



## Committee of Whole

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**Meeting Date:** February 14, 2023  
**Submitted by:** Durk Vanderwerff, Director of Planning and Development  
**Subject:** Proposed Plan of Subdivision (File No. 39T-TC1903) and Official Plan Amendment No. 28 (File No. 39-TC-OPA28); Hawthorne Park; Thames Centre

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### **BACKGROUND:**

Sifton Properties Ltd. is proposing to develop a residential plan of subdivision on full municipal services on a 21 hectare (52 acre) property in Dorchester. The development would create eight blocks for single-detached residential development, four blocks for low and medium-density residential development, three blocks for medium-density residential development, two mixed-use commercial blocks, and various blocks for open space, stormwater management, road widening, ecological buffers, and the natural environment.

It is noted that rather than lotting the entire subdivision at this time, the proposed plan would create blocks to be further divided by subsequent planning approvals (red-line amendment, part-lot control by-law, or plan of condominium). Developers are increasingly pursuing such proposals as this provides for greater flexibility to 'respond to market conditions as each block is developed'. This approach does however not yield specific unit numbers. The total estimated future development units of the site would be in the range of 350 units to 500 units, plus a potential long-term care facility and commercial uses along Dorchester Road.

The land is currently designated 'Residential', 'General Commercial Special Policy Area 2' along Dorchester Road, and 'Protection Area' and 'Environmental Area' along the southerly limits. Sifton Properties Ltd. has applied to amend the Thames Centre Official Plan. Amendment No. 28 would redesignate portions of the property from 'Residential' to 'Residential Special Policy Area 2' and from 'General Commercial Special Policy Area 2' to 'General Commercial Special Policy Area 2A' to permit an increased range of medium-density residential uses, and from 'General Commercial Special Policy Area 2' and 'Residential' to "Parks and Open Space" to recognize proposed parkland and open space blocks.

Cumulatively, the proposed changes to the Thames Centre Official Plan would allow, at a greater density, a broader mix of medium-density residential uses on the property including stacked townhouses and apartment buildings. The local zoning by-law amendment, which is not before County Council, would specify the density, lot coverage, height, etc. for the individual blocks.

The surrounding land uses vary and include residential, institutional, commercial, natural heritage features and the Municipal drinking water well field. Access to the proposed development would be provided from Dorchester Road (County Road 32) and Byron Avenue.

Several reports and studies have been provided in support of the proposal including a planning justification report; geotechnical exploration; environmental impact study, sanitary servicing strategy, transportation impact study, noise assessment report hydrogeological assessment; conceptual stormwater management report and water balance, and conceptual water distribution analysis.

County Council is the Provincially delegated Approval Authority for plans of subdivision and locally adopted official plan amendments. This report summarizes the planning policy context and provides a planning recommendation for Council from the perspective of the Approval Authority. More detailed local planning analysis, as provided to Thames Centre Council, is provided within the attached local planning reports. In addition, a location map, the draft plan, the proposed conditions of draft plan approval and a copy of Amendment No. 28 are appended to this report.

## **ANALYSIS:**

The proposed plan of subdivision and Amendment No. 28 were processed concurrently by the Municipality. The submissions were accepted as complete in October 2019 and Thames Centre Council supported the proposal at their September 12, 2022 meeting. Through the extended processing time the proposed plan was subject to several changes, additional studies and the Municipality held three public meetings (November 2019, February 2021, and September 2021).

An agency circulation was undertaken for the plan of subdivision and the comments received were either addressed during the process or can appropriately be addressed as conditions of draft plan approval. The proposed draft plan conditions include matters to satisfy the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (environmental impact assessment, stormwater management, sediment and erosion control plan, permits), the County Engineer (road widening, reserves, construction of left and right turn lanes, stormwater management), and the Municipality (infrastructure, subdivision agreement, drinking source water protection, etc.). Municipal staff have supported the preliminary draft plan conditions, attached, that standardize the wording from those recommended

by Thames Centre Council and that rely on and make the connection to the policies of Amendment No. 28.

The proposal generated substantial public comment during the local process prior to Thames Centre Council making their decision. The concerns can generally be summarized as related to the scale / density / height of the development, traffic, natural heritage, servicing, impact on schools, parking, parkland and open space, drinking source water protection, and general compatibility with the surrounding neighbourhood. The County is also in receipt of written submissions that generally echo the concerns raised during the local process. It is noted that a number of the public concerns relate to zoning provisions which are not before the County for approval.

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) identifies the importance of focusing population growth and development to settlement areas such as Dorchester both as a means of developing vital communities and to protect natural heritage and agricultural resources. This is to be achieved through well-planned communities that ensure the long-term prosperity and social well-being of the municipality. The preferred form of development is to occur on full municipal services. Further, the PPS identifies the importance of directing development away from natural environment features unless suitable setbacks and mitigation measures are implemented. The PPS encourages compact form and densities to make efficient use of land and infrastructure while accommodating a range and mix of residential types.

The County Official Plan directs growth and development to Settlement Areas and that development make use of existing and / or extended services in a logical and planned manner. The County Plan seeks protection for natural heritage features and agricultural land by directing development away from these areas. The Official Plan designates Dorchester as an 'Urban Settlement Area' and encourages a range of housing types, densities, and options while placing the primary responsibility to develop implementing policy to local municipalities in local official plans.

The lands are located within the urban settlement area of Dorchester and are designated for residential and commercial development. Much like the County Plan, the Thames Centre Plan has direction on natural heritage, housing, growth within settlement areas, and logically extending municipal services. The property is located within a Well Head Protection Area (WHPA) and therefore subject to the Thames Sydenham and Region Source Protection Plan policies that have been incorporated into the Thames Centre Official Plan. The Official Plan encourages and promotes within Dorchester a broad range of housing types that are suitable for different age groups, lifestyles, and household structures including different built forms such as single detached, semi-detached, townhouse, and apartments. More detailed local planning considerations can be found in the attached local planning reports.

Overall, the subject lands are an appropriate location for residential and commercial development on full municipal services within Dorchester. The technical matters related to drinking source water protection, natural heritage setbacks, municipal development requirements, etc., have been addressed during the process or can appropriately be addressed as conditions of draft plan approval.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that the proposed plan of subdivision, subject to recommended conditions, is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, conforms to the intent and purpose of the County and the Thames Centre Official Plans, represents sound land use planning, and approving it would have regard to the decision of Council for the Municipality of Thames Centre.

It is also my opinion that Amendment No. 28 is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, conforms to the intent and purpose of the County and the Thames Centre Official Plans, represents sound land use planning, and approving it would have regard to the decision of Council for the Municipality of Thames Centre.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The budget expense related to the provincially delegated Approval Authority responsibility for local official plans is offset, to an extent, through the collection of application fees. The approval of development and the accompanied community growth has indirect long-term financial implications.

#### **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>
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  Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas in Middlesex County

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the proposed Plan of Subdivision (File No. 39T-TC1903) be granted draft plan approval subject to conditions and that a Notice of Decision be circulated as required by the Planning Act and that the Notice of Decision indicate that all written submissions

received on the application were considered; the effect of which helped make an informed recommendation and decision.

That Amendment No. 28 (File No. 39-TC-OPA28) to the Municipality of Thames Centre Official Plan be approved, and that staff be directed to circulate a Notice of Decision as required by the Planning Act and that the Notice of Decision indicate that all written submissions received on the application were considered; the effect of which helped to make an informed recommendation and decision.

*Attachments:*

Location Map

Proposed Draft Plan of Subdivision

Official Plan Amendment No. 28

Preliminary Draft Plan Conditions

Planning Reports