



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

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To: Mayor and Members of Goderich Council
Andrea Fisher, Director of Legislative Services

From: Victor Kloeze, Senior Planner

Date: November 12, 2024

Subject: New Provincial Planning Statement (PPS)

RECOMMENDATION

That the report, titled new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) be received for information.

Background

The Province released the final, new Provincial Planning Statement on August 20, 2024. The new PPS took effect on October 20, 2024; it replaces the Provincial Policy Statement which came into effect on May 1, 2020.

Comments

This report contains a summary of the amendments to the Provincial Planning Statement, focusing on those changes most impactful for the County and local municipalities within Huron.

The new PPS consolidates the Provincial Policy Statement and 'A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe' into a new Provincial Planning Statement. This has led to a series of new definitions (eg. "large and fast-growing municipalities") and policies which will not have impact for the County of Huron or the Town of Goderich.

Key Changes by Section, Relevant to Huron County:

Planning for People and Homes

Policy 2.1.1 provides that planning authorities shall base population and employment growth forecasts on Ontario Population Projections published by the Ministry of Finance and may modify these projections as appropriate.

Policy 2.1.3 provides that, at the time of creating a new official plan and each official plan update, sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of at least 20 years but not more than 30 years, informed by provincial guidance. The policy also provides that planning for *infrastructure, public service facilities, strategic growth areas* and *employment areas* may extend beyond this time horizon.

Policy 2.1.6 directs planning authorities to support the development of *complete communities*.

Staff Comments:

Huron is well positioned to respond to Provincial direction with the 2024 Huron County Population and Housing Projections report, prepared by Watson & Associates Economists (online here: <https://www.huroncounty.ca/plandev/county-wide-projects/population-and-housing-projections/>). Huron adopted the medium growth scenario which projects significant growth out to 2051, when the County's population is projected to be 90,200 persons.

Goderich is anticipated to accommodate approximately 16% of the County's population growth over the forecast horizon., with the greatest annual population rate in the County at 1.4% over the next 30 years (2021 to 2051). Goderich is anticipated to add 65 additional housing units annually over the 2021 to 2051 period, the second highest share of housing growth in the County. This level of forecast growth is nearly triple the annual housing growth of 24 units per year added over the 2001 to 2021 Census period. The following tables are from the Watson & Associates Report.

Figure 6-4
Huron County
Population Forecast by Local Municipality, 2021 to 2051

Location	Total Population			Annual Population Growth	
	2001	2021	2051	2001 to 2021	2021 to 2051
Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh	5,617	6,141	9,210	26	100
Bluewater	7,183	7,870	11,530	34	120
Central Huron	8,103	8,140	10,890	2	90
Goderich	7,894	8,226	12,510	17	140
Howick	3,923	4,222	5,500	15	40
Huron East	10,049	9,928	13,500	-6	120
Morris-Turnberry	3,632	3,747	4,480	6	20
North Huron	5,174	5,273	6,790	5	50
South Huron	10,401	10,476	15,740	4	170
Huron County	61,975	64,050	90,160	104	870

Figure 6-6
Huron County
Permanent Housing Forecast by Local Municipality, 2021 to 2051

Location	Total Permanent Housing			Annual Housing Growth	
	2001	2021	2051	2001 to 2021	2021 to 2051
Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh	1,940	2,355	3,310	21	32
Bluewater	2,590	3,305	4,690	36	47
Central Huron	2,930	3,270	4,400	17	38
Goderich	3,185	3,665	5,630	24	66
Howick	1,200	1,345	1,850	7	17
Huron East	3,430	3,705	5,170	14	49
Morris-Turnberry	1,170	1,195	1,540	1	12
North Huron	1,995	2,155	2,920	8	26
South Huron	3,955	4,340	6,460	19	70
Huron County	22,395	25,335	35,970	147	355

Note: Figures may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Historical data from Statistics Canada Census; forecast by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

In order to provide sufficient housing for current and future populations, Planning staff work closely with local municipalities to ensure sufficient land bases for housing are available and that those lands are used efficiently (through minimum density requirements). Settlement Area and growth analyses are completed during Five Year Reviews of local Official Plans. There have been privately initiated applications for settlement area expansions in Seaforth, Grand Bend and Fordwich in recent years.

