A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report PDS.20.37, entitled “2020 Provincial Policy Statement”; for information purposes and as a follow up to Staff Report PDS.19.114.

B. Overview

Last year the province announced the “More Homes, More Choice: Ontario’s Housing Supply Action Plan”. The vision of the Action Plan includes the cutting of red-tape to make it easier to build the right types of housing in the right places, and to make housing more affordable.

As part of the Action Plan review the province has subsequently revised the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). On February 28th, 2020 the province issued a new Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 that came into effect on May 1st, 2020.

C. Background

The purpose of the PPS is to give direction on matters of provincial interest as it relates to land use planning. Prior versions included the 1997 PPS, 2005 PPS and 2014 PPS.

Approval of 2020 PPS followed a consultation period conducted by the province between July through October 2019. Staff provided an overview of the then draft PPS to Council per Staff Report PDS.19.114 (September 16th, 2019).

Although it is a provincial document the PPS is often implemented directly by municipalities. Subsection 3(5a) of the Planning Act provides that a decision of the Council of a municipality (or it’s Committee of Adjustment) in respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter shall be consistent with the PPS that is in effect on the date of that decision.

As a province-wide document the PPS must cover a wide range of land-use planning topics. In broad strokes the PPS touches on the following;

- The efficient use and management of land,
The provision of sufficient housing including affordable housing,
The protection of the environment, natural resources and farm land,
The continued opportunity for economic development,
The planning of transportation and other infrastructure to accommodate needs, and
The protection of people and property from natural and human-made hazards.

The 2020 PPS is the result of the province’s overarching “Housing Supply Action Plan” initiative. The themes below were the impetus for the 2020 PPS;

1. Encouraging the development of more and different types of housing,
2. To protect the environment and public safety,
3. To reduce barriers and costs for developers and provide greater predictability,
4. Support rural, northern and Indigenous communities, and
5. Recognize local decision-making in support of new housing and economic development.

The themes are explored in more detail below in Section D.

D. Analysis

1. Increasing Housing Supply and Mix

The 2020 PPS policies:

• Increase land supply requirements municipalities must meet;
  ➢ Increase planning horizon from 20 to 25 years for employment areas, and
  ➢ Increase housing land supply from 10 to 15 years.
• Allow higher minimum requirement for serviced residential land (5 years) for upper- and single-tier municipalities;
• Update provincial guidance to support land budgeting (i.e. Projection Methodology);
• Increase flexibility for municipalities related to the phasing of development and compact form;
• Add flexibility to the process for settlement area boundary expansions (e.g. allow minor adjustments subject to specific tests, highlight that study requirements should be proportionate to the size/scale of development);
• Require transit-supportive development and prioritize intensification, including potential air rights development, in proximity to transit, including corridors and stations;
• Support the development of housing to meet current and future housing needs, and add reference to housing options;
• Support municipalities in achieving affordable housing targets by requiring alignment with Housing and Homelessness Plans; and
• Broaden policies to enhance support for development of long-term care homes.

Comment: The primary designated urban employment area of the Town is located in the south-east corner of Thornbury-Clarksburg. As part of the recent Official Plan approval (2016) it was determined that this general area is sufficiently sized to accommodate the projected urban
employment growth of the Town over the long-term horizon. The current Official Plan housing supply policy is to maintain a minimum 10-year supply (Section D7.3). With the new PPS requirement of a 15-year supply it is probable that further analysis and growth forecasts will need to be considered to ensure the Town has enough lands pre-designated for residential housing to reach a 15-year supply. This analysis can be considered as part of the Planning Department’s 2020 workplan which included a density intensification study for Thornbury. The results of the in-house analysis and Density/Intensification study can then be considered by Council as part of an update to the Town’s Official Plan in 2021. While a Growth Management Strategy is planned for 2023, if staff-led analysis of the Town’s existing housing supply results in a need to accommodate additional units, Planning staff will present options for Council’s consideration. These options could include advancing the completion of the Growth Management Strategy.

The Town’s Official Plan policies are permissive with respect to the range and mix of potential housing forms and options. In those settlement areas of the Town designated as Residential/Recreational Area a mix of residential types are permitted “by right” (Sections B3.7 and B7), subject to zoning bylaw provisions. This includes single detached, semi-detached, townhouses and low-rise multiple dwellings. The potential for new accessory dwelling units whether in the main dwelling or in a detached accessory building has also been considered. Other policies in the Official Plan allow for potential intensification by creating new in-fill lots via a Consent application.

The Official Plan has considered the provision for special needs housing within the Town (Section B3.1.6). Special needs housing includes important community uses such as long-term care facilities, retirement homes, residential care facilities and emergency housing. Staff note that some of the policies within this section of the Official Plan may be overly restrictive and contrary to the goals of the new PPS (ex. remove requirement of minimum separation distances between residential care facilities). Such policies can be re-examined by Council as part of the 2021 Town Official Plan update.

2. Protecting the Environment and Public Safety

The 2020 PPS policies:

- Enhance direction to prepare for impacts of a changing climate;
- Enhance stormwater management policies to protect water and support climate resiliency;
- Promote the on-site local reuse of excess soil;
- Maintain current policies related to natural and human made hazards which directs development away from hazardous areas including flood-prone areas in order to protect public health and safety, while work by the Special Advisor on Flooding is underway;
- Maintain current policies that require municipalities in southern Ontario to identify natural heritage systems, and provide flexibility as to how to achieve this outcome; and
- Maintain protection for the Greenbelt.
Committee of the Whole May 19, 2020
PDS.20.37 Page 4 of 7

Comment: The Town’s Official Plan includes policy dedicated to stormwater management (Section C5). These policies are usually implemented during the Town’s review of development applications (Site Plan, Plan of Subdivision) and require submission of supporting SWM reports and drawings. Staff also monitor our stormwater management practices and augment these with other resiliency planning techniques (low-impact design (LID’s), municipal asset management, updated engineering standards, development charges studies, etc.).

