



## Council

---

**Meeting Date:** Tuesday, June 14, 2022  
**Submitted by:** Durk Vanderwerff, Director of Planning and Development  
**SUBJECT:** COUNTY OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 3

---

### **BACKGROUND:**

The County's Official Plan is a municipal policy document created under the Planning Act that sets out a land use policy vision based on long-term goals and objectives. The Plan provides a policy framework for topics such as resource management, growth management, and the provision of physical services by dealing with issues of Provincial and County interest. The Official Plan recognizes the planning powers and authorities vested in local municipalities and does not set out detailed local policies.

The Plan is Council's primary tool for making land use decisions and managing physical change and provides a way to evaluate and settle conflicting land uses while meeting local, County and Provincial interests. 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.

Over the next 25 years, it is expected that the County will grow at a faster rate than the previous 25 years with the population projected to increase to as many as 115,000 people. Managing this growth while at the same time protecting agriculture and the natural environment is a key challenge.

The purpose of the proposed Amendment No. 3 is to update the County Official Plan to ensure that the land use planning policies are current, reflect Provincial legislation and policy, have regard for matters of Provincial interest and any guideline documents, are consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), and reflect changing community needs for the next 25-years. Amendment No. 3 applies to the entire County of Middlesex.

The primary subject matter initiatives, undertaken in support of the Official Plan Review, and considered by the County's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), can be summarized within ten topic areas.

**Provincial Change** – the County Official Plan acts as a 'bridge' between Provincial Policy and local municipal official plans by providing guidance to local plans but at a level of

detail reflective of upper tier policies. Working with the Province, a 'Review of the Official Plan for Compliance with Provincial Changes' background report was completed.

**Transportation** – a strong and efficient transportation system has been a key long-term priority of Middlesex County and, therefore, represents an important component of the Official Plan. A review of the Transportation System policies was undertaken, and separately, a Cycling Strategy was completed and endorsed by County Council.

**Agriculture** – is the predominant land use within the County and an important component of the economy and culture. Middlesex County's agricultural lands and agricultural operations are important locally, provincially, and nationally. A review of agricultural issues was undertaken including minimum farm parcel size, surplus dwellings, and changed Provincial agricultural policy.

**Population and Housing Forecasts** – are included within the Official Plan and are intended to be used by the County and local municipalities to assist in managing growth and development. Growth Forecasts were completed to reflect a 25-year planning horizon, Provincial projections, and the rapid development that is occurring within the County.

**Drinking Source Water Protection** – the Clean Water Act is intended to ensure the protection of municipal drinking water sources and, subsequently, human health and the environment. A review was undertaken working with local municipalities and conservation authorities to establish Source Water Protection policy for the County.

**Natural Heritage** – the County's Natural Heritage system, made up of features such as woodlands, wetlands, valley lands, and watercourses, provides important environmental, social and economic benefits. The existing Official Plan contains strong natural heritage protection policies but with a focus on the protection of individual woodlands and wetlands. The PPS requires a move from the protection of 'natural heritage features' to the protection of the 'natural heritage system'. To support this, the Middlesex Natural Heritage System Study was completed.

**Economy and Strategic Direction** – County Council approved two significant strategic documents independent of the Official Plan Review: Corporate Strategic Plan and Economic Development Strategy Update. A policy exercise was undertaken to ensure that the County's land use planning policies are aligned with these documents.

**Development** – across the County, building and development has significantly increased across all types of applications. A review was undertaken of the evolving building forms including apartment buildings and other infilling proposals; forms that have not traditionally occurred within Middlesex.

**Housing** – is a complex issue that has important implications for local communities. The Official Plan review did not include a complete review of housing issues as the County is

undertaking a separate 'Attainable Housing Review' that will examine the housing continuum and identify gaps in the provision of housing and corresponding strategies. Enhanced housing policies are proposed at this time however a future separate amendment to the Official Plan will be considered to implement the findings of the 'Attainable Housing Review'.

**Additional Considerations** – engagement with Indigenous Communities was initiated as part of the Official Plan Review and it is proposed to acknowledge, within the Official Plan, the unique relationship that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples have with the land. There are minor or technical changes to be made to update wording to reflect changed Provincial or other terminology, update mapping schedules to reflect newer information, and to include overall subject areas throughout the Official Plan such as Climate Change and Healthy Communities. As well, enabling language was developed to allow for the future inclusion of a Village of Newbury chapter into the County Official Plan instead of a separate stand-alone official plan document.

Subject to further input from County Council, the Official Plan Amendment No. 3 would:

- incorporate new Provincial legislation and policies including bringing the Official Plan into consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement while having regard for matters of Provincial interest,
- implement new County policy initiatives and plans including the Cycling Strategy, Corporate Strategic Plan, and the Economic Development Strategy Update,
- represents sound land use planning,
- guide growth over a 25-year period to 2046, and
- reflect where possible input received through the Middlesex 2046 Engagement.

This report represents the conclusion of the Official Plan Review. This report gives an overview of the process taken, a summary of the Middlesex 2046 Engagement campaign, examines the proposed changes and input received over ten topic areas, outlines the legislative requirements, and recommends approval of Amendment No. 3 subject to any further direction from Council.

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **1.0 Review Process**

The Official Plan Review involved a six-phase study process:

**Phase 1: Project Initiation** – at the commencement of the Official Plan Review, Council held a public meeting to discuss the revisions that might be required in accordance with Section 26 of the Planning Act. Council gave direction to launch the Official Plan Review and an initial consultation was undertaken.

**Phase 2: Background Reports and Policy Formulation** – an extensive background and policy formulation process was undertaken that included both the completion of

reports in support of the Official Plan Review and also the incorporation of separate but related work including: Source Protection Plan Implementation Background Report, Middlesex Natural Heritage System Study, Middlesex County Economic Development Strategy Update, Economic Development Strategic Plan Alignment with Official Plan Final Report, Middlesex County Cycling Strategy, County Official Plan Transportation Policies Report, Review of the County Official Plan for Compliance with Provincial Changes Report, Homeless Prevention & Housing Plan, Population and Housing Projections Report, Middlesex County Strategic and the work of the Middlesex County Planning Advisory Committee.

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

**Phase 4: Middlesex 2046 Engagement** – the Public Engagement phase ('Middlesex 2046') included 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.

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

**Phase 6: County Council to Consider and Adopt Official Plan Amendment** – subject to County Council direction, a final Official Plan Amendment is to be considered for adoption and submission to the Province in accordance with the Planning Act.

## **2.0 Middlesex 2046 Engagement**

Consulting with people who live, work, or volunteer in the County was an important part of the Official Plan Review – a campaign called 'Middlesex 2046'. The purpose of Middlesex 2046 was to engage stakeholders and the broader public in meaningful conversations regarding how the County should plan to accommodate projected growth.

Conversations focused on five primary topics: Agriculture, Natural Heritage, Economy, Development, and Housing. Stakeholders were informed of the other topic areas that the County was considering as part of the Official Plan Review, such as drinking source water protection, however such topics are significantly prescribed by legislation and therefore did not lend themselves to meaningful two-way engagement.

The Middlesex 2046 Consultation Summary Report provides a detailed overview of the campaign objectives, core values, process, tactics, and input received. The rates of participation in the program exceeded previous County policy planning initiatives with the survey having almost 500 respondents from all local municipalities and of those:

- 94% live in Middlesex County,
- 44% work in Middlesex County,
- 26% volunteer in Middlesex County, and
- 49% indicated they were a patron of Middlesex County businesses and attractions.

While many of the engagement opportunities were in a virtual environment, opportunities were made available for input in traditional forms such as the use of hardcopy surveys distributed through the Middlesex County Libraries. The virtual engagement techniques expanded the participation and feedback received when compared to previous methods and can be built upon for future engagement initiatives. Input from Middlesex 2046 is of significant value for the Official Plan Review and is also of value to other County initiatives including the upcoming Attainable Housing Review.

### **3.0 Review Topics**

The primary subject matter initiatives undertaken in support of the Official Plan Review, and considered by the County's PAC, can be summarized within ten topic areas: Provincial Change, Transportation, Agriculture, Population and Housing Forecasts, Drinking Source Water Protection, Natural Heritage, Economy and Strategic Direction, Development, Housing, and Additional Considerations.

### **3.1 Provincial Change**

#### **3.1.1. Overview**

- **The County Official Plan acts as a 'bridge' between Provincial Policy and local municipal official plans by providing guidance at a level of detail reflective of upper tier policies.**
- **Working with the Province, a 'Review of the Official Plan for Compliance with Provincial Changes' Background Report was completed outlining proposed changes based on thematic areas: Agricultural, Housing, Employment Areas, Growth and Density, Natural Heritage and Resources, and General Changes.**
- **The proposed changes have been refined as a result of the Middlesex 2046 Engagement feedback and continued Provincial consultation.**

#### **3.1.2. Analysis**

The overall land use planning framework in Ontario has undergone significant change including updates to the PPS and the release of numerous pieces of Legislation that largely are aimed at protecting matters of provincial interest. GSP Group were engaged to undertake a 'Review of the County Official Plan for Compliance with Provincial Changes' Background Report.

**Agriculture** – the protection of prime agricultural land has long been a matter of Provincial interest and changes to the PPS agricultural policies further entrench this. The PPS directs municipalities to identify and designate all Prime Agricultural Areas within their

jurisdiction. The types and scale of 'other' permitted uses in prime agricultural areas has been clarified through the establishment of agriculture-related use and on-farm diversified use policies within the PPS.