As the Town is a completely urban municipality, applications for settlement area expansions are unlikely to have a direct impact – they are more likely to impact surrounding municipalities.

Housing

Policy 2.2.1 requires planning authorities to establish and implement minimum targets for housing that is *affordable for low and moderate income households*; this term is now defined relative to the municipality as opposed to regional market area.

Policy 2.2.1b) continues to require planning authorities to permit and facilitate all housing options including additional needs housing and all types of residential intensification, including the *development* and *redevelopment* of underutilized commercial and institutional sites for residential development.

Policy 2.2.1c) requires planning authorities to promote densities for new housing which efficiently use land, resources, *infrastructure* and *public service facilities*, and support the use of *active transportation*.

Staff Comments:

Local municipalities, including the Town, have implemented ‘as-of-right’ housing options which promote more compact forms of housing, permit additional needs housing in all urban areas, and creates flexibility for new, more dense forms of housing in fully, partially and privately serviced settlement areas as well as within agricultural settings. The direction to promote the development and redevelopment of underutilized commercial and institutional sites has already been met by permitting multi unit residential in the mixed use arterial, mixed use core, and grouped commercial areas.

The Town of Goderich has already adopted amendments to streamline the conversion of churches to residential, in addition to permitting higher density and additional needs housing in Community Facility (CF) zones.

Settlement Areas & Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

PPS 2024 introduces definitions for ‘designated growth areas’, ‘strategic growth areas’ in addition to amending the definition for ‘settlement area’.

Settlement areas: means urban areas and rural settlement areas within municipalities (such as cities, towns, villages and hamlets). Ontario’s *settlement areas* vary significantly in terms of size, density, population, economic activity, diversity and intensity of land uses, service levels, and types of infrastructure available.

Settlement areas are a) built-up areas where development is concentrated and which have a mix of land uses; and b) lands which have been designated in an official plan for development over the long term.

Designated growth areas: means lands within *settlement areas* designated for growth or lands added to *settlement areas* that have not yet been fully developed. *Designated growth areas* include lands which are *designated and available* for residential growth in accordance with policy 2.1.4.a), as well as lands required for employment and other uses.

Strategic growth areas: within *settlement areas*, nodes, corridors, and other areas that have been identified by municipalities to be the focus for accommodating *intensification* and higher density mixed uses in a more *compact built form*.

Policy 2.3.1.4 now requires (instead of encourages) planning authorities to establish minimum targets for *intensification* and *redevelopment*.

The requirement for a comprehensive review at the time of a settlement area boundary expansion has been removed. Policy 2.3.2.1 now directs that in identifying a new *settlement area* or allowing a *settlement area* boundary expansion, planning authorities “shall consider” a list of factors, many of which were previously addressed in comprehensive reviews such as need, capacity in existing/planned *infrastructure* and *public service facilities*, avoiding *prime agricultural lands*, compliance with *minimum distance separation*, avoiding impacts on *agricultural system*, and whether expansion provides for phased progression of urban development.

Staff Comments:

Altered direction for settlement area expansions may be less rigorous overall but continues to underscore the importance of planning for growth in a coordinated fashion and specifically, aligning settlement area boundary expansions with sufficient infrastructure capacity and avoiding/minimizing impacts on agriculture. Huron's Best Practices for Growth Planning (2020) is an excellent resource in outlining how growth is best planned for in a rural context. As the Town is a completely urban municipality, applications for settlement area expansions are unlikely to have a direct impact – they are more likely to impact surrounding municipalities.

The definition of '*public service facilities*' is altered to include 'elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools', 'hospitals', 'community recreation facilities' and 'childcare'. During recent planning processes for new plans of residential subdivision, the lack of availability regarding public service facilities has been cited numerous times, particularly in reference to family doctors and other medical practitioners (eg. dentist, physio therapist, etc). The altered Provincial direction requires that planning authorities consider the capacity of those facilities in whether an expansion to a settlement area is appropriate. This will require increased coordination between the County and various partners (eg. healthcare alliances, school boards, childcare providers, local municipalities, etc).

