

If you require this information in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@northumberland.ca or 1-800-354-7050 ext. 2327



Report 2024-160

Report Title: Northumberland Next – Additional Public Meeting for OPA1 Natural Heritage System (2024)

Committee Name: Economic Development, Tourism and Planning

Committee Meeting Date: December 4, 2024

Prepared by: Dwayne Campbell
Acting Director / Manager of Planning and Economic Development
Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Initiatives

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: December 18, 2024

Strategic Plan Priorities: Innovate for Service Excellence
 Ignite Economic Opportunity
 Foster a Thriving Community
 Propel Sustainable Growth
 Champion a Vibrant Future

Information Report

“That the Economic Development, Tourism and Land Use Planning Committee receive Report 2024-160 ‘Northumberland Next – Additional Public Meeting for OPA1 Natural Heritage System (2024)’ for information; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this report for information.”

Purpose

This report introduces proposed changes to County Official Plan Amendment No. 1 - Natural Heritage System, that are consistent with the new Provincial Policy Statement, 2024.

Background

Official Plan Amendment No. 1 – Natural Heritage System (NHS Amendment) is the first amendment of a series of amendments to update the County Official Plan in accordance Provincial requirements.

On December 15, 2021, after an extensive 3-year process, County Council adopted the NHS Amendment and it was submitted to the Province of approval.

On October 18, 2023, County Council passed a resolution requesting that a Provincial decision on the NHS Amendment be deferred considering the pending release of the new Provincial Planning Statement.

In a letter dated September 6, 2024, Honorable Paul Calandra (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing), requested that the adopting by-law to the NHS Amendment be repealed to allow the County the ability to re-visit the Amendment to ensure alignment of local land use policies and interest with the new Provincial Policy Statement, 2024 (PPS, 2024).

On October 16, 2024, County Council directed staff to respond to the Minister's letter to suggest an alternative approach wherein staff draft modifications for the NHS Amendment to ensure alignment with the new PPS, 2024. Council also directed staff to prepare a report outlining the modifications required, and to hold a public meeting to present the proposed modifications and provide the public and interested parties the opportunity to provide input. This report and the attachments have been prepared as directed by Council.

Consultations

The development of the Natural Heritage System (NHS) Plan launched in 2018, in anticipation of the launch of a formal Official Plan update process. The first round of public consultations on the Natural Heritage System Plan in November 2018 was to gather input on natural features to be included in the plan.

A second round of consultations was held in November/December 2019 to introduce the three proposed options for a Natural Heritage System and to gather feedback on these options. The 'Basic' option would achieve the minimum provincial requirements while the 'Enhanced' option would be the most conservation-forward system being proposed.

In January/February 2020, an interactive map showing the limits of each of the proposed options on individual properties was provided to the public and a feedback form was released to collect input on a preferred option.

The full Official Plan update process, Northumberland Next, launched with an initial public consultation in October 2020. Through this process, the County is reviewing maps and policies in the current Official Plan and will undertake a series of amendments to update the Plan to best guide growth and development over the next 30 years. The first of which, was the NHS Amendment.

The final NHS report was completed in July 2020 and endorsed by Council. The third option ('Enhanced') was selected as the preferred option for the Northumberland NHS.

In March 2021, the NHS Amendment was prepared and presented to County Council and the public for feedback through a virtual Open House and Public meeting.

In December 2021, County Council adopted the NHS Amendment.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

Notice and hosting of all open house events and public meetings are undertaken in accordance with the *Planning Act*.

Discussion / Options

A memo and information report, prepared by Meridian Planning Consultants, dated October 3, 2024, is attached and provides the details about the proposed changes and modifications required to the NHS Amendment. There are 83 proposed modifications that include map schedule changes and policy changes to the adopted NHS-Amendment that will ensure that it is consistent with PPS, 2024 (refer to attachment 1).

It is worth noting that the complexity of implementing various Provincially legislated natural heritage systems (i.e. Oak Ridge Moraine, Growth Plan and PPS) into the County NHS has been simplified as a result of recent Provincial legislative changes. As a result of the Provincial direction to consolidate the Growth Plan NHS, the proposed modifications simplify the land use structure for the County's natural heritage system, and establish policies that will consider development proposals that were previously prohibited in certain natural heritage features. While some land use areas that were originally incorporated as natural heritage areas under the former Growth Plan will be re-designated, they will remain part of the overall natural heritage system. The spatial area of the natural heritage system will remain the same as originally proposed. However, changes to policies may affect requirements related to where development and site alteration can be permitted and under what conditions, in these areas. As an example, development that was previously prohibited in significant woodlands may now be considered once it has been demonstrated that there is no negative impact to the woodlot. For a full description of all the proposed changes, please refer to attachment 1.

Financial Impact

The proposed changes and additional public meeting for the NHS Amendment are additional costs to the Council approved budget for the Official Plan update that was approved in 2020. It is anticipated that the additional expense will be covered by deferring subsequent amendments and projects as part of the County Official Plan update.

Member Municipality Impacts

Once approved by the Province, the amendment mapping and policies will be integrated into the Northumberland County Official Plan and each of the local municipalities will need to update their official plans with the Natural Heritage System.

Conclusion / Outcomes

As directed by County Council, a report on proposed changes to County Official Plan Amendment No. 1 - Natural Heritage System, have been prepared by Meridian Planning Consultants and is attached for information along with a tracked-changes version of the adopted Amendment for discussion at a public meeting.

Following the public meeting, County staff will gather feedback and use it to inform final changes to the amendment.

The final changes to the amendment will be presented to the Economic Development, Tourism, Land Use Planning Committee and Council in early 2025 for consideration and endorsement.

Once the proposed changes to are endorsed by County Council, the amendment will be submitted to the Provincial government for consideration and approval.

Once approved by the Province, the amendment mapping and policies will be integrated into the Northumberland County Official Plan.

Attachments

1. Report 2024-160 ATTACH 1 'Memo: Proposed Modifications to OPA 1-NHS, Meridian Planning (October 3, 2024)'
2. Report 2024-160 ATTACH 2 'Adopted NHS OPA to Oct 2024 (tracked changes version)'