The residence surplus to a farming operation policies of the PPS were updated to require that the lot be "...limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use and appropriate sewage and water services" and be habitable. The PPS was strengthened to require planning authorities to review and evaluate alternative locations for settlement boundary expansions and that any boundary area expansion comply with the minimum distance separation formula.

Amendment No. 3 would address these changes including establishing a continuum of uses within the agricultural area of Home Occupations, On-Farm Diversified Uses, Agri-Tourism Uses, Agriculturally Related Uses, and Farm Businesses. In addition, as addressed elsewhere in this report, policy is proposed to be added to address Additional Residential Units and Farm Labour Accommodation.

**Housing** – there has been long standing Provincial policy support for affordable housing, however, there have been several changes in this area. The cumulative changes add 'affordable housing' as a matter of Provincial Interest; expand on the secondary residential unit policies to allow 'additional residential units', extend temporary garden suites, and require that an appropriate affordable and market-based range and mix of housing be provided.

Housing is addressed in more detail in Section 3.9 but Amendment No. 3 would make changes related to Additional Residential Units, would make the policy connection to the County's Homeless Prevention Plan, and would generally encourage a diversity of housing options.

**Employment Areas** – the Provincial direction on the protection of employment areas has evolved significantly. The Planning Act includes the defined term "area of employment" along with clarification that this refers to manufacturing uses, warehousing uses, office uses, and associated retail uses. The PPS requires planning authorities to protect and preserve employment areas for current and future uses and to ensure the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and projected needs.

Amendment No. 3 would include policy direction for the designation of Rural Employment Lands to accommodate industrial, manufacturing, and creative rural economy uses that typically require a larger building and / or lot but that do not require full municipal services. It would also include enhanced direction concerning the conversion of employment land to non-employment uses under some circumstances.

**Growth / Density** – growth and development pressures are the driving force behind many of the PPS changes. As outlined in the PPS, healthy, liveable and safe communities include many elements such as settlement areas, employment areas and natural areas.

Active transportation is promoted throughout the PPS including in policies for settlement areas, housing, infrastructure, transportation and energy conservation / climate change. Active transportation policies are aimed at reducing the dependency on individual use of private automobiles and the associated impacts of that mode of transportation.

Cultural heritage and archaeology policies of the PPS were updated to require land adjacent to built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes to demonstrate how these features and landscapes will be conserved. The interests of Indigenous Communities also need to be considered in conserving cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

Amendment No. 3 would address the aforementioned Planning Act and PPS requirements including in relation to the promotion of active transportation, and update language concerning the interests of Indigenous Communities.

**Natural Heritage / Natural Resources / Environmental Considerations** – the PPS requires that municipalities (in southern Ontario) identify and protect Natural Heritage Systems and deposits of mineral aggregate resources for the long-term. The PPS was updated to require municipalities to consider the impacts of a changing climate including through the promotion of active transportation, energy conservation, renewable energy systems, and considering impacts of building design and orientation. Amendment No. 3 would include a Natural Heritage System approach by incorporating the Middlesex Natural Heritage System Study and other related changes.

**General Changes** – there have been many other Provincial changes including allowing municipalities to create ‘complete application’ policies within official plans. Amendment No. 3 would incorporate complete application requirements including that applicants are responsible to undertaking all such work as well as any peer-review costs.

### **3.1.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement**

Prior to the Middlesex 2046 Engagement, the Provincial Changes Background Report involved extensive work with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and they have been kept aware of all steps in the Official Plan Review. Through the Middlesex 2046 Engagement, the consultation on matters of Provincial policy was limited given that many such areas are largely prescribed.

In more recent discussions with the Province, some additional changes have been identified including related to culture, servicing, wildfires, and additional minor or technical changes (Sections 2.1, 2.2.1.2, 2.4.5, and 2.4.7). There remains one outstanding matter at the time of writing this report and it appears unlikely to be resolved in the near-term. The Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry are considering how wetlands should be addressed as part of the natural heritage system or as component features. It is noted that any adopted official plan amendment must be

approved by the Ministry and this matter could be addressed through modification if necessary.

The City of London and a private developer provided comments that relate to an interpretation of the settlement area policies of the PPS. In summary, it is their position that the County should establish defined settlement area boundaries within the County Official Plan and the private developer would further advocate that those boundaries should direct additional growth to certain settlement areas.

It has been the practice of Middlesex County that the Official Plan identify areas where growth will be directed by conceptually identifying settlements. The Plan requires development to occur in settlement areas but allows the extent of the settlement areas to be established through local official plan processes which are subject to review and approval by County Council. The County's approach is an atypical approach in southwestern Ontario.

The requested move toward a stronger County role in settlement area delineation would be an important undertaking and would require the completion of a county-wide Growth Management Study and significant changes to the Official Plan structure. As such, it is proposed that Amendment No. 3 proceed without making this change and that this matter be further considered by County Council (with additional background information) as part of the 2023 budget process. It is noted that a number of the other changes suggested by the City of London are proposed to be included (Sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2, and 3.2.1).

Comments were also provided by a private developer that the County should not identify the agricultural areas as a 'Prime Agricultural Area' through the Official Plan. It is a requirement of the PPS for the County to identify the Prime Agricultural Area and the County's agricultural areas are, by definition, a Prime Agricultural Area (where prime agricultural lands predominate). Approximately 86% of the County's land base is comprised of prime agricultural soils (Classes 1 to 3 soils) and of the soils classified for agriculture, approximately 98% are prime agricultural soils.

## **3.2 Transportation**

### **3.2.1 Overview**

- **A strong and efficient Transportation System has been a key long-term priority of Middlesex County and therefore represents an important component of the Official Plan.**
- **Background work included a review of the Transportation System policies and a Cycling Strategy; both reports were endorsed by County Council.**
- **The proposed changes to the Official Plan would update the Transportation System policies to reflect consistency with the PPS and provide additional policy direction concerning single access communities, cycling, railways, alternative transportation modes, roundabouts, and other matters.**



- **The proposed changes have been refined as a result of the Middlesex 2046 Engagement feedback.**

### **3.2.2 Analysis**

The Transportation System policies, primarily found in Section 2.4.2 of the Official Plan, are proposed to be updated to reflect the following.

The PPS introduced more robust transportation policies including supporting active transportation, coordination between municipalities and other levels of government, recognizing additional elements to healthy communities, strengthening the protection for provincially planned transportation corridors, and promoting land use compatibility for lands adjacent to corridors.

Several changes to the transportation policies are proposed that would provide greater consistency with the PPS:

- include additional support for active transportation modes to promote opportunities for physical activity and cost effective travel and healthy communities,
- include additional support for a variety of transportation modes for all road users,
- include additional direction regarding the protection of corridors, and,
- incorporate a 'transportation system' approach.

The Planning Act empowers municipalities to acquire land for road widening purposes as a condition of one of three types of applications (consent, subdivision / condominium, or site-plan) provided the road to be widened and the extent of the widening is described in an Official Plan. The County Official Plan, using text and a map schedule identifies the County Roads and their required right-of-way widths.

The purpose of obtaining the necessary road widening is to accommodate any future road works, utility needs and to accommodate and maintain bridges, ditches, culverts and other road infrastructure. Obtaining land dedications through the planning process reduces taxpayer costs related to the purchase of land to accommodate future road works and to address existing right of way deficiencies and is widely accepted within Ontario. Further, the increased separation of buildings and structures on private property associated with widenings benefit the County relative to road construction and maintenance costs.

It is proposed that the Official Plan be amended to include specific language that states that a road widening may be taken from both 'severed' and 'retained' parcels created by way of a consent application. This practice is common in many municipalities and has been undertaken by the County since County Council provided a policy interpretation on this a number of years ago. Although the existing wording is sufficient to allow this, additional clarity is proposed.

Single access communities may be described as a residential area that has only one shared vehicular entrance and exit. These can include entire developments (such as condominium communities), or portions of development (such as a plan of subdivision incorporating cul-de-sacs). While single access communities have always existed, the traditional grid street layout has limited their presence.

A number of concerns have been identified with single access communities primarily related to emergency access. In addition, such communities have also come to be viewed as a design that impedes both social interaction and physical activity as it encourages the reliance on vehicles. Accordingly, a number of policy amendments are proposed to further encourage development patterns based on a grid, modified grid or fused grid pattern, for the purpose of promoting community design that is safe and that facilitates both physical activity and social interaction.

While roundabouts are a relatively new type of intersection control to be considered within Middlesex County, they are increasing in popularity in many areas across the Province. There are a number of benefits roundabouts have over traditional intersections, the most compelling of which is their improvement to road safety achieved through the reduction in traffic speeds and contact points between vehicles and the reduction of left-hand, right-angle (T-bone) and head-on crashes. Other benefits to roundabouts include: providing for more efficient movement of traffic; shorter traffic stops and delays; less air and noise pollution; and, lower maintenance costs.

That being said, there are three common disadvantages associated with roundabouts, being the initial high cost of construction, the potential for a larger footprint than a typical four-way intersection, and additional design work required to accommodate a full range of transportation modes, including farm vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

Proposed changes would provide direction on when improvements to County Road intersections may include traffic efficiency and safety measures, including roundabouts. The County Official Plan would continue to defer to the local municipality with respect to the preferred method of intersection control along local roads. It is also proposed to include additional wording within the Transportation Policies to generally encourage the consideration of safety for all road users in road design.

