



Meeting Date: April 20, 2022

Submitted by: Michael Di Lullo, CAO

Report No: CAO-15-2022

Subject: Adoption of Official Plan Amendment No. 59 Comprehensive Official Plan Review

Recommendation:

THAT Report CAO-15-2022 re: Adoption of Official Plan Amendment No. 59 Comprehensive Official Plan Review be received;

AND THAT pursuant to Report CAO-15-2022, a By-law be prepared for Council's consideration to Approve and Adopt the 2022 Middlesex Centre Comprehensive Official Plan

AND FURTHER THAT the Official Plan Amendment No. 59 be adopted and submitted to the County of Middlesex for approval.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Comprehensive Official Plan Review that was initiated in 2020 and recommend approval of the documents. The findings and proposed revisions will form the basis of Official Plan Amendment No. 59.

Background:

The Municipality's Official Plan was adopted by By-Law 2000-038 on April 19, 2000 and the document received approval by the County on September 12, 2000. In May of 2020, the Municipality selected WSP to undertake a comprehensive Official Plan Review for Middlesex Centre. The intent of this project is to proceed forward with an updated guiding document that will help shape the long-term future related to growth.

Originally intended to be completed in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the project and the shift to virtual outreach has ensued.

As noted in Report CAO-1-2022, the project has now come to completion following additional public meetings and direction from all stakeholders including the public, agencies and council.

Official Plan Amendment No. 59 to the Middlesex Centre Official Plan would implement the recommendations of the Growth Management Strategy Report (dated February 2022). The Comprehensive Review also provides direction for current planning issues and undertakes a conformity exercise with the County Official Plan and current Provincial legislation and policy, including the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Review is summarized in Official Plan Amendment No. 59 as follows:

To maintain an adequate land supply designated for settlement area land uses within the municipality while re-distributing these designations from vacant land areas where development is subject to servicing, environmental and other constraints to focus the majority of growth and development in areas where development would optimize the use of existing services, minimize the impacts of development on agriculture, permit residential, employment and commercial land uses within efficient travel distance of each other, and promote active transportation and complete communities within the Urban Settlement Areas, while protecting and encouraging the enhancement and restoration of features of the natural environment. The goal is to direct and manage growth in a manner that is sustainable, consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and in conformity with the County of Middlesex Official Plan.

To conclude the project, the adopted Official Plan will be forwarded to the County of Middlesex for final approval.

Analysis:

Appended to this report is Official Plan Amendment No. 59 which is the main guiding document that contains all of the proposed changes. The more substantial changes reflected in Amendment No. 59 relate to the following:

Middlesex Centre Strategic Plan

The Municipality adopted a new Strategic Plan in 2021 and the five priorities are embedded in the official plan document.

Policies for Agricultural Areas

To promote and encourage a wide range of on-farm diversified uses and agriculture-related businesses, new direction is proposed for compatible uses in agricultural areas consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and provincial guidelines. The intention is to diversify the rural economy, allow farm operators to prosper, and new farm products or services to develop.

Settlement Area Structure

The structure of the settlement areas within Middlesex Centre is based on a three-level hierarchy. The three levels are Urban Settlement Areas, Community Settlement Areas, and Hamlet Settlement Areas.

Each settlement area has been reviewed and updated in accordance with the growth strategy undertaken by Watsons & Associates. The population forecasts are updated to reflect a positive growth rate over the next thirty year horizon, including allocation of growth to areas that have not previously been designated such as Delaware.

Expansion to Settlement Areas

Policies surrounding the expansion of the settlement area are updated in accordance with Section 1.1.3.8 of the Provincial Policy Statement (2020). It was determined in this project that expansion is not necessary as there is sufficient land supply in the community areas located throughout Middlesex Centre; however, following direction from Council, growth has been focused on Delaware. With the expansion of the Delaware settlement area, no expansions are necessary to accommodate forecasted growth in the other settlement areas.

Secondary Plans

Policies to support privately-initiated secondary plans to accommodate for future development. The intention is to provide a policy framework whereby major development plans can proceed in a comprehensive, holistic manner at the expense of proponents.

Settlement Employment Area & Employment Lands

Further clarification of permitted uses for the settlement employment area is defined along with criteria that outlines the justification to convert lands from non-employment uses. Some changes have taken place related to Employment Settlement with an allocation of lands dedicated to Delaware which is where employment is intended in future, in close proximity to the 400 series highways.

Parks and Recreation

Additional amenities that are added to the permitted uses that fall under Parks and Recreation which adds further amenities to the Municipality.

Private and Communal Servicing

Private communal servicing is a consideration which is confined to the hamlet areas only where it is deemed feasible and consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement

(2020). This consideration is an option if appropriate infrastructure is not possible or planned.

Secondary Units

Additional Residential Units such as dwelling unit within a main dwelling or in an accessory structure, temporary Garden Suites, and Modular Housing are permitted to support on-premises living where it is appropriate to do so. This policy change is critical as the housing supply issue is prominent throughout the province, offering these types of housing will aid to create density.

Severances in Agricultural Areas

The policy surrounding agricultural severances has been updated to clarify eligibility and align with the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and County Official Plan.

Land Use Schedule Updates and Expansions

Land Use schedules for settlement areas have been updated where necessary to reflect the projected land needs over the planning horizon. Direction of future growth into Delaware resulted in the addition of residential and employment lands south of Delaware, and the redesignation of lands in south Ilderton. The settlement area boundary expansion also resulted in the creation of new special policies areas to ensure development is orderly and that full municipal services are provided.

