

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Application for Official Plan Amendment OP 21-14-5 – Ronald Wilson

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Community Planning

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Oxford County Council approve Application No. OP 21-14-5, submitted by GSP Group., for lands described as North ½ Lot 20, Concession 1 (North Dorchester), Parts 1-3, RP 41R-1677, municipally known as 682776 Road 68, to expand the Village of Thamesford by including an additional area comprising approximately 4.4 ha (10.87 ac), and to redesignate the entirety of the subject lands from Agricultural Reserve and ‘Special Policy Area Requiring Secondary Planning’ to ‘Low Density Residential’ and ‘Medium Density Residential’.
2. And further, that Council approve the attached Amendment No. 321 to the County of Oxford Official Plan;
3. And further, that the necessary by-law to approve Amendment No. 321 be raised.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Official Plan Amendment proposes to designate additional lands within the Village of Thamesford identified as a ‘Special Policy Area Requiring Secondary Planning’ for residential use and to expand the current Village boundary for similar purposes. Specifically, the lands are proposed to be designated ‘Low Density Residential’ and ‘Medium Density Residential’ to facilitate a range of housing types in Thamesford.
- The proposal is generally consistent with the policies of the Provincial Policy Statement and supports the strategic initiatives and objectives of the Official Plan with respect to low and medium density housing within serviced villages and can be supported from a planning perspective.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

This application will be implemented in accordance with the relevant objectives, strategic initiatives and policies contained in the Official Plan.

Financial Impact

Approval of this application will have no financial impacts beyond what has been approved in the current year's budget.

Communications




Notice of complete application and notice of public meeting regarding this proposal was provided to surrounding property owners in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act on November 2, 2021 and March 20, 2024, respectively. An additional Notice of Public Meeting was provided on June 5, 2024. As of the date of the writing of this report, no comments have been received.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council's vision of "Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future." These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendations in this report supports the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
<p>Goal 1.1 – 100% Housed</p> <p>Goal 1.2 – Sustainable infrastructure and development</p> <p>Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being</p>		

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

DISCUSSION

Background

Owner: Ronald Wilson
682776 Road 68
Thamesford, ON, N0M 2M0

Agent: GSP Group c/o Michael Serra & Brandon Flewelling
201-72 Victoria Street South
Kitchener, ON, N2G 4Y9

Location:

The subject lands are described as North ½ Lot 20, Concession 1 (North Dorchester), Parts 1-3, RP 41R-1677. The lands are located on the southwest corner of Road 68 (Hwy 2) and 15th Line (Banner Road), and are municipally known as 682776 Road 68, Township of Zorra.

County of Oxford Official Plan:

Schedule 'C-3'	Serviced Village
Schedule 'Z-1'	Settlement and Agricultural Reserve
Schedule 'Z-2'	'Low Density Residential' and 'Special Provision Policy Area Requiring Secondary Planning (See Sec. 4.2.2.4)'

Township of Zorra Zoning By-law 35-99:

Existing Zoning: 'Development Zone (D)'

Proposal:

The County of Oxford and the Township of Zorra have received an application for Official Plan Amendment (OPA) to redesignate lands identified as a 'Special Provision Policy Area Requiring Secondary Planning' (SPA) for residential use. The application also proposes to include an additional developable area comprising approximately 4.4 ha (10.87 ac) that is outside of the limit of the Village of Thamesford, and to redesignate the entirety of the subject lands from Agricultural Reserve and SPA to 'Low Density Residential' (LDR) and 'Medium Density Residential' (MDR).

For Council's information, the application for OPA, as submitted by the applicant, includes all of the lands identified as Area A and Area B on the attached plates. Through review and discussion with the applicant's consulting team, it has been agreed that there is no legitimate basis for considering Area B, west of the Humphrey Drain for residential development at this time and as such, Area B will not be discussed further in this report in the context of expanding the settlement boundary of Thamesford, or for residential development in the near term.

While the majority of the lands in Area A are within the settlement boundary, the applicant is proposing to 'round out' the potential extent of development to include an additional 4.4 ha (10.87 ac) that are not currently identified as being within Thamesford's designated settlement boundary. The area of the lands identified by the applicant appears to exclude the extent of the Conservation Authority regulation limit related to the Humphrey Drain, which forms the westerly extent of the boundary expansion. The said drain traverses the lands from north to south and is illustrated on the various plates attached to this report. The presence of the Humphrey Drain and its associated floodplain/regulation limits, generally, form the westerly extent of the area proposed to be redesignated.

The subject property is currently vacant and is in agricultural production (cash cropping). A portion of the lands approximately one lot deep and extending the length of the site immediately adjacent to the 15th Line (Banner Road) are currently designated 'Low Density Residential', as generally shown on Plate 5.