The stormwater management policies of the Town’s Official Plan could also be re-examined by Council as part of the 2021 Town Official Plan update. By that time the Town should have in place a new set of Engineering Standards (presently under review) and an understanding of the scope of work required to develop a Town Master Drainage Plan.

Staff also support the concept of reusing excess soil on-site or within the boundaries of our community where appropriate, thus minimizing the need to long-haul soil on regional transportation routes.

3. Reducing Barriers and Costs

The 2020 PPS policies:

- Allow mineral aggregate operations to use rehabilitation plans to demonstrate that extraction will have no negative impacts;
- Align policies and definition of cultural heritage with recent changes to the Ontario Heritage Act;
- Refocus PPS energy policies to support a broad range of energy types and opportunities for increased energy supply;
- Direct large ground-mounted solar facilities away from prime agricultural and specialty crop areas; and
- Make minor changes to streamline development approvals and support burden reduction.

Comment: Planning staff is presently working on drafting Official Plan policy for proposed renewable energy projects in consultation with the Town’s Sustainability Advisory Committee. This renewable energy policy can be undertaken as a separate amendment to the Town’s Official Plan, or as part the comprehensive 2021 Town Official Plan update, at the direction of Council.

Also, Staff support the continued improvement and streamlining of municipal development review procedures that eliminate unnecessary costs and lost time.

4. Supporting Rural, Northern and Indigenous Communities

The 2020 PPS policies:
• Allow flexibility for communities by clarifying perceived barriers to sewage and water servicing policies for lot creation and development in rural settlement areas;
• Enhance municipal engagement with Indigenous communities on land use planning to help inform decision-making, build relationships and address issues upfront in the approvals process; and
• Enhance agricultural protections to support critical food production and the agricultural sector as a significant economic driver.

Comment: As a matter of standard practice the Town includes the Historic Saugeen Métis (HSM) Lands, Resources and Consultation Department on circulations regarding submitted land-use planning applications. In turn HSM are diligent with providing timely responses and input back to the Town’s Planning & Development Services.

The Town’s Official Plan has robust policies that protect and enhance the value of the Town’s agricultural, special agricultural and rural (Section B4). These policies are implemented in the Town’s Zoning By-law 2018-65.

5. Supporting Certainty and Economic Growth

The 2020 PPS policies:

• Encourage municipalities to facilitate conditions for economic investment, and at the time of official plan review or update, assess locally-identified employment areas to ensure designations are appropriate;
• Provide municipalities with greater control over employment area conversions to support the forms of development and job creation that suit the local context (current and future); and
• Provide stronger protection for major facilities such as manufacturing and industrial uses where non-employment uses are planned nearby (i.e. buffering uses from new sensitive uses).

Comment: As part of the 2021 Town Official Plan update a review of stimulating conditions for economic investment and reaffirming that the Town’s employment areas and land-use designations are appropriate may be undertaken. Furthermore, the Town’s Official Plan has in place policies that minimize the possibility of conflicts between employment and non-employment uses (Section C13).

Conclusion

Based on a high-level review of the 2020 PPS it is suggested that the immediate impacts to the Town’s policy documents are minimal/manageable.

The Town’s Official Plan and Zoning By-law are relatively new documents, and as such, many of the 2020 PPS changes were previously considered (ex. adequate housing supply, protecting agricultural and environmental areas, etc.). However, the Planning Act requires the Town to
conduct a “five-year review” to ensure it’s Official Plan is up to date. Planning Staff anticipate that this review will include a more comprehensive review and complete analysis what amendments to the Town’s Official Plan may be required as part of the pending 2021 Official Plan update to ensure it conforms with the 2020 PPS and the new Grey County Official Plan.

Potential changes to the Town’s Official Plan could include more defined resiliency planning policy (stormwater management) and the easing of restrictions for special housing (allow by right, not require a zoning by-law amendment). Also, the continued improvement of the Town’s development review process can continue to be explored.

**E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan**

Goal #1: Create Opportunities for Sustainability  
Objective #3 Promote a Diversified Economy  
Objective #4 Support Value-Added Agriculture and Culinary Tourism

Goal #2: Engage Our Communities & Partners  
Objective #3 Strengthen Partnerships

Goal #3: Support Healthy Lifestyles  
Objective #2 Increase the Range of Housing Choices and Promote Housing Affordability

Goal #4: Promote a Culture of Organizational & Operational Excellence  
Objective #5 Constantly Identify Opportunities to Improve Efficiencies and Effectiveness

Goal #5: Ensure Our Infrastructure is Sustainable  
Objective #3 Implement Best Practices in Sustainable Infrastructure  
Objective #4 Ensure that Infrastructure is Available to Support Development

**F. Environmental Impacts**

There are not direct environmental impacts associated with the recommendation of this report. However, if the PPS is revised as currently proposed, changes to provincial policy regarding stormwater management and environmental protection is possible.

**G. Financial Impact**

There are no direct financial impacts associated with the recommendations of this report.

**H. In consultation with**

Shawn Carey, Director of Operations  
Brian Worsley, Manager of Development Engineering
I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been subject to a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required.

Comments regarding this report should be submitted to Trevor Houghton, managerplanning@thebluemountains.ca

J. Attached

There are no attachments to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

_____________________________
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Director of Planning and Development Services

For more information, please contact:
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