

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Community Planning

Increasing Residential Density – Next Steps

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council directs Community Planning staff to proceed with the proposed draft work plan to undertake formal review and consideration of measures to increase residential density in the County, as generally outlined in Report CP 2023-288, including the initiation of an Official Plan Amendment to consider implementation of the matters outlined in Phase 1 of the work plan and related consultation with Area Municipalities;
2. And further, that Report CP 2023-288 be circulated to the Area Municipalities for their information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- At their May 11, 2022 meeting, County Council approved a resolution directing staff to prepare a report to provide further information and options that could be considered to better accommodate residential growth through increased density within fully serviced settlement areas and minimize the need for settlement boundary expansions.
- Report No. [CP 2022-397](#), and subsequent Council information session held April 12, 2023, identified various measures to increase residential density and provide a full range of housing options.
- This report provides further background and detail with respect to residential density targets and proposes a draft work plan for the formal consideration of various measures that could be implemented to increase residential density in the County, including Planning staff's initial expectations with respect to phasing/timing, general approach, and potential resource needs/impacts (i.e., staffing and budget).

Implementation Points

This report sets out a proposed work plan for consideration and implementation of various measures and initiatives to encourage and support increased residential density throughout the County. These include measures and initiatives that require both County level (i.e. Official Plan updates) and Area Municipal level (e.g. area studies, zoning by-law and site plan review/updates etc.) consideration and action. As such, consultation with the AMs will need to be undertaken prior

to finalizing many of the proposed policy changes and other actions being recommended for consideration through the workplan.

Financial Impact







Report No. CP 2023-250 identified planning resource considerations associated with various levels of planning service. This report provided examples of various proactive planning projects (e.g. review and implementation of options to increase density) and associated staffing and other resource impacts (e.g. funding for consulting support/studies) for further consideration as part of the 2024 budget process.

This report provides further detail on some of these specific projects and associated resource requirements, including the potential need for additional funding (e.g. budgeting for technical studies) that may require further consideration as part of the County and/or Area Municipal budget processes.

Communications

There are no specific communications being proposed as part of this report, beyond those associated with the posting of this report as part of the Council agenda and circulation to the Area Municipalities for their consideration. However, additional communication with the AMs and the public are recommended in order to further pursue and/or implement any Council direction and/or actions that may result from their consideration of the various options outlined in this report.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
<i>WORKS WELL TOGETHER</i>	<i>WELL CONNECTED</i>	<i>SHAPES THE FUTURE</i>	<i>INFORMS & ENGAGES</i>	<i>PERFORMS & DELIVERS</i>	<i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i>
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DISCUSSION

Background

In early 2022, a several Area Municipalities reached out to County staff to get a better understanding of potential options for facilitating and encouraging increased residential densities in their communities and the County as a whole. Following these initial discussions, the following motion was considered and approved by County Council at their May 11, 2022 meeting:

Whereas Oxford County recognizes that there is a need for increased quantity, variety, and attainability of housing, and;

Whereas Oxford County is a prudent manager of its finances and intends to make the most effective and efficient use of municipal infrastructure in the long term, and;

*Whereas Oxford County values its prime agricultural land and its natural spaces, and;
Whereas Oxford County values sustainability in the delivery of all services, and;*

Whereas Oxford County strives to create complete communities providing opportunities for all to work, live, play, and learn;

Therefore be it resolved that staff be directed to bring a report to County Council to provide further information and options that could be considered by the County and Area Municipalities to better accommodate their projected residential growth through increased density within fully serviced settlement areas and minimize the need for settlement boundary expansions.

With respect to the above direction, it is noted that the County's Official Plan policies currently require that growth be directed primarily to fully serviced settlement areas to ensure, among other objectives, efficient use of land, infrastructure and public services and support the development of complete communities. Complete communities are not specifically defined in the OP but are referred to in Provincial policy as mixed-use neighbourhoods or other areas within a town or city 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.

Further, the Official Plan contains policies that provide direction on minimum residential density, intensification and unit mix requirements, as well as support for various forms of residential intensification (i.e. converted dwellings, re-purposing of older non-residential buildings for residential use, encouraging and promoting various forms of residential intensification in residential and mixed use areas and downtowns, criteria for establishing new medium and high density residential development sites, etc.) for fully serviced settlement areas. Accordingly, the existing Official Plan policies currently provide a solid framework upon which to build, recognizing that there are opportunities for updates and improvement, particularly with respect to the identification of specific areas for intensification and additional density and building height.

