
Subject: Niagara Official Plan: Settlement Area Boundary Review – Rural Recommendations

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Recommendations

1. That Report PDS 42-2021, **BE RECEIVED** for information regarding the Settlement Area Boundary Review – Rural Recommendations.

Key Facts

- This report provides information on proposed changes to rural settlement area boundaries. No decisions are sought from Council at this time.
- Changes to settlement boundaries can only be made by the Region at the time of a Municipal Comprehensive Review (“MCR”). The Region’s MCR is occurring as part of the new Niagara Official Plan (“NOP”).
- Using the Provincial Land Needs Methodology, the Region prepared a land needs assessment (“LNA”) to determine the amount of expansion area required to meet its growth needs.
- A need for 115 hectares is identified for rural settlement area expansions in Wainfleet (75 hectares) and West Lincoln (40 hectares).
- Potential expansion locations were provided for public review in summer 2021. All identified areas were reviewed using evaluation criteria based on Provincial policies and direction.
- In addition to boundary expansions, technical adjustments are being considered where boundary alignment either incorrectly reflected the parcel boundary, did not align with zoning or to provide appropriate width to access a parcel.
- Comments on the proposed changes to the settlement area boundaries are requested by February 7, 2022, to provide sufficient time for review and input in to the next draft.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations directly related to this report. Council approved the resources to complete the Niagara Official Plan (“NOP”) over a five year period as part of the 2017 Budget Process.

Analysis

The Region can adopt changes to rural boundaries at the time it passes the NOP. Consideration must be given to both requests for expansion, as well as the review of the entire boundary, to determine the best location for expansion.

Expansions can only happen if there is a “need” for the expansion. The need is determined through a land needs assessment (“LNA”), a process set out by the Province.

This report relates to rural settlement area boundary expansions recommendations only. Urban area recommendations may be found in PDS 41-2021.

Rural Settlement Areas (sometimes referred to as “Hamlets”) in the Greenbelt Plan area cannot expand. Therefore, the Rural LNA is focused mainly on West Lincoln and Wainfleet, where need was identified and Rural Settlement Areas currently exist outside of the Greenbelt Plan Area. Further details on the LNA can be found in Appendix 2.

Based on the land need assessment, an additional 75 hectares is needed within Wainfleet and 40 hectares within West Lincoln.

Port Colborne and Fort Erie were reviewed as part of this work. It was determined that the existing land supply was adequate. No additional lands were required.

Rural Settlement Area Boundary Review

A smaller portion of population and employment growth is planned to be accommodated in rural areas, primarily within Hamlet boundaries.

Wainfleet does not have an urban settlement area and therefore the entirety of its growth is to be accommodated in its rural areas. Half of residential growth and approximately 60% of rural employment growth allocation is directed to its Hamlets.

A significant majority of new population growth for West Lincoln is forecasted to go to the Smithville urban area; only a small percentage is planned for Hamlets. All residential land need directed to the rural area is to be accommodated within Hamlets. Approximately 60% of rural employment growth will be directed to West Lincoln's hamlets.

Maps showing expansion locations are included below and also found in Appendix 1.

Rural Settlement Review Criteria

To review potential areas for expansion, the Region prepared rural settlement review criteria to assess locations. This criteria was released for review and comment as Appendix 18.3 to Report PDS 17-2021. The assessment criteria was developed to be consistent with and conform to Provincial policy.

No feedback was provided on the criteria. As a result, no changes to the criteria were made and it was used to consider expansion locations and requests.

The rural criteria is based on five categories: contribution to rural character, support for agricultural community, impacts to agricultural operations, environmental constraints, and hydrogeological considerations. The review also looked at site specific context considerations (e.g. proximity to an airfield or landfill site).

The Region, in consultation with the applicable local municipalities, reviewed all identified and requested locations in the rural settlements to determine the most appropriate and feasible location to accommodate growth.

Appendix 3 provides additional discussion on the Rural assessment results for each of the expansions and other areas that were considered through the Region's Rural Settlement Area Boundary Review ("SABR") review.

