Waterdown Community Node Secondary Plan Study
June 17, 2021 Public Information Meeting
Transcript of Questions and Responses

A question and answer session was held during the information meeting. Questions and responses provided by the project team are recorded below. All questions and responses are verbatim from the meeting. Minimal edits have been made.

Questions posed to attendees at the meeting:

1. We would like to hear especially what you like, if you think something is quite useful about the secondary plan, or if there's anything you think should be changed or added?

2. On the Urban Design guidelines do you think they give suitable guidance for new development proposals to ensure that they are compatible and of a high quality design, and should anything should be changed or added?

3. For the cultural heritage review, do you think the recommendations appropriately recognize and protect heritage resources and do you have any comments on the proposed study area for the heritage conservation district(s)?

Questions asked by attendees:

1. When would the Zoning by-law be amended to implement the Secondary Plan, for both commercial and residential? Would the regulations to implement the plan be incorporated in the commercial and residential portions of the new Hamilton By-law or into the Flamborough Zoning By-law?

We are looking at making the changes at the same time that the Secondary Plan comes forward. We are currently looking at making both commercial and residential changes but we do know that the residential zoning project City-wide is being initiated. That may take some time for new residential zoning to come forward. In the meantime, as a means of addressing some of the things we've heard and some of the heritage conservation goals we're looking to make some zoning adjustments to both commercial and residential right away when the secondary plan comes forward. Then for some of those things we would be looking to have them carried forward when the new residential zoning comes in as well.
2. **Would the zoning be as part of the new Hamilton by-law or would it be part of a Flamborough specific by-law?**

The commercial zoning is part of a new city-wide zoning so the amendments would be made to that zoning for commercial. The residential areas are currently under the Flamborough Zoning By-law so we'd be looking at making changes to the Flamborough Zoning By-law. The zoning team working on the City-wide zoning would be looking at carrying forward those things to the new zoning by law as well in the future.

3. **What policies would be included to ensure that redevelopment of commercial lands along Hamilton Street maintain the same amount of retail space as there is today? Additionally, what opportunities would be available to ensure that grocery stores are maintained through redevelopment, which typically require a greater retail gross floor area (GFA)?**

We have done an assessment of the amount of commercial gross floor area that is in the area now and we've put some policy language in the draft secondary plan that talks about how we want to maintain a certain level of commercial in the area. Any significant reductions to the amount of commercial would require a commercial impact assessment. We've included that language in the secondary plan. It's very difficult to require specific uses like a grocery store but we are anticipating that those types of uses would still remain in the node because they are a significant service within the node.

4. **Will this presentation be made available to the public?**

Yes, the verbal presentation will be posted on the website and the slide decks will also be available for people to see. That would be a number of days from now but they will be available for everyone to see.

5. **Are residential single family dwellings exempt from Heritage Conservation District Plan submissions if you’re considering an addition?**

The way that a Heritage Conservation District Plan process works is that first a Heritage Conservation District Study is done, similar to the work that we've done for the cultural landscape review in which the area is researched and understood and there's community engagement done as part of that process. Then if Council approves the study and the recommendations of the study state to move forward to a plan then the Heritage Conservation District Plan would review what kinds of policies and guidelines would be put in place that would apply to the properties within the boundary for the Heritage Conservation District. It certainly could apply to residential properties. It could also apply to commercial properties within the area, so any type of property. There would be some level of distinction generally made between which properties are seen as contributing properties. They would have a certain set of guidelines towards conservation different from those that are non-
contributing. Those differ from the properties that exhibit the values of the area and they would have a different set of guidelines.

If this goes forward there would be consultation establishing that so there will be opportunities to have further discussions.

6. **Will the cultural heritage landscapes apply only to the public realm (i.e. the municipal right-of-way) or will they apply to private property? If so how?**

The cultural heritage landscapes apply to public lands as well as private property so it’s all of the land that’s included within the boundaries for the cultural heritage landscape. The guidance is provided through the policies in the Secondary Plan as well as the Urban Design Guidelines, so that's how it would apply. That's where we've come up with recommendations related to heights or setbacks or those zoning bylaw recommendations.