The whole of the lands identified as Area A comprise an area of approximately 21.93 ha (54.17 ac) while Area B, west of the Humphrey Drain is approximately 14.1 ha (34.84 ac). Surrounding land uses consist mainly of low density residential lands to the east and south (Thames Springs Development), and agricultural lands to the north and west.

In support of the proposed OPA, the applicant has submitted a conceptual subdivision plan together with several preliminary studies/reports related to stormwater management, water and wastewater servicing, traffic, and noise/vibration and air quality associated with existing licensed sand and gravel pits located to the west and northwest of the subject lands.

Plate 1, Location Map & Zoning, identifies the location of the subject lands, as well as the zoning of the lands within the surrounding area.

Plate 2, Aerial Map (2020), provides an aerial image of the subject lands and the surrounding area.

Plate 3, Proposed Densities, shows the overall net densities in the 'LDR' and 'MDR' designations, as well as an overall density, as provided by the applicant.

Plate 4, Elevation Contours, shows the elevations on the subject lands as provided by the UTRCA.

Plate 5, Current Boundary vs. Proposed Boundary, shows the current settlement boundary (Thamesford) limit, as well as the proposed boundary.

Plate 6, 'Area A' & 'Area B', shows the two areas subject to the application, as provided by the applicant.

Plate 7, Approximate Proposed Designations, shows the approximate extent of the residential designations as proposed by the applicant.

Comments

2020 Provincial Policy Statement

Section 1.1.1 of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) states that healthy, livable and safe communities are sustained by promoting efficient development and land use patterns which sustain the financial well-being of the Province and municipalities over the long term, accommodating an appropriate affordable and market-based range and mix of residential types (including single-detached, additional residential units, multi-unit housing, affordable housing and housing for older persons), employment, institutional, recreation, park and open space, and other uses to meet long-term needs.

Section 1.1.2 of the PPS directs that sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of up to 25 years, informed by provincial guidelines.

The PPS directs that settlements are defined to mean urban areas and rural settlement areas within municipalities that are built-up areas where development is concentrated, and which have a mix of land uses and which have been designated in an Official Plan for development over the long-term. Settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development and land use patterns within settlement areas shall be based on densities and a mix of land uses which, among other matters, efficiently use land and resources and are appropriate for and efficiently use infrastructure and public service facilities which are planned or available and avoid the need for unjustified and/or uneconomical expansion.

Land use patterns within settlement areas shall also be based on a range of uses and opportunities for intensification and redevelopment in accordance with the criteria in policy 1.1.3.3, where this can be accommodated. Appropriate development standards should be promoted which facilitate intensification, redevelopment and compact form, while avoiding or mitigating risks to public health and safety.

Planning authorities are required to establish and implement minimum targets for intensification and redevelopment within built-up areas, based on local conditions, however where provincial targets are established through a provincial plan, the provincial targets shall represent the minimum target for the affected area.

Section 1.1.3.8 indicates that a planning authority may identify a settlement area or allow the expansion of a settlement area boundary only at the time of comprehensive review and only where it has been demonstrated that sufficient opportunities to accommodate growth and to satisfy market demand are not available through intensification, redevelopment and designated growth areas to accommodate the projected needs over the identified planning horizon; that infrastructure and public service facilities which are planned or available are suitable for the development over the long term; that there are no reasonable alternatives which avoid prime agricultural areas; there are no reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in prime agricultural areas; and

that the impacts from new or expanding settlement areas on agricultural operations which are adjacent or close to the settlement area are mitigated to the extent feasible.

In undertaking a comprehensive review, the level of detail of the assessment should correspond with the complexity and scale of the settlement boundary expansion or development proposal. A comprehensive review for the purpose of this section shall be:

- a) Based on a review of population projections and employment projections and allocations by upper-tier municipalities and provincial plans, where applicable, which consider alternative directions for growth or development and determines how best to accommodate the development while protecting the provincial interest;
- b) Utilizes opportunities to accommodate projected growth or development through intensification and redevelopment and considers physical constraints to accommodate the proposed development within existing settlement boundaries;
- c) Is integrated with planning for infrastructure and public service facilities and considers financial viability over the life cycle of these assets, which may be demonstrated through asset management planning;
- d) Confirms sufficient water quality, quantity and assimilative capacity of receiving water are available to accommodate the proposed development;
- e) Confirms sewage and water services can be provided in accordance with Section 1.6.6; and,
- f) Considers cross-jurisdictional issues.

