



REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor R. Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Steve Burke, Senior Planner - Policy

DATE: April 20, 2010

REPORT NO.: PDS-2010-0043

RE: **Final Report** - Intensification Areas & Policies Official Plan Amendment
File No.: D08/IN Intensification Study

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PDS-2010-0043, dated April 20, 2010, regarding the final revised Intensification Areas & Policies Official Plan Amendment, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Town of Halton Hills Official Plan Amendment No. 9 - the Intensification Areas & Policies Official Plan Amendment, dated April 2010 (provided under separate cover), be adopted as a non-exempt local Official Plan Amendment;

AND FURTHER THAT Town of Halton Hills Official Plan Amendment No. 9 – the Intensification Areas & Policies Official Plan Amendment be submitted to the Region of Halton for approval;

AND FURTHER THAT Town staff monitor the approval process for Official Plan Amendment No. 9, and in the event that the Region of Halton post-circulation letter proposes modifications or deferrals, prepare a report to Council with recommendations concerning any proposed modifications or deferrals.

BACKGROUND:

Places to Grow: Better Choices, Brighter Future – Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, approved under the *Places to Grow Act*, took effect on June 16, 2006. The Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) Growth Plan contains policies that direct a significant portion of new growth to previously developed areas through intensification. One of the

integral policies of the GGH Growth Plan is that by the year 2015 and every year thereafter, a minimum of **40 percent** of all residential development within each upper-tier municipality (e.g. Region of Halton) must be within the Built-up Area. The Built-up Area is defined as the limits of the developed urban area as of the effective date of the GGH Growth Plan (i.e. June 16, 2006). In order to implement this intensification target, *Places to Grow* requires all Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities to develop an **intensification strategy** and implement the strategy through amendments to their official plans.

The Halton Hills Official Plan already provides a solid policy foundation with which to guide residential intensification and mixed-use development in the Town, based upon the approved Regional Official Plan and the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement. However, the Official Plan does not formally address the policy framework contained in *Places to Grow*, or Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 38, recently adopted by the Region of Halton to address conformity to the Growth Plan.

The Draft Halton Hills Intensification Strategy provides recommendations for revisions to Halton Hills Official Plan policies and land use designations, as necessary, in order to achieve conformity to the intensification policy directions of *Places to Grow*. The draft Official Plan Amendment implements those policy directions, and also addresses conformity to the intensification policies of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 38.

The purpose of the Official Plan Amendment is to implement recommendations resulting from the Halton Hills Intensification Opportunities Study, which culminated in a Draft Halton Hills Intensification Strategy (December 2009). The Amendment identifies Intensification Areas within the Town, in which to focus intensification, including the Georgetown GO Station Area, Civic Centre Area, South Acton (Maple Leaf) lands, and the Georgetown and Acton Downtown Areas, as well as identifying a portion of Guelph Street in Georgetown as an intensification corridor. The objective is to provide for residential and mixed-use intensification opportunities, while ensuring that the character and stability of established residential neighbourhoods and commercial areas is maintained and enhanced.

The draft amendment proposes some changes to the policies of the Halton Hills Official Plan, which address conformity with the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan and adopted Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 38. These changes include:

- The delineation on a schedule of the Built Boundary as defined by the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure for the Urban Areas of Acton and Georgetown, within which new units are considered intensification by the Growth Plan;
- A table specifying the minimum intensification target of 5,100 residential units over the 2015 to 2031 period, as directed in the Regional Official Plan, and the anticipated distribution of this target by Intensification Area, based upon the conclusions of the Intensification Opportunities Study Background Report, and the GO Station Area Land Use Study Preferred Land Use Alternative;
- The delineation on a schedule of the boundaries of the Intensification Areas noted above;

- The identification of the Georgetown Downtown Redevelopment Area and the Trafalgar Road Redevelopment Area, within the Georgetown Downtown Area and Civic Centre District Intensification Areas, respectively, and the inclusion of land use policies to encourage intensification through redevelopment;
- The identification of the Georgetown GO Station as Major Transit Station as defined by the Growth Plan, together with general policies that are elaborated upon in the Secondary Plan for the GO Station/Mill Street Corridor Intensification Area;
- Policies with respect to intensification to address conformity with the Growth Plan and Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 38 (Sustainable Halton).

In addition, re-designation of the following properties is included in this amendment:

- 127 Mountainview Road North, legally described as Part Lot 18, Concession 10, Georgetown, from Medium Density Residential Area to High Density Residential Area;
- 24 Ontario Street, legally described as Part East Half Lot 19, Concession 9, Georgetown, from Low Density Residential Area to Medium Density Residential Area;
- 82 to 96 Wallace Street, legally described as Lots 243, 244, 245, and 246 of Plan 1098, Acton, from Low Density Residential Area to Medium Density Residential Area.

