



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Staff Report

REPORT NO: DS-2023-12

TO: Council

SUBMITTED BY: Harold O’Krafka, MCIP RPP PLE

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REVIEWED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO

DATE: June 12, 2023

SUBJECT: Minister’s Decision on ROPA 6 – Baden and New Hamburg
Secondary Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report DS-2023-12 be received for information; and,

THAT Council direct staff to prepare a terms of reference for the development of a secondary plan for Baden and New Hamburg that will contemplate and create a long term plan for the development of lands inside the Countryside Line in Wilmot Township; and further,

That Council direct staff to issue an RFP for consulting services to complete the secondary plan.

SUMMARY:

The Region’s Official Plan Amendment No. 6 (ROPA 6) has been approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Minister’s approval increased the volume of lands within the Township Urban Area and designated for community and employment area from approximately 50ha under ROPA 6 as approved by the Region to just over 300ha.

The significance of the volume of lands added by the Minister necessitates the immediate development of a secondary plan for Baden and New Hamburg.

The Township of Wilmot Official Plan provides the overall mission and policies for managing growth, protecting resources and promoting economic development in the Township of Wilmot and within the Township Urban Settlement Areas of Baden and New Hamburg.

Secondary Plans are more detailed plans for specific areas within the community that identifies land use planning, community design, transportation and municipal infrastructure needs to accommodate long term growth – in this case for all lands inside the Countryside Line.

The secondary planning exercise will also identify an appropriate staging plan for growth to ensure that its implementation balances the needs of the community with the need increase the rate of housing construction in Ontario.

BACKGROUND:

The Region of Waterloo describes the Regional Official Plan (ROP) as:

“Regional Council’s long-term strategy for guiding and integrating growth management, development, land use, infrastructure planning, together with financial and capital investment.” (Report PDL-CPL-23-017 June 6, 2023)

The Region began a review of its Official Plan in 2018 which culminated in the adoption of ROPA 6 in August 2022. ROPA 6 was subsequently approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs on April 11, 2023 with 12 modifications. The approved document is attached as Attachment 1.

The most significant modification was the addition of Policy 2.J.14:

2.J.14 For the lands added to the Urban Area or the Township Urban Area on Map 1, the Designated Greenfield Area on Map 2, and the Urban Area / Township Urban Area on Map 3, Area Municipalities shall identify appropriate land use designations, including the identification of employment lands, with consideration of applicable provincial policies and guidelines.

The intent of this policy is to implement Option 1 for community area and 15% intensification for employment area land needs as identified in the final Land Needs Assessment from staff report PDL-CDL-22-20, considered by Regional Council on June 29, 2022.

Nothing in this policy precludes proponents from initiating planning applications or undertaking secondary planning in advance of the area municipalities’ next official plan update.

In Wilmot the effect of this new policy was the designation of all lands inside the Countryside Line for development as community area (residential, institutional, commercial) and employment area (industrial). Attachment 2 compares the impact of ROPA 6 as adopted versus ROPA 6 as approved by the Minister.

ROPA 6, as adopted by Regional Council added only 35ha of Community Area and 15ha of Employment Area to Wilmot Township to accommodate growth to the year 2051. The Ministers approval increased the amount of Community Area to approximately 287ha while maintaining the additional 35ha of Employment Area. The Ministers approval eliminated the specific density and intensification projections for Wilmot contained within ROPA 6 allowing the community greater flexibility to determine the appropriate density and mix of housing required in Wilmot.

REPORT:

The modification by the Minister to ROPA 6 is significant for Wilmot Township and, in the opinion of staff, beneficial as it allows for the proper and orderly planning of the municipality over the long term.

Specifically, ROPA 6 as approved by the Region of Waterloo added only limited amounts of lands to Baden and New Hamburg at such a small scale that the necessity of a large scale secondary planning exercise was largely questionable.

Essentially the effect of ROPA 6, as adopted, would have been continued fringe development of the two communities, as they grow together, by essentially adding one additional subdivision to each community to 2051.

The Minister's decision appropriately treats the entire volume of lands within the Countryside Line as a whole and provides the opportunity for the community to engage in a visioning exercise of what the ultimate land use and servicing strategy for the community should be.

It dramatically speeds up the development of new housing by eliminating the necessity for future Regional Official Plan Amendments and aligns with the stated expectation of Bill 23 that will see local municipalities assume responsibility for land use planning.

By developing a plan for the whole of the lands infrastructure investments can be efficiently and effectively staged to maximize the return on investment and to ensure that a more complete community is developed in alignment with the longstanding vision of Wilmot's concentrated growth model.

With Option 1, referenced by the Ministers decision, identifying an additional 13,700 people being added to the community to 2051 it represents essentially the doubling of the existing combined population of Baden and New Hamburg.

Wilmot has a very unique opportunity to create a highly desirable, walkable and accessible community that enhances the existing communities of Baden and New Hamburg. Effectively a

secondary planning exercise will provide the community with the opportunity to envision what a third, central community will look like. It will contemplate the density and range of housing types and affordabilities' that should be provided and are needed, the active transportation network that should connect the new community to existing Baden and New Hamburg communities, the integration of road networks and supportive commercial development and the integration of the new community with the expanding employment lands.

In addition, it will assess the servicing and infrastructure requirements to ensure that the growth is sustainable and maximizes the efficiency of infrastructure investments.

To that end, and recognizing that the Minister's approval provides that development interests can proceed with applications in advance of local Official Plan updates, staff recommend that Council provide direction to staff to proceed with drafting a terms of reference for a comprehensive secondary plan and to issue the requisite request for proposals (RFP) to complete same.

Staff anticipate that the RFP would be issued in late July and that the successful bid would be brought to Council for approval early in September. The timeline for completion of the secondary plan would be expected to be fall of 2024 which reasonably should not unduly delay any pending applications triggered by the Ministers decision.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

Preparing a Secondary Plan to plan the long term integrated growth and development of the community aligns with all five goals of the Wilmot Strategic Plan being Responsible Governance, Community Engagement, Quality of Life, Economic Prosperity and Environmental Protection.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The 10 year capital budget for Development Services includes a total of \$435,000 for Secondary Planning activities including \$210,000 in 2024 and \$125,000 in 2025 for Greenfield Land Use and Servicing Secondary Planning in Baden and New Hamburg as well as \$100,000 in 2024 for Baden and New Hamburg Urban Growth Centre Studies. The latter will assess reasonable intensification opportunities and servicing / infrastructure limitations and would be incorporated into the Secondary Plan.

Beginning the Secondary Planning exercise in 2023 should not reasonably impact the 2023 budget significantly as billing would largely be expected to begin in late 2023.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Ministers Approval of ROPA 6

Attachment 2: Visualization of Wilmot Impact of ROPA 6 vs Ministers Approved ROPA 6