7. **There are challenges to increasing access from narrow secondary streets. Proposals for new developments along John Street and White Oak have had suggestions to ensure access to Hamilton rather than off of the secondary streets.**

This is certainly something that will have to be considered on a site-by-site basis as some secondary streets lend themselves as vehicle access routes, and some do not. Where possible, we would look to ensure that new secondary streets provide adequate widths and traffic movements to enable them to function as good vehicle access routes.

In our plan we look at if new secondary streets become part of that street network we want to ensure that they are designed in such a way that we can use them as those access routes to try to remove a lot of the traffic turning on and off of Hamilton and Dundas. That isn't to say that every curb cut can be eliminated from those streets because there certainly are existing streets that don't lend themselves well as those vehicle access roads and that might be because of what’s adjacent to them or simply the widths of them that they won't support being a main access road. It is really a site by site basis and I think in these guidelines we're really hoping to achieve those new streets so that they can start alleviating some of that traffic pressure on the main roads and eliminate a lot of those turning movements.

8. **Is this plan suggesting that the Sobeys property will be redeveloped?**

We are not making any suggestion that this property will be redeveloped. Our team simply selected it as a good example of a large lot where we could illustrate how the principles of the guidelines could be applied. The same principles could apply to any of the large lots along Hamilton Street were they to be redeveloped.

What we find in in drafting urban design guidelines is that a picture is worth 1000 and more words because we can have all of this policy language written but until
you really see how it hits the ground on the real example it's hard to really understand what those relationships are. We often find that these demonstration plans which are our hypothetical examples are a really good way to show how the guidelines can be applied. In no way do they indicate any future development or the potential for development. That was a selected site that we thought was of a nice size and it had the frontages and a lot of conditions we wanted to speak to in terms of how the guidelines will work but there's no indication that anything will be happening soon on that lot.

9. **We have recently learned about the truck route master plan which is underway. Why is the Waterdown bypass not shown or discussed in it?** You can never achieve the pedestrian, historical and retail goals for the Waterdown town centre if the large trucks continue to speed through the town causing noise, dirt and distraction. Dundas Street through the historic core town centre must have “Trucks Prohibited” regulations to have successful village character.

We have a truck route master plan Public Information Centre next Thursday from 6 to 8 through our Engage Hamilton portal (see link below). The reason why it's not on the maps currently is because the road doesn't exist so I think we have to really think about how fluid that plan will be. In the future once that road is extended to Hwy 6 there will certainly be an opportunity to guide any truck traffic heading to and from Hwy 401 area or other areas in north Flamboro to take that route. We will certainly encourage them to do so. In the interim there are things in our Transportation Management Plan that we could do to reduce and mitigate those negative effects of trucks; reducing speeds to manage the noise and vibration issues that affect the heritage core. We have that challenge in the lower city as well. Any time you have truck traffic going through a pedestrian-focused area there’s a negative effect and we want to mitigate that as best as possible. We appreciate the comment and we encourage you to participate in that Public Information Centre and provide us all your comments through that avenue. That is next Thursday a week from today. If you were to go back onto the Engage Hamilton site you can find that under truck route master plan “TRMP”.

Email Link provided: [https://engage.hamilton.ca/trmp](https://engage.hamilton.ca/trmp)

10. **Are traffic lights to be synchronized during peak travel times 6:00 to 8:30 AM easterly and 4:00 to 6:30 PM westerly?** Presently commute times of the last seven years have increased two to three minutes per year.

Through our Transportation Operations and Maintenance Division in the City we do network reviews of the traffic signal synchronization periodically so that's something that we would always manage and monitor to see what we could do. That's good for vehicular traffic however sometimes from a pedestrian perspective that creates an issue as well, having too much synchronization. There's that balance between
the desire for the vehicular traffic while trying to balance that pedestrian focused urban community core. These are things that we will always continue to work on and manage and adapt now and in the future.

11. St. James church at 306 Parkside Drive is located within the boundaries of the Waterdown Node Secondary Plan study area and currently has a proposal to build 40 townhomes on the property with the church to remain. Does the Secondary Plan limit the size of the development within the Waterdown Node study area?

12. When approved would the Secondary Plan prevent or limit a large scale development (40 townhomes) which is proposed for the site?