Section 1.6 of the PPS addresses infrastructure and public service facilities and states that infrastructure and public service facilities shall be provided in an efficient manner that prepares for the impacts of a changing climate while accommodating projected needs. Further, Section 1.6.6.1a) directs that planning for water and sewage services shall accommodate forecasted growth in a manner that promotes the efficient use and optimization of existing municipal sewage and water services.

Municipal sewage services and municipal water services are the preferred form of servicing for settlement areas to support protection of the environment and minimize potential risks to human health and safety. Within settlement areas with existing municipal services, intensification and redevelopment shall be promoted wherever feasible to optimize the use of the services.

Planning for stormwater management shall;

- a) Be integrated with planning for sewage and water services and ensure that systems are optimized, feasible and financially viable over the long-term;
- b) Minimize or, where possible, prevent increase in contaminant loads;
- c) Minimize erosion and changes in water balance and prepare for the impacts of a changing climate through the effective management of stormwater;
- d) Mitigate risk to human health, safety, property and the environment;
- e) Maximize the extent of function of vegetative and pervious surfaces; and
- f) Promote stormwater management practices, including stormwater attenuation and re-use, water conservation and efficiency and low impact development.

Section 2.3 of the PPS states that prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture, and that permitted uses in prime agricultural areas include agricultural uses, agricultural-related uses and on-farm diversified uses. Land may only be removed from prime agricultural areas for a limited range of uses, including expansion of a settlement area in accordance with the policies contained in Section 1.1.3.8.

Section 2.4 of the PPS sets out policies directing that minerals and petroleum resources shall be protected for long-term use. Section 2.5 specifically addresses mineral aggregates and directs that such resources shall be protected for long-term use, and where provincial information is available, deposits of mineral aggregate resources shall be identified.

Section 2.5.2.4 directs that mineral aggregate resources shall be protected from development and activities that would preclude or hinder their expansion or continued use, or which would be incompatible for reasons of public health, public safety or environmental impact.

In known deposits of mineral aggregate resources and on lands adjacent to them, development and activities that would preclude or hinder the establishment of new operations or access to resources shall only be permitted if resource use would not be feasible; the proposed land use or development serves a greater long-term public interest; and issues of public health, public safety and environmental impact are addressed.

Section 1.2.6 of the PPS – Land Use Compatibility, directs that major facilities (resource extraction activities are included in the definition of ‘major facilities’ as contained in the PPS) and sensitive land uses shall be planned to avoid, or if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate any potential adverse effects from odour, noise and other contaminants, minimize risk to public health and safety, and to ensure the long-term operational and economic viability of major facilities in accordance with provincial guidelines, standards and procedures.

Where avoidance is not possible, planning authorities shall protect the long-term viability of existing or planned uses that are vulnerable to encroachment by ensuring that the planning and development of proposed adjacent sensitive land uses are only permitted if it is demonstrated that there is an identified need for the use; alternative locations for the proposed use have been evaluated and there are no reasonable alternative locations; adverse effects to the proposed sensitive land use are minimized and mitigated; and potential impacts to major facility uses are minimized and mitigated.

Official Plan

The subject lands are primarily located within the Village of Thamesford, which is identified as a ‘Serviced Village’ according to Schedule ‘C-3’, County of Oxford Settlement Strategy Plan, as contained in the Official Plan. The balance of the lands, approximately 4.4 ha (10.87 ac) of the 32 ha (93 ac), are designated as ‘Agricultural Reserve’ according to Schedule “Z-1”, Village of Thamesford Land Use Plan.

Serviced Villages are settlements characterized by a broad range of uses and activities which have been developed or are proposed for development on centralized water and wastewater facilities and new development in the Serviced Village designation shall generally be fully serviced by both water and wastewater facilities.

According to Section 2.1.1 (Growth Management), in order to manage growth, it is a strategic initiative of the Official Plan to ensure designated growth settlements are developed with efficient land use patterns and densities to minimize land consumption, to control infrastructure costs, and to limit growth pressure in rural areas. Further, Section 4.1 (Strategic Approach) states that the County shall aim to ensure existing designated land supplies and infrastructure will be efficiently utilized, including achievement of intensification targets, prior to designating new areas for growth.

Section 6.2.1 (Objectives for Rural Settlement Residential Designations) states that compact urban form and residential infilling, as well as a range of housing types, shall be promoted in all rural settlement areas where appropriate given the level of infrastructure available.

Further, the Official Plan (Section 6.2.2) directs that Low Density Residential areas in serviced villages are those lands that are primarily developed or planned for a variety of low-rise, low density housing forms consisting of single detached, semi-detached, duplexes, converted dwellings, and street fronting townhouses.

