To: **Committee of the Whole**

Agenda Section: Corporate Services
Division: Engineering, Planning and Environment
Department: **Planning**

Item Number: **CCW - 2024-046**

Meeting Date: February 11, 2025

Subject: **Township of Severn Official Plan**

Recommendation

That the Township of Severn Official Plan, as adopted by the Township of Severn Council by By-law 2024-40 dated June 26, 2024, and modified as per Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 to Item CCW-2025-046 dated February 11, 2025, be approved;

That the County's approval does not apply to the following Non-Decisions:

Non-Decision No. 1:

A Non-Decision applies to various sections of the Official Plan that reference Employment designations and policies including Sections 6.5 Supporting Employment, 11.5 Settlement Employment, 11.13 Highway Employment, and 11.14 Resort Employment; and

That staff are directed to issue a Notice of Decision of the Official Plan for the Township of Severn in accordance with the *Planning Act.*

Executive Summary

It is a legislative requirement under Section 26 (1) of the *Planning Act*, for the council of a municipality to revise their official plan every 10 years and to update the Plan every 5 years thereafter.

An official plan is a general policy document that includes a statement of goals, objectives and policies for managing growth and development within an entire municipality's

geographic area. It sets out a comprehensive framework for land uses, resource management, community configuration, and decision-making.

The Township of Severn's Official Plan was last comprehensively updated and approved by the County of Simcoe April 25, 2006 and further amended and approved by the Ontario Land Tribunal on June 11, 2010. Since then, there have been many Provincial policy and legislative changes. In particular, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has consolidated the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, as amended, and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020, as amended, into one policy document now referred to as the Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (PPS, 2024).

The Township of Severn undertook their initial review of their Official Plan (OP) in early 2022 and adopted their new OP November 14, 2022. However, after receiving County comments and the pending Provincial legislative changes to introduce the new PPS, 2024, Township staff decided to update the adopted OP so that it would be consistent with the anticipated release of PPS, 2024.

On June 26, 2024, Township Council adopted the Township of Severn Official Plan 2024 (OP 2024), by By-law 2024-40. Following the adoption, Township staff forwarded a package to County staff to review the new adopted OP 2024 and ultimately have County Council make an approval. On October 20, 2024, the Provincial Planning Statement 2024 came into effect.

County Planning staff have reviewed the Township of Severn's adopted OP 2024, and worked with local planning staff to make necessary modifications to ensure that the OP 2024 is consistent with the now in-effect PPS, 2024, and conforms to the goals, objectives and policies of the Simcoe County Official Plan (SCOP).

County staff can confirm that public and agency comments were considered and that the document is consistent with the applicable provincial policies and conforms to the SCOP. This work is a common part of the County's review and approval process, ultimately leading to County Planning staff's recommendation for approval to County Council.

As noted previously, County staff have reviewed the Township of Severn's adopted OP 2024 for consistency with the PPS 2024 and conformity with the SCOP. County staff are recommending approval of OP 2024, with modifications largely to ensure consistency with the PPS 2024.

County staff are recommending a Non-Decision with respect to sections 6.5 Supporting Employment, 11.5 Settlement Employment, 11.13 Highway Employment, and 11.14 Resort Employment. The portions recommended to receive a non-decision by County Council would be anticipated to be updated to be better aligned with the employment policies of the PPS 2024 within 6 months to 1-year post OP 2024 approval

Where policies are subject to a non-decision by County Council, the previous Township of Severn's Official Plan 2010 continues to be in effect. In circumstances where OP 2010 policy

is in effect, and make reference to other sections of the official plan, the OP 2024 shall apply, unless they form part of the non-decision policies.

The County of Simcoe is the approval authority for local municipal official plans as per Section 17 of the *Planning Act,* R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13, as amended. Therefore, it is the responsibility of County Council to make a decision on official plans that are adopted by local municipalities. The OP takes effect upon County Council approval, provided no appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) are received.

Background/Analysis/Options

It is a legislative requirement under Section 26 (1) of the *Planning Act*, for the council of a municipality to revise their official plan every 10 years and to update the plan every 5 years thereafter. Regular updates ensure that a municipality's official plan conforms with provincial policy, has regard to matters of provincial interest, and is consistent with provincial planning statements issued by the Minister.