COMMENTS:

Agency and Internal Comments:

Responses to the request for comments on Official Plan Amendment No. 9 were received from the following agencies: Region of Halton, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation, Halton District School Board, and Bell Canada. Conservation Halton advised that they had no comments as the intensification areas were outside of their watershed. The Halton District School Board advised that the addition of students to the area may impact school accommodation and transportation needs, which will be evaluated at the time development applications are received by the Town. Input has been received throughout the process from the Infrastructure Services and Recreation and Parks departments.

Region of Halton

Comments received from the Region of Halton on the Georgetown GO Station Area Secondary Plan pertain to all Intensification Areas. Therefore, the comments are addressed in this report and Amendment No. 9. Firstly, Regional staff noted that while the Draft GO Station Area Secondary Plan identifies two bonusing triggers in addition to those already identified in Section G4.3.1 of the Town's Official Plan, affordable housing is not included. It is noted that Section G4.3.1 (h) identifies one of the bonusing triggers

as "any other public benefit that has been identified in a Council-initiated study", but it is not clear if this includes affordable housing.

Therefore, Regional staff recommend that affordable housing be added as one of the bonusing triggers in the GO Station Area Secondary Plan, in order to assist both the Town and Region in achieving their goal of providing a full range of housing opportunities to Halton residents, and in meeting the Region's target that at least 30 per cent of new housing produced annually in the Region be affordable. Rather than make changes to the GO Station Area Secondary Plan, it is recommended that affordable housing be included in Section G4.3.1 of the Official Plan through Amendment No. 9, as one example of a significant public benefit that may result in Council passing a by-law to permit bonusing (i.e. increase in height or density) for development proposals within an Intensification Area.

Regional staff also commented that Regional Official Plan Amendment 38 seeks to ensure the integrity of intensification areas is maintained by prohibiting site-specific Official Plan or Zoning By-Laws that would reduce development densities in these areas unless it is part of a municipal comprehensive review of the Official Plan or a review of a Secondary Plan. Therefore, Regional staff recommends that a policy be included in the GO Station Area Secondary Plan that would prohibit site-specific amendments to reduce development density, consistent with Section 81(7)(c) of ROPA 38. Town staff is of the view that this prohibition should apply to all Intensification Areas, and therefore it is recommended that this policy be added to Amendment No. 9.

Regional staff also expressed concern with wording in the Draft Amendment that permitted changes to the minimum intensification targets for individual Intensification Areas (e.g. Georgetown GO Station Area, South Acton Special Study Area) without amendment to the Official Plan, provided that the overall minimum target of 5,100 units between 2015 and 2031 was maintained. Regional staff argued that this policy conflicts with Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 38 Section 81(7)(c). Town staff disagrees that the policy in question would permit down-designation of individual sites, given that the wording refers to overall Intensification Area targets and not individual land use designations. However, in the interests of ensuring clarity, it is recommended that the wording in question be deleted from Amendment No. 9.

Credit Valley Conservation

The Conservation Authority expressed concerns with two specific areas proposed for intensification through Amendment No. 9. Firstly, Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) staff note that the *Trafalgar Road Redevelopment Area* is traversed by a tributary of the Black Creek and is partially within the Regulatory Floodplain and erosion hazard. Therefore, these lands may not be suitable for development or intensification. Town staff observes that the Regulatory Floodplain has been placed in a *Greenlands A* designation in the Official Plan, and the *Trafalgar Road Redevelopment Area* designation and policies are applicable to this designation only. Therefore, no changes are recommended to Amendment No. 9.

Secondly, CVC staff note that the 82 to 96 Wallace Street properties proposed for re-designation to *Medium Density Residential Area* are traversed by a tributary of the Black Creek, and may be entirely within the Regulatory Floodplain and erosion hazard. Therefore, these lands may not be suitable for development or intensification.

Town staff notes that Regulatory Floodplain mapping does not exist for this particular watercourse, and consequently no part of the subject area was included within the *Greenlands A* designation in the Official Plan. However, CVC staff has provided estimated floodplain mapping that indicates a significant portion of the area may be situated within the floodplain. Given the absence of Regulatory Floodplain mapping and a *Greenlands A* designation on the subject properties, it is recommended that the area be re-designated as *Medium Density Residential Area*, but with a Special Policy Area provision. This provision would limit development to existing uses, and incorporates a policy that any development proposal for the site shall include the preparation of detailed floodplain mapping, which shall establish the development limits of the area, and place the limits of the regulatory floodplain within the *Greenlands A* land use designation.¹

Heritage Halton Hills

The municipal heritage committee, Heritage Halton Hills (HHH) has provided comments expressing some concerns with respect to the proposed *Downtown Redevelopment Area* designation. HHH has noted that the area proposed for high intensity intensification is an area of undetermined potential heritage value, and the Guelph Street portion of this area has not yet been evaluated in the Heritage Register process. HHH would like to advise of their intent to examine the possibility of a Heritage Conservation District study of the Georgetown Downtown, for the triangle forming the original downtown bounded by Main, Mill and Guelph Streets.