Natural Environment

Natural Environment policies were updated to reflect changes to the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and provincial guidelines. Schedule B was updated to reflect Middlesex Natural Heritage Systems Study (2014).

Economic Diversification

Recognizing that economic planning is as equally important to residential sub-sets, the project has reviewed the employment areas along with undertaking a strategic focus to locate business closer to the provincial highways as they serve as the economic engines. This decision to locate in the Delaware area will enable the municipality to diversify and attract new business.

Complete Communities

This project supports the need to provide complete communities – this will be achieved by creating places where there are a combination of places for residents to live. This plan supports the vision of creating diversity in housing, greater opportunity for on-farm residential growth and also allocating for business and commercial growth.

Public Consultation and Timeline

From the onset of this project, WSP carried out a communications and engagement strategy throughout the Official Plan Review process.

A Special Council Meeting held under Section 26 of the Planning Act was first held in August 2020 where WSP discussed the potential updates to the Official Plan. This meeting also initiated the public consultation which members of the public and interested stakeholders could comment and send correspondence to the Municipality on matters related to the Official Plan.

Additionally, correspondence was sent to neighbouring First Nations including the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. This letter provided an overview of the Official Plan process and requested comments and input related to land use and the environment, as well as an invitation to have in-person meetings and discussions to review the Official Plan and policy direction. Additional correspondence has been sent to neighbouring First Nations throughout the Official Plan Review process, however, the Municipality and WSP has not received communication.

A public survey was issued via random mail-out and posted online with a joint-projects initiatives with the Strategy Plan and Municipal Budget Review. During this time, the Municipality opened an application process to establish a Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

In September 2020, the first Stakeholder Advisory Committee was held to review different key themes of the Official Plan, and members' interest in Official Plan topics that should be addressed. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee met two more times following the completion of the Direction and Recommendations Report and Draft Official Plan Amendment.

In October 2020 Vision Workshop was also held for all members of the public to participate to help develop a shared vision and guiding principles for the Official Plan.

In November 2020, the Technical Advisory Committee met for the first time. The Committee consists of staff from the Municipality, County, school boards, Provincial Ministries, and Conservation Authorities. This meeting initiated discussion of key policy issues identified in the Discussion Papers. The Technical Advisory Committee met two more times following the completion of the Direction and Recommendations Report and Draft Official Plan Amendment.

In December 2020, a Policy Workshop was held with Council to provide an update of the Official Plan Review progress and gather feedback on key policy issues and opportunities.

Two public Open Houses were held in October 2021. WSP provided an update of the Official Plan Review process, identified key issues in detail and all the comments that the Municipality has received to shape the Official Plan. WSP reviewed proposed changes to the Official Plan which reflected Growth Management, Infrastructure, Natural Heritage Systems, Economic Diversification and General Policies.

Following this meeting, a Public Meeting was held in November 2021. WSP provided an overview of the recommended policy direction based on feedback heard from the Open Houses in October 2021 and all feedback received during this process. WSP provided an overview of population, job and housing growth expected within the Municipality. Key recommended changes to the Official Plan were identified including recommended policies for inclusion and changes to land use schedules.

At the first meeting in January 2022, council convened to review the information and feedback for the purposes of providing input related to growth as determined by Watsons. This input was taken into consideration as the growth allocation was reviewed and distributed accordingly.

In March 2022 a statutory Open House was held. WSP identified over 150 changes to the Official Plan and provided an overview of the revised key policy changes including surplus farm dwelling severance criteria, changes to settlement area boundaries, additional residential units, on farm diversified uses, secondary plan policies, and new special policy areas. This provided council a final opportunity to review the information prepared along with final adjustments related to the growth allocation.

Since the commencement of the Official Plan Review process, the Municipality has received numerous comments from members of the public and residents, interested stakeholders, landowners, and members of the development and building industry. Many comments requested to expand the settlement area boundaries and redesignate lands to allow for future development. Additional comments were related to policy direction such as use of agricultural lands, parklands and trails, permitting granny flats and modular homes, limiting growth, transportation and traffic calming, protection of agricultural and environmental lands, and urban development within settlement areas. WSP has recorded all comments have been received by the Municipality.

Once Council adopts the final plan from WSP, the next step is to forward to the County for adoption.

Planning Rationale

Accompanying this Report are the Schedules and Redline that forms part of the comprehensive review.

Also included is the planning rationale provided by WSP that speak to the major changes such as adjustments to the settlement area growth allocations, policies related to surplus farm dwelling severances, the identification of lands to be added to the

Delaware settlement area, and a new special policy area designation intended to ensure the orderly development of Delaware.

The final version of the Official Plan update amendment is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, conforms with the current Middlesex County Official Plan, reflects the needs and vision of the community and plans to accommodate the population and employment growth forecasts prepared as part of this review.

Financial Implications:

N/A

Strategic Plan:

This matter aligns with following strategic priorities:

- 1a. Planning & Positioning: Diversifying future residential development.
- 1b. Planning & Positioning: Preserving rural heritage.
- 1c. Planning & Positioning: Realizing development potential.

The official plan review process has enabled stakeholders across the municipality to come forward and provide input to help shape the growth of Middlesex Centre. The document will help direct how to plan and invest in the future of the municipality in a balanced and harmonized approach.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 – Middlesex Centre OP Update Amendment By-law

Appendix 2 – Middlesex Centre OP Schedules A-D

Appendix 3 – Middlesex Centre OP Redline

Appendix 4 – Middlesex Centre OP Planning Rationale