A range of potential measures to increase residential density were outlined in staff Report No. [CP 2022-397](#). This report was followed up by a [Council Information Session](#) on April 12, 2023, at which planning staff provided additional details and information on the various options and opportunities to enhance density in all areas of the County. The staff presentation at that session illustrated that there are a range of built forms that can be used to achieve greater residential density and increase the range of housing options and that some 'missing middle' building types (e.g., back to back townhouses, low/mid rise apartment buildings etc.) can achieve similar or greater densities than higher-rise apartment buildings with potentially less impact on existing residential neighbourhoods. That said, mid-rise and high-rise residential and mixed-use buildings may be an appropriate building form for achieving higher densities in key urban growth centres (e.g. central areas in the County's Large Urban Centres) and other well-serviced and connected locations.

It is also noted that a number of the area municipalities have recently completed, initiated and/or identified various local initiatives that are and/or will look at opportunities to increase densities within their jurisdictions (e.g. Secondary planning in Ingersoll, East-Zorra Tavistock and Drumbo, review of opportunities for increased height and/or density in Woodstock's the Central Area designation, review of opportunities for increased height, density and/or mixed uses in the Village of Thamesford, etc.). Where known and applicable, these initiatives have been reflected in the draft work plan and some may require substantial commitment of Planning staff and, in some cases, other resources (i.e., budgeting for area studies) to undertake and complete in a timely manner. However, it is expected that additional local initiatives may be identified through the consultation process identified in the proposed draft work plan.

As such, the primary purpose of this report is to seek Council's direction to proceed with Planning staff's proposed workplan in order for the County and Area Municipalities to begin formal consideration of various measures (as generally outlined Report No. [CP 2022-397](#) and subsequent Council information session) that could potentially support and enable increased density in the County, including an indication of anticipated timing and resource needs. The overall intent is for planning staff to immediately begin consulting with the area municipalities on, and working toward the implementation of, the various shorter term actions identified in the draft workplan, together with initial discussions on implementation of some of the longer term actions identified in the draft work plan, including local implementation considerations, process, and resource requirements.

Comments

The following commentary briefly reiterates the current residential density and intensification context in the County and provides some further detail and background on the typical rationale and standards for establishing density targets in Ontario. This is followed by a proposed draft work plan to consider measures for increasing density for Council's consideration and direction.

a) Residential Density and Intensification - Current Context

As previously discussed in Report No. [CP 2022-397](#), the current Official Plan policies establish minimum required and maximum permitted net residential density for development in the Low, Medium and High density designations in all eight Area Municipalities and policy direction to promote and facilitate intensification of existing built-up areas,

There is a considerable range in the minimum and maximum residential density requirements across the County's various fully serviced settlements, particularly between those for the Large Urban Centres and the Serviced Villages. The City of Woodstock is currently the only municipality that has specific unit type mix (i.e. percentage of low, medium, and high density units) and overall minimum residential density (i.e., 30 units per net hectare/12 units per net acre) requirements for new development set out in the Official Plan. The Official Plan policies for the other area municipalities currently encourage a mix of unit types and establish minimum and maximum density requirements for each residential density designation (i.e., low, medium, and high), however, that is not always sufficient to ensure an appropriate range of unit types and minimum overall density is being consistently achieved.

Recent development monitoring activities indicate that overall average residential densities in the County appear to have been trending gradually higher, with development types shifting more toward smaller lots for single detached dwellings and a higher proportion of multiple unit type building forms, such as street fronting townhouses, stacked townhouses, and apartments. Over the 2019-2021 period, the County achieved an average overall residential density for new development, including all unit types and both greenfield development and intensification, of approximately 35 units/net ha (14 units/net ac) in the Large Urban Centres and 21 units/net ha (8.5 units/net ac) in the Serviced Villages.

