

Wellington County Official Plan Review

Virtual Public Information Centre (PIC) Meeting Summary

Prepared by LURA Consulting

Background

The County of Wellington is currently reviewing its Official Plan (OP) to complete a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and a 5-year review of its Official Plan as specified under Section 26 of the *Planning Act*. An MCR is part of the OP review process. It establishes a long-term vision and planning framework for a municipality that fosters a sustainable approach to future residential growth and economic development. The County is doing this to prepare for additional population and employment growth and ensure that the updated OP supports healthy, compact and complete communities in Wellington as directed through *A Place to Growth: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*.

In December 2021, the County provided an update on the Official Plan Review process and engaged community members to gather public input and answer questions on the County of Wellington's MCR. The County also presented the growth forecasts and municipal allocations, and land needs assessment analyzed by the County's consultants, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.

This consultation builds on the Phase 1 Report presented in June 2021, which focused on the proposed Urban Structure and Growth Analysis for the County of Wellington. To learn more about the work completed in Phase 1, please [review the presentation](#) and [read the consultation summary](#). The draft Phase 1 MCR Report: Urban Structure and Growth Allocations is also available on the website. Phase 2 work focuses on Urban Land Needs and Policy Recommendations and the Report's findings were the topic of this consultation. A third phase of work is planned that will examine the results of the Phase 2 and determine appropriate locations for potential Settlement Area Boundary expansions.

Meeting Promotion

Members of the public who wished to join the Virtual PIC were requested to register in advance. Individuals could also join the meeting by calling in by phone.

A public notice regarding the Virtual PIC was published through the Wellington Advertiser two weeks before the meeting. The meeting was also promoted through the County's social media platforms to raise awareness.

Meeting Overview

The Virtual PIC was held on December 13, 2021, with a purpose to:

- Provide an update on the County of Wellington's MCR and OP Review process
- Review the growth forecasts and municipal allocations, and present the municipal results of the Land Needs Assessment
- Gather feedback and answer questions participants have about Wellington County's MCR

The meeting presentation was publicly posted in advance on [Plan Well](#), the County of Wellington's Official Plan Review website, to allow participants the opportunity to review beforehand or follow along if they joined the meeting by phone. **In total, 50 participants joined the meeting.**

Susan Hall (Facilitator from LURA Consulting) began the meeting with an introduction and overview of the meeting agenda. Sarah Wilhelm (Manager of Policy Planning at the County of Wellington) provided introductory remarks and a brief context to the County's Official Plan review process. Jamie Cook and Brad Post (Consultants at Watson & Associates) delivered a presentation on the following topics of the OP Review:

- Policy Context and Growth Plan
- Urban and Rural Systems
- Population and Employment Growth Forecasts
- Urban Community Area and Employment Area Land Needs, Approach and Methodology
- Residential Intensification
- Excess Lands

Susan Hall facilitated a discussion to receive feedback and comments from members of the public. A summary of the facilitated discussion is provided below.

What We Heard

General OP Review and MCR process

Participants were invited to ask questions and share their comments regarding the approach to accommodating population and employment growth in the County of Wellington.

Participants were asked the following question to prompt discussion:

- What questions, comments and feedback do you have on the approach to accommodating population and employment growth in Wellington County?

The questions, answers and comments are included as follows. Questions are marked by a 'Q', comments are marked with a 'C', and answers and responses are noted with an 'A'.

Q: Will the MCR become part of OPA 119, and can you clarify the relationship between them?

A: OPA 119 captures part of the work from Phase 1 and other aspects of the MCR are rolled out in the future phases.

Q: Would areas like Crieff and Killeen be considered Hamlets and is there an opportunity to expand small settlements when considering future growth? There is a great deal of residential expansion in Puslinch, so I struggle to see why it has been given a 0% growth rating.