Through the Rural SABR process, the Region considered the need for both community lands (residential and commercial) and rural employment (dry industrial) lands. The following is a summary of community area and employment area recommendations for rural settlement expansions.

Consultation

The Region consulted and engaged with the local municipalities through the Rural SABR process. In addition, consideration was given to local municipal staff reports and any information submitted as part of a request.

The Region also received comments from the public through the SABR mapping tool. Comments and responses are included in Appendix 8 to associated Report PDS 41-2021.

West Lincoln

A total of 13 sites were reviewed under the Rural Expansion Criteria. The Rural LNA sets out a need for 40 hectares of developable area for Hamlet expansion in the Township.

Four Hamlets have been recommended for expansion. Expansion areas are described below with summary details for each area being recommended.



West Lincoln – Community Lands

Recommendation #1 - Abingdon

Current Rural Settlement area = 35 hectares

Expansion Area = 11 hectares

The expansion is located behind existing rural residential lots north of Bismark Road and east of Abingdon Road. The expansion will round out the Hamlet boundary and does not extend the boundary any further north on Abingdon Road or east along Regional Road 65.

This location is in close proximity to an existing park and would reflect other current development proposals on the west side of Abingdon Road.

Defunct livestock barns are present on the southerly expansion lands. There are no other agricultural related constraints present and the expansion would not have significant impact on the surrounding agricultural area.

There are some minor other wetland features located on both properties. These features are farm ponds and drainage channels that meet the minimum requirement to be mapped.

Recommendation #2 - Caistorville

Current Rural Settlement area = 43 hectares

Expansion Area = 7 hectares

The proposed expansion would add a modest amount of land to the boundary to facilitate a rural lot subdivision on a local road. The expansion maintains the rural character of Caistorville.

The easterly boundary would continue south to encompass these lands. There is no further opportunity to expand southerly due to environmental constraints.

The lands are relatively clear of environmental features. Environmental features surround the expansion area and will be studied through future applications to ensure protection.

There are no barns in the area and the inclusion of these lands for rural residential would have limited agricultural impact.

Recommendation #3 – Wellandport

Current Rural Settlement area = 80 hectares

Expansion Area = 3 hectares

This expansion is relatively small in size and would not alter the character of Wellandport. The property includes lands that are partially within the boundary.

There are no significant environmental features on the expansion lands. A small drainage channel runs through the property. Future study work should review this feature.

Operating chicken barns are located north of the property. Based on review and correspondence with Township staff, a number of rural residential lots already exist within the MDS area of influence and the existing Hamlet boundary is closer to the operation. On this basis, Staff determined the barns did not pose a constraint for inclusion into the boundary.

West Lincoln – Rural Employment Lands

The Rural LNA includes provision for rural employment land need to the rural area. In West Lincoln's case approximately 40% of this growth is generally directed to typical agricultural employment growth (i.e. greenhouses, farming operations). The remaining portion is directed to rural hamlets where some uses are more appropriately located.

In order to inform location and need for rural employment lands to accommodate growth, the Township retained a consultant to prepare a Rural Employment Lands Hamlet Expansion Study (the "RES"). In addition to where future rural employment growth should be allocated, the study also addressed concerns with existing employment uses establishing in agricultural areas that were not suitable or operating illegally.

The results of the RES utilized the Region's Rural SABR criteria as a first step to determine the Hamlets with the highest probability of accommodating rural employment. As well, the Region provided approximate land need for rural employment based on the Rural LNA.

The Region was involved throughout the preparation of the RES and has reviewed the results in its independent assessment.

Regional Recommendation – Fulton

Current Rural Settlement area = 11 hectares

Expansion Area = 20 hectares

Fulton is located in the north-west part of the Township and currently has residential lots, commercial and rural employment uses (including a gas station, Minor Bros., and a veterinarian clinic).

The proposed expansion includes some environment features; these features will offer a natural buffer between the future rural employment and the existing residential lands located along South Grimsby Road 18.

In terms of agricultural impacts, there is one livestock operation south of Regional Road 20. The minimum distance separation arc places the expansion outside of the area of influence.

