



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chairman and Members of the Planning and Development Committee
From: Mark Paoli, Senior Policy Planner
Date: February 7, 2013
Subject: **Official Plan 5-Year Review – Prime Agricultural Area Correction (PD2013-08)**

1. **Background**

In Wellington County, Minto, Puslinch and Erin have dual designations in the rural system. The dual designations consist of the 'Prime Agricultural Area' and the 'Secondary Agricultural Area' designations.

The boundaries between the 'Secondary Agricultural Area' and 'Prime Agricultural Area' designations in Minto, Puslinch and Erin were adopted at different times and had the following points in common: local process that involved farmers and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs staff; done on a Town- or Township-wide basis; and used a land evaluation (looking at the characteristics of the land) and area review (looking at land use and development patterns) approach.

As noted in earlier report PD22012-30, during the 5-Year Review pre-consultation and Open Houses, several landowners (4 in Erin and 1 in Puslinch) requested that the 'Prime Agricultural Area' designation on their lands be reconsidered, and changed to 'Secondary Agricultural Area'. Some of the properties are in the Greenbelt, in which redesignation of Prime Agricultural lands can only be considered at the time of Greenbelt Plan conformity. Greenbelt conformity is one of the objectives of the 5-Year Review.

2. **Wellington Federation of Agriculture Consultation**

Staff approached the Wellington Federation of Agriculture (WFA) in November to ask their opinion about: the merits of reconsidering the 'Prime Agricultural Area' designation on those properties and surrounding lands where we have received requests; and if so, what criteria should be used.

The WFA formed a committee of Directors to consider this, and provided comments with the following main points:

- The committee is in agreement with OMAFRA Land Use staff that a comprehensive review of the designation should be undertaken if there is to be a consideration of any redesignations, especially multiple landowner redesignations;
- Arguments may be made for a particular property to be re-designated but the fact remains that a substantial effort was made to adhere to the farmland protection policies in the Provincial Policy Statement when the secondary agriculture designations were first applied in Erin, Puslinch and Minto; and
- The WFA believes that entertaining individual requests for redesignation sets the stage for subsequent requests. This is clearly counter to policies that exist in the County of Wellington Official Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement – policies that exist to protect our food production capacity by protecting agricultural land.



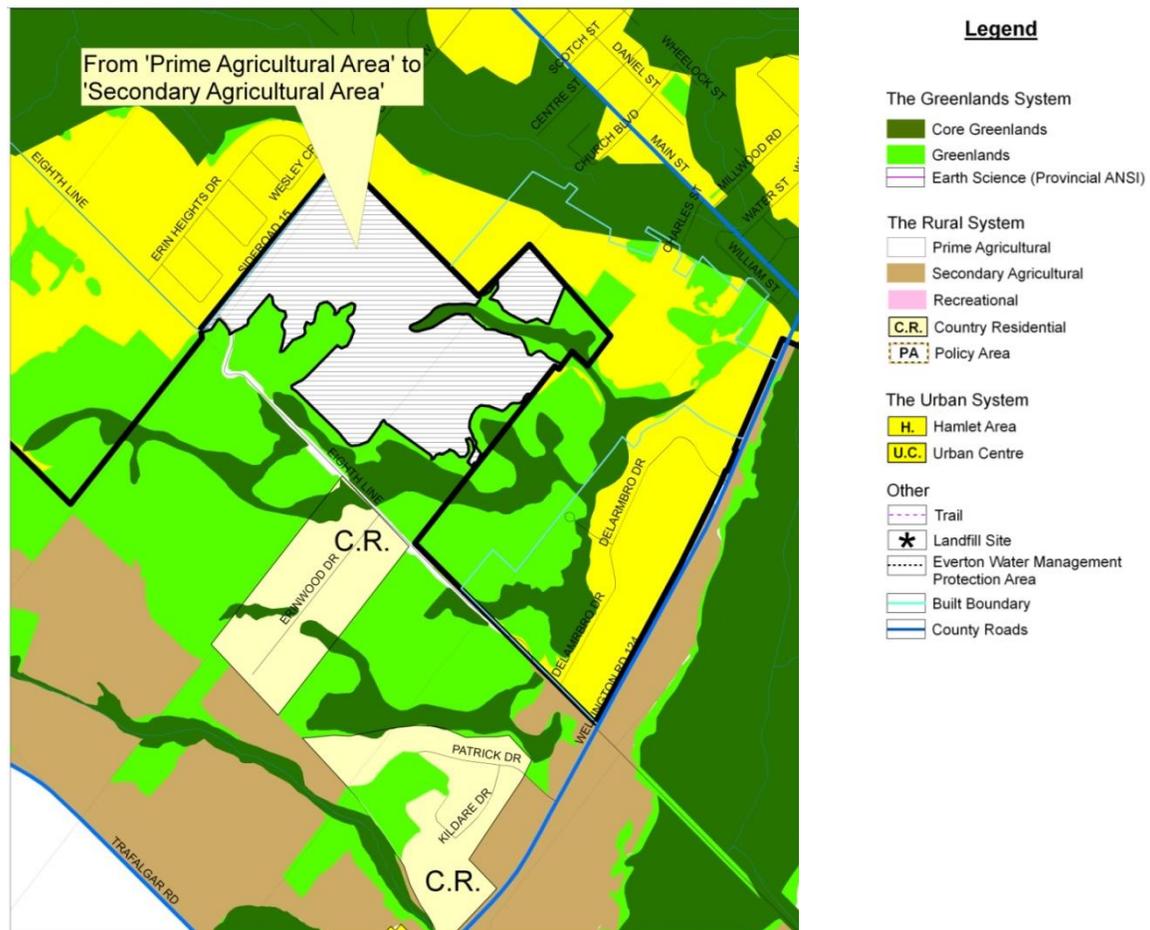
3. Discussion

Staff do not propose to reconsider the original Puslinch and Erin dual designation results in the 5-Year Review. There is one area where staff believe the 'Prime Agricultural Area' designation shown in the Erin and County Official Plan schedules does not reflect the dual designation work, and should be corrected.

The Erin Dual Designation Study was a comprehensive and iterative process that generally consisted of two phases: an initial phase in which each Lot/Concession block in the Town was assigned a score that resulted in draft Prime and Secondary Agricultural Areas; and a later phase of revised scoring by the WFA, and further analysis and site-visits to a number of areas of concern to confirm or revise designation boundaries.

The area in question is on the west side of Erin Village and consists of two properties (Denison and Little). The combined area outside of the Greenlands designations is approximately 100 acres (see Figure 1). In reviewing the dual designation study documentation, it appears that this area was not intended to be included in the 'Prime Agricultural Area' in the initial phase, and was not of concern to the WFA in the later phase. The Prime Agricultural Area designation may have been a result of the mapping process in which the Erin Fringe Area was shown on earlier maps, and later removed.

Figure 1: Erin West Fringe Area





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In addition to being a correction, the area in Figure 1 is also distinct from the other areas in Erin with landowner requests because they are in areas that were of concern to the WFA, and included in the 'Prime Agricultural Area'. In the opinion of staff, this correction would conform to the Greenbelt Plan and be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement because it restores the findings of the Town-wide comprehensive review in the Erin Dual Designation Study.

4. RECOMMENDATION

"THAT Draft OPA 81 be revised to correct the 'Prime Agricultural Area' to 'Secondary Agricultural Area', as shown in Figure 1 of report PD2013-08"

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Paoli'.

Mark Paoli,
Senior Policy Planner