Alternative transportation modes, including electric and self-driving vehicles and buses have the potential to fundamentally disrupt our current 'car-centric' principals of land use planning and design within the current 25 year land use planning horizon. Accordingly, staff have reviewed the existing transportation policies for the purpose of identifying opportunities to encourage active transportation (including walking and cycling) and facilities to support energy efficient active and alternative modes of transportation both at the County and local level. The proposed policies would encourage greater electric vehicle usage through the provision of public and private vehicle charging infrastructure

within development near major roads and within higher density commercial, employment, and residential developments.

The Railway Association of Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities prepared a guide for new development in proximity to railways. The guidelines propose building setbacks, noise and vibration influence areas, security fencing and warning clause guidelines. It is however noted that while there is no legislation requiring the inclusion within an official plan of the guidelines, it appears to be a best practice that was developed by municipalities and the railway operators. Reference to the guidelines is proposed to be included in the Official Plan.

Middlesex County Council has supported the development of a long-range cycling strategy to improve cycling in Middlesex, for people of all ages and cycling ability. The cycling strategy will:

- create a plan for a connected network of on and off-road cycling routes throughout the County to connect major destinations, points of interest, natural areas, etc.;
- make cycling more convenient and enjoyable for residents and visitors;
- provide County and Local Municipal staff with tools to help with decision-making related to cycling; and
- promote Middlesex County as a cycling destination within Ontario.

The proposed transportation policies would incorporate the key findings of the cycling strategy and otherwise reference the cycling strategy document.

### **3.2.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement**

It is noted that prior to the Middlesex 2046 Engagement, the development of the cycling strategy was subject to an extensive public consultation program that included on-line questionnaire, an interactive mapping tool, open houses / drop-in sessions, and consultations with partners including local municipalities.

Through the Middlesex 2046 Engagement, the transportation networks within Middlesex County were generally viewed as positive, except public transit. While the community transportation pilot was viewed as a positive development, participants noted significant enhancements would be necessary to connect current and prospective employees to local job opportunities. It was noted, not surprisingly, that at present, it is difficult to travel to employment, school, healthcare, and shopping without access to a vehicle. The need for County Roads to accommodate all road users including automobiles, cyclists, and farm equipment was highlighted and the generally wider road allowances and paved surfaces were noted as being desirable.

Through the agency consultation process, the Middlesex-London Health Unit provided written submissions related to the transportation policies. The Health Unit's interest in transportation policies is based upon their underlying mandate to "support the creation of

healthy public policy related to reducing exposures to health hazards and promoting the development of healthy built and natural environments.”. The proposed changes to the Transportation policies have been updated to reflect the comments provided by the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

Finally, Amendment No. 3 includes enhanced wording to address the protection of existing pipeline infrastructure based upon discussions with Enbridge Gas.

### **3.3 Agriculture**

#### **3.3.1 Overview**

- **Agriculture is the predominant land use within the County and an important component of the economy and culture.**
- **A review of agricultural issues was undertaken and considerable input was received through Middlesex 2046 Engagement and discussion at the PAC.**
- **Proposed changes would address Farm Labour Accommodation, Minimum Farm Parcel Size, Surplus Dwellings, Manure, Biosolids and Septage Storage, a Notwithstanding Policy and Other Uses / Flexibility.**
- **The proposed changes have been refined as a result of the Middlesex 2046 Engagement feedback.**

#### **3.3.2. Analysis**

Agriculture is the most significant land use within Middlesex County and a major contributor to the local economy and culture. The PAC agricultural discussion was initiated with the following quote: *“The decisions made today will fundamentally affect options available for future generations. The ability to produce food, to regulate the system of production to reflect the values of society, to maintain the important economic contributions of agriculture, and to retain the important role that farmers play in managing the countryside is dependent on retaining farmers and the lands essential to their livelihood.”* \_Caldwell.

**Farm Labour Accommodation** – temporary foreign workers have a significant role within the agricultural and food production industries. Due in part to an aging farm population, limited availability of family farm labour, and increases in the size and scale of farm operations, the demand for temporary foreign workers has increased over time and it is expected that this trend will continue. Outbreaks of COVID-19 among farm workers has been a significant public health issue and resulted in changes to the Federal Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. As a result, some farm operators are seeking to build additional living structures with independent eating / washroom / amenity facilities.

The PPS recognizes on-farm buildings for accommodation for full-time farm labour as an agricultural use when the size and nature of an operation require additional employment. OMAFRA’s Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Agricultural Areas directs farmers to locate

housing for farm-labour within existing building clusters on agricultural parcels, and if not feasible, on lower priority agricultural lands, provided MDS requirements are met.

Amendment No. 3 would provide for the permanent establishment of on-farm accommodation (the plan currently only supports temporary use) and directs that local official plans address matters such as location, size, services, access, MDS, etc.

**Minimum Farm Parcel Size** – a key component of managing the agricultural resource is the general discouragement of agricultural lot creation to avoid the unwarranted fragmentation of agricultural land and to ensure that viable agricultural parcels are available to support current and future farming practices. The existing Official Plan limits the creation of new farm parcels to ‘about 40 hectares’ (100 acres) in size for both the severed and retained parcels.

It is argued that farming practices are supported by larger farm parcels:

- operationally more efficient (tile drainage, large farm equipment, etc),
- maintain greater flexibility,
- more suitable for livestock,
- less expensive on a per-hectare basis, and
- less likely to face non-farmer ownership competition.

In contrast, it is argued that smaller farm parcels:

- less expensive to purchase,
- support young farmers,
- support specialty farm operations,
- support local food initiatives, and
- support value added agricultural.

The PPS only permits lot creation in prime agricultural areas for agricultural uses provided that the lots are of a size appropriate for the type of agricultural uses common in the area and are sufficiently large to maintain flexibility for future changes in the type or size of agricultural operations.

Stovel and Associates undertook an Agricultural Parcel Size Analysis on behalf of the County and presented their findings to the PAC:

- Middlesex contains a diverse and healthy agricultural system,
- variations in existing farm sizes can be attributed mainly to past and present agricultural trends and fragmenting factors such as railways, highways, and rivers,
- averages heavily influenced by numbers of small often non-farm parcels,
- in terms of the word ‘common’, the County has a range of farm parcel sizes and arable parcels regardless of size are cultivated,
- 5 of 7 municipalities in the range of 38 ha as typical lot size,

- 2 of 7 municipalities in the range of 30 ha as typical lot size, and
- a 38 ha (94 acre) minimum size recommended to provide opportunity to establish new livestock operations and flexible operations.

The PAC discussed this issue over two meetings and made the recommendation that the ‘about 40 hectares’ (100 acres) policy be maintained with the addition of the following qualifier policy for local municipalities: “A different minimum farm parcel size for local municipalities may be considered through an amendment to the County Official Plan provided that a study is carried out by the local municipality with the guidance and assistance of the Province, to demonstrate that the different farm parcel size is appropriate for the type of agricultural uses common in the local area, yet is sufficiently large enough to maintain flexibility for future changes to the type or size of agricultural operations.”.

**Residence Surplus to a Farming Operation** – in order to protect agricultural land for long-term agricultural use and to avoid land use conflicts, new residential lots are prohibited within the agricultural area with one exception – a Residence Surplus to a Farming Operation. On average, there are 44 such applications annually within Middlesex.

Amendment No. 3 would update the surplus dwelling policies such that the lot must be “limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use and appropriate sewage and water services”, that the dwelling be “habitable”, and that the current 1999 cut-off-date be changed to “at least 10-years prior”.

Through the work of the PAC, Amendment No. 3 also includes policy direction that local official plans address considerations including minimizing the loss of agricultural land, addressing the retention of outbuildings with the residence surplus to a farming operation including maximum building size and permitted uses, adequacy of services, and Minimum Distance Separation.

**Manure, Biosolids and Septage Storage** – Amendment No. 3 would acknowledge that such activities are regulated by other levels of government and are a component of agricultural activities. The proposed policy would however indicate that storage and/or processes of non-agricultural source materials such as biosolids for the purpose of distribution are considered industrial uses and therefore subject to site plan control to mitigate land use conflicts and address matters such as stormwater management, setbacks, screening, buffering, etc.

**Notwithstanding Policy** – the Planning Act controls the division of land and is technical and legal and therefore can lead to situations where abutting properties that were separately conveyable properties merge as a result of being in the exact same name / ownership. The Planning Act has recently been changed to deal with the inadvertent merger as a result of the death of a spouse but does not address other cases of merger.

Based on discussion and input of the PAC, Amendment No. 3 would include a general policy to allow a local municipality to consider a “..consent to sever previously separate parcels that merged..”.

**Other Uses and Flexibility** – the proposed changes would establish a continuum of uses within the agricultural area of Home Occupations, On-Farm Diversified Uses, Agri-Tourism uses, Agriculturally Related Uses, and Farm Businesses.

### **3.3.3. Middlesex 2046 Consultation**

The need to protect agricultural land for future generations of farming was a key theme across all workshops and the public open house. Many participants stressed that, once paved, farmland is lost forever with negative implications for future farmers, local food security, and environmental concerns. Participants indicated that, to protect farmland, future urban development should be denser and not expand into agricultural land. There was strong support for inclusion of a cut-off date in relation to surplus dwelling consents.