Fulton is the preferred location because it is well connected via Regional Road 20 to the Township, as well as beyond. It is conveniently located along the Highway 20 corridor that connects to the City of Hamilton with access to the Red Hill Parkway and QEW.

This location also provides an opportunity for West Lincoln to comprehensively plan the rural employment uses and provides space for businesses to relocate, as well as attract new ones.

Wainfleet

A total of 11 sites were reviewed under the Rural Expansion Criteria. The Rural LNA sets out a 75 hectares land need for Hamlet expansion.

Four Hamlets in Wainfleet have been recommended for expansion. Expansion areas are described below with summary details for each area.



Wainfleet – Community Area

Recommendation #1 - Wainfleet Village

Current Rural Settlement area = 157 hectares

Expansion Area = 47 hectares

The Wainfleet Village is the largest Hamlet in Wainfleet and has a number of services and facilities that support the Hamlet and surrounding agricultural area. Wainfleet's Official Plan identifies this area as the focus for growth and development. More than half of the population and employment growth directed to Wainfleet is allocated to this Hamlet.

Two locations are recommended for the Village of Wainfleet.

North/South of Bell Road

The Region recommends the entirety of the parcel between Bell Road and Clarendon Street West to the unopened road allowance be added to the Wainfleet boundary. In addition, the frontage of Bell Road to the north should also be included in the boundary for a total area of 29 hectares.

The primary focus of these lands will be residential, with some employment uses such as commercial, restaurants and personal services to support the population growth. Adding lands on both sides of Bell Road will allow for more comprehensive planning.

These lands are generally unencumbered by environmental features.

There are also no significant agricultural impacts. One livestock operation was identified to the south; however, with the Feeder Canal, road and buffering, it does not preclude the Region's boundary recommendation.

South Village Boundary

Approximately 18 hectares is recommended for inclusion in the Wainfleet boundary along the southern edge of the Hamlet to the east and west of Side Road 20.

The westerly side of the road would see a small expansion for the purpose of adding land to facilitate the development of lands to the north already in the boundary.

The easterly side of the road adds land just south of the Village's park. Adding residential lands in close proximity to the park and recreation area will add population in close proximity to facilitate its use.

There are no environmental features identified on the expansion lands.

Agricultural activity is generally feed/cash cropping. A poultry operation exists approximately 300 metres to the south. Calculations for MDS indicate the arc would impact a small portion of the property.

The Region supports this location, but requires that the Township zone the property to restrict residential development within the arc until the MDS can be resolved. Options are available to address this impact through subdivision design or review of land use.

Recommendation #2 – Wellandport

Current Rural Settlement area = 19 hectares
Expansion Area = 3 hectares

Consideration of this expansion area was done in conjunction the West Lincoln side of Wellandport. Wellandport has commercial establishments and a library available to

serve the community as it grows. This expansion area would contribute modest growth to help build the character of the Hamlet.

The boundary proposes to follow the buffer limit of the environmental feature to the south. Since the expansion area excludes the natural feature and its buffer, no environmental concerns remain.

This expansion would not have any MDS impacts. A livestock operation is located to the east of the proposed expansion, outside the MDS area of influence. In addition, the existing Hamlet boundary is located closer to the livestock facility.

Wainfleet – Rural Employment

Recommendation #1 - Chambers Corners

Current Rural Settlement area = 52 hectares

Expansion Area = 17 hectares

There are two expansion areas identified in Chambers Corners.

Chambers Corners has a number of existing businesses; the addition of two areas in this Hamlet for rural employment would be in keeping with the character of the area. Future consideration for buffering and compatibility could be considered at the time of local conformity through land use permissions and zoning.

North East Parcel

The Township has identified a need for more rural employment lands in a centralized area. Chambers Corners offers an opportunity for synergy with existing employment related uses existing in this Hamlet.

Chambers Corners is also well connected, with direct access to Forks Road and Regional Road 24.

An environmental feature is located along the north edge of the property. A significant amount of developable land is available outside of the environmental feature and buffers. The environmental feature would be studied and appropriately buffered through future environmental study work.

Rural employment lots are on average 2 hectares. At this size, the developable land would allow for a rural lot subdivision for several businesses.

