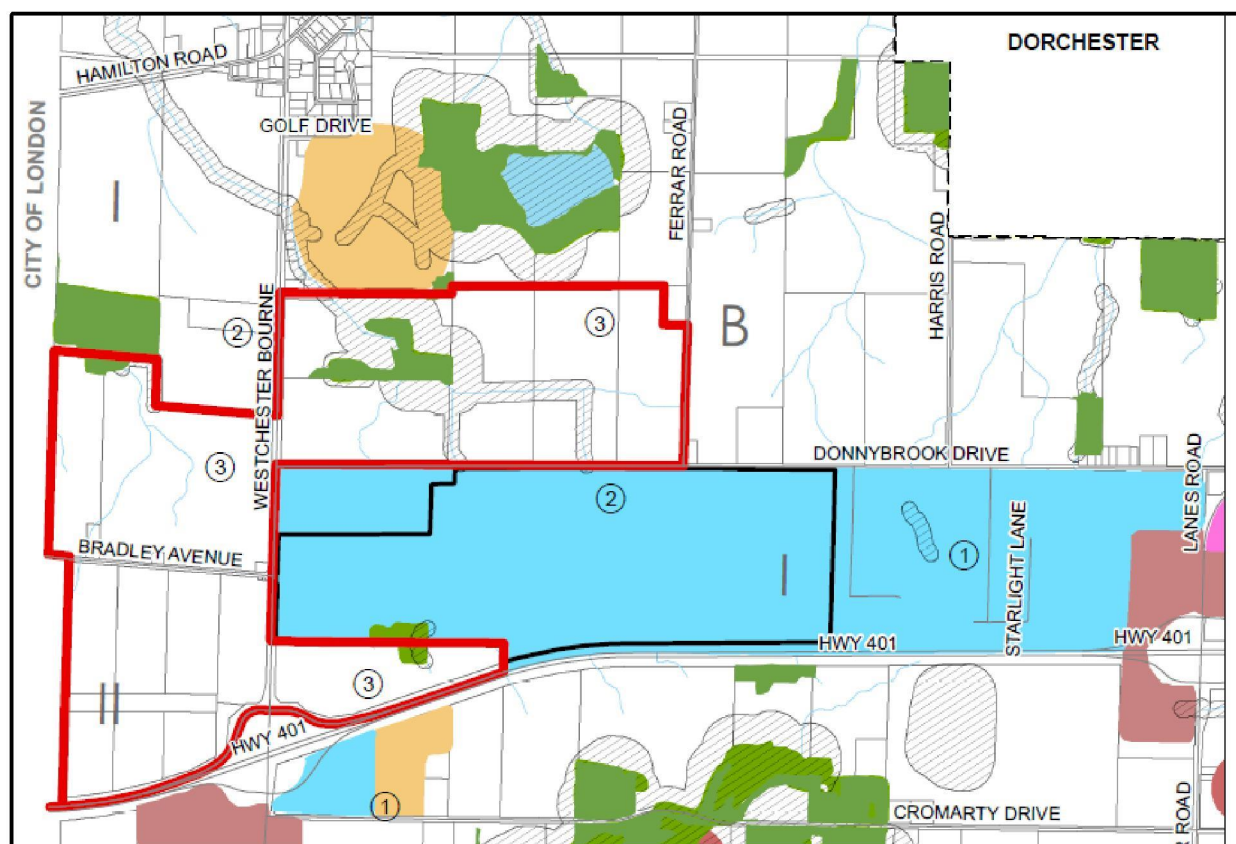
land and infrastructure while also protecting agricultural land.

c) Long-Term Protection of Employment Areas

Under the PPS, planning authorities may plan beyond 25 years for the long-term protection of employment areas provided lands are not designated beyond the planning horizon being 2046 in this case. Based on the analysis provided in the Employment Discussion Paper, the Municipality has sufficient land designated for employment purposes for the next 25 years.

Through direction offered by the Highway 401 Corridor Land Use Study (2006) undertaken by Monteith Brown, it would be appropriate to identify and protect lands as offered by the PPS and generally located north and east of the Donnybrook industrial area in the general vicinity of the Highway 401 corridor and adjacent to the City of London being the area outlined in red as shown on the map below.