Although the above noted average densities would appear to be meeting or exceeding the current minimum density requirements set out in the Official Plan, these averages include infill/intensification type developments, which tend to have higher densities than greenfield development, bringing up the average. Further, the average density being achieved in the County's various communities for new development still varies considerably and the average density of many older residential areas is often considerably lower, which can serve to substantially lower the overall residential density of a particular community (e.g. to less than 20 units/net ha). As such, further review and updates of the County's Official Plan policies and consideration of other potential measures is warranted to ensure that every area municipality has the policies and measures in place to ensure they can achieve the minimum residential densities and unit mix necessary to make efficient use of land, infrastructure and public services and create complete communities.

b) Residential Density – Current Research and/or Standards

Further to the previous report and information session, Planning staff received questions with respect to what density is typically deemed to be necessary to support a complete and livable community. To try to help address this question, Planning staff have undertaken some further background research with respect to how the County's current residential density targets compare to those typically cited as being required to support complete communities.

From this review it appears that there is general consistency on overall minimum density requirements but there is variation on how density targets are specifically being measured and achieved in various contexts (e.g. gross versus net density, people/jobs per ha versus unit/ha, overall versus area specific density targets or some combination thereof etc.).

It is noted that Oxford's policies currently utilize a units per net hectare approach, as that was determined to be easier to consistently implement and measure, as the gross to net ratio for every development can vary substantially and the actual number of persons residing in a particular unit/area can also change considerably over time. For comparison, a target of 20-22 units/gross ha (i.e. the overall residential density target in larger urban GGH municipalities served by transit) equates to approximately 30-34 units/net hectare in the Oxford context.

Some further discussion on the findings from the above noted review is as follows:

Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) - The density targets currently set out in the current Provincial Growth Plan have been developed for the Ontario land use context through considerable research, analysis and real world application and have been adjusted and refined somewhat over time. Provincial communication material indicates that the GGH density targets tend to support walking, cycling and transit, a diverse mix of land uses, high-quality public

open space, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. These requirements and targets are summarized as follows:

- Minimum greenfield density target of 50 people/jobs per gross ha for most GGH communities (i.e. roughly the equivalent of 20-22 units/ha for exclusively residential).
- The target for some smaller, outer ring municipalities in the GGH (e.g. Brant, Haldimand County) is 40 people/jobs per gross ha (i.e. roughly the equivalent of 16-17 units/ha for exclusively residential).
- Due to the lower employment land densities in most municipalities, residential density often needs to be higher than the 40-50 people per gross hectare target, in order to achieve the overall blended people/jobs target.
- Minimum density target of 150 people/jobs per gross ha for GGH 'urban growth centres/downtowns' (i.e. roughly the equivalent of 60-65 units/ha for exclusively residential) and a similar target for major transit station areas and priority transit corridors.

Transit Supportive Density - The Ministry of Transportation's (MTO) Transit Supportive Guidelines recommend the following minimum densities within 400-800 m of a transit route:

- 22 units/ha (50 residents/jobs/ha) - basic bus transit;
- 37 units/ha (80 residents/jobs/ha) – frequent transit service; and,
- 45 units/ha (100 residents/jobs/ha) - very frequent bus service (with potential for light rail transit, or bus rapid transit)

Active Transportation and Health – Studies have shown a health benefit associated with increased residential densities (i.e. due to the ability of residents to rely more on active transportation, such as walking, biking and transit). **One such study** found that achieving densities of 18-20 units per hectare had a benefit to body mass index and obesity (i.e. which has been shown to correlate with prevalence of certain cancers and cardiovascular disease), with densities of approximately 30 units per hectare having an even more pronounced benefit.

To put this into perspective, 30 units per hectare is often considered to be the lower end of density for the various housing forms often referred to as 'missing middle' housing. These housing forms (e.g. back to back townhouses, low/mid rise apartments etc.) can often provide many of the same benefits as high-density/high-rise urban housing forms, while still remaining compatible with/maintaining the low rise residential character (e.g. building heights, ground-related units, landscaping, individual parking) of many existing residential communities and neighbourhoods and providing more ground oriented housing options, which many still prefer.

Supporting Complete Communities - One of the key goals typically expressed in the policies and research with respect to complete communities is that all essential facilities and services for daily living be easily accessible by walking, or potentially bicycle or transit use (i.e. within 15 minutes). In practice this means that such facilities and services should generally be located within a 1.25 km radius or 5 square kilometres (e.g. roughly the area of the Village of Norwich). The population density needed to sustain social, physical and environmental infrastructure within this area is typically cited as being approximately 50 people per gross developable hectare, which is consistent the Provincial Growth Plan targets discussed above.