Participants were somewhat open to flexibility for uses indirectly related to farming operations, such as agri-business, agri-tourism, multi-generational housing, and housing for farm labour, but caution was also expressed concerning uses that are not related to agriculture such as vehicle storage, warehousing, etc.. As such, proposed policies focus on agriculturally related and supportive uses including On Farm Diversified Uses with the evaluation criteria emphasizing the relationship to the underlying farm operation.

There was not consensus on minimum requirements for new farm sizes. While participants felt strongly about the need to protect agricultural land for future generations, some felt smaller parcels would allow for easier entry for new farming operations. Others felt that land costs per hectare are not a significant barrier to entry. Most, if not all, participants agreed that, regardless of the minimum farm size, land should be used for farming and not as large residential lots. Larger on-farm uses such as ‘rural event venues’ remain an issue without consensus and Amendment No. 3 would generally allow such uses subject to criteria within local official plans and in most cases a local official plan amendment.

## **3.4 Population and Housing Forecasts**

### **3.1.1. Overview**

- **Population and Housing Forecasts are included within the Official Plan and are intended to be used by the County and local municipalities to assist in managing growth and development.**
- **Growth Forecasts to reflect a 25-year planning horizon, Provincial projections, and the rapid development that is occurring within the County were undertaken.**
- **The proposed changes would include reference to the updated projections,**

### 3.1.2. Analysis

Population Projections are included within the Official Plan and are intended to be used by the County and local municipalities to assist in managing growth and development. The projections have been updated to reflect the current 25-year planning horizon and the rapid development that is occurring within the County (as best can be captured), and the passing of time.

To support this work, Watson & Associates Economists (Watson) were engaged to update the County's projections. They reviewed the projections against the broader economic and demographic changes occurring within southwestern Ontario and Middlesex County, updated the projections, and provided detailed demographic analysis related to age cohorts, headship rates, housing propensity trends, scenario testing, and housing forecasts.

Three growth scenarios (Low, Reference and High) were completed for each local municipality based upon assumptions including differing levels of within Ontario migration. Under all three growth scenarios, all local municipalities are anticipated to experience moderate to strong growth:

- Under the Low Scenario, the County's population is forecast to increase from 74,000 in 2016 to 96,300 in 2046, which represents an annual population growth rate of 0.9%. This would result in a housing growth rate of 1.3% annually.
- Under the Reference Scenario, the County's population is forecast to increase to 107,600 by 2046, representing an annual growth rate of 1.3%. This would result in a housing growth rate of 1.7% annually.
- Under the High Scenario, the County's population is forecast to increase to 115,000 by 2046, representing an annual growth rate of 1.5%. This would result in a housing growth rate of 1.9% annually.

The inclusion of growth scenarios allows municipalities to select a forecast that is appropriate for their local circumstances. It is important to note that it is a requirement of the PPS for the County Official Plan to identify and allocate population and housing projections. The County Plan does not however constrain municipalities from realizing growth at a faster or slower rate than the projections. It is not the intention of the County Official Plan to limit well planned growth.



Figure 2  
Middlesex County  
Population Forecast Scenarios, 2016 to 2046

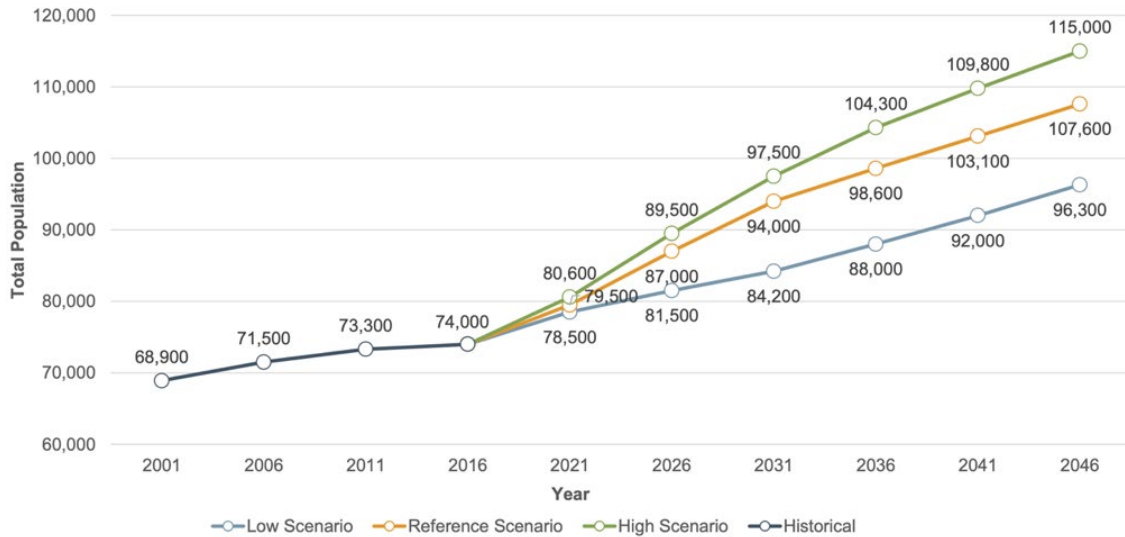
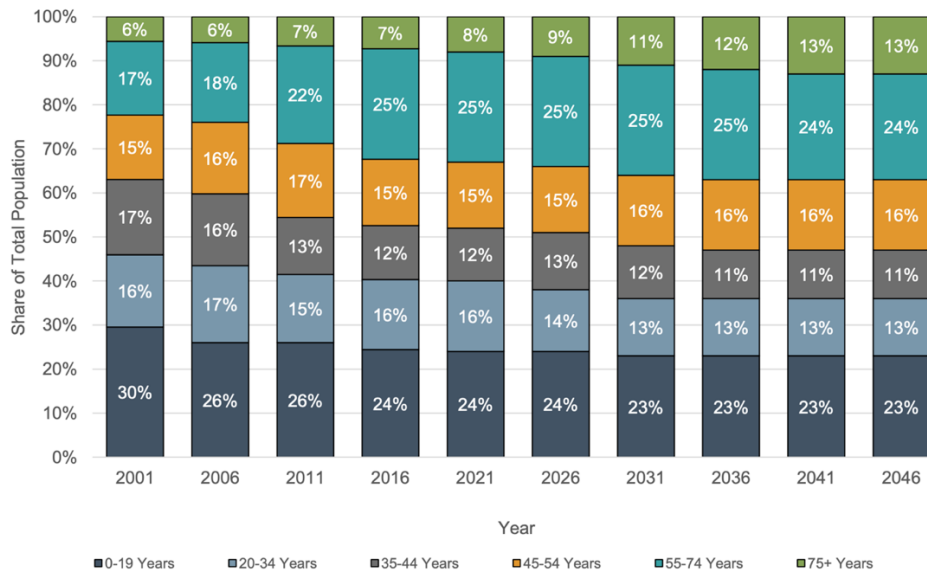


Figure 1  
Middlesex County  
Population Forecast by Age Group

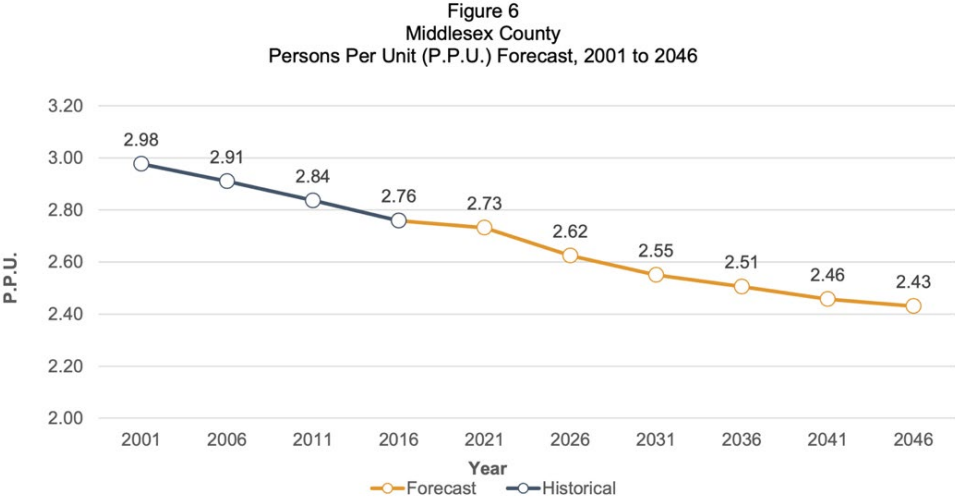


The population forecast by major age group highlights certain population age structure trends. The average age of the population in the County is getting older, similar to the Province as a whole. This is primarily due to the large concentration of Baby Boomers (empty-nesters and young seniors) between 56 and 74 years of age (born 1946 to 1964) which represents approximately a quarter of the total population.

Ultimately, the aging of the population will continue to place downward pressure on County-wide population growth and labour force participation while at the same time increasing demand for housing (at relatively higher densities), amenities, and community services within the County’s larger urban areas.

Future population growth, as well as associated housing needs will largely be driven by the “Millennial” generation and “Generation Z”. A diverse range of housing by both type and tenure (ownership and rental) are anticipated to be required to accommodate these groups. Watson note that the extent to which Middlesex County can capitalize on potential demand from these groups is subject to a number of economic and socio-economic variables such as relative housing costs, local and regional employment opportunities, technological disruption and advancement, fuel costs, lifestyle preferences, local amenities, community services, and perceived quality of life.

