



Strathroy - Caradoc OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW Summary of Changes

May 2022



Introduction

This summary has been written to accompany the Draft Redline Official Plan that has been prepared as part of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's Official Plan Review. It summarizes the policy context in which the Draft Redline Official Plan was prepared, key changes introduced, and how the recommendations contemplated in the Policy Directions Report have been implemented.

The Municipality will be bringing forward an Official Plan Amendment in Spring 2022 to implement housekeeping changes to the Official Plan and to implement key policies driven by Provincial Policy, County policy, and the Growing Together Strathroy-Caradoc Master Plans and Studies. This Official Plan Amendment will not update the Municipality's growth-related policies such as the forecast population and settlement area boundary review. A second Official Plan Amendment will be brought forward in Q1 2023 to implement the Municipality's Comprehensive Review and complete the Official Plan Review project.

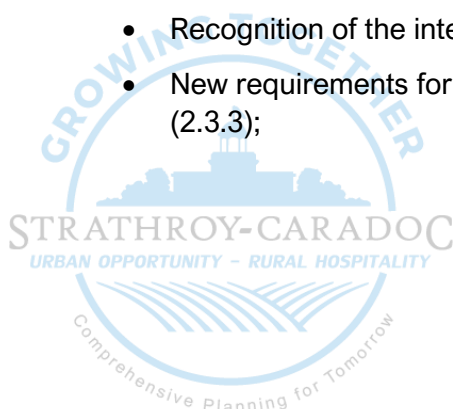
Policy Context

Conformity to the Planning Act and Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS)

The *Planning Act* requires municipalities to ensure that their Official Plan has regard for matters of Provincial Interest, set out in Section 2 of the *Act*, and is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). The proposed changes in the Strathroy-Caradoc Official Plan (SCOP) are intended to ensure the Official Plan is consistent with the PPS.

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) was updated in 2020 and the update to the SCOP must be consistent with the in-effect policies contained therein. The major changes in the PPS 2020 include the following:

- Permit adjustments to settlement area boundaries outside a comprehensive review, subject to criteria (1.1.3.9);
- A requirement that municipalities plan for a 25-year horizon, as opposed to 20 years, and plan for residential growth to 15 years instead of 10 (1.4.1);
- Explicit consideration for the impacts of climate change (3.1.3) and requirements to consider the negative impacts of a changing climate (1.8.1);
- Recognition of the interests of Indigenous communities (2.6.4 – 2.6.5);
- New requirements for prime agricultural areas and diversification of agricultural uses (2.3.3);



- Requirement to permit and facilitate housing options to meet the needs of residents, including 'special needs' (1.4.3.b.). 'Special needs' is defined in the PPS;
- Direction to support safe streets and active transportation (1.5.1); and
- A requirement to establish a natural heritage system (2.1.3);

Conformity to Middlesex County Official Plan

The County of Middlesex is currently in the process of finalizing an update to its Official Plan. The SCOP is required to conform to the County Official Plan. In March 2022, the County released a final version of the County Official Plan. The policies of the SCOP were reviewed against the policies of the County Official Plan and new policies and directions included there were taken into consideration in the Redline Official Plan. The next OPA to the SCOP in 2023 will address growth management related policies that are not addressed in the Redline Official Plan but are requirements of the County Official Plan.

Master Plans and Studies

The Official Plan Review is being prepared as part of the Growing Together Strathroy-Caradoc project, which included the completion of a series of eight different Master Plans and Studies, including the:

1. Parks and Recreation Plan (PRMP)
2. Transportation Master Plan (TMP)
3. Recreational Trails Master Plan (RTMP)
4. Employment Lands Study (ELS)
5. Attainable Housing Study (AHS)
6. Regional Commercial Systems Study (RCS)
7. Servicing Capacity and Constraint Study
8. Fire Station Location Study

In developing these Master Plans and Studies, the community and stakeholders were engaged through 2021 and 2022 to learn about priorities and goals for the future of Strathroy-Caradoc. Recommendations from each of these Master Plans and Studies have been summarized in the Policy Directions Report and considered in the Redline Official Plan.

Policy Directions Report

The Policy Directions Report provides a detailed road map for implementing the changes required by Provincial, County, and Master Plans and Studies. The Policy Directions Report identifies policies of the existing SCOP that should be updated because they are out of date, or they conflict with updated provincial and County policies. It also provides some initial direction on how to implement changes to the SCOP to conform with Provincial and County policies and address housekeeping changes.

