

Memorandum

Date: September 17, 2019

To: Members of Council

From: Margherita Bialy, Community Planner, Policy & Sustainability, Community Services

Subject: Preservation of Rural Community Character and Infill Policy Review - Update

The purpose of this memo is to advise Council that the Preservation of Rural Community Character and Infill Policy Review Study is completed, and findings can be accessed on the Town's website:

<https://www.caledon.ca/en/townhall/preservation-of-rural-community-character-and-infill-policy-review.asp>

The Town recognizes the unique and diverse history of each of its communities and favours a mix of thriving interconnected settlement areas. Policy and Sustainability division initiated this study to update the policy framework to address preservation and enrichment of rural community character in a manner that considers sensitive growth and infill development.

This study established a policy framework that ensures that any new development positively contributes to the established character, sense of place, cultural heritage assets of the Town's villages, hamlets and the rural service centre of Caledon East. The findings of this study will significantly contribute background research for the 2041 Official Plan review process. An amendment to the Official Plan will be required to bring recommended revised policies into effect and this will occur as part of the 2041 Official Plan Review.

Background

MBTW | WAI was retained by the Town of Caledon in 2017 to undertake the study. The Preservation of Rural Community Character and Infill Policy Review study focused on the Town's six villages and nine hamlets and included the rural service center of Caledon East (referred to as individual study areas). The villages included in this study are Palgrave, Alton, Caledon Village, Cheltenham, Inglewood, and Mono Mills. The hamlets are Albion, Belfountain, Campbell's Cross, Cataract, Claude, Melville, Mono Road, Terra Cotta and Wildfield (refer to Schedule A – Study Area Map).

The policy review was undertaken in four phases:

- Phase 1: Background Review and Data Analysis included a comprehensive review of the existing policy context and regulatory frameworks to identify issues and themes to be addressed.

- Phase 2: Analysis, Options and Directions explored community character and infill policy options, identified key policy directions, terms and definitions and evaluated community character traits in individual study areas.
- Phases 3 and 4: Draft Policy Recommendations summarized public input, provided draft policy recommendations for the Town's Official Plan, and provides recommendations for next steps and implementations

The analysis and discussion during each phase of the policy review resulted in the following documents:

The results of Phase 1 were presented in the Preservation of Rural Community Character and Infill Policy Review: Background Paper. Five policy themes were identified in the background report to provide a guide for policy recommendations including:

- protection and preservation of rural community character;
- appropriate growth;
- compatibility with cultural heritage and rural landscapes;
- community safety; and
- main street economic vitality.

The Background Report is final and is posted on the project webpage provided below:

<https://www.caledon.ca/en/townhall/preservation-of-rural-community-character-and-infill-policy-review.asp>.

The second phase of the study included the development of potential policy and guidance options required to preserve and enhance rural community character. As, part of the process, key terms and definitions from the Town's Official Plan were reviewed, as well as, a review of precedent Official Plans, studies and documents from other municipal jurisdictions was conducted to inform the development of new or revised terms and definitions. The results of Phase 2 were presented in the Preservation of Rural Community Character & Infill Policy Review: Directions Report. The Directions Report includes policy recommendations and a list of refined key terms and definitions, which aims to clarify terminology and eliminate ambiguity.

The Directions Report will be available online after September 17 on the link below.

<https://www.caledon.ca/en/townhall/preservation-of-rural-community-character-and-infill-policy-review.asp>

Phases 3 and 4 included the preparation of draft policy recommendations which are summarized below:

- As part of the Official Plan review, the Town should revisit its strategy for growth and reclassify the road network in co-ordination with the Region of Peel;

- Update the Town Wide Design Guidelines to establish detailed lighting standards; develop a main street streetscape improvement inventory; prepare rural design guidelines; develop rural cross sections; identify and provide guidance with regards to rural character elements; and introduce a fencing inventory;
- Establish heritage conservation districts;
- Strengthen and maintain Caledon's open spaces and trails;
- Update the Town's Site Plan Control Manual;
- Develop a strategy for "subdivision-style" development; and
- Develop Residential Infill Guidelines.

Community Engagement and Consultation Process

During Phase 1, the first community engagement event was held on October 11, 2017, with approximately 50 stakeholders and residents in attendance. The purpose of the Workshop was to introduce the study to the public and stakeholders, obtain resident input on the guiding principles, objectives for future infill development in Caledon and identify key amenities and character features in individual community areas. Participants identified the following strengths, opportunities and concerns to help guide the study:

- infill policies are insufficient in protecting rural character;
- complex issue of preserving rural lifestyles in Caledon;
- need for a threshold for future infill development;
- protecting existing character homes from demolition;
- protecting natural heritage landscapes and dark skies;
- aversion to "monster homes" and "cookie-cutter" architecture; and
- spaces for small business development.

A survey was conducted after the Visioning Workshop, collecting 48 responses from residents of the study areas between October 20 to November 10, 2017. The survey spanned four categories: background, community character, identifying compatible development and appropriate built form. When asked about community character, responses reflected a range of voices, including:

- small town character
- family oriented
- unique charm
- yards to play in
- easy access to trails and natural areas

- architectural heritage integration with natural environment

During Phase 2, two community drop-in sessions were held on December 6, 2018 and January 10, 2019. The purpose of the events was to provide an update on study progress including the outcomes of the October 2017 Visioning Workshop, the results of the online survey and next steps. Panels were presented at both sessions, which included new ideas such as typical settlement area traits, new terminology, and the concept of “Character Areas” for each of the 16 study areas. Feedback varied from the identification of additional cultural heritage assets to refining “character area” boundaries, as well as, the need for aging in place policies and housing that accommodates seniors.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The policy recommendations that were developed during this study will require an amendment to the Official Plan. This will be accommodated as part of the Caledon 2041 Official Plan Review process.

Attachments:

Schedule A: Study Area Map