Quality of Life – Residential density doesn't measure quality of life in a community and perceptions of density can vary greatly from place to place. Changing people's perceptions and acceptance of density can take time, particularly in communities or neighbourhoods that have historically been comprised predominantly/exclusively of low density housing forms (e.g. single detached, semi-detached and/or townhouse dwellings).

Some of the more qualitative considerations that can affect residents' perceptions of density include matters such as the existing context (i.e., a community/neighbourhood that is already typified by higher density housing forms versus those that are not), building type/height, building design, and how well new higher density development is integrated with other uses and amenities.

Dense communities can be attractive and highly desirable areas to live. It is not necessarily the unit density itself that results in adverse perceptions and living conditions, but rather the lack of appropriate consideration for building and urban design and availability of supportive infrastructure and amenities – such as transit, walking routes, parks and open space, and a variety of goods and services within the immediate area. Overcrowding within the units themselves (i.e. because of lack of availability of appropriate units and low affordability), often accounts for the worst perceptions of density and living conditions.

For increased density to be well accepted it is essential that the various qualitative factors noted above are appropriately considered and addressed. This would generally be accomplished through comprehensive long term planning for land use (e.g. Official Plan policies, secondary planning and other measures), infrastructure and public service facilities (e.g. master planning for parks/trails, transportation facilities, libraries, schools etc.) and other day to day goods and services, to ensure that all the components of a complete community and high quality of life are being appropriately considered and planned for.

Building Height – All three Large Urban Areas (i.e. Woodstock, Tillsonburg and Ingersoll) have Council approved Design Guidelines for their Central Areas, which contain direction on various aspects of site and building design, including building height. As previously discussed, there are various low-rise and mid-rise building forms that can greatly increase existing residential densities, while still maintaining and/or being compatible with the character of existing lower rise areas. That said, there are also various communities and/or areas of communities in Oxford that have existing high-rise buildings and/or that may otherwise be suitable for new higher-rise residential development in certain locations.

The existing Central Area Design Studies for the respective Urban Centres identify various opportunities for context sensitive intensification in the Central Areas and set out recommended minimum and maximum building heights based on the current character of the Central Areas, which have been implemented to varying degrees. These area/urban design type studies establish various recommendations and requirements for a particular study area, based on a detailed review of the existing built form/character, lotting fabric etc., to help ensure new higher density and/or higher rise development can be sensitively integrated into that area and not negatively impact adjacent development (e.g. appropriate transitions to lower rise development and minimize shadowing). In the Oxford context, these studies typically conclude that to accommodate a building that transitions to adjacent lower rise development and has viable floor area would require a minimum lot depth of approximately 35 m for buildings 5-6 storeys in height and 50 m for buildings 7-8 storeys in height.

Although it appears that most of the recommendations contained in the above noted studies are still relevant and appropriate, some aspects may still benefit from further review/update. Further, it would likely be necessary to consider undertaking similar area/urban design type studies for other areas of the County (e.g. the core areas of serviced villages and other key intensification areas) to provide similar context specific direction with respect to opportunity sites for further intensification and how increased height and/or density can be appropriately integrated into those areas.

c) Proposed Draft Work Plan

The overall residential density, residential designation-specific densities and transit supportive density requirements currently set out in the Official Plan for the City of Woodstock appear to be generally in keeping with the densities considered to be necessary to support 'complete communities' and support regular bus transit service.

As such, Planning staff are recommending that similar density and unit type mix requirements and policies be considered for implementation in the other Large Urban Centres and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the rural Serviced Villages as a short term, interim implementation measure. This would serve to ensure new development throughout the County is achieving reasonable minimum densities while further review/study and consultation is being undertaken to consider how best to implement additional area specific density and intensification policies and measures and, ultimately, to comprehensively update the County's growth management policies (i.e., through a new Official Plan).

To provide further direction in this regard, Planning staff have prepared an initial draft work plan to frame out the proposed approach for formal consideration of the various policies and other measures that could potentially be implemented to support and enable increased density in the County. As proposed, this work plan would see Planning staff immediately begin consulting with the area municipalities on, and working toward, the implementation of the various shorter term actions (i.e. as identified in Phase 1). At the same time, staff would initiate preliminary discussions with the Area Municipalities on selected longer term actions (i.e. as identified in Phases 2-4), including potential study requirements, local implementation considerations, required process, staffing and budget etc. It is expected that this draft work plan, particularly the later phases, will continue to evolve over time as consultation with the Area Municipalities and further review and background work progresses.