Summary of Changes

The Policy Directions Report categorized the proposed changes in Redline Official Plan in eight themes.

Housekeeping

Due to the structure of the existing SCOP, there were many instances where policies were duplicated. The Redline Official Plan eliminates unnecessary duplication of policy by restructuring the SCOP to put like sections together. Some of the proposed changes include:

- The main sections have been changed to help facilitate policy consolidation and readability:
 - Section 2: Municipal-Wide Policies
 - Section 3: Strathroy and Mount Brydges
 - Section 4: Rural Area
 - Section 5: Protecting Natural Resources
- Policies for roads and servicing, among others, were consolidated and moved to an expanded Section 2.0 for general planning directions and consolidated;
- A Territorial Acknowledgement has been added to the beginning of the SCOP, developed in consultation with Chippewas of the Thames First Nation;
- Gendered language has been removed from the SCOP;
- Previously approved Official Plan Amendments have been consolidated into the SCOP;
- The formatting of headings and subheadings has been revised;
- Where possible, italics have been removed to improve document accessibility in accordance with the AODA; and
- New schedules and maps have been prepared.

Pandemic Recovery

Some policies have been revised to address new economic and social realities resulting from the pandemic. Some of the proposed changes include:

- Updated policies related to home occupations, including criteria for the zoning by-law to consider providing greater flexibility (2.3.7);
- Policies supporting broadband access (2.2); and
- Broadening policies on engagement and consultation to recognize the role of virtual engagement and identify opportunities to conduct 'hybrid' in-person engagement (7.5).

Natural Environment & Climate Change

Several policy areas have been revised and added to recognize the threat of climate change and to protect the natural environment. Some of the proposed changes include:

- Policies concerning natural resources are consolidated in Section 5;
- Policies that recognize the importance of clean air and new policies promoting urban forestry, renewable energy systems, and electric vehicle charging (2.3.5);
- Policies that recognize the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and set the stage for a future Climate Adaptation Plan;
- Stronger protections created for certain natural features, like Provincially Significant Wetlands, to explicitly prohibit development or site alteration within them (5.2.1);
- Draft policies of the Middlesex County Source Protection Plan (2017) have been integrated into the SCOP;
- General mapping and policy updates to implement the County of Middlesex Natural Heritage Systems Study; and
- Definitions added for 'Natural Heritage Systems' and 'Ecological Functions'.

Complete Communities

The SCOP has been updated to reflect the principle of complete communities, which relates to creating mixed-use neighbourhoods and spaces that support all people and communities in their daily needs. Policy changes within this theme include policies for employment, parks, housing density, and transportation. Some of the proposed changes include:

- Recognition of the importance of maintaining and protecting employment lands by:
 - Setting out criteria for the conversion of Urban Employment areas to non-employment uses;
 - Restricting major retail uses in the Urban Employment designation, while permitting limited non-employment uses which support the employment function (e.g., day cares, gyms, take out restaurants)
- Policies on commerce expanded to articulate the vision laid out in the Regional Commercial Systems Study (2.3.1) by:
 - Identifying a new Mixed-Use Corridor designation has been introduced which allows for residential uses and intensification along key corridors in Strathroy;
 - Creating a new Village Commercial designation which has been applied to the Mount Brydges core area to reflect the unique characteristics of the area and set out policies for future development; and

- Setting out conversion policies for the conversion of lands within the Commercial designation to a non-commercial designation.
- The vision and guiding principles and other recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan integrated into Section 2.4 to:
 - Refine the parks hierarchy; and
 - Set out policies for the acquisition of parkland.
- Recognition of the need for urban design guidance for infill development;
- Harmonized stormwater management policies across the Municipality and additional policies to information stormwater management plans prepared as part of development applications;
- Policies for Cannabis Production and Cannabis Processing have been introduced which reflect the dual agricultural and industrial nature of the use, while providing policies to mitigate potential impacts and compatibility concerns;
- A revised approach to built-form typologies (e.g., low, medium, and high-density development) has been introduced to provide greater flexibility, achieve design excellence, and facilitate a range and mix of housing forms; and
- A new harmonized Neighbourhood land use designation is applied to both Strathroy and Mount Brydges, and small-scale commercial uses are permitted in the Neighbourhood designation (3.3.4).

