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Draft York Region Official Plan Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2022-06

Department(s): Planning and Building Services

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Meeting Date: January 31, 2022

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled Draft York Region Official Plan dated January 31, 2022 be received; and,
2. That this report be forwarded to the Regional Municipality of York as Council's comments on the draft York Region Official Plan; and,
3. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Executive Summary

In 2018, York Region began consultation on its Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) in preparation for a new Regional Official Plan. York Region recently released its draft of the new Regional Official Plan (draft ROP) in November 2021 for public consultation and are requesting comments from local municipalities and stakeholders by March 31, 2022. It is anticipated that a statutory public meeting will be held in May 2022 and the final ROP will be presented to Regional Council in June 2022 for adoption, followed by submission to the Province for approval.

Planning staff have been participating throughout the MCR and draft ROP engagement processes and have been providing comments to Regional staff on various policy matters. Comments relating to population forecasts and major transit station area boundaries for Newmarket have been addressed in the draft ROP. Planning staff generally have no objections to changes in the Regional Structure and Regional Greenlands System for Newmarket and will continue to work with Regional staff on implementing other major policy areas such as housing and transportation.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a summary of some of the policy matters in the draft York Region Official Plan and Town Planning staff's comments with respect to those draft policies.

Background

The current York Region Official Plan (YROP 2010) was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 2010. Since then, many Provincial plans/legislations have changed and accordingly the YROP 2010 is due for a comprehensive review to align with new Provincial legislation, plans, and policies. In 2018, York Region began its consultation for the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process and since then has released a series of background policy reports on various policy matters such as intensification, growth and infrastructure alignment, land needs assessments, housing, employment, natural heritage system, agriculture, and major transit station areas (MTSAs).

Planning staff have been participating throughout the MCR process and have provided comments to Regional staff through both the Local Municipal Working Group and through one-on-one meetings. Throughout this process, Planning staff have also provided updates to Newmarket Council through a number of reports including info report [INFO-2020-31](#) (York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review Update), staff reports [2021-42](#) (York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review – 2051 Forecast) and [2021-68](#) (York Region 2051 Alternate Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios).

In November 2021, a draft of the [new Regional Official Plan](#) (draft ROP) was presented to Regional Council and released for public consultation. In accordance with Regional Council's direction on [November 25, 2021](#), further revisions were made to the draft ROP on December 1, 2021.

Regional staff are now seeking comments from local municipalities on the draft ROP by March 31, 2022. A statutory public meeting will be held in May 2022, followed by a targeted final ROP to be presented to Regional Council for adoption in June.

Discussion

The following subsections outline some of the draft policies contained in the draft ROP and how they apply to Newmarket.

2051 Population Forecast

Regional Council has directed Regional staff to apply a Phased 50-55% intensification rate to the 2051 forecast, resulting in the population and employment forecast for Newmarket listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Newmarket Population and Employment Forecasts

	2031	2041	2051
Population	97,400	102,700	115,900
Employment	51,800	54,200	58,500

Regional staff have advised there may be minor refinements to the forecasts for 2031 and 2041 as they continue to work on the forecast model resulting from recent Regional Council direction. As recommended in staff report [2021-68](#) and adopted by Council, the proposed 2051 population forecast of 115,900 is supported as a minimum. Any further refinements to the forecast should not be lower than the above figures.

Regional Structure and Land Use Designations

The Regional Structure guides land use in York Region and it generally categorizes lands as areas for growth and development or areas for environmental and agricultural protection and enhancements. The Regional Structure consists of land use designations and overlays. For the purpose of this report, the following discussion focuses on the applicable sections of the Regional structure, land use designations, and overlays that apply to Newmarket.

Regional Structure

In accordance with the draft Regional Structure map (Map 1 of the draft ROP), Newmarket is comprised of Regional Centre, Regional Corridors, Urban Area and certain places are overlain by the Regional Greenlands System. The proposed structure is generally the same as the current Regional Structure as it applies to Newmarket under the current YROP 2010. The only difference being a couple of pockets of “whitebelt” in the southern part of Newmarket under the current YROP 2010; whereas, in the draft ROP these whitebelt areas are being proposed as Urban Area (with or without Regional Greenlands System overlay) (see Attachment 1). This proposed change is consistent with Planning staff’s recommendation as submitted to the Province of Ontario and York Region in 2019. As noted in info report [INFO-2020-31](#), this change is necessary to align Provincial and Regional natural heritage systems with the Town’s Official Plan designation and floodplain mapping. There are also other refinements to the Regional Greenlands System overlay throughout Newmarket to align with the natural heritage system in the Town’s Official Plan (see Attachment 2).