Forecast trends in population age structure provide insights into future housing needs based on anticipated average household occupancy. Over the long-term planning horizon, the estimated Persons Per Unit (PPU) levels for the County are forecast to continue to decline to 2.43 in 2046.



Watson observe that relative to the past, it is anticipated that housing demand will shift more towards medium / high density housing (townhomes, apartments) from low-density housing (single-detached).

### 3.2.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement

The Middlesex 2046 Engagement was predicated upon the forecast that over the next 25 years the County will grow at a faster rate. During Middlesex 2046 Engagement the preliminary 2021 Census Population and Dwelling numbers were released by Statistics Canada which demonstrates the strong growth occurring within Middlesex.

The following charts provide a comparison of the 2021 Watson forecasts and the actual 2021 Census. The forecast Watson 2021 population numbers exceed the actual 2021 Census numbers except for the Township of Lucan Biddulph.

POPULATION	Census	Census	Census	Annualized	Estimate	County Projections		
	2016	2021	% Change	% Growth		2022	Low 2021	Reference 2021
Adelaide Metcalfe	2,990	3,011	0.7%	0.14%	3,015	3,100	3,200	3,170
Lucan Biddulph	4,700	5,680	20.9%	3.86%	5,899	5,400	5,500	5,570
Middlesex Centre	17,262	18,928	9.7%	1.86%	19,280	19,300	19,600	20,080
Newbury	466	440	-5.6%	-1.14%	435	490	500	500
North Middlesex	6,352	6,307	-0.7%	-0.14%	6,298	6,600	6,600	6,610
Southwest Middlesex	5,723	5,893	3.0%	0.59%	5,928	5,900	6,000	5,980
Strathroy-Caradoc	20,867	23,871	14.4%	2.73%	24,522	23,300	23,700	24,100
Thames Centre	13,191	13,980	6.0%	1.17%	14,143	14,400	14,600	14,720
<b>Middlesex County</b>	<b>71,551</b>	<b>78,110</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>1.77%</b>	<b>79,492</b>	<b>78,490</b>	<b>79,700</b>	<b>80,730</b>
London	383,822	422,324	10.0%	1.93%				
Middlesex Census Division	455,526	500,563	9.9%	1.90%				

DWELLINGS	Census	Census	Census	Annualized	Estimate	County Projections		
	2016	2021	% Change	% Growth		2022	Low 2021	Reference 2021
Adelaide Metcalfe	992	1,013	2.1%	0.42%	1,017	1,020	1,020	1,030
Lucan Biddulph	1,785	2,115	18.5%	3.45%	2,188	1,970	2,010	2,040
Middlesex Centre	5,983	6,695	11.9%	2.27%	6,847	6,550	6,650	6,760
Newbury	179	187	4.5%	0.88%	189	180	180	180
North Middlesex	2,336	2,391	2.4%	0.47%	2,402	2,370	2,390	2,380
Southwest Middlesex	2,354	2,407	2.3%	0.45%	2,418	2,390	2,390	2,400
Strathroy-Caradoc	8,294	9,453	14.0%	2.65%	9,704	9,050	9,180	9,320
Thames Centre	4,924	5,186	5.3%	1.04%	5,240	5,240	5,290	5,350
<b>Middlesex County</b>	<b>26,847</b>	<b>29,447</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>1.87%</b>	<b>29,996</b>	<b>28,770</b>	<b>29,110</b>	<b>29,460</b>
London	163,140	174,657	7.1%	1.37%				
Middlesex Census Division	190,045	204,157	7.4%	1.44%				

A private developer provided written comments and presented at the Public Meeting indicating that because the Watson forecasts were completed prior to the release of the 2021 Census, that the forecasts are inaccurate, significantly underestimate growth, that this will result in insufficient land supply within local municipalities, and that updated projections should be undertaken. As shown above, the 2021 Watson forecasts compare favourably with the actual 2021 Census.

In terms of the request to undertake new population projections, although the preliminary 2021 Census numbers have been released, the detailed data necessary to undertake further projections will not be released until September 2022 with any custom Census output for Middlesex a couple of months following that. It is therefore proposed to use the Watson forecasts and that County Council consider as part of the 2023 budget process if updated projections should be undertaken. In related comments, LIBRO Credit Union also

recommended that the County consider minor annual reviews of population projections to capture the changes that can occur rapidly.

When considering population projections, it is also important to note the limitations to this work. Projections are necessarily based on past population statistics and therefore are trend based. This is reasonably accurate for large populations but is more challenging for smaller populations.

Projections are based on assumptions that can be significantly impacted by external factors such as declining birth rates, changes in migration patterns, the aging of the population, changes in life expectancy, and differences in commuting patterns. Those external factors tend to occur at the societal level and are difficult to influence at the municipal level. It can also be some time before those factors are reflected in the Census, in part, because of the inertia of existing populations. A future population is strongly influenced by the current base population such that changes, even significant changes, are moderated by the existing population.

The High Growth Scenario attempts to capture the fact that the County is experiencing greater development activity when compared to the past – it remains to be seen how that translates into sustained population growth. The upward trend in building and development within the County appears to signal changing within-Ontario. Similarly, any impacts because of COVID-19 over the long term are not yet known.

Finally, it is noted that it is the intention of staff to work with local municipalities to develop an annual ‘available land monitoring tool’ to track and identify if sufficient land for future development is available. It is noted that this work also relates to the enhanced provision of development information to the school boards and other partners.

### **3.5 Drinking Source Water Protection**

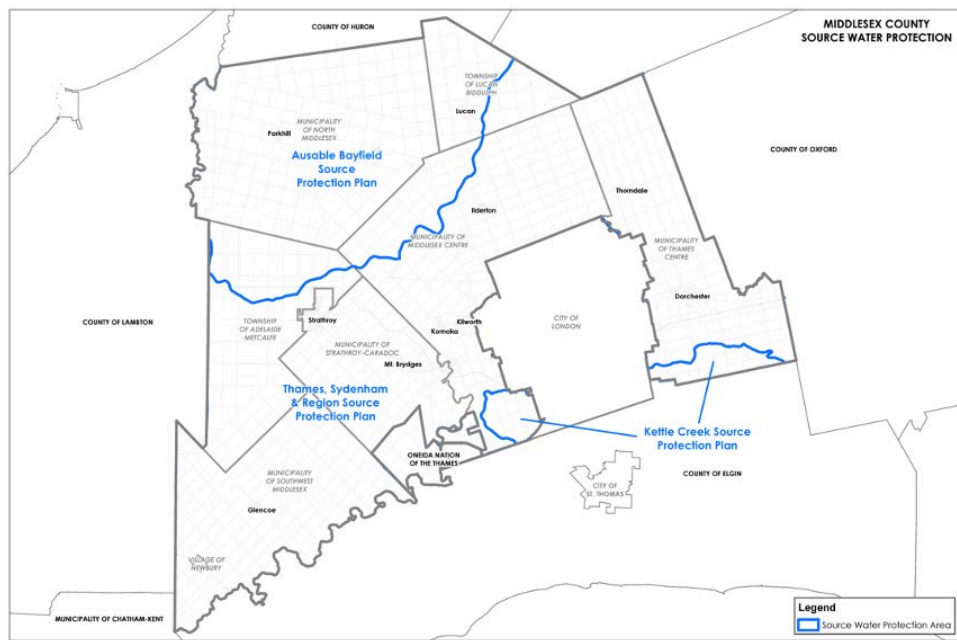
#### **3.5.1. Overview**

- **The Clean Water Act is intended to ensure the protection of municipal drinking water sources and subsequently human health and the environment.**
- **The Act sets out a risk-based process, on a watershed basis, to identify vulnerable areas and associated drinking water threats and issues through the preparation of Assessment Reports and Source Protection Plans.**
- **A review was undertaken working with local municipalities and conservation authorities to establish planning policy for Middlesex County.**
- **The proposed changes would include reference to the Clean Water Act, Source Protection Assessment Reports and Plans, direction for local municipal official plans and zoning by-laws, updated definitions, and a mapping schedule.**

### 3.5.2. Analysis

The Clean Water Act is intended to ensure the protection of municipal drinking water sources and subsequently human health and the environment. The Act sets out a risk-based process, on a watershed basis, to identify vulnerable areas and associated drinking water threats and issues through the preparation of Assessment Reports and Source Protection Plans. Within Middlesex County there are three Source Protection Plans: Thames-Sydenham and Region, Lake Erie, and Ausable Bayfield.

Assessment Reports identify risks to municipal drinking water sources and Source Protection Plans put policies in place to protect sources of drinking water. The intention is to protect existing and future drinking water sources by ensuring that where an activity is or would be a significant threat, that the activity never becomes a significant drinking water threat, or that the activity ceases to be a significant drinking water threat.



Within Middlesex County, there are four Municipal Drinking Source Water Systems that have Wellhead Protection Areas located within the Municipality of Thames Centre (Thorndale and Dorchester) and the Municipality of Middlesex Centre (Birr and Melrose). There also is one Municipal Drinking Source Water System within the adjacent Municipality of Central Elgin (Belmont) that has a Wellhead Protection Area that extends into Middlesex County.

The Clean Water Act requires land use planning decisions to conform to the Significant Threat policies of the Source Protection Plans and to have regard to other policies set out in Source Protection Plans.

