



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Planning Committee
From: Sarah Wilhelm, Manager of Policy Planning
Date: Thursday, October 14, 2021
Subject: County Official Plan Review – OPA 119 County Growth Structure



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1.0 Purpose

This report provides an overview of a draft Official Plan Amendment for a revised County Growth Structure. This is the first Amendment of the County's phased municipal comprehensive review.

2.0 Background

When the County launched the Official Plan Review in September 2019 (report PD2019-17), staff kept the option open to do phased official plan amendments to complete the work if there were shifting Provincial, County and local priorities. This has been the case. Since that time, the Province has released the following major growth-related initiatives:

- Amending the 2019 Growth Plan and extending the planning horizon to 2051;
- New land needs assessment methodology;
- Amending the Provincial Policy Statement; and
- Proposing a major Greenbelt Plan expansion into Wellington.

Our consultants, Watson & Associates, have prepared a "Phase 1 MCR Report: Urban Structure and Growth Allocations" in keeping with the amended Growth Plan and new methodology. In it, Watson recommends changes to the County structure (including a revised settlement area hierarchy) and the proposed Amendment implements that work. The Amendment also addresses County and local priorities to ensure that Puslinch remains a stable community into the future.

3.0 Purpose of the Official Plan Amendment

The purpose of Official Plan Amendment 119 (OPA 119) is to:

- Add new policies for complete communities;
- Revise the County Growth Structure and settlement hierarchy based on servicing;
- Add new policies for a Regionally Significant Economic Development Study Area in Puslinch;
- Recognize the existing historic rural settlement of Puslinch as a Hamlet; and
- Other technical and formatting changes.

4.0 Main Changes to Official Plan

4.1 Complete Communities

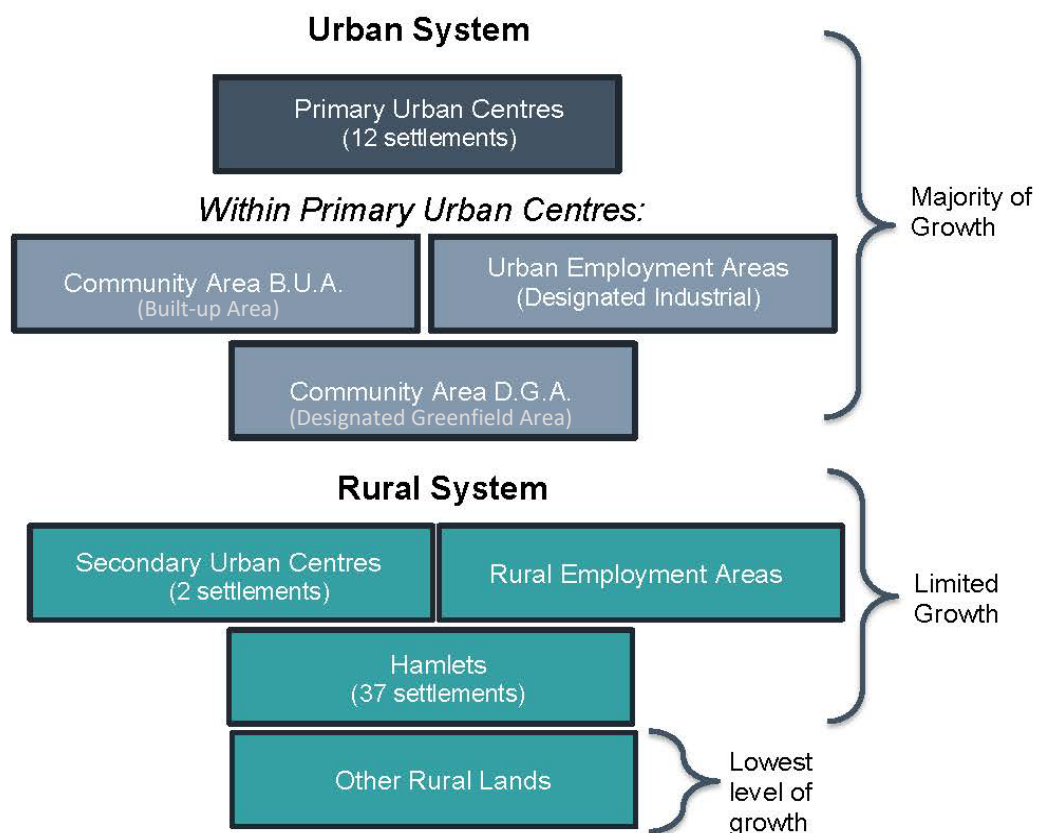
One of the guiding principles of the Growth Plan is to support the achievement of complete communities that are designed to support healthy and active living to meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime. The draft amendment introduces complete communities as a key planning concept and objective of the Official Plan.