An official plan is a general policy document that includes a statement of goals, objectives and policies for managing growth and development within an entire municipality's geographic area. It sets out a comprehensive framework for land uses, resource management, community configuration, and decision-making. The purpose of an official plan is to ensure that future planning and development will accommodate the growth in population over long term and meet the specific needs of a community while protecting and enhancing the natural and built environments.

The following provides a summary of the Township of Severn's Adopted Official Plan, 2024:

Proponent: Township of Severn

Location: All lands within the Township of Severn

Proposal: The purpose of the Township of Severn's OP update is:

1. To bring the OP into conformity with the County of Simcoe Official Plan (SCOP 2016), save and except policies that have yet to be updated to conform with the PPS 2024; and,

2. To ensure the OP is consistent with, and does not conflict with, the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024).

County File: SV-OP-2201

The Township of Severn's Official Plan was last comprehensively updated and approved by the County of Simcoe April 25, 2006, and was subsequently heard before the Ontario Land Tribunal and disposed of, coming into force and effect, on June 11, 20210.

Since the last official plan approval, there have been many Provincial policy and legislative changes. In particular, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has consolidated the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, as amended, and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020, as amended, into one policy document now referred to as the Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (PPS 2024).

The Township of Severn commenced their provincial plan conformity exercise under Section 26 (2.1) of the *Planning Act* in late 2021 through the release of a Discussion Paper. The Discussion Paper provided an outline of the public process, allowed an opportunity for the public to ask questions and submit comments, and provided some explanation on the updates required to bring the official plan into conformity/consistency with provincial plans and legislation.

The Township of Severn undertook their initial review of their Official Plan in early 2022 and adopted their new OP November 14, 2022 (OP 2022). The OP 2022 was adopted and submitted to the County of Simcoe for review for conformity and consistency with the Growth Plan 2020, PPS, 2020, as amended, and the SCOP. County staff provided comments and proposed modifications to OP 2022. However, after receiving County comments and the anticipated Provincial legislative changes to introduce the new PPS, 2024, Township staff decided to restructure and update the adopted OP 2022.

Though the new PPS, 2024, had not come into force and effect, the Township ensured changes were made to their OP 2022 in anticipation of the PPS, 2024. As a courtesy, the Township held a second Public Meeting on June 19, 2024, to provide the public and agencies with an opportunity to review, discuss, and comment on the revised OP policies.

On June 26, 2024, Township Council adopted OP 2024, by By-law 2024-40. Following the adoption, Township staff forwarded a package to County staff for review and ultimately recommend an approval to County Council. A chronology of the OP public and legislated process is attached as Schedule 5 to this report, CCW 2025-046.

County staff have reviewed OP 2024 for conformity and consistency with the PPS 2024 and SCOP, as well as all other applicable provincial legislation. County staff, in collaboration with Township staff, made some modification to the adopted OP 2024. Additionally, County staff received further comments from stakeholders that required proposed modifications to the text of OP 2024. The tracked changes version showing the modifications made to the OP 2024 are attached as Schedule 1 to this report, CCW 2025-046. All comments received were addressed and a summary can be found in Schedule 4 attached to report CCW-2025-046.

COMMENTS RECEIVED

A public process is required when updating official plans. The Township of Severn commenced their public process in 2021 with the release of a discussion paper, followed by a public open house pursuant to Section 17(15)(d) of the *Planning Act.*

Appropriate notice was provided to the prescribed agencies, Indigenous communities and the public as per the requirements of the *Planning Act.* Public consultation included a discussion paper released in late 2021, open house on September 21, 2022, a public meeting held on September 29, 2022, and a second public meeting held on June 19, 2024.

A summary of the public comments received throughout the process is provided in Schedule 4 to Item CCW 2025-046. The response matrix includes all comments received from both the repealed adopted OP 2022, and the adopted OP 2024. The Township received Five (5) oral submissions June 19, 2024, along with twelve (12) written submission on the adopted OP, 2024, after its release on May 30, 2024.

County planning staff circulated the adopted OP 2024 on August 13, 2024, to agencies, internal departments, and known stakeholders for further review and comment. County staff received comments from Huron-Wendat Nation and the Canadian National Railway Company (CN) in response to that circulation. The comments received lead to modifications in the policy text of OP 2024. For a summary of all agency and stakeholder comments and how they were addressed, please see the comment response matrix attached as Schedule 4 to this report, CCW 2025-046.

RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS

In collaboration with Township of Severn Planning Department staff, modifications are recommended to the adopted OP 2024. Aside from any grammatical or nomenclature modifications to adopted OP 2024, noteworthy modifications were made as follows:

Section	Modification
2.6.5	Update to language of long-term tree planning program
4.2 Determining Complete Application	Updating Environmental Site Assessment requirements
7.3 Sewage Servicing	Update to include proof of septage capacity on private/communal services
8.5.3 Human Made Hazards	Update for Environmental Site Assessment requirements
9.3 Highways and County Roads	Requirements updated to include site plan and wording applicable to County Roads
9.6 Rail Network	Include language with respect to rail yard/line operations and setback to sensitive land uses, safety requirements, mention of safety regulations, etc.
11.3 Greenlands	Update to language and permitted uses with respect to consistency with County OP
11.4 Settlement Living	Inserted language with respect to live-work units and local commercial uses within the Settlement Living designation
11.7 Agriculture	Update language to be consistent with PPS regarding impacts on prime agriculture. Updated Additional Residential Unit (ARU) language to comply with *Planning Act.*

14.1 Archaeological Resources	Update to studies required and language respecting First Nations and indigenous communities interests.
16.3 Managing Impacts	Update to language to be consistent with PPS regarding archaeological potential and the removal of Growth Plan references with respect to natural heritage conservation in mineral aggregate extraction operations.
17.7 Public Uses	Updates to language to be consistent with PPS regarding public authority construction project contracts and the use of temporary/portable asphalt plants.
19.1	Updates to the basis and historical context of the South of Division Road Secondary Plan Area.
19.2	Update to the planning principles to use the same language and ensure consistency with the PPS 2024 policy with respect to hazard lands, natural heritage, and servicing.
19.3	To change some terms that are outdated and remove/replace with more inclusive terminology and to implement consistency with the PPS 2024 with respect to public uses in hazard lands and adjacent buffer areas. To modernize the accessibility language. To delete the waste disposal and the archaeological policies and have them refer to the updated official plan policies earlier in the document.
19.4	To amend the environmental protection policies to be consistent with PPS 2024, and to clarify any future applications remain consistent with PPS 2024 policies. Language was added to clarify the intent of the legacy term “Special Policy Area” being used in the Secondary Plan is not confused with the Provincial term defined in PPS 2024. Added clarification of uses permitted in the Open Space designation. The removal of references to the previous Township of Orillia Official Plan. The removal of outdated accessory apartment language.
19.5	The removal of references to the previous Township of Orillia Official Plan and realign references to policy within the OP 2024.
19.7-19.8	Minor changes to refer to the Planning Act for updated legislative regulation with respect to Interim Control By-laws, Temporary use by-laws, and public notices.
Definitions	The addition of Net Hectare
Proposed Modifications to OP 2024 Schedules	**Modification**
Schedule B, C, SA1, and SA2	Update to the naming of designation from “Public Service Facility” to “Community Uses”

Schedule B, C, F	The identification of a county waste site, minor refinements to the Greenlands designation based on current Natural Heritage Mapping
Schedule E	The removal of unopened road allowances showing as ‘roads’ as well as the addition of a yellow dashed line to depict a ‘future County Road’ along Division Road.
Schedule F	The addition of a ‘Bedrock’ overlay to conform/consist with County OP/PPS 2024

The above noted text and schedule modifications have been thoroughly reviewed and are supported as good planning by Township and County staff and are shown as track changes in Schedule 1 to this report, CCW 2025-046. Schedules to OP 2024 have also been modified and attached as Schedule 2 to this report, CCW 2025-046.

POLICY REVIEW

The Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The document supports a comprehensive, integrated, and long-term approach to planning. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing approved the new PPS 2024, bringing it into force and effect date of October 20, 2024.

County staff reviewed adopted OP 2024 for consistency with the PPS 2024. Staff of are the opinion that OP 2024, as modified, is consistent with PPS 2024, save and except employment lands policies; sections 6.5 Supporting Employment, 11.5 Settlement Employment, 11.13 Highway Employment, and 11.14.

