



# Committee of the Whole

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**Meeting Date:** July 18, 2023

**Submitted by:** Durk Vanderwerff, Director of Planning and Building

**Subject:** County Official Plan Amendment No. 3; Minister's Decision

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## **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 matters 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.

During the last term of Council, an extensive process was undertaken to update the County's Official Plan. This included a campaign called 'Middlesex 2046' to engage stakeholders and the broader public in conversations concerning how the County should plan to accommodate projected growth to 2046.

The primary subject matter initiatives, undertaken in support of the Official Plan Review, involved ten topic areas: Provincial Change, Transportation, Agriculture, Population and Housing Forecasts, Drinking Source Water Protection, Natural Heritage, Economy and Strategic Direction, Housing and Additional Considerations.

The review of the Official Plan culminated in the adoption of Amendment No. 3 to the County Plan on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Amendment No. 3 was submitted for Provincial Approval on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. On September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing suspended his review of Amendment No. 3 while the Government considered various legislative and policy changes.

The Minister approved with modifications Amendment No. 3 on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The Minister's Decision (attached) is not appealable and therefore the County's Official Plan is in effect as of July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023 as updated by Amendment No. 3 and as modified by the Minister's Decision.

## **ANALYSIS:**

The Minister's Decision included seventeen modifications. At the time of writing this report staff are reviewing the modifications in detail but overall, the number and extent of the changes is not considered significant.

The modifications include: enhanced language requiring that the County work in partnership with Indigenous communities to develop a 'protocol and collaborative process' concerning natural heritage system and heritage conservation matters; changes to the Additional Residential Unit policies including that 'tiny homes' are to be considered as temporary units, instead of as a permanent additional residential unit; technical changes related to areas of mineral aggregate and development in proximity to railway operations; inclusion of more specific complete application policies; and the tightening of the agricultural consent policies by replacing 'shall generally not be considered' with 'are discouraged' in relation to the creation of new farm lots of less than 40 hectares.





The one area of modification that stands out and requires additional consideration concerns the County's settlement hierarchy. The Official Plan sets out a growth management hierarchy to focus non-agricultural development to settlements through the identification of settlement areas as Urban Areas, Community Areas and Hamlets. This was previously done by definition and implemented through local official plans which gave flexibility but is not the common approach within Ontario. Amendment No. 3 was modified to identify settlements by name within this hierarchy.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

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

## **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:**

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

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
<p>Cultivating Community Vitality</p> 	<p>Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and support community wellness</li> <li>• Attract, retain, and engage youth in our community</li> <li>• Champion and encourage active transportation and public transit opportunities</li> </ul>
<p>Connecting Through Infrastructure</p> 	<p>Ensure communities are built on a sustainable foundation that is connected and thriving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and advocate, through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure, recognizing our unserved and underserved areas</li> <li>• Commit to a sound asset management strategy to maintain and fund critical infrastructure</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthening Our Economy</p> 	<p>Encourage a diverse and robust economic base throughout the county</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support opportunities to create a stronger and sustainable agricultural sector</li> <li>• Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments</li> <li>• Attract visitors to Middlesex County</li> <li>• Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas in Middlesex County</li> </ul>
<p>Promoting Service Excellence</p> 	<p>Innovate and transform municipal service delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations</li> <li>• Engage, educate and inform residents, businesses, and visitors of county services and community activities</li> <li>• Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities</li> </ul>

## Attachments