
Subject: Recommendation Report – Northwest Welland Secondary Plan (OPA 29) – City of Welland

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021

Recommendations

1. That Local Official Plan Amendment No. 29 to the City of Welland Official Plan **BE APPROVED**, as modified (Attached as Appendix 1 to Report PDS 29-2021);
2. That all parties **BE NOTIFIED** of Regional Council's decision in accordance with *Planning Act, 1990* requirements;
3. That staff **ISSUE** a declaration of final approval for Local Official Plan Amendment No. 29, 20 days after notice of Council's decision has been given, provided that no appeals have been filed against the decision, in accordance with *Planning Act, 1990* requirements; and
4. That this report **BE CIRCULATED** to the City of Welland, the City of Thorold and the Town of Pelham.

Key Facts

- This report recommends approval of Local Official Plan Amendment 29 ("LOPA 29"), as modified, to the City of Welland Official Plan. LOPA 29 implements the Northwest Welland Secondary Plan ("NWSP").
- Earlier this year, the Region approved Regional Official Plan Amendment 18 ("ROPA 18") and LOPA 24 to expand Welland's urban area boundary to include the NWSP area.
- The NWSP will provide specific land use and policy direction for the development of the plan area. Its direction is supported by a number of technical studies.
- The City of Welland held a series of engagement events for the NWSP. A formal Public Meeting was held on September 22, 2020 in accordance with the

requirements of the *Planning Act, 1990* and the City adopted the LOPA 29 at its meeting on October 27, 2020.

- Prior to the adoption of LOPA 29, the Region requested additional information related to infrastructure servicing, transportation and policies related to the natural heritage system. These changes were not made to the Secondary Plan prior to adoption and, therefore the Region retained approval authority.
- The City submitted the updated Northwest Welland Secondary Plan Municipal Servicing Conceptual Design Report on May 19, 2021 to address the Region's infrastructure comments.
- The Region modified the NWSP to reflect comments related to infrastructure, as well as outstanding matters on natural heritage corridors, transportation, phasing and cost sharing. City of Welland Staff support these modifications.
- LOPA 29, as modified, is consistent with and conforms with Provincial and Regional policy.

Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

The cost to process LOPA 29 has been accommodated within the Planning and Development Services Department 2021 Operating Budget.

In the event Council's decision is appealed to the Ontario Lands Tribunal, additional resources would be needed. In such case, a further report on financial implications will be provided.

The Region awarded a Smarter Niagara Incentive Program – Planning Grant to this project. The SNIP planning grant will fund 50% of the cost of a secondary plan project to an established limit. In this case, the limit is \$125,000.

Analysis

The NWSP is comprised of approximately 190 hectares generally running along Quaker Road and bound by the Town of Pelham and City of Thorold to the north, the rear lot

lines of properties along Niagara Street to the east, Niagara College's Welland Campus to the south and Line Avenue and Clare Avenue on the west.

The NWSP was initiated as a 2 phase process in 2017, supported by the Region, to consider the northwest urban area expansion and secondary plan process.

Phase 1, the expansion of Welland's urban area boundary, was successfully concluded earlier this year with the approval of ROPA 18 and LOPA 24 to include the Northwest lands. The NWSP area is now designated urban.

Phase 2 is the Secondary Plan. The Secondary Plan considers how development will logically occur and ensures a coordinated approach to land use and mix of built form, consideration of infrastructure and transportation requirements, natural and cultural heritage protection, urban design, and similar matters beyond the general policy of the Official Plan.

The NWSP establishes land use and policy direction for the future development of the plan area. Studies submitted in support of NWSP were used to inform and refine the specific land use direction. These technical studies include:

- **Background Report and Key Direction Report:** summarizes the applicable planning policy, existing conditions and key inputs from the below studies to provide a planning rationale for the recommended land use plan and policy direction for the NWSP.
- **Transportation Impact Study:** identifies the capacity of the existing road network within the study area to determine the level of service and informed the Secondary Plan work in terms of new road connections and active transportation facilities.
- **Functional Servicing Study:** sets out the capacity of the existing infrastructure network to service the expansion lands and made recommendations for future servicing requirements.
- **Stormwater Management Report:** demonstrates how stormwater runoff generated by the NWSP lands will address water quality and quantity.
- **Natural Heritage Study / Floodplain and Natural Hazards Study:** identifies impact on key hydrologic areas, natural heritage systems and how to mitigate any impact on

natural heritage features. Information from this report was used to designate environmental areas accordingly.

- **Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Assessment:** identifies the archaeological and built heritage features within the study area, evaluates these features and makes recommendations on mitigating any adverse effects of any further development on built heritage and archaeological resources.