Staff recommends that since the heritage value of buildings within the proposed *Downtown Redevelopment Area* cannot be determined at this time, policy wording be incorporated into the scope of a Comprehensive Development Plan for the designation, which would consider appropriate conservation options for any heritage buildings that are determined to have heritage value, within the context of the redevelopment of the area. It is also important to note that the effect of the proposed designation is not to introduce substantially new land use policies from those that are already found in the Official Plan, but to increase the proposed density somewhat, and provide for redevelopment that is guided by a Comprehensive Development Plan, encouraging land assembly and quality urban design, amongst other matters.

HHH also commented that any intensification of the subject area should be relative to the neighbourhood context, and respect the skyline marked by the steeple of the 1869 Baptist Chapel at 14 Main Street. Also, the height of new buildings should respect the

¹ It should be noted that the Comprehensive Zoning By-law (CZBL) proposes the place the area in a "D" Development Zone, which would also only permit existing uses, thereby requiring a re-zoning.

natural topography by considering the rise in elevation from Silver Creek to the intersection of Guelph and Main Streets.

Staff recommends that policy wording be incorporated into the scope of a Comprehensive Development Plan for the designation, which require consideration of the topography of the area in determining appropriate building height, design and massing, by ensuring that building height increases correspond with elevation increases, and that building heights respect the skyline of the area represented by the Baptist Chapel steeple.

In addition, it is recommended that building height in this designation be a **range** of four to eight storeys, rather than the **maximum** eight storey height, which is the standard established in the Official Plan for high density residential uses, and that appropriate building heights for individual development sites be determined by the Comprehensive Development Plan. This recognizes that appropriate building heights for Intensification Areas are best determined through more detailed planning exercises, such as Secondary Plans, Comprehensive Development Plans, or Urban Design Guidelines.

Bell Canada

The telecommunications utility has commented that the Provincial Policy Statement requires that planning for infrastructure and public service facilities be integrated with planning for growth so that infrastructure is available to meet current and projected needs. Therefore, Bell Canada would like a policy to be incorporated into Amendment No. 9, which commits the Town to ensure that Intensification Areas are development-ready, by amongst other matters, coordinating discussions with utility providers to ensure utility infrastructure is in place to serve the new development. Town staff recommends that such a policy be added to Amendment No. 9.

Public Comments:

The January 27, 2010 public open house and the February 8, 2010 statutory public meetings were attended by 20 people and 10 people respectively. The following is a discussion of the verbal and written comments received at, or subsequent to, the statutory public meeting.

Wellings Planning Consultants representing the Acton East Housing Corporation asked for confirmation that the 127 McDonald Boulevard property designated as *Medium Density Residential Area* was included in the intensification potential identified by the Intensification Opportunities Study. A request was also made that the property located at Tanners Drive and Rennie Street, adjacent to the Rennie Street Park, be re-designated *Medium Density Residential Area*, in order to facilitate intensification of the property. This site has been reserved by the Halton Catholic District School Board since 1993, but it is the understanding of staff that the Board may no longer require the site for a future elementary school.

Staff can confirm that the 127 McDonald Boulevard property was factored in to the estimate of intensification potential in the Intensification Opportunities Study. Staff does not recommend the re-designation of the Rennie Street/Tanners Drive property, as the most appropriate future use of school sites is currently under examination by the Town's School Site Land Use Planning Study.

Laurent Thibault and Lesley Adams gave presentations at the statutory public meeting in support of the Town's intensification efforts, but urging more aggressive intensification in the face of peak oil, and the need to preserve local farm land. Harvey Anstey expressed concerns about the cost and negative effects of intensification.

Barbara Halsall, a resident of Georgetown, provided a written submission articulating several concerns, which can be summarized as follows:

- The Town should ask the Region to prepare a carrying capacity study to determine which communities have the carrying capacity to accommodate population increases;
- Intensification must occur before development on farmland;
- High-rise development over 6-7 storeys should be avoided in favour of 3-4 storey apartments;
- Farmland must be preserved to ensure a local food supply, and address the issue of peak oil.

