

Appendix 18.3

SABR - RURAL SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW PROCESS

SUMMARY

Rural settlements, also known as Hamlets, play an important role through the provision of housing, social, cultural and economic land uses serving the needs of rural residents within its settlement boundary and the surrounding Agricultural and Rural Areas.

The Region has exclusive approval authority over settlement area boundaries; both urban and rural. The Region may consider rural settlement boundary expansions through the Niagara Official Plan (municipal comprehensive review) process.

The *Growth Plan* directs the majority of growth be accommodated within urban areas. A small percentage of growth will be allocated outside the urban areas, directed primarily to rural settlements.

The *Growth Plan* policy for settlement areas sets out that settlement boundary expansions cannot occur within the *Greenbelt Plan* area. This restricts expansions in northern Niagara communities.

Provincial policy for rural settlement expansions differs from urban area boundary expansions; thus, the criteria and process outlined below are specific to rural settlements.

The following are the draft criteria that will be considered by Regional staff in assessing rural settlement expansion requests:

- Contribution to the rural character: rural settlements are generally lower density communities designed to support the surrounding agricultural and serve the historical development that has occurred in the community. Expansions for new development shall maintain and enhance the distinctive character, enhance the quality of life through appropriate design of commercial and public space areas, and promote greater economic vitality.
- Purpose of rural settlements to support the agricultural community: the rural settlement should have sufficient capacity to accommodate supporting farm-related uses and commercial uses to support the nearby agricultural and rural communities.
- Hydrogeological considerations: whether the expansion is rounding out an undersized lot or where the expansion is proposed for new lot creation, the size of the expansion should result in the ability for viable lots that will ensure adequate water supply and suitable for private waste disposal systems, subject to applicable requirements.



- Impacts to the Natural Environment System: the proposed expansion does not result in negative impact on the natural environment system.
- Impacts to the surrounding agricultural area: expansions should be located so as to minimize and mitigate to the extent feasible the impacts on nearby agricultural operations. This review will include expansion size, adjacent soil class, access, residual access and nearest constraint. This criteria will consider impacts to agricultural infrastructure and livestock facilities. Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) constraints will be considered through this criteria.
- Site-specific context: location considerations may be provided through supporting information or information provided through consultation with the local municipality.

In West Lincoln, the majority of forecasted growth will be directed to the urban area of Smithville. A small percentage of growth will be allocated to the rural settlements/agricultural area.

In Wainfleet, the majority of the growth will be allocated to its rural settlements with the Wainfleet Rural Settlement receiving the higher percentage of growth and a smaller percentage going towards others that can suitably to accommodate private servicing. An even smaller percentage may be allocated to the agricultural area.

The Region's Land Needs Assessment will determine the amount of growth to be directed to rural settlements.

Below is the draft process for consideration of Rural Settlement boundary expansions:

Step 1. Consider the details of expansion.

1. Determine the type of request:

- a) Technical adjustment (ex. property already developed and adjacent to current boundary)
- b) Minor rounding out (ex. adding the remainder of a property with minor development potential)
- c) Expansion request (ex. expanding the rural settlement for the explicit purpose of development)

2. Additional information is not required to be submitted to be considered through this process. If provided, review any additional information provided to support the request.

NOTE: Rural settlements within the *Greenbelt Plan* area cannot be considered for expansion.

Step 2. Prepare and review mapping with local municipality.

1. The Region will prepare mapping that demonstrates the ability to accommodate growth within the existing boundary to generate a potential inventory of available vacant land supply in each rural settlement. The mapping will include constraints that must be considered in determining developable lands within that vacant land supply, as well as the constraints surrounding the rural settlement boundary.

In particular, the following mapping layers will be added to the vacant land mapping:

- Any surrounding agricultural infrastructure, including livestock facilities (based on aerial photography)
- Soil conditions and classification
- Natural environment system constraints
- Any other contextual constraints identified through the review.

NOTE: The review of recent hydrogeological studies, and discussions with private septic services staff, will assist in determining the average lot size to be applied to the rural settlements to generate a potential inventory of lots that can be accommodated within the existing settlement boundary.

2. Once the vacant land supply and inventory projection is determined, the Region can establish if an expansion is needed to accommodate growth in rural settlements. If an expansion is required, the Region will consider the requests submitted, as well as the full extent of the rural settlement boundary, to determine the most appropriate location for expansion.
3. The Region will meet with local municipal staff to discuss the mapping, constraints and potential inventory for each rural settlement.

Step 3. Evaluate boundaries and expansion requests against the criteria.

The Region will further review the candidate areas against the evaluation criteria to determine the most appropriate location for expansion. This evaluation will be undertaken in consultation with the local municipal planning staff.

This step will result in generating preferred locations for potential expansion based on the distribution of the forecasted allocation determined through the Region's Land Needs Assessment.

At this time, local planning staff would report to their local Council with recommendations that reflect local interests related to which rural settlement areas should receive expansion and where the expansions are most appropriate for each, in relation to the existing boundary. Local Council endorsement of preferred locations are targeting to be received by the Region in August 2021.

The results of the evaluation will be finalized by Regional planning staff, having considered the criteria and local Council preferred locations. Regional Planning staff will make recommendations to its Council as part of the Settlement Area Boundary Review component of the new Niagara Official Plan. The recommendation is planned with the release of a consolidated draft Niagara Official Plan in fall 2021.

Minor Rounding-Out

The process and steps outlined above describes the expansion process as part of a Municipal Comprehensive Review ("MCR"). In Niagara, the MCR is the Niagara Official Plan.

The *Growth Plan* now includes a policy which allows municipalities to consider a minor rounding out of a rural settlement boundary outside of the MCR, subject to specific criteria:

2.2.9.7. Notwithstanding policy 2.2.8.2, minor adjustments may be made to the boundaries of rural settlements outside of a municipal comprehensive review, subject to the following:

- a) the affected settlement area is not in the Greenbelt Area;
- b) the change would constitute minor rounding out of existing development, in keeping with the rural character of the area;
- c) confirmation that water and wastewater servicing can be provided in an appropriate manner that is suitable for the long-term with no negative impacts on water; and

d) Sections 2 (Wise Use and Management of Resources) and 3 (Protecting Public Health and Safety) of the PPS are applied.

In order to submit this request, the Region would require the interested party to make application for a Regional Official Plan Amendment to adjust the rural settlement boundary. The application would need to be supported by a number of studies including, but not limited to, a planning justification report, an agricultural impact assessment, an environmental impact statement and a hydrogeological study. Any other required studies would be determined through pre-consultation and dependent on the location, context and proposal.

Policies related to rural settlements and the minor rounding out are included in the Regional Structure section, **Appendix 4.3**.