The Official Plan establishes densities for Low Density Residential areas with a maximum net residential density of 22 units per hectare (9 units per acre), and a minimum net residential density of 15 units per hectare (6 units per acre).

Further, Section 6.2.3 of the Official Plan directs that Medium Density Residential areas in serviced villages are those lands that are primarily developed or planned for low profile multiple unit development that exceed densities established for Low Density Areas. Residential uses within the Medium Density Residential areas include all forms of townhouse development, cluster houses, converted dwellings and low-rise apartment buildings.

The maximum net residential density within Medium Density Residential designations is 50 units per hectare (20 units per acre), and the minimum net residential density is 22 units per hectare (9 units per acre).

Net residential density is defined as the number of housing units per hectare of residentially designated lands, exclusive of lands required for open space, environmentally sensitive areas, and transportation and servicing infrastructure, including stormwater management.

The Official Plan establishes that further Medium Density designations [not currently identified on the land use schedules] will generally abut major roads, County Roads or Provincial Highways or will be situated such that traffic movements from the site do not flow through adjoining Low Density Residential Areas, and further, that sites will be in close proximity to community serving facilities such as schools, shopping facilities and recreational and open space areas which serve as community activity nodes.

In addition to the locational policies outlined in this section, when considering proposals to designate lands for medium density residential development, the Area Council and County Council will be guided by the following:

- the proposal will be fully serviced by centralized water supply and wastewater treatment facilities and storm sewers, power and gas distribution facilities will be available to accommodate the proposed development;

- stormwater run-off from the proposal will be adequately controlled in accordance with the interim stormwater management policies of Section 3.2.7.2.1 and will not negatively affect adjacent properties;
- the size, configuration and topography of the site is such that there is sufficient flexibility in site design to mitigate adverse impacts on the amenities and character of any adjacent Low Density Residential areas through adequate buffering and screening;
- the location of vehicular access points and the likely impacts of traffic generated by the proposal on adjacent streets has been assessed and is acceptable;
- adequate off-street parking and outdoor amenity areas can be provided;
- the availability of and proximity to existing or proposed services and amenities such as schools, leisure facilities and parks to serve the new development;
- the effect of the proposed development on environmental resources or the effect of environmental constraints on the proposed development will be addressed and mitigated as outlined in Section 3.2.

In recognition of the importance of efficient land use and development patterns, the Official Plan directs in Section 2.1.1 that County Council shall proactively plan, co-ordinate and stage growth and the provision of public service facilities and infrastructure to sustain financial well-being over the long-term.

Growth and development will be focused in settlements and their vitality and regeneration will be promoted. It is the intent of the Official Plan to ensure a sufficient supply of land will be provided within settlements to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of residential and non-residential growth, in accordance with the 20 year needs of the County and the Township, while accounting for opportunities to accommodate growth through intensification. For Council's information, the current policies of the Official Plan have not yet been updated to reflect the 25 year growth planning horizon recently introduced via the 2020 PPS (as opposed to the 20 year horizon noted above).

Settlements will be required to develop with land use patterns and a mix of uses and densities that efficiently use land and resources, are appropriate for, and efficiently use, existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities, support active transportation and existing or planned transit, are freight-supportive, minimize negative impacts to air quality and climate change and promote energy efficiency. Development and land use patterns that would prevent the efficient expansion of settlements in areas adjacent or in close proximity to settlements will be avoided.

The majority of the subject lands are within the designated settlement boundary of Thamesford and are identified as a 'Special Provision Policy Area Requiring Secondary Planning' in accordance with Section 4.2.2.4 of the Official Plan. The relevant policies of this section direct that the preparation of a secondary plan will include the identification of the settlement boundary based on forecasts for the planning period as well as other factors including natural heritage features and surrounding land uses and resources. Expansions to the settlement boundary shall also comply with the justification requirements set out in Section 4.2.2.4.4.

The secondary planning exercise will identify opportunities to accommodate growth through intensification and existing designated growth areas as a first priority. Further, matters related to phasing strategies, the efficient use of land, infrastructure and public services and achieving of intensification or density targets identified in the Official Plan will be addressed, together with the following:

- identification of the type, mixture, location and densities of future land uses, including phasing and/or Future Urban Growth Areas, where appropriate;
- identification of a major road pattern which will integrate future development and servicing with existing infrastructure;
- the capacity of public services, such as schools and parks, relative to expected growth and the need and location of any additional facilities; and
- the effect of the proposed development or site alteration on environmental resources as well as how such development may be affected by environmental constraints will be addressed in accordance with Section 3.2 of the Official Plan.