**Part of Schedule A – Land Use Plan**



Through that Study, this area was identified of primary importance as having a high priority and potential for future industrial development. It would be appropriate that those lands be redesignated from Agricultural to Agricultural – Special Policy Area 3 (SPA 3) subject to the following policy direction:

“These lands are identified as potential future employment lands being candidate lands for inclusion as designated employment lands subject to the undertaking of a comprehensive review. To ensure the protection of these lands for potential future employment purposes, uses permitted shall be limited to existing uses. Consents to sever a dwelling considered surplus to a farm operation as a result of farm consolidation shall not be permitted in this area.”

Although the owner (R. Jackson) of the farm situated on the east side of Westchester Bourne (County Road 74) and north of Highway 401 has requested by written submission that his lands be re-designated from agricultural to employment purposes considering his lands were down-designated by the County of Middlesex through a modification to Amendment No. 12 as part of the last Official Plan review back in 2015, the Employment Discussion Paper has concluded that there is an oversupply of land designated employment for the next 25 years. As an alternative to re-instating his lands for employment purposes and to ensure consistency with the PPS, his lands are now being considered for the long-term protection for employment purposes through the application of SPA 3.

d) Natural Hazard Areas

Natural hazards include regulated areas under the Conservation Authority Act including flood prone areas and steep slopes. Under the current Official Plan, natural hazard areas are designated Environmental Area. Under the proposed amendment, the Environmental Area designation is to be replaced with the Natural Hazard Areas designation. New mapping data has been provided by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) based on revised flood modelling generally translating into expanded coverage for natural hazard areas. As noted in their written submission, Auburn Developments has significant concerns with the revised flood modelling and the impact on land development. To address those concerns and in consultation with the UTRCA, staff is recommending that natural hazard areas be shown as a mapping overlay as opposed to a designation. Ultimately, the limit of development within the natural hazard overlay would not require an amendment to the Official Plan but would be subject to approval from the conservation authority and the Municipality. Auburn Developments prefers this approach.



e) Urban design guidelines

A written submission was received requesting that the Official Plan be amended to include policies promoting quality built form through the implementation of design guidelines (including the use of brick, stone, stucco and other materials). Under the site plan approval section which applies to new commercial, industrial, institutional and medium residential development, the proposed amendment has been revised to note that the Municipality shall prepare and adopt urban design guidelines to promote quality built form. This approach would be consistent with other comparable lower tier municipalities in the County.

f) Climate Change

To better address climate change, concerns were raised that the proposed amendment should use more directive language (i.e. shall, require) and require for example that new developments use sustainable elements in their building design rather than the use of enabling language (i.e. encourage, support, promote). Sustainable building design may not be viable for all developments and as such, the use of enabling language is appropriate. To incentivize sustainable development opportunities, the Municipality should consider establishing a community improvement plan through a grant and/or loan program. Policy direction has been provided in the proposed amendment in this regard.

In all, the proposed Amendment is consistent with the PPS and in conformity with the County of Middlesex Official Plan.

### **3.1 Agency Comments**

The proposed amendment was circulated to prescribed agencies under the Planning Act, including to indigenous communities to ensure consistency with the PPS, however no formal comments were received.

Should the proposed amendment be adopted by Thames Centre Council, a subsequent agency circulation would be undertaken by the County of Middlesex. Any subsequent change to the amendment as adopted could be in the form of a modification by the County.

### **3.2 Public Comments**

The proposed amendment was circulated to the public through the giving of proper notice under the Planning Act. Written submissions were received for specific properties and/or regarding specific topics of interest. A summary of those submissions is included as well as a staff response is found under Appendix 3. Public meeting and open house records are also found under Appendix 4.

## **4. RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** Council confirm its regard for all submissions received through the Thames Centre Official Plan Review 2021/2022 process and adopt in principle Amendment No. 27 to the Thames Centre Official Plan and declare that the Amendment does not conflict with any provincial plans, is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and has regard to matters of provincial interest under Section 2 of the Planning Act;

**AND THAT** the implementing by-law to adopt Amendment No. 27 be prepared and forwarded to the next regular meeting of Council for consideration of approval;

**AND THAT** staff subsequently forward Amendment No. 27, as adopted, to the County of Middlesex for consideration of approval.

### **Attachments:**

Appendix 1 – Proposed Amendment No. 27 – marked up version of the Thames Centre Official Plan

Appendix 2 – Discussion Papers

Appendix 3 – Consultation Summary

Appendix 4 – Public Meeting and Open House Records

Prepared by: Marc Bancroft, Director of Planning & Development Services

Reviewed by: Mike Henry, Chief Administrative Officer