The following proposed draft work plan provides a summary of what is intended to be undertaken as part of each implementation phase, together with an initial indication of anticipated timing and associated staffing and/or budget considerations, where applicable.

i) Phase 1 – Shorter Term Measures (Interim updates to OP policies and zoning)

This phase is currently proposed to include the following:

a) Continuing with various 'in-progress' density related initiatives, as follows:

- Maintaining up to date building and land supply information (including identification of potential underutilized lots that may have potential for intensification) and monitoring the density of all new residential development being approved in the County (on-going).
 - Monitoring the availability of servicing capacity to continue to accommodate planned growth (on-going).
 - Requiring the consideration and identification of appropriate residential density targets and unit mix requirements as part of all municipally initiated secondary planning studies, particularly those undertaken in support of proposed settlement expansions (on-going).
 - Official Plan amendments and zoning amendments to permit ARUs in Urban Centres (in progress).
 - Monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of ARU policies and zoning provisions in Rural Townships (anticipated update report to Townships in early 2024).
 - Initiating updates to the County's growth forecasts and land supply analysis, including considerations of opportunities to accommodate growth through intensification (late 2023).
- b) Initiating an OPA to formally consider interim updates to various Official Plan policies pertaining to density and unit type mix including, but not necessarily limited, to the following:
- *Woodstock:*
 - No significant changes to the current overall residential density and unit type mix requirements for new development appear to be immediately required, as the current policies are generally in keeping with Provincial targets. That said, some additional flexibility to allow the unit type mix targets to be adjusted as necessary to reflect current housing type forecasts/housing need studies may be considered.
 - Upcoming updates to the County's growth forecasts and land needs analysis and/or other studies/reviews (i.e. Central Area height/density review, etc.) could potentially identify the need for additional policy amendments.
 - *Ingersoll and Tillsonburg:*
 - Updates to the minimum and maximum density ranges for the various residential density designations (i.e. low, medium and high) to be generally consistent with those in the Woodstock policies.
 - Introduce new requirements for minimum overall density and unit type mix similar to those in the City of Woodstock, including consideration of potential flexibility to allow such unit type mix targets to be adjusted as necessary to reflect current housing type forecasts/housing need studies.
 - *Serviced Villages*
 - Increasing the minimum density for Low Density Residential (e.g. from 15 units/ha to 22 units/ha).
 - Increasing the minimum density for the Medium Density Residential (e.g. from 23 units/ha to 31).
 - Inclusion of minimum required overall density and unit type mix for new residential development.
 - Initial consideration of any potential interim updates to the maximum height/density policies to provide some additional flexibility for consideration of higher densities/height in strategic locations, subject to appropriate locational development

review criteria. However, any substantial changes to the height/density provisions should be comprehensively considered as part of Phases 2 and 3 of the workplan.

- c) Zoning Review/Updates - Review existing low density zone provisions (e.g. R1 and R2) in the Large Urban Centres and Serviced Villages to identify opportunities to permit additional unit types on a more 'as of right' basis (i.e. duplexes, semis and street townhouses), particularly in newly developing residential areas. Further, ensure the associated zoning provisions (e.g. lot sizes, lot coverage, setbacks etc.) are appropriate for achieving the desired density and housing forms.

There may also potentially be some opportunity to review and/or streamline the permitted uses and provisions in other zones as part of this first phase, if deemed appropriate based on timing and available staffing resources.

Timing: Immediate initiation, with proposed completion by mid 2024

Resource Needs:

Staffing - To be undertaken by CPO staff, with the expectation of additional staffing resources, as generally identified in Report No. CP 2023-250 being added in 2024.

Budget – Beyond the staffing noted above, no additional budget impacts are anticipated.

ii) Phase 2 – Short to Medium Term (Identifying potential for area specific density targets)

This phase is currently expected to involve Planning staff undertaking a preliminary review of data and land use planning context for each of the County's fully serviced settlements, followed by consultation with each of the Area Municipalities to discuss the potential for establishing updated policies and tools and measures to require/facilitate increased density, height and/or intensification for specific areas in each community (i.e. Central Areas, Village Cores, and potentially other specific areas).

The intent of this preliminary review/discussion would be to identify the settlements and areas where there is likely to be sufficient potential for intensification/increased density over the next few years (i.e. based on a preliminary review of existing land uses, lot fabric, built form, availability of services/amenities, environmental constraints, servicing capacity etc.) to warrant undertaking an area specific review/study and policy development in advance of the development of a new Official Plan.