County Council, in consultation with the Area Municipality, may authorize a waiver or reduction in the scope and content of the secondary plan and/or servicing strategy requirements based on the nature and scope of the proposed development and the availability of information from previous investigations.

Section 4.2.2.4.4 of the Official Plan regarding expansions to Serviced Villages directs that such expansions must be considered in accordance with the review criteria contained in Section 3.1.7 (formerly Section 3.1.6, prior to the approval of OPA 269 in February 2024).

Section 3.1.7.1 of the OP provides policy direction for Settlement Area Expansions and directs that that settlement expansions shall only be considered through a comprehensive review and must be consistent with the Growth Management Policies contained in Chapter 4, including the requirement to undertake secondary planning and servicing strategies in accordance with Sections 4.2.2.4.1 and 4.2.2.6.1.

Compelling evidence shall be required to demonstrate whether a proposed settlement expansion is justified in accordance with the applicable policies of the Provincial Policy Statement and this Plan. This will include, but is not limited to, studies and information required to address the above noted comprehensive review, secondary planning and servicing strategy requirements and the following:

- as part of the comprehensive review for a settlement expansion, the preparation of an Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) shall be required and as detailed in Section 3.1.7.3; and,
- Proposals shall also comply with all other applicable policies of this Plan, including, but not limited to: Section 3.2, Environmental Resources Policies, Section 3.3, Cultural Resource Policies and Chapter 10, Implementation Measures.

The scope of the AIA noted above will be based on the proposed expansion and will generally characterize that the lands in question do not comprise specialty crop areas; that there are no reasonable alternatives which avoid prime agricultural areas, there are no reasonable alternatives on lands with lesser agricultural capability; MDS is satisfied; and impacts from the expanded settlement on nearby agricultural operations and prime agricultural lands are avoided or mitigated to the extent feasible.

The Official Plan recognizes that the County of Oxford contains significant reserves of mineral aggregate resources, including bedrock-derived crushed stone and naturally occurring sand and gravel.

The County recognizes that the extraction of mineral aggregate resources is, and will continue to be, an important industry in the economy of the County and the policies of the Official Plan will focus on protecting existing operations and mineral aggregate resources from incompatible uses while ensuring that extraction is carried out in a manner that minimizes negative community, economic and environmental impacts.

To this end, the Official Plan includes detailed policies regarding land use compatibility between mineral aggregate extraction and sensitive land uses which are premised on the establishment of priorities which balance the protection of natural resources (such as mineral aggregates) and other public interests, such as ensuring reasonable opportunities for settlement growth. It is a principle of the Official Plan that where aggregate resource extraction and settlement development have the potential to conflict with one another due to the proximity between these types of uses, issues of land use compatibility shall be considered and adequately addressed to minimize such potential conflicts. To this end, where new development is proposed in proximity to existing licensed extraction operations, the responsibility for mitigation will primarily be borne by the land developer through the municipal development review process.

Section 3.4.1.5.2 directs that consideration of applications to amend the Official Plan in accordance with the policies of Section 3.1.7 (formerly 3.1.6 prior to approval of OPA 269) within 500 m (1,640 ft) of an identified Sand and Gravel Resource Area must ensure that the opportunity to extract mineral resources from identified resource areas will not be precluded or hindered and that potential land use incompatibilities are minimized.

Regarding development in proximity to licensed aggregate operations, the policies of the Official Plan direct that where development within a settlement designation is proposed within 300 m (985 ft) of an approved licensed aggregate extraction operation, the primary responsibility for the mitigation of potential land use conflicts between the use and the aggregate operation will be that of the development proponent. When residential development or other sensitive land uses are proposed, a study undertaken by a qualified professional which addresses potential noise, vibration, dust and particulate impacts will be completed by the proponent and will determine appropriate attenuation/mitigation measures.

Notwithstanding the above, where a proposed residential development or other sensitive land use is situated within 300 m of an approved licensed aggregate operation but is further from existing approved sensitive development, the requirement for study may be scoped or waived.

Prior to scoping or waiving such study, the proponent must demonstrate that the measures proposed by earlier study would not be negated or offset by factors such as topography, possible multiple noise sources or other factors.

Deviation from the standard 300 m setback requirement noted above will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that acceptable attenuation can be achieved consistent with Provincial guidelines and where conditions of approval and other mechanisms are imposed which ensure that identified measures are incorporated into the development approval at the proponent's expense.

Zoning By-law

The subject lands are within both the 'Development Zone (D)' and the 'General Agricultural Zone (A2)' in the Township of Zorra Zoning By-law.