The Region provided detailed comments on the draft Secondary Plan to the City of Welland on September 14, 2020. These comments provided suggestions for policy clarification and requested additional information and policy to address outstanding items related to servicing, transportation and natural heritage corridors.

On September 22, 2020, the City of Welland held a Public Meeting for LOPA 29. On October 27, 2020, the City adopted LOPA 29.

LOPA 29 includes the policies and a specific land use plan for the NW Welland Secondary Plan, as well as mapping changes to the City's Official Plan schedules to designate the NW Welland lands as within the NWSP area. At that time, the Region could not issue an exemption to Regional approval since ROPA 18 and LOPA 24 were not yet approved.

Additionally, several items set out in the Region's September 14, 2020 comments were unresolved.

At the January 13, 2021 PEDC meeting, Regional Planning staff advanced a report for ROPA 18 and LOPA 24 to recommend expansion of the urban area boundary. At this meeting, City staff made a delegation to request that the Region exempt its approval for LOPA 29. In response, Regional staff advised that they could not recommend issuing an exemption since several matters (noted above) remained unresolved. Regional Council did not allow the exemption; it retained approval authority for LOPA 29.

Since that time, the Region and City have worked collaboratively to resolve the outstanding items. On May 19, 2021, Welland provided the Region with infrastructure information that addressed remaining outstanding concerns.

Regional staff are now satisfied that all outstanding matters set out in its September 14, 2020 letter have been resolved since they have been incorporated in the modified version of LOPA 29. These changes are supported by Welland Staff.

The modified LOPA 29 has 13 policy modifications and 1 mapping change. These include policies related to natural heritage corridors, transportation, servicing, phasing and cost sharing.

Secondary Plan Modifications

Natural corridors are essential in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in an ecosystem and avoiding fragmentation. Additional policy direction has been provided to protect and incorporate corridors through the development of the Secondary Plan area. The potential corridor linkages have now been conceptually identified on Secondary Plan Appendix 1 - Map 4. The corridor connections between natural features are to be further reviewed through an Environmental Impact Study as part of future development applications.

The Region has modified the transportation policies to add specific direction for additional transportation analysis for development along Rice Road and the future collector road. In addition, policy directs that future road accesses to a Regional Road will require approval from the Region.

The Region has received and reviewed an updated Northwest Welland Secondary Plan Municipal Servicing Conceptual Design Report, dated May 2021. The updated report addresses the infrastructure related concerns and provides detailed direction for a local municipal servicing strategy through a local sanitary collection system. LOPA 29 has been modified to add a policy to reference to this updated report, which will guide servicing strategies submitted for development applications within the plan area. An additional policy prohibits individual servicing connection to the regional trunk sewers.

Finally, policies have been added that require the creation of a phasing plan to ensure that development within the Secondary Plan area proceeds in a logical, efficient and fiscally responsible manner. The phasing strategy will consider a number of elements to ensure that growth and infrastructure requirements are well coordinated.

In addition to the above phasing policies, the City has also requested the incorporation of policies related to front-ending and cost sharing agreements. These policies will

ensure that, as the Secondary Plan area develops over time, the development is coordinated and the costs of the municipal and community infrastructure, land and/or facilities are fairly and equitably shared amongst all land owners.

With the above noted modifications, the Region is satisfied all outstanding matters of regional interest have been addressed. Staff consulted with Welland Staff and received support for the changes.

Policy Analysis

LOPA 29 has been reviewed for consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (“PPS”) and conformity with the applicable Provincial Plan, being the *Growth Plan*, and the Region’s Official Plan.

For the reasons set out below, LOPA 29 is consistent with the PPS, 2020 and conforms to the *Growth Plan* and the Region’s Official Plan.

Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The PPS, 2020 provides direction on land use planning to promote sustainable, strong communities, a strong economy, and a clean and healthy environment.

The PPS encourages efficient development patterns that optimize the use of land, resources and public investment in infrastructure and public service facilities by promoting a mix of housing (including affordable and market-based range of residential types), employment, recreation, parks and open spaces. It encourages transportation choices that increase the use of active transportation and transit before other modes of travel.

PPS policies also direct the protection and enhancement of natural heritage features and systems, cultural heritage and archaeological resources, and the wise use and management of resources.

The Secondary Plan addresses the above and provides a framework for the creation of a complete community while protecting important resources.

A Place to Grow - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)

The Growth Plan provides a strategic, long-range growth management framework for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area. The Growth Plan supports Ontario's vision of building stronger, more efficient, prosperous communities through appropriate growth management.