A Source Protection Plan Implementation Background Report (MHBC Planning) was completed. The Background Report (1) reviewed the legislative and policy framework

including the Clean Water Act and the PPS, (2) reviewed the Ausable Bayfield, Thames Sydenham and Region, and the Kettle Creek Source Protection Plans including the required policy areas and identifying the differences between the plans, (3) provided options for the County, and (4) recommended a policy framework to be included within the Official Plan.

### **3.5.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement**

Drinking Source Water protection planning is heavily prescribed by the Province and as such there was little input during the Middlesex 2046 Consultation on this topic. It is however noted that the underlying Source Protection Assessment Reports and Source Protection Plans were created based upon substantial public and stakeholder input. Further, the completion of the Background Report included a steering committee of County, local municipal and conservation authority representatives.

## **3.6 Natural Heritage**

### **3.6.1 Overview**

- **The County's Natural Heritage system, made up of features such as woodlands, wetlands, valley lands, and watercourses, provides important environmental, social and economic benefits.**
- **The existing Official Plan contains strong natural heritage protection policies with a focus on the protection of individual woodlands and wetlands.**
- **The PPS requires a move to the protection of the 'natural heritage system'.**
- **To support this, the Middlesex Natural Heritage System Study was undertaken to provide a scientifically based analysis of the Middlesex County landscape.**
- **Proposed changes would move to the protection of the natural heritage system while seeking to accommodate growth.**

### **3.6.2 Analysis**

Natural heritage planning has traditionally been addressed at the time of a planning approvals whereby the nearby woodlots or wetlands are investigated to determine if the development would have an impact on those features. In recent years, land use planning has moved towards a 'systems approach' to natural heritage planning where the connections between features are considered in addition to the individual features.

In this regard, the PPS now requires municipalities to identify natural heritage systems. The PPS goes on to provide detailed policy direction concerning natural heritage matters to be addressed when development is being evaluated. Importantly for Middlesex County, the PPS recognizes the importance of agriculture and states that nothing in the natural heritage policies is intended to limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue.

The Middlesex Natural Heritage System Study (MNHSS) was undertaken to provide a scientifically based analysis of the Middlesex County landscape. The five local

conservation authorities, with the Upper Thames River as the lead, completed the MNHSS on behalf of the County. The Study included a peer review component whereby information was taken to an outside consulting ecologist (Brent Tegler) to review and provide input to the County before the document was finalized.

The process included detailed and comprehensive mapping using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). After the completion of the mapping exercise, Vegetation Communities and Groups were identified and evaluated based upon 'significance criteria'. The significance criteria are: Significant Valley System, Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, Open Watercourse, Wetlands, Woodland Size, Woodland Proximity, Thicket Size, Meadow Size, Meadow Proximity, Significant Vegetation Group, Diversity, Proximity, Significant Wildlife Habitat, Groundwater Ecosystem, and Bluff or Depositional Area.

The Study revealed that roughly 20 percent of Middlesex is naturally vegetated. Not surprisingly, woodlands are the largest component; however, there are also significant amounts of meadows, often found along the major watercourses where water and ice scour limit the regeneration of woodlands. The Official Plan requires the completion of a Development Assessment Report / Environmental Impact Statement in support of development applications.

The MNHSS recognizes that agriculture is the dominant land use in the County and that working agricultural fields provide linkages between natural heritage patches. This can be described as a 'porous' landscape where, for example, wildlife moves between features through agricultural fields. It is at the time of a potential land use change that the impact of the change on the system should be considered. As noted in the MNHSS, "...if agricultural land is proposed to be converted to urban development, the system linkages that would have been provided in the working agricultural landscape may be disrupted or eliminated by the post development urban landscape."

### **3.6.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement**

Prior to the Middlesex 2046 Engagement, the MNHSS study process was overseen by a Steering Committee and a Technical Advisory Committee with expertise in ecology, biology, mapping and planning.

There was limited discussion regarding Middlesex County's natural heritage system during the virtual workshops and public open house. Participants indicated they were most interested in discussing other topics under consideration however respondents to the survey gave a score of 85 (out of 100) on how important it is to protect the natural heritage system from future development.

Respondents provided a number of comments related to this topic including concerns around development encroaching upon natural areas and support for the preservation of

forests and animal habitats especially in relation to the larger riverine systems like the Thames, Sydenham, and Ausable.

The Conservation Authorities provided detailed comments during the process and the proposed Amendment No. 3 has been updated to largely reflect their comments. Their primary concern has been addressed by the separation of the Natural Heritage and the Natural Hazard policies. As well, a number of recommended more subtle wording suggestions were included additional wording to clarify that it is the applicant's responsibility to undertake studies related to development proposals.

Submitted comments as well as a presentation at the Public Meeting by a private developer provided the opinion that the proposed Amendment No. 3 indicates a bias towards the natural environment, without background reports, and is not consistent with PPS or Provincial initiatives to address housing. Additionally, concerns were expressed related to the proposed inclusion of the Regulated Areas of the Conservation Authorities on a mapping schedule.

The PPS requires the identification of natural heritage systems and this is to be done at the county level. The MNHSS study provides the background analysis and report that determines significance for Middlesex County. Amendment No. 3 does not designate a natural environment land use, rather it delineates on Schedule C those lands that are believed to be of significance. An amendment to the County Plan is not required for development or refinement of the natural heritage boundaries based on more detailed study. Similarly, Amendment No. 3 would delineate on Schedule D those lands that are subject to Regulation by the conservation authorities and an amendment to the County Plan is not required for development or refinement of the Regulation boundaries.

In general, it is preferred that development be directed away from the natural heritage system and if development must occur in proximity to such areas that the appropriate natural heritage review be undertaken. The existing and proposed County Official Plan requires this and the MNHSS provides the landscape level of analysis to support this.

In general, it is preferred that development be directed away from natural hazards and if development must occur in proximity to such areas that the responsible conservation authority should review and if required issue a 'Section 28 Permit'. The conservation authority regulation limits (created under Section 28 of the Conservation Authorities Act) are the best available landscape level indicator of potential natural hazards. Mitigating potential risks, including those risks that may be associated with the impacts of climate change, is sound land use planning.



## **3.7 Economy and Strategic Direction**

### **3.7.1. Overview**

- **County Council approved two significant strategic documents independent of the Official Plan Review: Corporate Strategic Plan and Economic Development Strategy Update.**
- **An exercise was undertaken to ensure that the County's land use planning policies are aligned with these strategic documents.**
- **The Proposed policies would support: Broadband Infrastructure, Agriculture / Agri-Business Opportunities, Employment Lands, Economic Diversity / Economic Prosperity, Arts, Cultural and Tourism, Quality of Place and Cultural Heritage, Housing and Community Improvement Plans.**
- **The proposed changes have been refined as a result of the Middlesex 2046 Engagement feedback.**

### **3.7.2 Analysis**

**Corporate Strategic Plan** - through a County Council led strategic planning process, Strategic Focus, Goals, Objectives and Guiding Principles were developed and incorporated into the Corporate Strategic Plan. This document is intended to ensure Council and staff remain committed and aligned with the direction of Council and to ensure that the County is moving forward in a calculated and deliberate way.

The key land use related County Council Corporate Strategic Plan Objectives are:

1. Connecting Through Infrastructure - encourage and advocate through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure recognizing our unserved and underserved areas
2. Strengthening our Economy - support opportunities to create stronger and sustainable agriculture sector; Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent and investment; and Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas

**Economic Development Strategy** - provides Middlesex County with a five-year roadmap of actionable items related to business retention and expansion, investment attraction, and tourism. Through the lens of economic development, the report presents opportunities for local economic growth in agricultural technology, technology-based manufacturing and food processing, agri-tourism and rural revitalization, and creative industries.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan culminates in four Strategic Objectives:

1. invest in people and places via rural revitalization;

2. entice talented workers and entrepreneurs to relocate here by leveraging the pace of rural life and nearby urban amenities;
3. attract investment in tech-based manufacturing, food production, and ag-tech; and
4. advocate for investment readiness and implement improvements in business development services.

A policy exercise was undertaken to ensure that the County's land use planning policies as expressed in the Official Plan are aligned with these strategic documents. MDB Insight completed the Economic Development Strategy and to ensure continuity also completed the alignment exercise.

MDB Insight identified a range of policy topics that should be supported by and reflected in the Official Plan, provided a matrix of policy statements that compared the County's current policy direction against the approach others have taken to address similar issues, and prepared draft policy recommendations to modernize policy language that more effectively support sustainable economic growth in a rural setting.

The proposed policies would support:

- Broadband Infrastructure
- Agriculture / Agri-Business Opportunities
- Employment Lands
- Economic Diversity / Economic Prosperity
- Arts, Cultural and Tourism
- Quality of Place and Cultural Heritage
- Affordable and Accessible Housing
- Community Improvement Plans

### **3.8.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement**

Prior to the Middlesex 2046 Engagement, MDB Insight worked with the Steering Committee from the Economic Development Strategy Update to build upon previous consultation and analysis. Stakeholder representatives of County Council, local municipalities, OFA, Workforce Planning, CFDC, tourism, PAC and Economic Development were included.

Through the Middlesex 2046 survey, 30% of respondents indicated that they owned a business within Middlesex while another 30% indicated that they were employed at a business with Middlesex. When asked the County's greatest tourism assets, 79% indicated natural attractions, 62% community festivals, fairs and events, and 51% agriculture.

Participants indicated that continued improvement in high-speed Internet is important across the County with it being noted that modern farming practices are heavily dependent on technology and connectivity. Several participants cited commercial and

industrial development along the 400 series highways as a significant economic development opportunity.