4.2 Growth Structure

Structural changes to the Urban System and Rural System are needed to reflect that privately serviced urban centres and hamlets in Wellington meet the definition of a rural settlement in the Growth Plan. There are 14 urban centres and 37 hamlets designated and delineated in the Official Plan. All are currently included in the Urban System. The growth structure recommended by the Phase 1 MCR Report and reflected in OPA 119 is shown below.

Figure 1 County Growth Structure and Settlement Area Hierarchy

Source: Watson & Associates



The main changes to the Official Plan that are needed to support the above County Growth Structure include the following:

| Main Changes | | Reason for Change |
|---|--|---|
| Urban Centres → Primary Urban Centres | | |
| Re-classify 12 urban centres with existing or planned municipal water and wastewater systems as “primary urban centres” and keep them in the Urban System | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to distinguish serviced from unserved urban centres to recognize Provincial Growth Plan requirement that majority of forecast growth to be allocated to areas with water and wastewater servicing |
| Urban Centres → Secondary Urban Centres | | |
| Re-classify 2 urban centres without municipal services (Aberfoyle and Morriston) as “secondary urban centres” and move them to the Rural System | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to distinguish serviced from unserved urban centres to recognize Provincial Growth Plan requirement that growth be limited in areas without water and wastewater servicing retain the “urban centre” status to recognize importance as community hubs |
| Hamlets | | |
| Continue to recognize existing hamlets, but move them to the Rural System | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hamlets are an integral component of the County’s rural area |
| Rural Settlement Areas – Outside Greenbelt Area | | |
| Establish that secondary urban centres and Hamlets will constitute rural settlement areas | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to recognize Provincial Growth Plan definition of rural settlements, which are existing hamlets or similar existing small settlement areas long-established and identified in official plans |
| Rural Settlement Areas – Inside Greenbelt Area | | |
| Establish that hamlets, but not secondary urban centres are considered rural settlement areas in the Greenbelt Area | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to allow for Morriston to continue to be considered a Town/Village in the Greenbelt |

In addition to the above, staff notes that the Official Plan currently contains policy 6.4.7 which provides for limited residential infilling in unmapped rural settlements in prime agricultural and secondary agricultural areas:

“Rural settlements are existing small communities that form part of the rural fabric of Wellington. These settlements are primarily small clusters of housing with occasional commercial, industrial or institutional uses. These areas are not designated on Schedule “A” and are not expected to grow but they may be recognized in the zoning by-law and limited residential infilling may be allowed.”

This policy is proposed to be removed in the Amendment because:

- it does not conform with the Provincial Policy Statement which prohibits lot creation for new residences in the prime agricultural area;
- it isn't necessary in the secondary agricultural area as current policies provide for residential lot creation (subject to criteria) which isn't limited to infilling; and
- the revised County Growth Structure supports hamlets and secondary urban centres as rural settlement areas.

4.3 Regionally Significant Economic Development Area

In May 2021, County Council approved submission of a request to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) for a Regionally Significant Economic Development Area (RSEDA) in Puslinch prior to finalization of a boundary for Greenbelt Plan expansion (report PD2021-17). Staff have had meetings with Provincial staff and we appreciate these discussions. However, the economic stability of Puslinch is important to the County as a whole for reasons including, but not limited to, the following:

- the Township carries a 15% share of the County tax levy, but only an 8% share of the population;
- Puslinch accounts for 19% of the County's commercial tax base and assessment base, and 30% of the County's industrial tax base and assessment base; and
- Puslinch is home to 7 of the top 20 corporate taxpayers and some of the County's largest employers.

Historically, a lack of municipal serviced land has not been an impediment to successful and sustainable employment land development in Puslinch.