Transportation & Trails

The transportation policies of the SCOP have been updated to reflect the multi-modal transportation needs of the Municipality, including walking, rolling, cycling, and electric vehicles. The Transportation Master Plan and Recreational Trails Master Plan set the stage for improvements across Strathroy-Caradoc and will work together with the SCOP to build complete and safe streets. Proposed changes include:

- New Section 2.1 is a consolidation and harmonization of existing policies for roads;
- Policies which support the implementation of the Transportation Master Plan and Recreational Trails Master Plan;
- Section 2.1.1 lays out policies for active transportation and trails, such as walking and cycling;
- New requirement for sidewalks in new developments and the inclusion of cycling facilities on collector and arterial roads; and
- Policies which support traffic calming and reduced speed limits to help ensure streets are safe for all users.

Agriculture

Some of the proposed changes to the SCOP are directed towards making the policies consistent with the PPS, including more guidance on permitting limited on-farm uses in support of agricultural areas. Some of the proposed changes include:

- More detailed policy regulating severances related to surplus farm residences added (4.2.1.8);
- More specific guidance on ‘farm help dwellings’ provided in Section 4.2.1.10, formerly called ‘temporary dwellings on farms’;
- New definitions added for agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses and policies added in Sections 4.2.1.13 and 4.2.1.9 to guide these uses; and
- Definition added for ‘agri-tourism’, meaning a farm-related tourism use, which includes uses like bed and breakfasts, corn-mazes and other seasonal attractions. Policies related to agri-tourism are intended to limit the scale and prevent incompatible uses within the rural area.

Housing

Many of the changes contemplated in the Redline Official Plan aim to provide a diverse, more robust housing supply to accommodate people of all ages and incomes in the already built-up areas of Mount Brydges and Strathroy. Some of the proposed changes include:

- Policies related to housing have been consolidated and harmonized in Section 2.5;
- The recommendations from the Attainable Housing Study have been implemented, which include:
 - The vision and objectives;
 - Target set for development of new housing, requiring 25% of new units to be rental tenure (2.5.2);
 - Policy discouraging conversion of existing rental housing to condominium or other forms of ownership (2.5.3);
- Increased residential land supply requirement from 10 years to 15 years;
- Updated policies and definitions for ‘special needs housing’, including group homes and long-term care, to permit them broadly within Neighbourhoods;
- New policies related to ‘shared housing’ (e.g., multi-tenant houses) to support this form of housing for residents;
- Definitions added for ‘affordable housing’ and ‘attainable housing’;
- A new intensification target is set at 15%, in accordance with County’s OP, and new density targets incorporated for low, medium and high-density residential units;

- 'Additional residential units' is defined, and up to two are permitted on a lot with a single detached, semi-detached or townhouse dwelling (2.5.9);
- Removed minimum separation distance requirements between two group homes to be consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code; and
- Modular housing and tiny dwellings are regulated in a new section 2.5.15.

Growth Management & Provincial Conformity

Growth Management and changes to the way the SCOP contemplates growth are addressed in the Redline Official Plan. However, the majority of growth management planning will be implemented in a future Official Plan Amendment to implement the Municipality's Comprehensive Review. The Comprehensive Review will make recommendations for any needed adjustments or expansions of the Municipality's settlement area boundary and implement growth forecasts to 2046. The changes contemplated in the Redline Official Plan include:

- Minor settlement area boundary adjustments are now permitted outside a comprehensive review subject to criteria in Section 7.1.3; and
- New policies with direction to monitor Urban Employment area and Commercial land supply and demand data according to key attributes recommended in the Employment Lands Study, Regional Commercial Systems study, and the County OP.

Implementation

The proposed changes concerned with the implementation of the SCOP are directed at being consistent with the *Planning Act*, providing more tools for implementing the policies of the Plan and encouraging more comprehensive consultation. The proposed changes include:

- Requirements for pre-consultation applications have been added to require certain *Planning Act* applications to consult with the Municipality prior to formal submission;
- Policies regarding consultation are expanded to be more robust and to consider:
 - The role of virtual consultations and hybrid in-person consultations; and
 - The requirement to consult with Indigenous communities.
- Review timelines for the OP updated to reflect the *Planning Act*: 5-year review cycle and 10-year update cycle; and
- Improved the readability of the OP and refreshed the glossary of defined terms.



Conclusion and Next Steps

The Draft Redline Official Plan, along with this Summary of Changes, have been informed by the comprehensive Growing Together Strathroy-Caradoc project which began in late 2020. Stakeholder and public consultations will be held to introduce and seek comments on the Redline Official Plan, prior to bringing forward an Official Plan Amendment for Council consideration at a Statutory Public Meeting.

Following the Statutory Public Meeting, all comments and input received will be used to finalize the Official Plan Amendment prior to Council adoption.