Finally, Amendment No. 3 includes revised Community Improvement policy (Section 4.8) based upon input from a consultant undertaking CIP work for the Township of Adelaide Metcalfe (and that has done work for several other local municipalities).

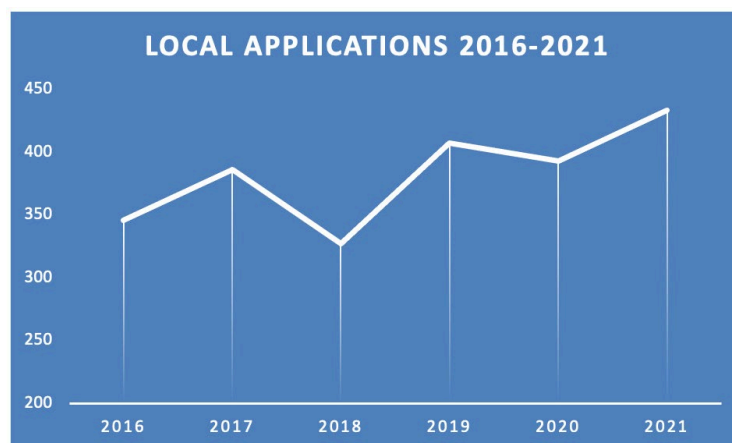
### **3.8 Development**

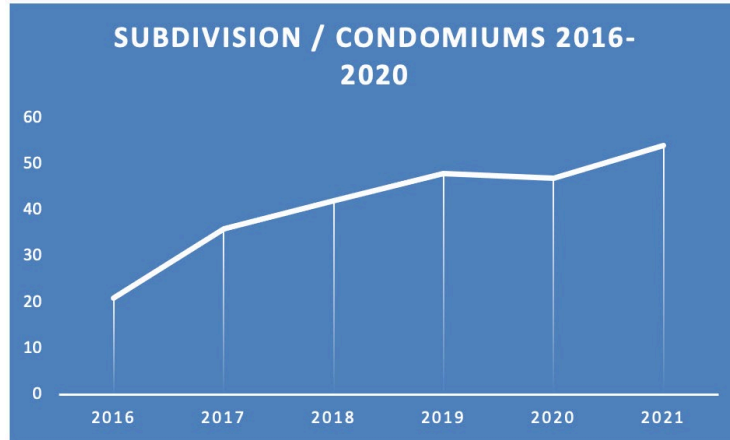
#### **3.8.1. Overview**

- **Across the County, building and development has significantly increased (from different baselines) across all types of applications and more recently there may be longer-term land use planning implications as a result of COVID-19.**
- **A review was undertaken of the evolving building forms including apartment buildings and other infilling proposals; forms that have not traditionally occurred within Middlesex.**
- **The proposed changes would include the promotion of a high standard of urban design, prioritizing principles such as pedestrianization, compact form, mixed-use, accessibility and universal design.**
- **The Middlesex 2046 Consultation helped the County understand community perceptions and expectations.**

#### **3.8.2 Analysis**

Since 2016, Middlesex County and local municipalities have seen an increasing number of development applications including a 100% increase in subdivision and condominium activity, and a 25% increase in approvals like zoning amendments and minor variances. Development across all types of applications has increased across the County with recent trends including that new developments are larger in size and more complex especially in relation to 'planning related' issues such as hydrological, environmental, and servicing.





If Middlesex County’s population grows to between 96,300 and 115,000 by 2046, between 10,800 and 17,900 housing units will be required. The challenge is to ensure these housing units are created in a way that is:

- attainable, accessible, and affordable,
- respectful of Middlesex County’s natural heritage system, and
- constructed in urban areas so that agricultural land continues to be protected.

Recent trends include more frequent residential infill and redevelopment within existing neighbourhoods, subdivisions with greater mix of unit types (not just single detached), a greater volume and complexity of condominium developments, and evolving building forms including apartment buildings. It is however not uncommon that residents express compatibility concerns when increased density / infilling / redevelopment is proposed.

There may be longer-term land use planning implications as a result of COVID-19 as more people permanently work-from-home, live more distant from their place of employment, and seek smaller town settings.

Amendment No. 3 would include additional direction to encourage municipalities to promote a high standard of urban design by prioritizing principles such as pedestrianization, compact form, mixed-use, accessibility and universal design, to create healthy vibrant communities which attract investment. The policies would promote and prioritize intensification and redevelopment, a pedestrian and mixed-use focus, and permit individual lot intensification, such as additional residential units, where criteria can be met. Further changes in this topic area are anticipated as part of the Attainable Housing Review.

### 3.8.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement

The Middlesex 2046 Consultation helped the County understand community perceptions and expectations. When asked for overall perceptions related to growth in Middlesex

County: 61% indicated they approve or strongly approve; 15% indicated that they disapprove or strongly disapprove; and the remaining were neutral or had no opinion.

While many respondents see opportunities associated with growth – such as new markets for local business, new entrepreneurs, new community infrastructure, and schools that can remain open – these views are not universally shared. There are others who are resistant to changing the traditional character of communities and / or may support change if it is not within their neighbourhood.

Some respondents are cautious about growth due to perceived unsustainable demands on services and infrastructure, including traffic congestion and community infrastructure such as recreational centres and schools. Some respondents also expressed concern regarding affordable housing options in proximity to existing neighbourhoods and that growth should be equitably balanced throughout the County.

Respondents were asked if they had ideas on how Middlesex County can best accommodate growth over the next 25 years and answers included: a greater range of housing options that are more suitable for local household incomes, first time buyers, rentals, and seniors; encourage increased densities in settlement areas; building up instead of out; reject “cookie cutter” development proposals; balance residential growth with commercial and industrial development; and leverage local downtowns for intensification opportunities.

### **3.9 Housing**

#### **3.9.1 Overview**

- **Housing is a complex issue that has important implications for local communities and the County is projected to grow by between 10,800 and 17,900 new homes by 2046.**
- **The County is undertaking a separate ‘Attainable Housing Review’ that will examine the Housing Continuum and identify gaps in the provision of housing and corresponding strategies for attainable housing with an emphasis on the factors that can be locally influenced.**
- **The Attainable Housing Review will extend beyond the timing of the Official Plan Review and as such a future separate amendment to the Official Plan will be considered.**
- **The proposed changes include limited language encouraging diversity of housing options, making connections to the County’s Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan and providing direction concerning ‘Additional Residential Units’ and ‘Farm Labour Accommodation’.**
- **Housing identified as a key issue during every component of Middlesex 2046 Consultation and the proposed changes have been refined as a result of the feedback.**

### 3.9.2. Analysis

Residential development is occurring across the County at a much higher rate than in the past while at the same time housing purchase prices and rental costs are increasing at a faster rate relative to household incomes. Housing affordability and attainability has increasingly become out of reach for many, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this issue. Middlesex County has an interest in working toward the goal of 'housing for all'.

Land use planning policies influence the provision of housing including through direction concerning the development / redevelopment of a range of housing options, varying in form, type and location. Housing policies tend to focus on enhanced infill and intensification, brownfield redevelopment, secondary suites, minimum / maximum density targets, and to encourage alternative (to single detached dwellings) built-forms including townhouses, rowhouses, garden suites, apartments, tiny homes, ARUs, etc.

The County is undertaking a separate 'Attainable Housing Review' that will examine the Housing Continuum from Emergency Shelter, Short-Term Supportive Housing, Long-term Supportive Housing, Subsidized Rental Housing, Rental Housing and Ownership Housing and identify gaps in the provision of housing and a corresponding municipal strategy. The Project would make recommendations that support market and nonmarket housing that meets the needs of current and future residents.



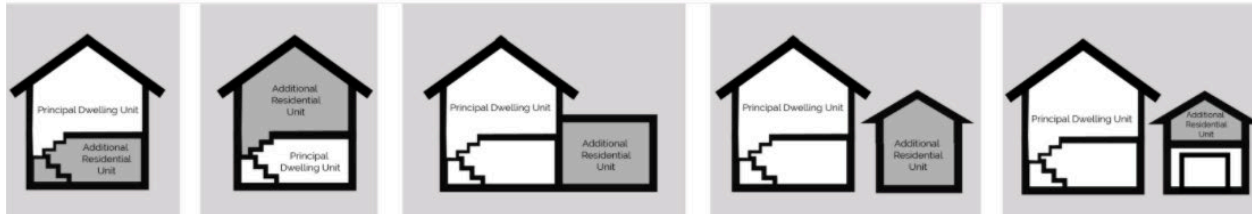
The Attainable Housing Review will extend beyond the timing of the Official Plan Review and as such a future separate amendment to the Official Plan will be considered to implement the findings of the 'Attainable Housing Review'.

The County Official Plan addresses housing primarily within Section 2.3.7 and directs local municipalities to create policies that encourage a range of housing types, housing densities and housing options. The Official Plan sets a 20% affordability target and requires that 15% of all development occurs by way of intensification and redevelopment and that this occurs primarily within Settlement Areas where an appropriate level of servicing is available. The Official Plan further directs local municipalities to include criteria for intensification and redevelopment.

Amendment No. 3 would make small changes to the Official Plan related to housing but would largely not address Housing issues in anticipation of the Attainable Housing Review.