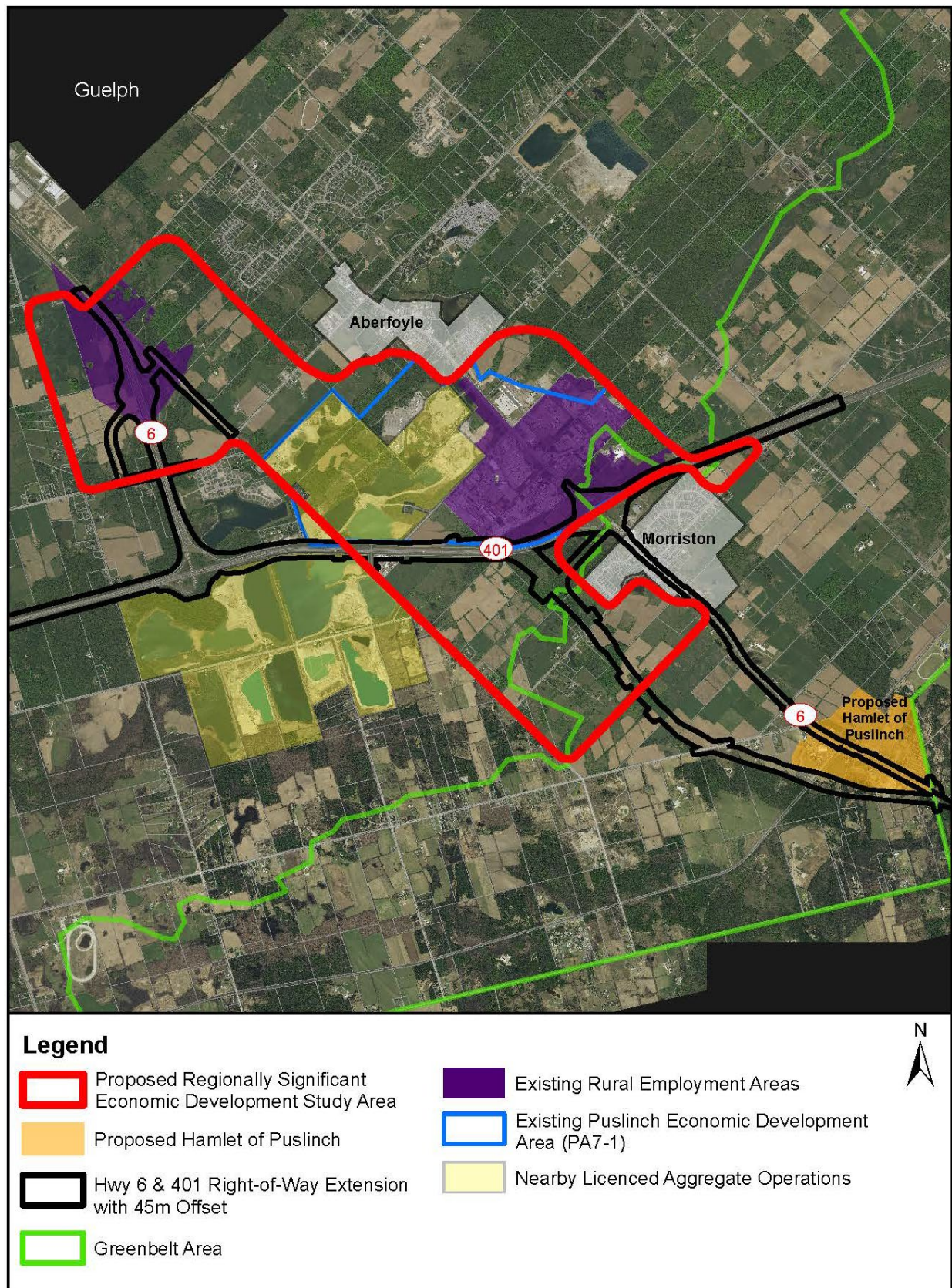
Further justification for a RSEDA is found in the June 2021 Ministry of Transportation discussion paper called "Towards a Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan". One key goal is to keep goods moving, including to:

"Work with municipalities to plan for and protect the capacity of the routes, corridors and facilities identified in the Strategic Goods Movement Network (SGMN) by integrating consideration of the SGMN into relevant municipal land use plans and transportation studies."

Highways 401 and 6 are identified as part of the Strategic Goods Movement Network and land should be designated and preserved near such major goods moving facilities and corridors.