Employment

PPS, 2024 defines *employment areas* as, "those areas designated in an official plan for clusters of business and economic activities including manufacturing, research and development in connection with manufacturing, warehousing, goods movement, associated retail and office, and ancillary facilities. Uses that are excluded from *employment areas* are institutional and commercial, including retail and office not associated with the primary employment use listed above.

Policy 2.8.1.1(e) is a new policy which requires planning authorities to promote economic development and competitiveness by addressing land use compatibility adjacent to *employment areas* by providing an appropriate transition to *sensitive land uses*.

Policy 2.8.2.5 significantly modifies the PPS, 2020 policies related to the removal of lands from *employment areas*. The PPS, 2024 permits planning authorities to remove lands from *employment areas* at any time (rather than through a Municipal Comprehensive Review), only where it has been demonstrated that the land is not required for employment area uses over the long term and that the proposed use would not negatively impact the viability of the employment area.

Staff Comments:

No concerns. The altered Provincial direction is consistent with how Huron County municipalities plan for employment areas and surrounding sensitive uses. While significant areas are designated for employment uses, there remains a lack of 'shovel ready' sites for industrial investment across the County (Huron County Economic Development, Investment Readiness Report, 2023). In the Town, the Town's industrial park on Parson's Court represents the bulk of the 'shovel ready' lands for industrial employment.

Sewage, Water and Stormwater

Policy 3.6.1(a) provides that planning for *sewage and water services* shall accommodate forecasted growth in a timely manner that promotes the efficient use and optimization of existing *municipal sewage services* and *municipal water services*, as well as existing *private communal sewage services* and *private communal water services*.

Policy 3.6.1(b) makes reference to ensuring that services are provided in a manner that protects the *quantity and quality of water* and aligns with comprehensive municipal planning for these services where applicable.

Policy 3.6.1(d) requires the integration of servicing and land use considerations at all stages of the planning process, including consideration of opportunities to allocate and reallocate, if necessary, the unused system capacity of *municipal water services* and *municipal sewage services* to support the efficient use of these services to meet current and projected needs for an increased housing supply.

Policy 3.6.2 adds a reference to include both centralized servicing systems and decentralized servicing systems to the policy for municipal sewage and water services.

Policy 3.6.4 contains provisions that would allow *individual on-site sewage services* and *individual on-site water services* in certain circumstances, and requires planning authorities to assess the long-term impacts of *individual on-site sewage services* and *individual on-site water services* at the time of the official plan review or update.

Staff Comments:

The proposed servicing direction is consistent with existing policy frameworks for development. To ensure comprehensive planning, municipal water and wastewater capacities must be monitored and upgrades/expansions planned for to avoid delays in development and align with planning documents. For example, South Huron has undertaken a Water-Wastewater Master Plan in 2024 which informs the 2024 Review of the South Huron Official Plan; this coordination allows for the long term land base analysis (ie. needs vs availability) to be completed.

Positive steps in public servicing have occurred including extending full municipal services to Hutton Heights in North Huron, extension of municipal sewer to portions of Egmondville in Huron East, and proactive community-wide nitrate studies in ACW and Morris-Turnberry. Zurich in Bluewater was also recently transitioned from well water to the lake-fed pipeline and a second well is being established in Saltford in ACW.

The additional reference to decentralized municipal water services reflects the approach taken along portions of the lakeshore where municipally operated wells provide drinking water. A municipally owned and operated 'package plant' would be an example of a decentralized municipal wastewater system, though none exist in Huron presently.

Energy Supply

Policy 3.8.1 includes new direction for planning authorities to provide opportunities for the development of energy supply including '*energy storage systems*'. *Energy storage system* is defined as: means a system or facility that captures energy produced at one time for use at a later time to reduce imbalances between energy demand and energy production, including for

example, flywheels, pumped hydro storage, hydrogen storage, fuels storage, compressed air storage, and battery storage.

