

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 PURPOSE**

The Official Plan for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville establishes a general framework for the future planning of the municipality. In particular, the Plan provides:

- i) an overall vision, principles and objectives; and,
- ii) policies and implementation approaches to guide decision making by the Town with respect to the natural environment, land use, community services, social and cultural matters and development review.

The Plan also incorporates detailed policies for each community within the Town.

## 1.2 OFFICIAL PLAN ORGANIZATION

This document consists of two major components:

- i) Sections 1-9, THE OFFICIAL PLAN, which is primarily applicable to the rural/agricultural area of the municipality. These sections include the vision, principles and objectives, as well as the policies and schedules for this part of the Town; and,
- ii) Sections 10-13, THE SECONDARY PLANS, which consist of detailed plans for the communities of Stouffville and Ballantrae-Musselman Lake, the Gormley Industrial Area and the Vandorf-Preston Lake Area.

The provisions of the Secondary Plans for Stouffville, Ballantrae-Musselman Lake, Vandorf-Preston Lake Area, and Gormley prevail over the provisions of the Official Plan in the event of any conflict.

The appendices also include excerpts from the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act* and the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan* which are referenced in the text of the Official Plan. These appendices are intended to assist in the interpretation of the policies of the Official Plan which are related to the Moraine.

## 1.3 BASIS

### 1.3.1 Planning Framework

The Official Plan is based on a range of background studies, municipal policies and guidelines such as the Growth Management Strategy and Leisure Services Master Plan, and public input at all stages of the preparation of the Plan. It also includes four Secondary Plans which had been previously adopted by Council and approved by the Province or the Region as required.

In addition, the Plan has been prepared within a framework of Provincial and Regional policies and guidelines including:

- i) The Provincial Policy Statement;
- ii) The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan;
- iii) The Rouge Park Management Plan;
- iv) The Region of York Official Plan;
- v) Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) Valley and Stream Corridor Management Program; and,
- vi) The Holland River Watershed Plan.

Certain key conclusions and assumptions regarding the future of the Town have been developed based on the background studies. These form the basis for the Official Plan and are outlined below.

### **1.3.2 Existing Community Structure**

The Town's existing community structure is illustrated on Figure 1 and its most significant features are described below:

- i) The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is part of the Greater Toronto Area and is located in the Region of York, one of the fastest growing areas in Canada. As a result, the Town is subject to pressures for urban development in and adjacent to communities such as Stouffville. There are also demands for development in the rural/agricultural area where the pressure is for the location of land intensive uses (e.g. cemeteries, recreation uses) and non-farm residential development, including estate lots.
- ii) Agriculture is still a dominant land use and is supported by large areas of prime agricultural land in the south, northwest and northeast portions of the Town. The dominance of the land use is despite:
  - a) a highly fragmented lot pattern, particularly in the central portion of the municipality where a significant number of estate and non-farm residential lots have been created; and,
  - b) numerous land intensive urban fringe uses including golf courses, plant nurseries, cemeteries and other similar uses.
- iii) The Town also includes many environmental features. This reflects the fact that a large part of the municipality is located in the Oak Ridges Moraine and/or the Rouge River watershed. A Natural Features + Greenlands Study carried out for the Town has identified a Greenlands System which includes wetlands, Environmentally Significant Areas, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, forested areas, and cold and warm water fisheries, and major groundwater recharge/headwater areas. However, within the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Greenlands System reflects the directions in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.
- iv) The aggregate industry is also strong, with significant existing pits and areas of aggregate potential.
- v) The rural/agricultural/environmental area is balanced by Stouffville which is a fully serviced urban community with a diverse range of residential, employment,

commercial and institutional uses. There are also the four smaller settlement areas of Ballantrae-Musselman Lake, Vandorf-Preston Lake, Bloomington and the Gormley Industrial Area which are dispersed throughout the rural/agricultural/environmental area.

### **1.3.3 Growth Management**

#### **1.3.3.1 Population and Employment**

The Official Plan, and the Town's 2013 Growth Management Strategy, are based on the following forecasts:

i) Population

The population of Whitchurch-Stouffville is forecast to grow from 39,400 in 2011 to 60,600 by 2031.

ii) Employment

Total employment is forecast to grow from 12,600 in 2011 to 23,000 by 2031.

#### **1.3.3.2 Distribution of Growth**

The Official Plan, and the Town's Growth Management Strategy, are based on the following assumptions regarding the distribution of future growth in the community:

- i) The focus of population and employment growth in the Town will continue to be the Community of Stouffville;
- ii) The other area in the Town where some moderate population growth will occur is the Ballantrae-Musselman Lake Community. Additional employment growth will be located on the lands in the Gormley Industrial Area and in the designated "ORM Employment Area", "Employment Area", and "Potential Employment Area" on Schedule "G" in the Vandorf Preston Lake Secondary Plan;

- iii) The balance of the Town will remain rural/agricultural/environmental in character and is not likely to see significant growth. The only exception is the community of Vandorf-Preston Lake where additional growth may occur in accordance with the Vandorf Preston Lake Secondary Plan.

#### **1.3.4 Assumptions**

Certain key assumptions underlie the Official Plan:

- i) Servicing

The form of development permitted in the rural/agricultural/environmental area will generally only require individual private sewage disposal and water supply systems. However, where new multiple lot/unit development is proposed, or in areas of groundwater contamination, or where other health problems develop, the Town shall give consideration to the use of communal sewage and water systems. The type of servicing in the individual communities will be established in the Secondary Plans.

- ii) Transportation

The existing arterial and collector road system, with any improvements required to serve development in the Secondary Plan areas, will be largely sufficient to service additional development in the rural/agricultural/ environmental area.

- iii) Recreation

The majority of the active public recreation facilities (e.g. baseball diamonds, swimming pools) required to service the needs of the residents in the rural/agricultural/ environmental area will be located in the Secondary Plan areas. Notwithstanding this fact, it is recognized that regional and natural facilities, such as trail systems, which are primarily passive in nature will be located in the rural/agricultural/environmental area. The development and/or expansion of the trail systems will be undertaken in consultation with landowners and the public at large. Further, a number of private recreation facilities, by their nature, will locate in the rural area (e.g. golf courses, shooting ranges, summer camps) subject to the policies of this Plan.

#### iv) Housing

Because of the limitations on servicing, the majority of the housing in the rural/agricultural/environmental area will continue to be primarily single detached. The full range of housing required by the Town will be provided in the Secondary Plan areas.

## **1.4 PLANNING AREA**

The Planning Area includes all the lands in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, however, specific policies may apply only to particular parts of the municipality.

## **1.5 PLANNING PERIOD**

The policies and designations of the Official Plan are intended to guide the planning of the Town to the year 2031. However, the planning period for the individual Secondary Plans may vary from this based on their date of adoption. Further, as new information becomes available or conditions change, the Official Plan shall be reviewed and amended as required. At a minimum, the Plan, including the Secondary Plans, shall be reviewed every five years to ensure that it reflects updated projections regarding population and employment and changes with respect to other matters such as Provincial and Regional policies.

## **1.6 LEGAL EFFECT**

The Official Plan is prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Act which gives the Plan its legal effect. This legal effect is established through Section 24 of the Act which states that generally no public work may be carried out and no By-law may be passed for any purpose which does not conform with the Official Plan.