The current Provincial Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan policies make it difficult to plan for growth in a small, rural municipality which depends on private services, such as Puslinch. As a result, we continue to seek support from MMAH to address such matters, including through a proposed Regionally Significant Economic Development Study Area (Figure 2) in the draft amendment for employment and other uses. This municipal comprehensive review is an opportunity to examine new options for South Wellington. Accordingly, staff recommend that the MMAH consider exclusion of the Study Area as part of the proposed Greenbelt Plan expansion at this time.

Figure 2 Regionally Significant Economic Development Study Area and Hamlet of Puslinch



4.4 Historic Hamlet of Puslinch

Notwithstanding the removal of policy 6.4.7, staff propose to identify the existing historic Hamlet of Puslinch in the Official Plan (Figure 2). There are diminishing opportunities for Puslinch to accommodate growth due to a fixed supply of available land in the following existing areas designated in the Official Plan:

- Aberfoyle Urban Centre
- Morriston Urban Centre
- Arkell Hamlet
- Country Residential Areas (expansion is prohibited by Official Plan)
- Lifestyle communities (expansion is prohibited by Official Plan)
- Secondary Agricultural Area
- Rural Employment Areas (Provincial policy limits expansion)
- Existing Greenbelt Plan Area and proposed expansion

Growth potential is limited primarily due to servicing constraints. Aberfoyle and Morriston are limited by the lack of availability of a receiving stream, a necessary element in a municipal sewage treatment system.

While the 1988 Puslinch Official Plan is no longer in effect, we note that there were five hamlets in Puslinch at that time: Aberfoyle and Morriston and the smaller areas of Arkell, Puslinch and Crieff. Policy 9.1 in the Plan dealing with Hamlets stated the following:

“A separate land use schedule for the Hamlet of Puslinch is not included within the Official Plan at this time and will not be added until after the construction of the Highway 6 realignment.”

As a result, a separate land use schedule was not included in the Official Plan for the Hamlet of Puslinch due to uncertainty around the construction of the Highway 6 By-pass. Since then, the construction of the Highway 6 and 401 Morriston By-pass expansion project has commenced. Phase 1 was completed last year when the replacement of the Puslinch Concession Road 7 bridge over Highway 401 was completed.

The historic Hamlet of Puslinch is a long standing small community in the Township with existing residential, institutional and commercial uses and should be recognized in the County Official Plan.

4.5 Other Formatting and Technical Changes

The Amendment updates terminology; updates map and text formatting; adds, removes and revises definitions; italicizes defined terms; and makes housekeeping revisions related to the above changes.

Planning and communications staff are working together to update the appearance of the existing schedules in the Official Plan. This will primarily involve the layout and colour, but not content. Staff expect to have the full Official Plan map series in a new format for consideration at the open house and public meeting.

5.0 Conclusion

This Amendment is of strategic importance to the successful implementation of a growth strategy which conforms with the Provincial Growth Plan. Planning staff are satisfied that the proposed Amendment should be circulated to County departments, local municipalities, Indigenous communities, commenting agencies, and individuals or organizations on the mailing list, and should be made available to the public for comment and discussion at a public meeting.

The Draft Growth Structure Amendment (OPA 119) is posted online at:

<https://www.wellington.ca/en/resident-services/pl-official-plan-review.aspx>

6.0 Recommendations

That the report “County Official Plan Review – County Growth Structure Amendment (OPA 119)” be received for information.

That the County Clerk circulate this report to Member Municipalities for information.

That the draft County Growth Structure Amendment (OPA 119) be circulated for comments.

That staff be directed to schedule and hold an open house(s) under the Planning Act to provide the public with opportunities to review and comment on the amendment.

That the Planning Committee be authorized to hold a public meeting under the Planning Act at the appropriate time.

That staff be directed to request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to consider the exclusion of the Regionally Significant Economic Development Study Area and the Hamlet of Puslinch identified in the Amendment as part of the proposed Greenbelt Plan expansion.

Respectfully submitted,



Sarah Wilhelm, MCIP, RPP
Manager of Policy Planning

Appendix A Historic Hamlet of Puslinch

Appendix A

Historic Hamlet of Puslinch

Township of Puslinch Official Plan Excerpt (November 10, 1988; Revised: October 2, 1998)