Poultry barns are present east of the north east parcel. In reviewing the MDS guidance material, as well as a report provided by the Township, it was determined that an expansion for rural employment is considered a less sensitive use (Type A) and therefore would not pose a conflict for minimum distance separation to the barns.

The Region will require the Township designate and zone this expansion for rural employment to ensure there is no conflict with MDS.

South West Parcel

To the support the parcel above, the south parcel is recommended for rural employment. It will provide opportunity for additional rural employment to support and enhance the other operations in the area.

The lands are adjacent to a rural employment operation and would allow for its expansion. Through this expansion, the property could utilize the existing access.

These lands have no environmental constraints present. Further, no agricultural operations were identified in proximity to the expansion.

The expansion may require one additional access to Highway 3 for a future rural employment lot.

Recommendation #2 - Ostryhon Corners

Current Rural Settlement area = 75 hectares

Expansion Area = 5 hectares

The Region recommends adding 5 hectares to the southerly limit of this Hamlet, following the existing boundary line and extending it south.

The lands are recommended for rural employment due to compatibility with adjacent contractor's yard and the proximity to the Burnaby airfield.

There are no immediate concerns related to agricultural operations or environmental features. MDS was reviewed through a previous boundary review which determined

there were a number of non-farm uses in or adjacent to the existing boundary that already restricted the livestock operation and there would be no MDS conflict.

Rural Settlement Technical Adjustments

Through the Rural Settlement SABR process the boundaries of each hamlet were also examined to determine if any minor adjustments were needed (e.g. to align a Hamlet boundary with a property boundary).

Through this process, one technical adjustment is supported in West Lincoln (Bismark) and three technical adjustments are supported in Wainfleet (Winger, Wellandport and Chambers Corners).

Details related to these adjustments can be found in Appendix 4.

Provincial Policy Review

The *Planning Act, 1990* requires all municipal Council decisions to be consistent with, conform to, or not conflict with the applicable Provincial policy. Regional and local planning staff must provide planning advice and make recommendations under the same requirements. The recommendations in this report conform to, are consistent with, and do not conflict with applicable Provincial policy and plans.

Policy review is included in Appendix 5.

Alternatives Reviewed

This Report is prepared for information only; therefore, no alternatives are provided.

Consultation on these recommendations is planned for late 2021 and early 2022. The Region seeks comments by February 7, 2022.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Settlement Area Boundary Expansion, as part of the Region's MCR and NOP, is supported by the following Council Strategic Priorities:

- **Supporting Business and Economic Growth:** Through long range planning to accommodate growth for rural community and employment lands and offer opportunities to attract and support economic wellbeing;

- **Healthy and Vibrant Community:** Through planning for safe, healthy neighbourhoods that are attractive, inclusive and connected;
- **Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning:** Through coordinated, efficient use of rural infrastructure and responsibly directing growth to rural settlements; and
- **Sustainable and Engaging Government:** Through planned growth that is fiscally sustainable and fosters strong, successful relationships between all levels of government in the supply of services.

Other Pertinent Reports

PDS 4-2021 Niagara Official Plan—Steps and Directions Moving Forward (information)

PDS 17-2021 Niagara Official Plan Consolidated Policy Report (endorsement)

PDS 33-2021 Niagara Official Plan: Land Needs Assessment and Settlement Area Boundary Review Update (endorsement)

Prepared by:

Kirsten McCauley, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services

Recommended by:

Michelle Sergi, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner
Planning and Development Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in conjunction with PDS 41-2021.

Appendices

Due to size, some of the following [appendices](#) are available on the NOP website only:
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Map of Recommended Rural (Hamlet) Settlement Area Expansions |
| Appendix 2 | 2051 Rural Land Needs Assessment (December 2021) |
| Appendix 3 | Rural (Hamlet) Settlement Area Assessment Review (website only) |
| Appendix 4 | Boundary Changes from Technical Adjustments to Rural (Hamlet) Settlement Areas |
| Appendix 5 | Provincial Policy and Plan Review |

From PDS 41-2021:

- | | |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| Appendix 8 | Public Comments (website only) |
|------------|--------------------------------|