The guiding principles of the Growth Plan are focused on achieving complete communities, stimulating economic growth, prioritizing intensification and higher densities to optimize infrastructure investments, and mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change.

Complete communities are defined as mixed-use neighbourhoods that offer opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to conveniently access most of the necessities for daily living, including an appropriate mix of jobs, local stores and services, and a full range of transportation and housing options, including affordable housing.

The Secondary Plan will direct the achievement of a complete community by providing a proactive plan for a mix of land uses and built form, the efficient use of infrastructure, the provision of a street network that supports active transportation and the provision of public spaces.

Regional Official Plan

As noted earlier, the Region approved ROPA 18 and LOPA 24 to bring the NWSP lands into the urban area boundary. The NWSP lands are now urban and designated as Designated Greenfield Area (DGA), where the lands are largely vacant, and Built-Up Area (BUA), where existing development is located.

The Secondary Plan proposes a mix of land uses and built form to provide variety and choice. The policy framework and land use direction will contribute to the minimum intensification rate for development or redevelopment in the existing BUA and new development will meet the density target for the new vacant area available for development. The DGA requires compact, mixed-use development that contributes towards the Region's density target of 50 persons and jobs per hectare.

ROPA 18 requires the approval of the Northwest Welland Secondary Plan to guide the development of this new community.

Consultation

The Secondary Plan underwent a comprehensive consultation process through the City. The City held Public Information Centres at key milestones to gather feedback from the public. A formal Public Meeting was held by the City on September 22, 2020.

The Region received some inquiries asking about the timing for approval of LOPA 29. Outside of those questions, the Region has not received any comments since the City's adoption in October 2020.

At the January 21, 2021 Regional Council meeting, Regional staff were directed to circulate all information related to the Secondary Plan to the City of Thorold and the Town of Pelham. Information was provided immediately following this meeting. Subsequently, Welland and Regional staff have met with both municipalities to discuss the project. Both municipalities advised that their interests relate to infrastructure and potential impacts to development for planned lands in East Fonthill and Port Robinson, respectively, which abut the NWSP lands.

The City of Welland updated the Northwest Welland Secondary Plan Municipal Servicing Conceptual Design Report, dated May 2021, to demonstrate how the plan area will be serviced by a local sanitary collection system. Regional Development Engineering and Water/Wastewater staff confirmed this additional information satisfies its outstanding concern.

In addition, the Region has initiated a review and update of the Water/Wastewater Master Servicing Plan ("MSP"). Previously, the NW Welland area was not included in the MSP as it was outside of the urban area. Through the current update, NWSP growth will be considered since these lands are now urban.

Adjustments to scope, budget, and timing of infrastructure upgrades for the Towpath Sewage Pumping Station will be reflected in the updated MSP based on the NWSP growth proposed to ensure Pelham and Thorold, which also rely on this infrastructure to service growth in their communities, will be accommodated. No negative impacts to Pelham's or Thorold's timing of development is anticipated as a result of the NWSP approval.

Conclusion

The NWSP contains policies that support and encourage a range and mix of land uses and built form types, the protection and integration of natural heritage features, opportunities for transit supportive development and active transportation, and the development of complete, well-designed neighbourhoods.

The Region has worked collaboratively with the City to create a Secondary Plan that will provide the foundation for a strong, healthy, balanced and prosperous new community.

Specifically, over the last few months, the Region and City have worked closely to address and satisfy the outstanding comments and modify the Secondary Plan accordingly. As noted, both Region and City staff are agreeable to these modifications and support the approval of the Secondary Plan as modified.

Alternatives Reviewed

Alternative Option 1:

Council could choose not to approve LOPA 29, as modified. This alternative is not recommended because Staff are satisfied the City has provided sufficient justification in its materials and planning opinion. The Region has worked with Welland on its NWSP work program.

Alternative Option 2:

Council could choose to approve LOPA 29 without modifications. This alternative is not recommended because LOPA 29 was modified to add policy direction to address Regional interest related to servicing, transportation and natural heritage. City and Regional staff agree that the modifications are appropriate.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Approval of the NWSP through LOPA 29 will support the following Council strategic priorities:

- Healthy and Vibrant Community – the NWSP area has been proactively planned through the Secondary Plan work to evolve into a complete community.

- Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning – the NWSP will allow for orderly growth to occur and to utilize infrastructure in a fiscally responsible manner.

Other Pertinent Reports

PDS 3-2021 - Regional Official Plan Amendment 18 and Local Official Plan Amendment 24 – Northwest Welland Urban Boundary Expansion Request

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Appendices

Appendix 1	Local Official Plan Amendment 29, as modified
Appendix 2	List of Modifications to LOPA 29