Where there is determined to be such potential, the next step would be to identify the nature and extent of the review/study (e.g. detailed area or urban design study and/or secondary planning process) that would be required to determine appropriate densities, height, unit types and/or other development criteria and requirements for that a target area (such studies are discussed further under Phase 3). This would typically involve Planning staff working closely with each area municipality to identify the proposed study/review area and scope and then develop terms of reference and project timeline together with identifying any County and Area Municipal staffing and other resources (i.e., study budget) that are expected to be required.

It may be determined that the level of review required would exceed the scope of an area study or secondary plan. In those cases, the establishment of area specific density targets and policies would be better left for consideration as part of the comprehensive background studies and consultation process typically undertaken to support the development of a new Official Plan (as discussed under Phase 4).

As previously noted, the City of Woodstock and Township of Zorra have expressed their specific interest in initiating such area specific studies/reviews for certain areas of their communities. As such, there have been some preliminary discussions with respect to the potential study area and scope and Planning staff will be following up shortly to offer assistance with the development of draft terms of reference and identifying associated staffing and/or project funding requirements (i.e. to inform 2024 budget deliberations).

Timing:

Immediate initiation, with consultation running into mid 2024

Resource Needs:

Staffing - To be undertaken by Community Planning staff, with the expectation of additional staffing resources as generally identified in Report No. [CP 2023-250](#) being added in 2024.

Budget – In addition to the staffing considerations noted above, there will likely be a need for the Area Municipalities (and potentially County) to begin considering budgeting for the costs of undertaking area specific studies/reviews identified through this phase. The need for and extent of external consulting expertise required for such studies and estimated costs will be determined through the area municipal consultation process identified in this phase and will be largely dependent on the study area and its scope and complexity. Further discussion on potential budget is provided under Phase 3.

iii) Phase 3 – Medium Term (Undertaking Various Studies/Reviews)

This phase of the workplan involves establishing project funding for and initiating any area specific studies/reviews identified through the review and discussions in Phase 2. At this point, planning staff anticipate that some form of study/review will be required to comprehensively consider opportunities to increase residential density in the following areas and have provided some initial thoughts on potential approach and matters that could be considered in that regard.

Review/Update Existing Central Area Design Studies

Staff have reviewed the Design Studies for the respective Urban Centres and are of the opinion that the although the recommendations remain largely relevant and appropriate, they would benefit from review, and potentially updates, to reflect recent development, changes to property use/ownership and new priorities, such as a desire for increased density and/or building heights.

These studies identified underutilized or vacant sites for potential redevelopment, sometimes referred to as 'soft sites'. Policies to provide criteria for determining soft sites should be developed and included in the Official Plan to provide the basis for a fulsome identification of 'soft sites' and would require consultation with AMs and property owners, amendments to local zoning by-laws

(or development of a Community Planning Permit System or CPPS), exploring options for incentives, municipal investment and land assembly, as appropriate.

Pre-zoning areas for specific uses, reduced parking requirements, and/or greater building height have been suggested as potential options to promote residential intensification, and Planning staff see merit in this approach when there is a strong understanding of what form of development would be appropriate. However, permitting uses and building forms as of right, may have unintended consequences or result in even more variances if the zoning provisions are not appropriate for the permitted uses. Further, the scope of site plan control has recently been limited for residential development to only permit site plan approval for developments of more than 10 units and this may trigger a desire for further detail to be contained in the zoning provisions or the use of alternatives to traditional zoning.

Alternatives to traditional zoning are form-based codes and development permit systems (known as a **Community Planning Permit System** or CPPS in Ontario). Both options require detailed analysis of the existing built form of the community and the development of a comprehensive vision and guidelines for future development, with the objective of reducing processing time, cost, and uncertainties, such as public process and potential for appeals to the OLT.

Like a traditional zoning by-law, the CPPS by-law would contain a list of permitted uses and development standards, such as height and density specifications (for example, how tall a building can be or how many units it can have). It could also contain other elements not found in a traditional zoning by-law, such as land uses that are allowed subject to certain conditions, and classes of development or uses of land exempt from requiring a permit, such as garages, pools, and sheds.