(Response to questions 11 and 12) The secondary plan specifies through the land use designations that we’re applying the types of uses that are permitted. It also talks about building heights and in some situations provides directions for densities as well. That property is currently an institutional designation. We are proposing to maintain that. The standards of the institutional designation are implemented through zoning. The townhouse form of development, the secondary plan would not prohibit that. That type of adaptive reuse is permitted on institutional lands when they are no longer being used for institutional purposes. Any proposal that comes in for a site like that would have to comply with all of the policies of both the Secondary Plan and the Urban Hamilton Official Plan. Those are things regarding appropriate design, compatibility and heritage conservation. It could be looking at the design of the buildings, the orientation, the layout, access, landscaping, all those types of matters. A heritage impact assessment report would also be a requirement if we did get an application for that site. So, there would be some limitations on what can be done. The townhouse type of development would not be prohibited but there would be some parameters set around how you could do that.

13. I have concerns about the proposed development at St. James church on Parkside. It is population dense and will impact the core in a very negative way. Traffic is already in nightmare on Parkside and this will only make it worse. It’s too many units for the size of land. How does adding the proposed housing units onto the St. James United Church property maintain the visual aspects of the Waterdown old core?

In terms of terms of the contextual fit, this is why the guidelines become very important. It’s because the guidelines have the ability to get into a certain level of detail and granularity when looking at proposed developments to ensure that very specific things help those developments to fit into the context. So we’re talking about everything from scale and height and massing but also really looking at materials and composition and what this building appears like from the public realm, from the street, from adjacent properties. Within the guidelines we’re really looking at ensuring that cladding materials, lot layouts and setbacks are appropriate. When
you see a development and say that is too dense or it's bad there are a lot of nuanced details about it that you can start to look at and analyze and figure out why it seems so dense and bad. This is why it's really important that as part of the approvals process these guidelines are going to be embedded as part of that Secondary Plan and spoken directly to in the Secondary Plan. As developments come in and the site plan control approvals process moves its way through the system it's the staff at the City that are able to take all of those specifics within the guidelines and evaluate and work with the developer to provide comment on how that can be achieved within that development site. It's a critical component and I think it'll help with those types of developments that that some might see and be shocked at either the size or the density of them. I think that that's why this is such a critical piece right now.

14. Will there be access to the proposed housing units via Kelly Street? Specifically, there is the very narrow piece of land between two of the Kelly Street homes that connects Kelly Street to the church parking lot. What is to become of that narrow piece of land?

15. Traffic congestion at the intersection of Kelly/Main, Mill/Parkside and Main/Parkside already exists. How will these congestion issues be addressed through this proposed plan and development?

(Response to questions 14 and 15) There have been no applications submitted on that site but typically if there were a type of infill development like townhouses we'd be looking to put the access off of a collector or arterial road, not off of Kelly Street. That's usually the requirement for traffic and transportation staff. In terms of the traffic review of a proposal our transportation planning staff review every proposal that comes in so they would be responsible for looking at impacts of the proposal, whether it can meet current requirements and what type of impact it will have on traffic. That would be something that they would have to do a review of in detail when we get an application.

16. What is the timeline for the secondary plan going forward to approval?

The timeline that we're hoping for is to get a final report and a final plan to the City's Planning Committee and Council sometime in the fall before the end of the year.

17. Why was Mary Hopkins School not included in the Cultural Heritage Protection area? If this school is closed the property could be developed and that would be a disaster for the heritage area of Waterdown. The school itself should be preserved for its heritage features.

Mary Hopkins School is within the Mill Street Heritage Conservation District so it is designated under part five of the Ontario Heritage Act. It is already protected.
18. Regarding the Sobeys example (albeit a new compelling vision) it seems like a major reduction of car parking. Do you feel that that can be a reality?

In terms of the example lot plan, we're looking at typical mixed use development and considering that there will be different parking rates for different types of buildings and some larger buildings. If they end up being partially office or commercial they may have some underground parking with a lot of surface parking for things like retail. So what we've done is a combined example of some of those uses. You would see an overall reduction but don't forget that when you introduce a new street network and show street parking on all the secondary side streets you actually introduce a remarkable number of easy to find new spots. So, it's not all located in lots but it's bridged between those interior surface lots, some underground, some under buildings and then also on street edges. A lot of times with the mid-rise development form a lot of the parking can be underground in those developments. That's why you might not see quite the same amount on the surface.