A: The 0% only speaks to the intensification components and not to total population, housing, or employment growth being forecasted for Puslinch. There is moderate growth for housing, population, and employment in Puslinch, but it is not classified as intensification as defined by the Growth Plan. The County cannot identify a specific intensification target for settlement areas in Puslinch, because the Province has not identified any delineated built-up areas in these settlement areas due to their size and servicing. However, this does not mean that there cannot be any intensification within the definition of the Growth Plan. Crieff and Killeen are not identified as a Hamlets within the County Official Plan. These area may have had some status in the former Puslinch Official Plan, but that was never carried forward into the County's Official Plan. The growth structure is being dealt with as part of OPA 119. Killeen was not recognized in the former Puslinch Official Plan. There is a policy that is being proposed to remove, and it is a policy that allows for infilling in rural settlement areas.

Q: How will the second stage of Audrey Meadows (Country Residential home development in Puslinch) be impacted?

A: The expansion of the Country Residential Subdivision is subject to site specific applications that are currently active, and the County cannot comment on those applications at this point in time. The County has received comments on Audrey Meadows for OPA 119 and the MCR, and these will be reviewed with all other comments received.

Q: I own a property in Arthur. If I wanted to build a business on my fallow field, would I be able to use that area, or would that be considered excess land?

A: This is difficult to answer without looking at a map and identifying where the designated excess lands are located. A closer look at the area is needed to provide a more accurate and specific answer.

Q: Wellington North is the only area identified with excess land. Would property owners be limited in how these lands are developed in the next ten years, and in what other ways would they be impacted?

A: The Province is asking for an identification of excess lands through the Growth Plan. The land designations will have to be reviewed against the results of the land need

requirements and will be subject to infrastructure capacity and constraints. This can limit growth but will need to be further examined.

Q: Are the 130 hectares of excess land in Wellington North residential, employment or both?

A: They will be a combination of community area, employment area and Future Development lands.

Q: Centre Wellington will require growth to 2051 as part of the 319 hectares. Does this include the non-built-up areas within the areas noted as designated greenfield lands in the current Official Plan?

A: Yes, an additional 319 hectares is needed in addition to the already designated lands. It will be above and beyond what has been designated.

Q: A minimum of 20% of Wellington's housing growth is planned through intensification in the delineated built-up area, including the protected Elora and Fergus heritage areas. What technical studies have been conducted to identify the appropriate intensification capacity that can be accommodated within the heritage areas, considering their low-rise small-town scale and historic streetscapes?

A: There is a heritage planner at the Township who is looking at the heritage areas in the County. There are also tools within the current Official Plan that require a heritage impact assessment and conservation plans that address potential impacts of a development proposal to areas adjacent to heritage resources or on a property containing heritage resources. These are evaluated on a case-by-case basis within the context of each proposal.

Q: There are concerns that accommodating growth in existing settlement areas that are heavily populated might lead to sprawl. Would an alternative approach be to create new centres or facilitate growth in smaller population centres?

A: There is currently a well-established structure to identify where growth exists and where it will be directed in the long-term. The primary focus will be on the urban centres given that this has already been set out in the provincial policy documents. In addition to provincial policies, market demand is also being considered. Shifting a little bit more growth into the northern communities of Minto and Mapleton is also being considered, but this requires balance. Determining how much is appropriate to shift requires ongoing monitoring of the projections to the actual growth. This is also why an update at a minimum of every ten years is useful so that trends can be continually reviewed and plans adjusted accordingly over time. Additionally, while the provincial policy statement allows for new settlement areas to be designated, the Growth Plan does not allow new settlement areas to be created, making it challenging.

Q: If Puslinch is designated a Hamlet, what type of developments could go there?

A: This identification is part of Official Amendment 119. The type of developments in the proposed Hamlet would be the same developments as in other Hamlets, which includes small-scale residential, commercial, etc.

Q: With the majority of the residential and employment land expansion occurring in Centre Wellington, is there information on the percentage of the expansion that will be required for Fergus and Elora?

A: These details have not been covered in this presentation, and it is something that will be identified in the coming months with the release of the detailed phase 2 Report. We will keep any questions or comments in mind when we get to that report.