In response to the concerns of residents, Town staff offer the following response:

- Staff will forward the request for a carrying capacity study to the Region;
- Staff notes that a land use policy framework is being put in place to encourage intensification, and both the Town and Region are making intensification a priority, including financial incentives through the Town's Community Improvement Plan, however, the precise timing of intensification requires a response from the private market;
- Staff notes that the maximum height in the *High Density Residential Area* designation in the Official Plan is 8 storeys. An exception is the Georgetown GO Station Area, which was the subject of a detailed land use study, which recommended increased density and height on key redevelopment sites adjacent to the GO station, and the Georgetown Downtown Area as described earlier in this report. The issue of appropriate building heights within the Acton Downtown Area will be examined through the Acton Downtown Land Use Policy Review currently in progress.
- Previous reports to Council have addressed in detail the Sustainable Halton planning exercise and Preferred Growth Option, which shifts urban development to intensification and densification of new growth areas, while minimizing the loss of agricultural land.

Other Revisions:

Town staff also recommends several additional changes to Amendment No. 9 in order to address particular matters:

- It is recommended that the policies applying to the Georgetown *Downtown Redevelopment Area* be revised to reduce the minimum density for high density residential uses to 75 units per hectare from 100 units per hectare. This change introduces greater flexibility to assist in achieving intensification which is compatible with the area. No change is recommended to the maximum density of 150 units per net hectare;
- It is recommended that the policies applying to the Georgetown *Downtown Redevelopment Area* be revised to introduce street and block townhouses as a permitted use, with a density range for developments consisting solely of townhouses of 21 to 50 units per net hectare, consistent with the Medium Density Residential Area designation in the Official Plan. This change acknowledges that contextually appropriate intensification for this area may include a mix of townhouses and apartment buildings;
- It is recommended that a policy be incorporated that permits Council to waive the requirement for a Comprehensive Development Plan for the Georgetown *Downtown Redevelopment Area*, and thereby allow a future site-specific development application to proceed, provided that criteria are met that ensure the objectives of the designation are not compromised (e.g. urban design, land use compatibility);
- It is recommended that the terminology of the Official Plan and Schedules be updated to reflect the use of the term “Major Transit Station” in the Growth Plan and ROPA 38.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report is consistent with the overall direction contained in the Strategic Plan, but in particular **Strategic Direction F: Achieve Sustainable Growth**, the **Goal** that growth is managed so as to ensure a balanced, sustainable, well planned community that meets the needs of its residents and businesses, and the following **Strategic Objectives**:

- F.7** To ensure that the character and stability of existing residential neighbourhoods is maintained when accommodating growth.
- F.10** To provide opportunities for intensification and affordable housing in appropriate locations within the Town.
- F.11** To ensure the efficient use of urban land and infrastructure in existing communities and new growth areas.

The report also has a relationship to **Strategic Direction A: Foster a Healthy Community**, and the **Strategic Objective**:

- A.1** To promote an adequate supply of housing and range of housing choices to meet the needs of present and future residents, including affordable, accessible and seniors housing.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no direct financial impact associated with this report. If approved, the Intensification Areas & Policies Official Plan Amendment puts in place policies for the intensification of downtown areas and brownfield sites, which could qualify for financial incentives provided for in the Town's Community Improvement Plan.

COMMUNICATIONS IMPACT:

Notification that this report was on the Council Agenda was provided to all those who provided their contact information at the statutory public meeting. Notification of the adoption of Official Plan Amendment No. 9 will be provided in accordance with statutory obligations under the Planning Act.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

There is no environmental impact on the natural heritage system of the Town from the policies contained in Amendment No. 9. If approved, the Amendment puts in place a planning framework to facilitate efficient use of land and infrastructure, through redevelopment and intensification, which contributes to the achievement of sustainable growth, thereby lessening the impact on the natural environment.

CONSULTATION:

The Intensification Opportunities Study, including preparation of the Draft Intensification Strategy, has been guided by input received from a Technical Advisory Committee comprised of staff from Recreation and Parks and Infrastructure Services, and the Region of Halton, as well as a Steering Committee comprised of members of Council, residents of Halton Hills, and a representative from Heritage Halton Hills.

CONCLUSION:

This report has outlined the contents of Official Plan Amendment No. 9 – Intensification Areas and Policies, reviewed public and agency comments, explained the revisions to the Amendment that are recommended in response to public and agency comments, and provided recommendations for the consideration of Council.

The Intensification Areas and Policies Official Plan Amendment, to implement the Town's Intensification Strategy, is the product of the Town's Intensification Opportunities Study, guided by a Steering Committee comprised of Town residents and Councillors,

and involving considerable public input. Planning staff is of the opinion that the final Amendment reflects appropriate revisions based upon the comments received.

The Intensification Areas and Policies Official Plan Amendment represents a sound strategy to facilitate the appropriate redevelopment and intensification of identified Intensification Areas in the Town, in keeping with the policies of the GGH Growth Plan, while protecting the character and stability of existing residential neighbourhoods. It is recommended that Council adopt Official Plan Amendment No. 9 – Intensification Areas and Policies, as outlined in the recommendations contained in this report.

Respectfully submitted,

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