## Additional Residential Units

The Planning Act requires that municipalities include policies within Official Plans to permit Additional Residential Units (ARUs) essentially in all areas: the use of two residential units in a detached house, semi-detached house or rowhouse, and the use of a residential unit in a building or structure ancillary to a detached house, semi-detached house or rowhouse for a total of three residential units on a property.



ARUs are self-contained dwellings with sleeping accommodation, kitchen, and bathroom facilities and often are referred to as Secondary Units, Accessory Units, or Basement Apartments and may also include Tiny Homes. ARUs are generally thought to be a cost effective and less intrusive way to increase the supply and diversity of primarily rental housing in communities. They may expand housing options, make efficient use of existing resources and infrastructure, support income-integrated communities, provide opportunities for aging in place, and provide homeowners with additional income.

The proposed policies, based upon additional review and discussion at PAC, would permit ARUs including tiny homes and require that local official plans and zoning by-laws address the Building Code, Fire Code and all other Provincial, County, and Municipal standards including that the ARUs be clearly subordinate in scale and function to the primary unit. Specific to the creation of ARUs outside of settlement areas, such uses shall be grouped with the primary dwelling, shall meet Minimum Distance Separation formulae, and shall be prohibited from being severed from the property.

### 3.9.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement

During the Middlesex 2046 Engagement the County heard from residents that housing is becoming unattainable for existing and future residents especially for those trying to enter the housing market. 86% of the survey respondents own a home, 7% rent a home, where 6% share or were preparing to enter the housing market. Among those participating in virtual sessions, there were universal concerns regarding the availability and affordability of housing. For local businesses, it is becoming increasingly difficult for employees to secure housing options that are consistent with local salaries.

Housing was identified as a key issue during all meetings and within the survey with general support for sustainable growth at greater density while prioritizing the protection of agricultural land and the environment. There was general support for greater variety of housing options / densities / intensification / rentals to address changing community needs and affordability (including rowhouses, apartments, duplexes, triplexes,

fourplexes, additional residential units, tiny homes etc.) however such views are not universal. There also was expressed desire to maintain 'small town feel' and control the amount and types of growth.

Other themes from the consultation included:

- red tape reduction will all governments and agencies to speed up supply,
- increase densities and reduce urban sprawl,
- create a variety of options for affordable starter homes,
- explore opportunities for tiny homes on existing lots and tiny communities (some participants questioned the long-term viability of this option),
- increased options for seniors will help to free up existing housing stock,
- “NIMBYism” continues to be a barrier, and
- housing affordability will be difficult for Middlesex County to address as there are larger forces that are outside County control.

Finally, it is noted that the Attainable Housing Review is proposed to include the completion of a fulsome engagement process to be designed by the selected consultant including the public, stakeholders and public agencies.

### **3.10 Additional Considerations**

#### **3.10.1. Overview**

- **There are minor or technical changes proposed to be made to update wording to reflect changed Provincial or other terminology, update mapping schedules to reflect newer information, and to include overall subject areas throughout the Official Plan such as Climate Change and Healthy Communities.**
- **Enabling language was developed to allow for the future inclusion of a Village of Newbury chapter into the Official Plan.**
- **As a result of the Middlesex 2046 Engagement, it is proposed to acknowledge, within the Official Plan, the unique relationship that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples have with the land.**

#### **3.10.2 Analysis**

There are minor or technical changes proposed to be made to the Official Plan to update wording to reflect changed Provincial or other terminology, update mapping schedules to reflect newer information or oversights such as the inclusion of Kerwood and Newbury as Settlement Areas, clarification of numbering that are duplicate or unclear, changes to dates, etc..

There are subject areas that are found throughout the Official Plan and are proposed to be updated such as Climate Change including encouraging greater electric vehicle usage through the provision of public and private electric vehicle charging infrastructure. This would include the provision of electric vehicle charging stations within developments near



major roads and within development of higher density commercial, employment or residential.

Amendment No. 3 would encourage local official plans to encourage 'complete communities' and 'healthy communities' which are considered to support residents in all stages of life through the provision of housing, recreation, services, and transportation options. This can be achieved in a number of ways including through higher densities, through development of traditional main streets, strong built form / urban design, provision of public amenities, and the opportunity for employment nearby.

The County and the Village of Newbury have agreed to a hybrid official plan where instead of having a separate local official plan, Newbury would rely on the County Official Plan existing policies for most topics such as agriculture and natural heritage. Additional policies in a Newbury specific chapter would be developed to address local issues such as the main street, the hospital, etc. At this time, it is proposed to include enabling language in the Official Plan and then develop the local policies with the Village as a separate official plan amendment.

### **3.10.3 Middlesex 2046 Engagement**

As part of the Middlesex 2046 Engagement, the Warden has reached out to First Nations to understand their level of interest in participating in the Official Plan Review and their preferred mode of engagement. These conversations are ongoing.

The Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation have met with the County and have provided written comments that have been incorporated into Amendment No. 3 (Sections 1.1, 2.2.5, 2.2.1.3 and 2.3.5.). Amendment No. 3 would include the following statement:

“The County of Middlesex is located on the Treaty and Traditional Territory and Ancestral Lands of many Indigenous peoples and is covered by several Upper Canada Treaties. The County of Middlesex recognizes and celebrates the contributions of Indigenous Communities in our shared cultural heritage. The County of Middlesex is now home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and communities that have a unique relationship with the land and its resources, and continue to shape the history and economy of Middlesex County.

Middlesex County recognizes the unique role Indigenous Communities have in land use planning and development, and the contribution of Indigenous Communities' perspectives and traditional knowledge to land use planning decisions. Middlesex County recognizes the importance of consulting with Indigenous Communities on planning matters that may affect their Treaty rights and interests and seeks to build constructive, cooperative relationships through meaningful engagement to facilitate knowledge-sharing in land use planning processes, inform decision-making, and build partnerships.”.

#### **4.0 Legislative Requirements**

The Planning Act requires that certain matters be addressed by County Council in the resolution or by-law to adopt Amendment No. 3. Section 26(5) requires that Council have regard for all submissions. Section 26(7) requires that Council declare that an official plan amendment does not conflict with provincial plans (however it is noted that there are no Provincial Plans that apply to Middlesex County), is consistent with the provincial policy statement, and has regard to matters of Provincial interest listed in Section 2 of the Planning Act.

Matters of Provincial interest:

- (a) the protection of ecological systems, including natural areas, features and functions;
- (b) the protection of the agricultural resources of the Province;
- (c) the conservation and management of natural resources and the mineral resource base;
- (d) the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest;
- (e) the supply, efficient use and conservation of energy and water;
- (f) the adequate provision and efficient use of communication, transportation, sewage and water services and waste management systems;
- (g) the minimization of waste;
- (h) the orderly development of safe and healthy communities;
  - (h.1) the accessibility for persons with disabilities to all facilities, services and matters to which this Act applies;
- (i) the adequate provision and distribution of educational, health, social, cultural and recreational facilities;
- (j) the adequate provision of a full range of housing, including affordable housing;
- (k) the adequate provision of employment opportunities;
- (l) the protection of the financial and economic well-being of the Province and its municipalities;
- (m) the co-ordination of planning activities of public bodies;
- (n) the resolution of planning conflicts involving public and private interests;
- (o) the protection of public health and safety;
- (p) the appropriate location of growth and development;

(q) the promotion of development that is designed to be sustainable, to support public transit and to be oriented to pedestrians;

(r) the promotion of built form that,

(i) is well-designed,

(ii) encourages a sense of place, and

(iii) provides for public spaces that are of high quality, safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant;

(s) the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to a changing climate.

### **5.0 County Council Direction and Next Steps**

This report represents the conclusion of the Official Plan Review. This report gives an overview of the process taken, a summary of the Middlesex 2046 Engagement campaign, examines the proposed changes and input received over ten topic areas, outlines the legislative requirements, and recommends approval of Amendment No. 3 subject to any further direction from Council.

The Proposed Official Plan Amendment No. 3 would:

- incorporate new Provincial legislation and policies including bringing the Official Plan into consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement while having regard for matters of Provincial interest,
- implement new County policy initiatives and plans including the Cycling Strategy, Corporate Strategic Plan and the Economic Development Strategy Update,
- represents sound land use planning,
- guide growth over a 25-year period to 2046, and
- reflect where possible input received through the Middlesex 2046 Engagement.

It is noted that the amendment to the County Official Plan is subject to approval by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Finally, County Council may wish to direct staff to include any other revisions to Amendment No. 3 to be considered for adoption.**

### **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:

<b>Strategic Focus</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
Cultivating Community Vitality	Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County	Promote and support community wellness Attract, retain, and engage youth in our community Champion and encourage active transportation and public transit opportunities
Connecting Through Infrastructure	Ensure communities are built on a sustainable foundation that is connected and thriving	Encourage and advocate, through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure, recognizing our unserved and underserved areas 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	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	Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations Engage, educate and inform residents, businesses, and visitors of county services and community activities Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities

**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Council confirm its regard for all submissions received through the Middlesex 2046 Engagement campaign, approve Official Plan Amendment No. 3 and declare that the Amendment does not conflict with any Provincial plans, is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, and has regard to matters of Provincial interest as listed in Section 2 of the Planning Act;

THAT the by-law necessary to adopt Official Plan Amendment No. 3 be prepared by the Clerk and forwarded to Council for approval; and

THAT the issues of a 'County-wide Growth Management Study' and a 'Population, Housing, and Employment Forecast Update' be considered by County Council as part of the 2023 budget process.