Q: When will we see a plan identifying the excess land in Arthur?

A: This will be provided in the Phase 2 report.

Q: The potential of increased traffic and blocked access to fields and agricultural suppliers could be challenging for many farm businesses. Is the movement of agricultural equipment considered in the analysis of how development is laid out?

A: The agricultural and rural component of the review will relate to the agricultural land base mapping, which is one specific part of the review. This area is being considered, but it is important to note that there are some limitations on the extent of growth in agricultural areas.

C: One of the key provincial legislation and policy constraints imposed on growth is that the County of Wellington is required to satisfy statutory requirements from the Planning Act and the Growth Plan to ensure that its cultural heritage resources are protected and conserved. Any proposed amendments to the Official Plan must implement the statutory requirements to protect the County's cultural heritage resources while ensuring that it fully complies with the provincial legislation and policy constraints.

The Association of Municipalities Ontario provides a helpful guide to understanding the differences between County and Regional government structures and their associated responsibilities. Learn more at the [Association of Municipalities Ontario's website](#).

Settlement Area Boundary Expansion

Participants were presented with a range of considerations for the Settlement Area Boundary Expansion and were asked the following question to prompt discussion:

- Are there any major considerations we should add to settlement area boundary expansion?

The questions, answers and comments are included as follows. Questions are marked by a 'Q', comments are marked with a 'C', and answers and responses are noted with an 'A'.

Q: Will new police, paramedic and fire stations be considered as the population increases?

A: One of the key aspects of the work that needs to be considered is the need for services associated with population and employment growth. The County and the municipalities work together to deliver emergency medical services (EMS) in terms of where these can be located and provided. One of the things that Watson & Associates Economists LTD is also undertaking is updating the County of Wellington's Development Charge Background Study. Each of the County's hard and soft services is being reviewed through various master planning studies in various stages of work. The County ensures that it aligns capital requirements across all services to growth within the County.

Q: Will the County consider the local municipalities' growth preferences or decide unilaterally where the growth will occur?

A: The County has been working with its member municipalities throughout the process. There is a technical committee comprising all the municipal CAOs and planning staff or consultants from the municipalities. Municipalities are aware of the work taking place and the proposed plans. Their ideal scenarios and comments are also being considered. The County is regularly communicating with the local municipalities and will continue to do so throughout all the phases of the project.

Q: As a farm owner, I am concerned that urban residents have a much louder voice. How would you balance the rural business voice with the urban residential voice to preserve Wellington County's fertile and productive farmland?

A: It is important to consider multiple perspectives. There are still comments coming in about heritage aspect, so it is still an ongoing discussion. There is an active effort to listen and try to give everything the same level of importance, but at the same time acknowledging that there are critical areas that need to be balanced.

Written Feedback

Following the meeting, the County of Wellington received one submission by email. The following key points were raised through written feedback:

- Cultural heritage and agricultural land policies should be considered statutory constraints as the process continues.
- The dialogue between staff, councils and citizens needs to be improved on to develop policy that is compliant with all the provincial and municipal policies.
- The OPA's growth management and intensification criteria need to expand and include the rights of nature, heritage conservation and climate change, and the proposed amendments to OPA 119. There needs to be more information on how the expansion of the urban boundaries would be compliant with Places to Grow and the Provincial Policy Statement.

- More transparency is required for the County's process to determine a municipality's growth preferences and where to find policy relating to the municipality requesting alternative targets.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Susan Hall of LURA Consulting provided participants with the project team's contact information for any additional feedback and wrapped up the meeting. Participants can provide their feedback and comments until January 9, 2022. Members of the public can contact the project team by email or by phone at:

Contact: Sarah Wilhelm, Manager Policy Planning

Phone: 519-837-2600 ex 2130

Email: planwell@wellington.ca

Mailing Address: ATTN Planning Department

74 Woolwich Street

Guelph, ON

N1H 3T9