Staff Comments:

Within the County, there are 344 wind turbines (165 in ACW, 100 in Bluewater, 15 in Huron East, and 64 in South Huron), numerous solar panels, and one compressed air energy storage facility (NRStor / HydroStor, located in Goderich). In recent years, there have been proposals for battery storage (Huron East) and compressed air energy storage (Bluewater) within agricultural settings in the County.

On August 28, 2024, the Province launched the largest competitive energy procurement in Ontario's history with the goal of ensuring long term affordability as electricity demand is forecasted to rise 60 percent by 2050.

County and local Official Plans would benefit from an updated energy policy framework to guide new proposals with the goal of being supportive of energy supply projects while also supportive of the preservation of agricultural lands for agricultural purposes.

Natural Environment

Aside from amending some definitions, PPS 2024 does not change the natural heritage policies from the 2020 version.

Staff Comments:

No concerns. The existing framework aligns with how Huron County plans for natural areas.

Agriculture

The PPS, 2024 now *requires* (instead of *encourages*) planning authorities to use an *agricultural system* approach, based on provincial guidance, to maintain and enhance a geographically continuous agricultural land base and support and foster the long-term economic prosperity and productive capacity of the *agri-food network*.

Policy 4.3.2.5 provides that where a residential dwelling is permitted on a lot in a *prime agricultural area*, up to two additional residential units shall be permitted in accordance with provincial guidance, provided that specified criteria are met. This criteria includes compliance with the *minimum distance separation formulae*, compatibility with surrounding agricultural operations, the appropriate provision of *sewage and water services*, the ability to address public health and safety concerns, the requirement for additional units to be of a limited scale and located within, attached or in close proximity to the principal dwelling or farm building cluster and minimizing land taken out of agricultural production.

Policy 4.3.3.1 discourages lot creation and would only permit lot creation for *agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and infrastructure*. This policy also permits lot creation for up to one *residence surplus to an agricultural operation*, provided certain criteria are met.

Policy 4.3.5.2 requires an *agricultural impact assessment* or equivalent analysis based on provincial guidance where it is not possible to avoid impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural lands and operations.

Policies 4.5.4.1 and 4.5.4.2 modify the existing PPS, 2020 policies related to the extraction of *mineral aggregate resources in prime agricultural areas*. These policies state extraction is permitted as an interim use, provided that impacts are addressed as determined through *agricultural impact assessment* (per policy 4.3.5.2) and the site will be rehabilitated back to an *agricultural condition*. Rehabilitation to an *agricultural condition* is not required if the depth of the planned extraction makes restoration of pre-extraction agricultural capability unfeasible and agricultural rehabilitation in remaining areas is maximized.

Staff Comments:

Huron County municipalities adopted policies for Additional Residential Units on agricultural properties as part of the Housing Friendly Lens Implementation (2021). PPS 2024 adopts the exact same approach as Huron and thus no amendments are required.

Council can expect an increased focus on components of the agricultural system and the need to protect the system within planning reports, including analysis of agricultural impact assessments.

The change to agricultural rehabilitation standard responds to commonly heard criticism that aggregate is not an 'interim use' in agricultural settings when extraction is below the water table. Within Huron, there are many aggregate pits licensed for sub-water table extraction and staff have no concerns with this approach but flag the continued need for comprehensive planning for the water bodies post-extraction.

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

PPS 2024 shifts to requiring *protected heritage property* to be conserved from previous requirement which was for *significant built heritage resources* to be conserved.

New policy 4.6.4(b) encourages planning authorities to develop and implement "proactive strategies for conserving *significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes*."

Policy 4.6.4.5 modifies an existing PPS, 2020 policy and requires planning authorities to engage "early" with Indigenous communities. It has also been broadened to ensure their interests are considered when identifying, protecting and managing not only *archaeological resources* but also *built heritage resources* and *cultural heritage landscapes*.

Staff Comments:

The change to definitions is consistent with recent changes to the Ontario Heritage Act which limit protection to designated properties only and not those on municipal registers of culturally significant properties.