Approximately 17.53 ha (43.3 ac) of 'Area A' is zoned 'Development Zone (D)', which requires a lot area of 30 ha (74.1 ac) for non-residential uses, and identifies the area for residential uses shall be that which existed as of the date of the passing of the Zoning By-law. The 'D' zone permits a farm, a home occupation, and a single-detached dwelling existing at the date of passing of the Zoning By-law.

The balance of 'Area A', currently outside of the settlement boundary and approximately 4.4 ha (10.87 ac) in area, is zoned 'General Agricultural Zone (A2)'. The 'A2' zone permits a range of agricultural uses and requires a minimum lot area of 30 ha (74.1 ac), minimum frontage of 100 m (328.1 ft) and minimum setback of 26 m (85.3 ft) from the centreline of a county road for any non-agricultural buildings and structures.

At this time, no applications beyond the OPA have been submitted. It is reasonably expected that future submissions for draft plan of subdivision and zone change will propose to place the lands into a variety of residential zone classifications in line with the form and type of residential development (i.e. LDR and MDR) being implemented through the application for OPA. Until such time as future applications are received, and approvals granted, the subject lands will remain in their respective 'General Agricultural (A2) Zone' and 'Development Zone (D)', with provisions as noted above.

Agency Comments

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) each indicated that they have no concerns or comments related to the applications.

Oxford County Public Works has indicated they have no comment at this time, and comments would be received at the time of any future draft plan of subdivision application.

Oxford County Federation of Agriculture (OCFA) provided comment indicating that they do not support the redesignation of the subject agricultural lands into a residential designation.

CP Rail provided comment indicating that prior to development occurring on the subject lands, proximity guidelines will need to be considered.

Township of Zorra Public Works Department has indicated that direct frontages on 15th Line are discouraged, and any proposed draft plan of subdivision will require an alternative design from what is shown on the applicant's sketch in order to ensure the majority of vehicular traffic is being generated on an internal road network rather than on 15th Line / Banner Road.

Township of Zorra further provided initial engineering comments advising that as part of any draft plan of subdivision submission, a completed detailed design package including, at a minimum, functional servicing/stormwater management report, grading drawings, plan and profile drawings, erosion and sediment control drawings, storm sewer and sanitary sewer drawings and design sheets, stormwater management facility drawings, typical cross sections, miscellaneous notes and details drawings and watermain report confirming proposed diameter and adequate flows are provided. The Township's retained engineering consultant has indicated no objection to the proposed application or preliminary servicing approach but advises that a full review will be required at the time of draft plan submission.

Township of Zorra Chief Administrative Officer provided comments suggesting that there are concerns from a Township standpoint on going beyond the maximum permitted threshold of both the 'LDR' and 'MDR' designations. It is the opinion of the CAO that the overall density of the site should not exceed 50 units per hectare (20 units per acre), which represents the current maximum set out by the County's Official Plan and would still provide a significant increase in the general density of the Village of Thamesford as a whole.

The CAO noted that Thamesford will require a full range of development options and providing single detached dwellings will offer a healthy mix for the community. High-density options will be provided on the former Maple Leaf Foods with less than 3% of the total units allocated to single detached dwellings.

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority comments indicated that the proposed development would require the CA's written comment and any associated permits, for all future phases located within the UTRCA's Regulation Limit, as well as for Stormwater Management and other technical submissions that will be required. In addition, a floodplain model will be required prior to any development occurring at or below and elevation of 283 m geodetic.

Township of Zorra Council

Township of Zorra Council adopted a resolution supporting the proposed Official Plan amendment at the Township's regular meeting of June 19, 2024.

Planning Analysis

The application for Official Plan amendment (OPA) has been submitted to the County and Township to facilitate the redesignation the entirety of the subject lands from Special Provision Policy Area Requiring Secondary Planning and Agricultural Reserve to 'Low Density Residential' (LDR) and 'Medium Density Residential' (MDR).

Provincial Policy Statement

The proposed Official Plan Amendment (OPA) affects lands largely located within the settlement boundary of the Village of Thamesford and are intended to provide a mix of low and medium density housing forms (single detached, semi-detached, townhouses and apartments) on full municipal water and wastewater services to assist in meeting the needs of Township and County residents over the 20 to 25 year planning horizon.

Generally, the information provided in support of the proposed OPA is considered to be sufficient to support the designation of these lands for future residential purposes and can be considered consistent with the PPS as it relates to development within designated settlement areas.

County Public Works has indicated that there are no water/wastewater capacity constraints in Thamesford that would affect the development of these lands as generally proposed, and staff are of the opinion that the revised conceptual draft plan, together with the studies and reports provided in support of the proposed redesignation of the lands for residential purposes is sufficient for considering these lands for such purposes.