The policies of PPS 2024 require Employment Areas to be identified and protected within a municipality for long term. Currently, OP 2024, does not identify and plan for employment areas in a manner that is in accordance with the PPS, 2024. However, County and Town staff are working expeditiously to identify areas of protected employment within the Township, and update the employment land needs, mapping, and policy framework.

County Planning staff are of the opinion that the policies in OP 2024 with respect to employment lands and the Secondary Plan are not currently consistent with the PPS 2024. Therefore, County staff are recommending no decision be made by County Council on the respective sections at this time (i.e. recommend a Non-Decision).

County Planning staff are currently updating the SCOP employment land needs of protected employment lands and update policies to be consistent with PPS 2024. The County is currently working with the Township of Severn to expeditiously update the mapping and protected employment lands. Once completed, OP 2024 will be updated to conform to PPS 2024. Until such time, a Non-Decision is necessary, and The Township of Severn’s OP 2010 employment policies will remain in effect.

County staff will work with Township staff to update the employment area mapping and policies in the near future and offer assistance to the Township to update the mapping and polices of the Secondary Plan.

The SCOP provides a policy framework to implement provincial policies, determine growth and projected population numbers, and determine land needs for protected employment areas for local municipalities throughout the County. The SCOP is currently undergoing an update to implement growth allocation and population projections which subsequently affects employment land needs.

Since PPS 2024 was recently brought into force and effect on October 20, 2024, the County has not yet had a opportunity to undertake a comprehensive consistency exercise with the new policies. The SCOP, in its current approved form, also has some inconsistencies with PPS 2024. However, where there may be inconsistencies between Provincial and upper tier policy frameworks, PPS 2024 subsection 6.1.7 states, "*Where a planning authority must decide on a planning matter before their official plan has been updated to be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, or before other applicable planning instruments have been updated accordingly, it must still make a decision that is consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement."* Therefore, where there may be a matter of inconsistency, the County has an obligation to support policy conformity with PPS 2024 above its own official plan policies prior to completing an official plan update. The policies of OP 2024, as modified, conform with the County Official Plan, 2016 and are consistent with PPS 2024, save except for employment lands policies.

Summary

It is the opinion of County Planning staff that the Township of Severn's adopted OP 2024, as modified by Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 to this report, CCW 2025-046, is consistent with the PPS 2024 and conforms to the SCOP 2016, as amended, with the exception of section 6.5 Supporting Employment, section 11.5 Settlement Employment, 11.13 Highway Employment, and 11.14 Resort Employment.

County Planning staff recommend:

- That the new Severn OP 2024, as adopted by Township By-law No. 2024-40 on June 26, 2024, and as modified per Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 to this report, CCW 2024-046, dated February 11, 2024, be approved;

- That policies of section 6.5 Supporting Employment, section 11.5 Settlement Employment, 11.13 Highway Employment, and 11.14 Resort Employment, of the new Severn OP, 2024, as adopted by the Township By-law No. 2024-40 on June 26, 2024, have no decision made by Council;

- That Notice of Decision be provided in accordance with the *Planning Act.*

Financial and Resource Implications

There may be financial implications associated with this Item with respect to staff time spent on policy and mapping updates. Additionally, if the County's decision is appealed to the OLT there may be legal costs associated with that process. In the event of an appeal, staff will report back seeking authority to proceed with involvement in related OLT proceedings.

Relationship to Corporate Strategic Plan

Approval of the Township of Severn Official Plan as recommended supports the County's ability to provide Growth-Related Service Delivery and pursue continued Environmental Sustainability.

Reference Documents

None

Attachments

Schedule 1 – Tracked changes version of the Official Plan as modified by County Staff
Schedule 2 – Schedules to Official Plan, as modified, by County Staff
Schedule 3 – Clean version of the Official Plan as modified by County Staff
Schedule 4 - Comment Matrix
Schedule 5 - A chronology of the OP public and legislated process
Schedule 6 – Adopted Official Plan June 26, 2024, by Township of Severn Council

Prepared By Julie Nolan, RPP, Planning Program Supervisor, Innovation & Acceleration

Approvals	**Date**
Nathan Westendorp, Director of Planning, Chief Planner	February 4, 2025
Rob Elliott, General Manager, Engineering, Planning and Environment	February 4, 2025
Trevor Wilcox, General Manager, Corporate Performance	Click here to enter a date.
Mark Aitken, Chief Administrative Officer	Click here to enter a date.