

Town planner reports on county OP

Town Planner Steven Wever reported on a review of the First Draft of the County Official Plan, highlighting points of interest for the Town of Shelburne, at the April 14th Council meeting.

He noted that in the County OP, Shelburne is identified as an "Urban Settlement Area," one of three including Orangeville and Grand Valley. He said, "This is an important distinction" as it is the objective of the County to direct the majority of growth required to these areas.

Under the County Plan, the forecast growth allocation for the Town of Shelburne is a population of 10,000 by 2031. The Plan recognizes that Shelburne is in the process of studying urban expansion to the west of the town to support the additional population growth. Council will be required to obtain support from the Ministry of Environment for servicing growth beyond the current growth plan population allocated at 8,400.

The Planner stated that further discussions with the County were needed to review the employment forecast of 4,235 jobs which exceed the previous target of 3,560 jobs by 2031.

Councillor Walter Benotto asked, "How does the Province justify those numbers?" Mr. Wever said the allocations were based on a "Provincial wide employment forecast" which factors in predictions in population growth.

In 2006, the Provincial Government, concerned about the consequences of "low-density outward growth" in the GTA, introduced Places to Grow, a growth plan to change the pattern of development. Studies showed that mitigation was required to prevent traffic congestion, infrastructure deficit, environmental damage and the rapid loss of high-quality farmland caused by urban sprawl. Urban areas were mandated to intensify their new growth within established developments up to 40%, as well as planning for growth in undeveloped town lands or Greenfield Areas rather than spreading outward.

The new County OP establishes intensification targets, and in the case of Shelburne the Planner reports that the rate of intensification is 24% to "extend the life of the limited available intensification opportunities, while allowing for additional Greenfield development to occur, to reach the 10,000 population target by 2031."

The report indicated that "upon approval" of the County Official Plan, the County will assume approval authority from the Province for lower tier Official Plans and Amendments. The County has indicated that the draft OP assumes that approval authority for local Official Plan Amendments will be delegated to the municipalities, subject to Provincial approval and limitations.

Mr. Wever stated that the next steps included a joint Council workshop and public open houses in May. He is continuing to review the draft and will include input from Council and staff with his comments to the County. Town Clerk John Telfer concluded discussions, stressing two important considerations regarding the County Official Plan: "how is it going to be governed and how is it going to be administrated?"