19. Can you provide clarity on where applications for exception to go to 8 storeys might be considered?

What we were looking at is that the largest and deepest lots just on the west side of Hamilton Street might be considered for buildings above 6 stories up to the 8 story range. That really relates back to some of the guidelines in the draft urban design guidelines document. We'd be looking at how the massing would work in order to reduce the perception of that height and looking at where the placement of those buildings might be and how the transition works, having some sort of intervening lower-rise land use in between that and any other existing neighborhood areas on the other side of those Hamilton Street properties.

20. Will all C5 zoning (6 to 8 storey limit) be removed in the old core of Waterdown (Dundas Street, Mill Street and Main Street) and replaced with the BD zoning (2 to 3 storey limit) as per the Secondary Plan recommendations?

The zoning in the area used to be a Business District zoning under the Flamborough Zoning By-law. Now all the commercial zoning in the amalgamated City has been consolidated into one zoning by-law which is the C5 zoning that's being referenced. We wouldn't be reverting back to the original zoning when we're making zoning changes, we would be amending the current zoning that's there. So we'd be looking at amending the C5 or the C5A zoning depending on what portion of the node, in order to be consistent with the Secondary Plan and things like the height recommendations.

21. By-law number 20-101 was in effect for one year from the date of passing (May 20, 2020). Now that the year has passed, does the City plan to seek another similar by-law?
Another interim control by-law is not anticipated. There is a three year moratorium on passing another interim control by-law in an area after the interim control by-law tool has been used once. Since that by-law was in place for a full year and has now expired, we cannot pass another interim control by-law in that area for the time being.

22. **On one of the maps in this study a potential corridor between Sealey Park and the waterfall is shown. I think the idea is great, but wonder what is being considered as this connection would need to cross the rail line?**

Identification of that link is important and will be carried forward to the Recreational Trails Master Plan. That Plan will look at a little bit more at feasibility but absolutely we would want to ensure safe crossing of any rail line. It would probably be a structure which would come over top of that (railroad) to make sure that there would be a safe crossing. We wouldn't want to have anybody cross at grade if at all avoidable so that would be something that would be looked at in more detail, but we just want to identify the linkage as part of this process.

23. **Is there still a moratorium in the heritage area?**

   There is no hold on any development in the heritage area at this time. Any properties that are in the existing heritage district would still be subject to the heritage permit process for any changes within that area.

24. **Can you describe the goal or outcome of implementing a heritage tree by-law? Will this deter the destruction of old (healthy) trees on private properties?**

   The idea behind a tree by-law is that it would protect, maintain and enhance the long term health of trees that were subject to that by-law. Usually there would be some indication of the size of tree within the by-law. The diameter of the tree trunk would define which trees it would apply to.

25. **What planning tool will be used to implement urban design policies for residential areas? Would site plan control be what's used to implement the urban design policies?**

   Within the residential areas the primary tools we're looking at in order to address some of the heritage things, it would not be through site plan control. Typically, that process is for larger developments and not for single detached housing. What we're looking at doing primarily is the zoning adjustments to try and see if there are adjustments we can make that would reflect some of the things that we're trying to maintain in the area. Also, the Heritage Conservation District Study would be a follow-up measure that we're looking at that might introduce a district in the area where a heritage permit would be a way to look at proposed changes in the area before something is built.
26. Could affordable housing be considered an approved use for institutional zoning so as to provide perhaps a more shortened way to have affordable housing built, giving recognition to the zoning challenges that can be onerous? Given as an example, could intensification of the Mary Hopkins School grounds include affordable housing if it was considered that you would allow it as part of institutional zoning?

When we're looking at secondary plan policies and zoning requirements it doesn't set out specific levels of affordability. That's not something we can regulate through those tools. We can only regulate types of land uses and things like the heights and densities. As with the other site at the St. James church property, the institutional zoning does allow for reuse for low density residential uses if an institutional use ceases or if there is something like excess surplus lands. Those types of things like single detached and street townhouses are something that could be permitted within the institutional zone, but the affordable housing component is more of the ownership type of aspect which is something that we don't regulate through the Secondary Plan or zoning.

27. What is planned to increase safety of pedestrians along Mill Street south of Dundas? They are now crossing under the rail line on a very narrow path.

That is addressed by the proposed Sealey Park crossing to the waterfall. That was the intent of that rail overpass structure. That would resolve that issue of the tight right-of-way with the rail bridge there.

28. Section 5.1.1 of the design guidelines speaks to clear glazing at street level. This may compromise some heritage features of buildings in the core. Would there be consideration to amending that narrative?