Regarding the area beyond the existing settlement boundary bordered by the Humphrey Drain to the west that is also proposed to be included in the settlement area, Planning staff are of the opinion that while these lands are not justified for residential development based on current growth projections and land needs in Zorra, there is merit to including these lands within the settlement boundary.

As noted, these lands comprise approximately 4.4 ha (10.9 acres) and are bordered to the west by the Humphrey Drain. The lands are of irregular shape and in accordance with the comments received from the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA), the owner of the lands will be required to undertake floodplain modelling associated with the drain prior to any development occurring on the lands at or below an elevation of 283 m (geodetic). The Humphrey Drain would appear to be a logical limit of development for the subject lands.

The lands are also within, or are located in immediate proximity to, the UTRCA's regulation limit. Staff are of the opinion that while the designation of the lands for residential purposes can be generally supported, the detailed work that will be required to address the concerns outlined by the UTRCA could result in only portions of these lands being deemed suitable for development.

Further, and in addition to the UTRCA's comments, there are other factors that could influence the subdivision design of the lands for residential purposes. While the applicant has submitted a number of studies and reports to address the development of the lands at a conceptual or "feasibility" level, it is noted that additional detailed studies will be required to be completed and reviewed with respect to noise, vibration and air quality related to the existing licensed sand and gravel pits to the west and northwest, as well as noise associated with vehicle traffic on Hwy 2.

The proposed additional lands are also generally considered appropriate in the context of the PPS as it relates to settlement expansion in Prime Agricultural Areas. The subject lands do not constitute a speciality crop area, would appear to be in compliance with the Minimum Distance Separation requirements related to existing livestock facilities in the area, and would not appear to have any negative impact on surrounding agricultural operations. In light of the existing settlement area boundary and the proximity of the Humphrey Drain, the lands proposed for expansion would appear to have limited use for agriculture and would offer more flexibility in designing the subdivision going forward.

In light of the foregoing, Planning staff are of the opinion that the designation of the subject lands for residential purposes is appropriate and generally consistent with the policies of the PPS.

Official Plan

Planning staff are of the opinion that the proposal to designate the subject lands for future residential use is appropriate and supports the strategic initiatives and objectives of the Official Plan.

Regarding the proposal to expand the boundary of the settlement to the west, as described previously in this report, staff are of the opinion that this expansion is appropriate in the context of the Official Plan for reasons similar to those explained in the PPS section, above.

Further, staff are of the opinion that the proposal generally addresses the policies of the Official Plan as they relate to growth management and secondary planning within Serviced Villages. However, while the proposed designation of the lands for low and medium density residential use is considered appropriate, the conceptual nature of the development plan, together with comments received from various agencies considered to have an interest in the proposal, is such that staff are of the opinion that the approval of the proposed OPA should include a number of 'performance standards' and additional work that will be required through the submission of formal plans for development in the future.

As has been noted, the proximity of two separate licensed aggregate operations to the west and northwest of the subject lands may influence the extent or design of the draft plan of subdivision going forward. The applicant has submitted studies related to noise, vibration and air quality that demonstrate the feasibility of residential development on the subject lands relative to the aggregate properties. However, it is the opinion of planning staff that further detailed work should be completed to reflect and determine the proposed design, number and location of residential units, and possible mitigation measures that can be incorporated to reduce negative impacts on future residents and the existing aggregate operations.

Noise and vibration studies will also be required to identify the mitigation measures required for residential development in proximity to Highway 2 that may be impacted by noise and vibration from existing and anticipated traffic.

Further, Township of Zorra staff (with input from the Township's consulting engineer), have indicated no objection to the proposed application or the preliminary servicing approach, but advises that a detailed design package, including those items detailed in the 'Agency Comments' section of this report, will be required at the time of draft plan submission. Notwithstanding the comments above regarding the potential subdivision design implications related to various factors (i.e. aggregates, UTRCA flood modelling), it would not appear likely that any such design issues would warrant additional traffic control measures.

Regarding the proposed designation of the subject lands for 'Low Density Residential' (LDR) and 'Medium Density Residential' (MDR) use, staff are generally of the opinion that these designations are appropriate in the context of development within a Serviced Village. The Official Plan directs that any lands that are proposed for MDR use that are not currently designated as such on the applicable land use schedules (Z-2, Land Use Plan for the Village of Thamesford, in this case) require an amendment to the Plan and that further designations will satisfy a number of locational and site-specific criteria.

The Official Plan currently contains a density range for LDR designations from 15 units per ha (6 units per acre) to 22 units per hectare (9 units per acre) while lands designated MDR accommodate density that exceeds the LDR limits to a maximum of 50 units per hectare (22 units per acre). The density proposed by the applicant via the revised conceptual draft plan significantly exceeds the densities currently set out in the Official Plan.