In addition, an area in southwestern Newmarket is being proposed to be removed from the Regional Greenlands System overlay, but the lands will remain in the Urban Area in the draft ROP (see Attachments 1 and 2). Planning staff request that portions of this area be kept as part of the Regional Greenlands System such that they would align with the real-world location of existing woodlands.

Land Use Designations and Overlays

Regional land use designations are categorized under Urban System or Agricultural System. Lands within Newmarket are primarily designated within the Urban System, which is comprised of Community Area and Employment Area. A small portion of lands along Bathurst Street is designated Rural Area forming part of the Agricultural System (see Attachment 3).

Community Areas are areas where concentrations of existing and future population and employment growth will be accommodated. Employment Areas are areas where clusters of industrial, business, transportation, warehousing and related economic activities are accommodated and where residential uses are prohibited. Rural Areas are lands outside of urban areas and prime agricultural areas, generally designated as rural or open space which support diverse agricultural, economic, tourism and recreational activities and contain valuable natural resources.

To further define development priorities within the Urban System, a number of overlays are being proposed to supplement the Urban System policies (see Attachment 3). Overlays applicable to Newmarket, listed in the order of intensification hierarchy are: Regional Centre, Major Transit Station Area (MTSA), Regional Corridor (outside of MTSA), Built-Up Area, and Designated Greenfield Area (DGA). The majority of intensification is directed to Regional Centres, MTSAs, and Regional Corridors (collectively known as 'strategic growth areas').

The draft ROP is proposing an intensification target of 11,100 units in strategic growth areas and a density target of 40 people and jobs per hectare in DGAs for Newmarket. Both targets are consistent with targets previously presented to Regional Council. As stated in Town staff reports [2021-42](#) and [2021-68](#), Planning staff have no objection to the proposed targets. Due to the presence of supportive planning policies, Newmarket is well-positioned to meet those targets, subject to servicing capacity.

Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs)

MTSA is defined by the *A Place to Growth: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (the Growth Plan) as:

“Area including and around any existing or planned higher order transit station or stop within a settlement area; or the area including and around a major bus depot in an urban core. Major transit station areas generally are defined as the area within an approximate 500 to 800 metre radius of a transit station, representing about a 10-minute walk.”

In accordance with the *Planning Act* and the Growth Plan, single-tier and upper-tier municipalities such as York Region must delineate boundaries of MTSAs and set minimum density targets for the same. When determining boundaries of MTSAs, these municipalities should consider maximizing the area and the number of potential transit

users within walking distance of the station. Further to the Provincial direction, York Region has established the following principles when determining MTSA boundaries:

1. Reinforce the planned regional and local municipal urban structure;
2. Provide a diverse range and mix of land uses, if the MTSA is not located in an employment area (e.g. residential, employment, community services);
3. Include existing higher density land uses;
4. Include areas that are reasonably anticipated to develop or redevelop to higher densities;
5. Connect with adjacent MTSA's so that as much of the priority transit corridors are included, as possible; and
6. Be walkable.

As noted in info report [INFO-2020-31](#), before Regional Council endorsed the MTSA boundaries, Planning staff requested that Regional staff consider refining the boundaries of the Mulock GO MTSA, Savage-Sawmill BRT Station MTSA and Mulock BRT Station MTSA to better align with municipal planning documents. Then, in September 2020, Regional Council endorsed the boundaries and minimum density targets for 72 MTSA's across York Region. There are a total of 12 MTSA's in Newmarket, mostly located along Yonge Street or Davis Drive (see Attachment 4) with the highest minimum density target of 250 people and jobs per hectare at the Yonge and Davis BRT station and the lowest minimum density target of 150 people and jobs per hectare at the future Mulock GO station. All of the above mentioned comments regarding boundary refinements have been addressed and reflected in both the Regional Council endorsed MTSA staff report and in the draft ROP. Planning staff have no further comments on MTSA boundaries or minimum density targets.