Amendments to both the County and local Official Plans are required in response to the rights of Indigenous Nations. Amendments would include a Land Acknowledgement Statement,

consultation requirements with Indigenous communities, and further recognition of their role in advising on archaeological and natural heritage matters.

This shift in policy is supported by current practices of the Corporation; enhanced training on Indigenous culture was recently delivered for County and local municipal staff and members of Council. This shift is also reflected in recent projects such as enhanced consultation with Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation on the South Huron Official Plan review, cultural programming at local libraries, and the new mural at the Huron County Museum.

Mineral Aggregate

No significant policy changes.

'Compressed air energy storage' has been added to the definitions of *petroleum resources* and *petroleum resource operations*.

The definition of 'minerals' was changed to include a reference to non-metallic minerals which are those minerals that are of value for intrinsic properties minerals themselves and not as a source of metal. They are generally synonymous with industrial minerals (e.g., graphite, kyanite, mica, nepheline syenite, salt, talc, and wollastonite). Critical minerals are defined as "a subset of raw materials that have specific industrial, technological or strategic applications for which there are a few viable substitutes".

Staff Comment:

No concerns. Recent proposal for compressed air energy storage facility in former natural gas vault in Stanley Ward, Municipality of Bluewater appears to have more policy support under new provincial direction.

Natural Hazards

No major changes. Continued direction for planning authorities to collaborate with conservation authorities to identify hazardous lands and hazardous sites, and manage development in these areas in accordance with provincial guidance.

Staff Comment:

No concerns. County and local municipal staff are in regular contact with local Conservation Authorities on development activities (eg. entrance permits, pre-consultation meetings, agency review of long range planning documents, input on CA special projects, etc).

Implementation and Interpretation

Policy 6.1.5 explicitly requires planning authorities to keep their zoning by-laws and development permit by-laws up to date with the PPS, 2024 by establishing permitted uses, minimum densities, heights and other development standards to accommodate growth and development. It also requires planning authorities to keep their official plans up to date with the PPS, 2024 to protect provincial interests.

The PPS, 2024 contains new policies in section 6.2 requiring planning authorities to engage with the public, school boards and publicly assisted post-secondary institutions in efforts to implement the PPS, 2024.

Staff Comment:

Planning & Development staff have been working diligently to keep all long range policy documents up to date. In recent years, Five Year Reviews have been completed for Official Plans in Goderich, North Huron, and ACW while South Huron and Central Huron are currently undergoing review. Updates to Zoning Bylaws have been completed immediately following the Official Plan reviews to ensure all documents remain aligned.

Further, the Department completed 'major update' amendments to implement the Housing Friendly Lens in Bluewater, Central Huron, Huron East, Howick, Morris-Turnberry and South Huron (Official Plans and Zoning Bylaws). Staff have also worked with local municipalities to complete and implement the Bayfield Secondary Plan; assist with the Goderich and Huron East Community Improvement Plans, Bayfield Heritage Conservation District Plan; and recently initiated a Zone Map modernization project for Huron East.

NEXT STEPS

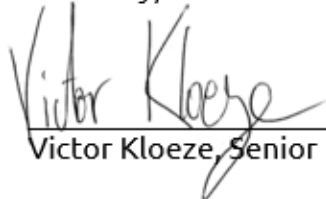
Conformity Amendments

County Council gave direction (on October 2, 2024) for staff to prepare a Terms of Reference for the County of Huron Official Plan PPS Conformity Amendment. This amendment will align direction with PPS 2024. Staff have identified the need to reflect the following changes at this time:

- Enhanced requirements for early and meaningful consultation with Indigenous Nations;
- Enhanced direction for responding to impacts of a changing climate;
- Further reflect Housing Friendly Lens work within County OP;
- Align County policy with growth planning framework (eg. removal of comprehensive review requirements); and
- Updated Energy policies.

Following an amendment to the County Official Plan, Planning & Development staff will work with each local municipality to amend the local Official Plans and bring policy frameworks into conformity with the new Provincial Planning Statement. This work will occur over the next 12-24 months.

Sincerely,



Victor Kloeze, Senior Planner, RPP MCIP