The first thing to mention is that in terms of the requirements for facades like glazing it applies to new development so not existing buildings. If we have heritage buildings that exist in the area we're not saying that they need to suddenly comply with minimum glazing requirements. The second piece would be that in terms of building within the heritage area and finding a fit I think that a larger glazing actually fits very well with a lot of the traditional heritage buildings. You'll see a large range depending on original uses of these buildings, but there are great examples of buildings from the 1840s and 1850s where designs were opening up the lower commercial facades with cast iron beams that are even more glazed than a lot of buildings we see today. I think there are ways to incorporate that and still fit into the heritage context. I don't think they are necessarily competing interests, but they are certainly going to be important considerations for what is adjacent to that site. When you are building directly adjacent or within a heritage area you have to consider what the surrounding context is and what's appropriate there. Trying to hit those thresholds within the guidelines is as important as ensuring the contextual fit of the surrounding buildings as well.
29. The core (Main/John/Mill) currently has a zoning by-law that permits urban farming and some commercial activity. Is the proposal by going to Residential 2 density removing that alternative expanded use and what implications does this have on current site use?

The area that I think is being talked about is the historic core area and some of the permissions in that area within the zoning. What we're looking at with the land use designations is essentially following the current zoning that's there. Any lands that have a commercial mixed use zoning are still designated for commercial mixed use and lands outside of that which were zoned for residential are still designated for residential. We are not making any real changes to the boundaries there, we're just mostly looking at tweaking the existing zoning for those height permissions and ensuring that the pedestrian-focused requirements that are in the historic core are being carried over to some portions of Hamilton Street.

Additional comment from City staff after the meeting: Some residential areas closest to the historic commercial core have zoning which permits an urban farm, a community garden, and an office of one Physical or Mental Health Practitioner, Physician or Dentist located within a Single Detached Dwelling (Flamborough Zoning By-law Core Area Residential (R5) Zone). The proposed Secondary Plan would remove the permission for a Health Practitioner, Physician or Dentist within single detached dwellings. These would only be permitted within the Mixed Use commercial area.

30. After the Waterdown Node Secondary Plan is complete will the study continue on the possibility of an additional heritage district along Dundas and Main streets in Waterdown? If so what is the timeline to complete that study?

There is a Heritage Conservation District Study being recommended for the area and as the question implied it would be a follow-up step to address heritage conservation. It would not be part of the Secondary Plan but it is a measure that may help to implement some of those objectives for heritage conservation in the secondary plan. We are gathering any feedback that the community has about what areas they may like to see protected through a Heritage Conservation District study. We'll be proposing a study area boundary as part of our recommendations. A study can take roughly 18 to 24 months from the initiation of the study through to completion of the final passing of the by-law and implementation of the Heritage Conservation District Plan.

31. Will there be guidelines to prevent bird strike on new building windows? I am thinking of feather friendly technologies.

The guidelines do contain guidance currently about deploying bird friendly design especially through facade designs. Things like building materials and visual markers are referenced in the document currently. It's becoming so important. Toronto was one of the first cities to really have a robust bird friendly guidelines
document so we’ve really looked to that and we hope that can happen everywhere in Hamilton.

32. **Bedrock exists at the northwest corner of Hwy 5 and Hamilton Street two meters below grade. How feasible would underground parking be achieved or proposed?**

Site by site it may be feasible. It's certainly possible to build underground but as soon as you have a lot of bedrock the cost goes up very quickly, so it's a site by site question for sure.

33. **The Memorial skate park will be undersized for youth growth. Is there expansion or alternate site proposals?**

The project team will follow up with Recreation staff to confirm if there are any future changes proposed for the skate park. The project team is not aware of any expansions proposed to the skate park at this time. Park amenities in the various parks are assessed regularly by our recreation staff to determine what kinds of facilities might be needed and if there are changes needed within the parks over time.

34. **Can you please clarify what a designation under the Ontario Heritage Act means as a land owner? What approvals would we need if we were to modify our home?**

Municipalities are able to manage and guide change to properties that have been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act through the Heritage Permit Process. For information on this process please visit: [https://www.hamilton.ca/city-planning/heritage-properties/heritage-permits](https://www.hamilton.ca/city-planning/heritage-properties/heritage-permits)