Use of a CPPS across the County and/or individual AMs would require significant staff resources and time to develop and implement, whereas the processing time and application fees in Oxford have not generally been identified as an impediment to development. However, the potential to use a CPPS for targeted 'intensification' area(s) in the County may at least merit preliminary consideration to determine if there would be sufficient benefit to further pursue in the Oxford context. CPPSs are not common in Ontario (the authority came into effect in 2016), but are becoming increasingly more common, particularly as Bill 23 introduced a requirement that the Province may require a municipality to use a CPPS in specific areas, such as around major transit stations. Some examples of municipalities that have a CPPS include the City of Brampton (downtown); Township of Lake of Bays (waterfront/shoreline); Town of Huntsville; Town of Gananoque; and Town of Carlton Place. Other municipalities, such as the Town of Innisfil and Town of Saugeen Shores, are studying the feasibility of implementing CPPS.

Identification of Soft Sites and Intensification Policies for Rural Settlements:

Based largely on the availability of existing and future municipal water and wastewater servicing capacity in the Serviced Villages, soft sites and intensification opportunities/strategies and measures could be identified for the Rural Settlements using some of the same considerations as provided above regarding the Large Urban Centres.

The Township of Zorra has expressed interest in this type of study for the Village of Thamesford and Terms of Reference will be developed in the short term to inform the Township's 2024 budget process and could be used as a template for other serviced settlements in the County.

Timing:

Terms of Reference and budget estimates are generally anticipated to be developed by mid-2024 (this may need to be expedited for the proposed Woodstock and Zorra area studies). Once the terms of reference and budgets for such studies/reviews have been developed and approved, the County/Area Municipalities will be in a position to begin these studies (i.e. beginning early to mid 2024 and potentially extending into 2025).

Resource Needs:

Staffing - To be undertaken by CPO staff, with the expectation of additional staffing resources as generally identified in Report No. CP 2023-250 being added in 2024. Will also require consulting services and assistance and involvement from key Area Municipal staff.

Budget – In addition to staffing considerations noted above, adequate budget (to be identified as part of Phase 2) will need to be established to cover the cost of undertaking these various studies/reviews. Based on recent experience, the cost of such area studies can vary considerably based on factors such as the study area, scope, complexity and consultation program, but generally start around \$50,000 (i.e. a scoped secondary plan/intensification study with limited consideration of servicing and urban design) and go up from there. Such area specific studies have historically been budgeted for by each Area Municipality. However, County staff may look at the potential for cost sharing in certain cases (depending on the study area, nature and scope).

iv) Phase 4 (Development of New Official Plan)

In addition to updates to the plans and guidelines for the Central Areas of the Urban Centres, there are various other strategic locations in the Large Urban Centres that have significant potential for intensification. In many communities, the integration of residential/mixed uses into existing residential or commercial areas and associated density targets and policies are based on a nodes/centres and corridors structure. Developing such a nodes and corridors structure for the Urban Centres would require a comprehensive background study and would likely need to be supported by an updated Commercial Policy Review and employment areas strategy to ensure that areas that are identified for mixed-use, industrial, commercial, and/or institutional land uses are appropriate. Further there are policy changes proposed in the draft Provincial Planning Statement which change the meaning of employment lands and are anticipated to require review and redesignation of commercial and/or industrial lands in the County and policy amendment to permit mixed-use development on certain commercial lands.

Timing: the need for and scope of such background studies and associated timing will be coordinated and identified through the development of the workplan for the New Official Plan, which is intended to commence in the later part of 2024 once the final version of the updated Provincial Policy Statement has been released (currently expected in early 2024).

Resource Needs: Specific staffing and other resources needs (i.e. budget for supporting studies etc.) will largely be determined through the development of the workplan for the new Official Plan. However, it is currently anticipated that the additional planning staff resources identified in Report No. [CP 2023-250](#) will greatly assist in moving this project forward. Further, given that this project has been anticipated for some time, some funding is presently being collected (i.e. in the Development Charges and Official Plan Review reserves) to help off-set the costs of this project.

Conclusions

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council's direction to proceed with Planning staff's proposed workplan in order for the County and Area Municipalities to begin formal consideration of various measures (as generally outlined Report No. [CP 2022-397](#) and subsequent Council information session) that could potentially support and enable increased density in the County, including an indication of anticipated timing and resource needs.

SIGNATURES

Report Author:

Original Signed By _____
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