It is important to note that not all lands within MTSA's will be redeveloped by 2051. Furthermore, lands within an MTSA do not automatically get assigned with higher density permission than what is currently permitted. Land use and density permissions for individual properties within MTSA's are determined by local official plans and zoning by-laws. Local municipal Councils having regard for the local planning context determine the appropriate land use and density for individual properties within MTSA's that will collectively meet the minimum density target for the MTSA as a whole. Once the MTSA boundaries and minimum density targets are approved as part of the approval of the new ROP, implementing local official plan policies and zoning by-law provisions relating to land use, height and density permissions for lands within approved MTSA's are protected from appeals by landowners or members of the public.

Housing

Housing affordability has been one of the top priorities in York Region. In addition to [York Region's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan: Housing Solutions](#), the draft ROP contains strong housing policies that require:

- A minimum 25% of new housing outside of Regional Centres and MTSAs be affordable in each local municipality, and
- A minimum 35% of new housing in Regional Centres and MTSAs be affordable in each local municipality.

In addition, the draft ROP also sets a target of 1000 new purpose-built rental units to be achieved in Newmarket between 2021 and 2051. Based on the current application trend, Newmarket is on-track to meet the first 500 units between 2021 and 2031 and assuming the current trend continues, Newmarket is well-positioned to meet or exceed the 1000 new purpose built rental unit target by 2051.

In preparation for the Town's Official Plan review and having regard for the draft ROP housing policies, Planning staff will be engaging a consulting team this year and will conduct a housing needs assessment as a background study for developing housing policies in the Town's updated Official Plan. As part of the housing needs assessment, tools such as inclusionary zoning will also be explored for implementation in MTSAs to effectively increase the number of affordable housing units in Newmarket.

Transportation

The draft ROP was circulated to Engineering staff for review and comment. Below is a summary of the comments received, most of which have been brought to Regional staff's attention through the Transportation Master Plan Update:

- Given the Barrie GO line will be extended to 15-minute, all-day, two-way service from Aurora to Bradford GO station and the potential for a future Mulock GO station, Mulock Drive (between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue, at a minimum) may need to be wider than 36 metres as currently identified on Map 11 Street Network of the draft ROP;
- Identify a full interchange at Mulock Drive and Highway 404 in the draft ROP for further study, and
- Staff acknowledge there is a Regional direction to reduce parking to encourage active transportation and walking, and that York Region will monitor parking provisions across the Region. Staff would like to reaffirm that parking requirements are a local matter, but Newmarket staff will continue to work with Regional staff to achieve the intent of Regional policy.

Next Steps in the Municipal Comprehensive Review Process

Regional staff are requesting comments on the draft ROP from local municipalities by March 31, 2022 to allow sufficient time to finalize the ROP before the Province's July deadline. A statutory Public Meeting is anticipated to be held in May, followed by a recommendation and final ROP to be presented to Regional Council in June. The adopted ROP will then be submitted to the Province for approval.

The Town's Official Plan Review process aligns well with the adoption of the new ROP. When the draft ROP is presented to Regional Council for adoption in June, the Town's Official Plan Review will have been started and the adopted new ROP will provide policy

direction in many aspects of the Town's Official Plan. This also ensures that the Town's new Official Plan will be in conformity with the new ROP.

Conclusion

Planning and Engineering staff have reviewed the draft ROP and do not have any major concerns with the proposed Regional direction. The Town's previous comments regarding population forecasts, refining MTSA boundaries, and aligning the Regional Greenlands System with the Town's natural heritage designations have all been addressed and reflected in the draft ROP. Planning staff request the Region to retain an area in southwest Newmarket as part of the Regional Greenlands System.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

- Extraordinary Places and Spaces
- Safe Transportation
- Economic Leadership and Job Creation
- Vibrancy on Yonge, Davis and Mulock
- Environmental Stewardship

Consultation

The draft ROP was circulated to Engineering Services for review and comment. Engineering staff's comments mainly relate to transportation policies of the draft ROP and have been summarized in this report.

Human Resource Considerations

None

Budget Impact

None

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Changes in the Regional Structure

Attachment 2 – Changes in the Regional Greenlands System

Attachment 3 – Regional Land Use Designations and Overlays

Attachment 4 – Major Transit Station Areas in the Town of Newmarket

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Approved for Submission

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