



Committee of the Whole

Meeting Date: December 10, 2024

Submitted by: Abby Heddle-Jacobs, Planner, Policy Focus

Subject: County Official Plan Update – Section 26 Meeting Background

BACKGROUND:

As Council will recall, the Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (PPS) came into force on October 20, 2024, and all land use planning decisions made as of that date shall be consistent with the new PPS. The PPS encompasses a single, province-wide land use planning policy instrument that provides direction to planning authorities on matters of provincial interest. Several other land use planning changes have recently been made as part of the Provincial 'Housing Supply Action Plan'.

The Planning Act and the PPS require that planning authorities keep their Official Plans up-to-date to ensure that they provide clear, reasonable and attainable policies to protect provincial interests and facilitate suitable development. As such, the County may wish to update the County's Official Plan to bring it into conformity with the new PPS. It is noted that the last update of the County Official Plan was approved by the Province relatively recently, in July 2023.

The Planning Act prescribes a process for updating an Official Plan and requires as a first step that the County hold a special 'Section 26' meeting of Council, open to the public, to discuss the revisions to the County Official Plan that may be required. Further, Section 26(5) of the Planning Act requires that Council have regard for any written submissions on this matter and give any person who attends the special meeting an opportunity to be heard on the subject.

ANALYSIS:

The special 'Section 26' public meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday January 14th at 3:00 pm, following the regular meeting of County Council. Staff are undertaking the statutory public notice requirements in accordance with the Planning Act. The meeting will take a hybrid format allowing those who wish to attend to participate virtually or in-person. The meeting will begin with a short presentation by County staff followed by an opportunity for those in attendance to, if they wish, make a presentation to County

Council. At this meeting, Council may give direction to staff to update, or not, the Official Plan.

If Council gives direction to staff to undertake an update to the Official Plan, a six-phase study process is proposed:

Phase 1: Project Initiation – at the commencement of the Official Plan Update, Section 26 of the Planning Act requires that Council hold a special public meeting to discuss potential revisions to the Official Plan and to ultimately give direction to launch the Official Plan Update process. This meeting is scheduled to take place on January 14th, 2025, at 3:00pm.

Phase 2: Background Reports and Policy Formulation – a background and policy formulation process would be undertaken including the completion of reports by topic area in support of the Official Plan Update. Topic areas to be considered as part of this exercise include Growth and Development, Housing, Agriculture, and Economy.

Phase 3: Draft Official Plan Amendment Refinement – in addition to consultation undertaken on topic specific areas, a Draft Working Copy Official Plan Amendment would be completed for stakeholder, agency and public review. Revised documents would be prepared based upon the comments received.

Phase 4: Middlesex 2056 Engagement – the Public Engagement phase ('Middlesex 2056') would include updated web content, undertaking of social and traditional media messaging, outreach to commenting agencies, collaboration with local municipalities, Indigenous Community outreach, a community survey, the holding of stakeholder workshops, an Open House, and a Public Meeting. On-going engagement with the Middlesex County Planning Advisory Committee would also occur throughout the process.

Phase 5: Finalize Official Plan Amendment – a finalized Proposed Official Plan Amendment would be drafted based on the background reports and input received.





Phase 6: County Council Adoption of Official Plan Amendment – a final Official Plan Amendment No. 4 would be considered for adoption and submission to the Province in accordance with the Planning Act.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The approval of development and the accompanied community growth has indirect long-term financial implications for the County, local municipalities, and partners. The Planning Act states that no public work shall be undertaken, and no by-law shall be passed that does not conform to the official plan.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:

This report aligns with the following Strategic Focus, Goals, or Objectives:

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
Cultivating Community Vitality 	Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and support community wellness Attract, retain, and engage youth in our community
Connecting Through Infrastructure 	Ensure communities are built on a sustainable foundation that is connected and thriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to a sound asset management strategy to maintain and fund critical infrastructure
Strengthening Our Economy 	Encourage a diverse and robust economic base throughout the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support opportunities to create a stronger and sustainable agricultural sector Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments Attract visitors to Middlesex County Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas in Middlesex County
Promoting Service Excellence 	Innovate and transform municipal service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations Build organizational capacity and capabilities

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the County Official Plan Update – Section 26 Meeting Background report be received for information.