The proposed densities may be feasible on the lands, however, more detailed analysis will be required prior to development. To this end, staff are of the opinion that the proposed amendment to the Official Plan should maintain the current maximum densities for both LDR and MDR designations with policy direction that higher densities may be permitted subject to a number of criteria that would assist the Township and County in determining what level of residential density would be appropriate on the lands. Planning staff are of the opinion that this approach would address the concerns raised by Township staff, including the comments provided by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Such criteria would include consideration of servicing capacities (water, wastewater and stormwater), the availability of public services, (parks, community facilities) traffic impacts, land use compatibility, etc. The Official Plan amendment proposed by Planning staff to address this issue is intended to address these considerations via the subdivision and Zoning By-law amendment process.

Staff are generally satisfied that the area comprising 'Area A', if developed for LDR and MDR purposes, would have limited impacts on the abutting lower density development to the south and east. While the proposed development will increase the number of vehicle access points to 15th Line, the amount of traffic that will be generated has been assessed via a Traffic Impact Brief that has been reviewed by the Township and County is considered to be acceptable for the purpose of this application.

As has been noted previously, staff are of the opinion that the area comprising 'Area A' is a logical area for future residential development to occur. With the exception of the approximate 4.4 ha (10.87 ac) requested to be included which is currently outside of the settlement boundary, this area was envisioned as being part of the longer-term growth needs for the Village of Thamesford, the Township, and for the County as a whole.

Servicing

As noted previously, the preliminary functional servicing report submitted in support of the proposed Official Plan amendment addresses the servicing strategy for 'Area A'. Additional details surrounding servicing will be provided through subsequent application(s) for draft plan of subdivision, and staff are satisfied that based on comments provided from both the Township and County Public Works Departments, servicing 'Area A' would not appear to be an issue from a water/wastewater perspective based on the capacity available for the Village of Thamesford.

With respect to stormwater management, consideration appears to have been given for the location of the future stormwater facility, which is situated immediately adjacent to a neighbouring facility being utilized by the development to the immediate south (Thames Springs West).

Comments received from the Township indicate that the overall stormwater management strategy appears to be viable, with further submissions being required to finalize the design and function of the required stormwater management facility, its overall capacity and function.

Humphrey Drain / Flood Model Requirements

As identified previously in this report, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) has indicated that the floodplain affecting the subject lands requires additional review. Based on the input received from the UTRCA, it appears the accuracy of the floodplain mapping for the Humphrey Drain would require further investigation prior to allowing development in any areas below an elevation of 283 m geodetic.

Plate 4 provides an overview of the elevations of the subject lands. Any future submission for draft plan of subdivision will require the applicant to undertake floodplain modeling to the satisfaction of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority.

In light of the comments received on the preliminary functional servicing information from various agencies (i.e. Township of Zorra and County of Oxford Public Works Department), and subject to the inclusion of appropriate performance standard policies to ensure review and approval of technical details, Planning staff are satisfied that infrastructure and public facilities are, on a conceptual basis, available to justify the redesignation of 'Area A' for low and medium density residential use, with further detailed review to be provided at the time of future submissions for draft plan of subdivision and associated zone change applications. Detailed review requirements are included in the proposed Official Plan amendment.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Planning staff are of the opinion that an amendment to the Official Plan to include an additional area comprising approximately 4.4 ha (10.87 ac) that is outside of the limit of the Village of Thamesford into the settlement, and to redesignate the entirety of the subject lands from Agricultural Reserve to 'Low Density Residential' and 'Medium Density Residential' is consistent with the policies of the Provincial Policy Statement and is generally supported by the objectives and strategic initiatives of the Official Plan. As such, staff are satisfied that the application can be given favourable consideration.

SIGNATURES

Report Author:

Original Signed By _____
Spencer McDonald, MCIP, RPP
Development Planner

Departmental Approval:

Original Signed By _____
Eric Gilbert, MCIP, RPP
Manager of Development Planning

Original Signed By _____
Paul Michiels
Director of Community Planning

Approved for submission:

Original Signed By _____
Benjamin R. Addley
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - Plate 1, Location Map & Existing Zoning
- Attachment 2 - Plate 2, Aerial Map (2020)
- Attachment 3 - Plate 3, Proposed Densities
- Attachment 4 - Plate 4, Elevation Contours
- Attachment 5 - Plate 5, Current Boundary vs. Proposed Boundary
- Attachment 6 - Plate 6, 'Area A' and 'Area B'
- Attachment 7 - Plate 7, Proposed Designations
- Attachment 8 - Official Plan Amendment No. 321