



Bluewater District School Board

P.O. Box 190, 351 1st Avenue North
Chesley, Ontario N0G 1L0
Telephone: (519) 363-2014 Fax: (519) 370-2909
www.bwdsb.on.ca

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Elisha Milne
Administrative & Legislative Coordinator
Township of Southgate
185667 Grey County Road 9
Dundalk, ON N0C 1B0
emilne@southgate.ca

Ron Davidson
Land Use Planning Consultant
Rob Davidson Land Use Planning Consultant Inc.
265 Beattie Street
Owen Sound, ON N4K 6X2
ronalddavidson@rogers.com

Southgate draft Official Plan Review

Dear Elisha Milne and Ron Davidson:

The Township of Southgate has commenced its Official Plan review and the projected increase in population will result in approximately 2,040 new households by the year 2046, giving Southgate Township the second highest percentage share of new housing starts within Grey County, behind the Town of the Blue Mountains. In response to the latest request for agency comments, this is an appropriate time to update you with respect to Bluewater District Schools Board's (BWDSB) needs and requirements for the provision of educational facilities.

Education over the past 5 years has been continuously evolving as the Ministry of Education's expanded role now incorporates child care, EarlyON Centres, HUB planning and community partnerships. In addition, the Ministry continues to increase supports for special education, as well as expand continuing education, alternative learning and virtual learning. These changing circumstances are reflected in the board's need for flexibility in facility program space.

Further to the facility challenges brought about by changing programming needs, the board's facility requirements are also impacted by residential intensification and infill development within settlement areas which increases enrolment in local schools. Conversely, we have noticed some of the rural student populations decrease over time. There has been an increase in families moving to small communities such as Township of Southgate, perhaps as a result of the rising housing costs elsewhere, which reinforces the importance of flexibility to provide space for student learning. With new residential development and growing industry, an increase in pupil yields per household could emerge which results in the need to acquire new school sites.

As such, BWDSB requests policies within each municipality's Official Plan which support the ever-changing needs of educational facilities. Many policies in the proposed plan such as active transportation, partnerships, and community uses are directly related to the role schools play in supporting families and children in the community. We are pleased to see the emphasis on Active Transportation in the draft Official Plans that we have reviewed to-date as we encourage active school travel for the many environmental, physical, and mental health benefits.

Given the above explanation, BWDSB will be reviewing draft Official Plans with an emphasis on the following policy areas:

Settlement Areas

- Schools are recognized as Public Service Facilities in the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). The PPS notes that it is in the interest of all communities to ensure the effective use of Public Service Facilities as they play a major role in enhancing the vitality of Settlement Areas which

in turn ensures long-term economic and social prosperity. While acknowledging that growth will be directed to the settlement areas that has full municipal services, Public Service Facilities (which include publicly funded schools as defined at the end of this letter), should be able to proceed as a permitted use in all designations without the need for an Official Plan amendment. The provision of educational programming takes many forms and will continue to evolve into the future. Community hubs, experiential learning, outdoor education, and partnerships will shape the delivery and format of schools making the traditional site location and physical form only one option. Due to this, **we request that Public Service Facilities (which include publicly funded schools) be permitted in all designations without requiring an Official Plan amendment.**

Child Care

- There are instances where child care uses are referred to as day care. **We request that all instances of “day care” and “day care centres” be replaced with “child care” and “child care centres” respectively.** The Days Nursery Act has been replaced by the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. We are pleased to see that child care uses such as Child Care Centres, Home Based Child Care, or Unlicensed Child Care are considered permitted uses in Residential, Commercial, Institutional, and Shoreline designations.

Active Transportation

- We encourage the inclusion of policies to identify and demarcate safe pedestrian and cycling routes to schools and other community destinations and promoting these routes. School boards are promoting students' ability to walk or cycle to school for environmental, health and well-being benefits as well as engaging students in the community and encouraging self-identification as citizens. We encourage municipalities to consider winter maintenance of multi-use trails particularly along routes that connect pedestrians to key destinations such as schools.
- We encourage municipalities to consider providing crossing guards.
- On all new local roads, sidewalks will be required on one side of the street. Sidewalks on both sides of local roads may be required in the vicinity of schools to ensure the safety of the students.
- Identify fragmented sidewalks and connectivity within existing residential areas and develop a plan for the construction of sidewalks or multi-use trails on at least one side of the road.
- Through developments approvals process active transportation amenities including bicycle parking and racks shall be required.
- Creating focal or meeting spots within developments to support congregation of people which could also serve as a safe alternative for student drop off pick up to help mitigate the reliance on driving.

Parking

- Where developments cannot provide adequate off-street parking on the site, the provision of parking on an alternative site within reasonable walking distance of the site could be considered provided that the alternative site is no more than 500 metres from the proposed development and the owner of the alternative site is willing to enter into an agreement with the developer and the municipality, and the alternative site can accommodate the parking of both users with respect to time of need. In addition, a school may provide a portion of the required parking as shared parking off-site with a compatible user and as determined by the school board in consultation with the municipality.
- The municipality should encourage the development of shared parking spaces between schools and municipal parks where the facilities are within walking distance. This will limit the requirement for an overabundance of parking spaces at school sites and may encourage parents to permit their children to walk a shorter distance from the park to the school.

Parks and Open Space

- Provide policies to speak to the need to develop parkland and recreational facilities and services in consultation with the local residents and in cooperation with other providers such as school boards. Schools provide an important source of green space and programmed outdoor space for the community. Sharing large field activities such as ball diamonds, soccer pitches, and running tracks makes efficient use of available resources and public funds. Where possible, parks should be located adjacent to school sites.
- Dedication of Parkland through the Development Process – Dedicated school sites do not comprise part of the developable area of a development with respect to parkland dedication or cash-in-lieu. School sites provide a valuable open space amenity within a community, as such the construction or additions to new development by school boards are not subject to the requirement for parkland dedication under *the Planning Act*. However, redevelopment of designated school sites for non-school related purposes is subject to parkland dedication.

Partnerships

- Partnership opportunities shall be considered with school boards when capital investment in land or infrastructure is being considered by either the school board or the municipality for the purposes of expanding use or cost sharing/saving opportunities.
- Partnership opportunities will focus on a range of uses promoting community wellness, social cohesion and well-being.

Implementation

- The Official Plan shall schematically identify the location of new school sites but these sites may be relocated without an amendment to the Official Plan or Secondary Plan at any time prior to final approval and registration of the plan of subdivision with the consent of the applicable school board. The release of an identified school site must be confirmed by all coterminous school boards.
- Where lands have been designated as Public Service Facility (school) in the Official Plan or in a Secondary Plan, the lands shall be reserved for that use for a specified period of time unless an alternative site is designated. The time period of reservation shall not be less than 10 years and shall be set out in the implementing subdivision agreement. The time period will not begin until the first building permit is obtained within the phase of the plan of subdivision in which the Public Service Facility (school) is located. In the case of school sites this reservation will be established in consultation with the school boards and such reservation shall expire upon confirmation in writing by each coterminous school board that the site is not required by the school boards.

Infrastructure

- In general, the school board's site preference is to be located within Settlement Areas. Higher order forms of servicing, including full municipal water and sanitary sewer services, are the preferred form of service infrastructure. Settlement areas where servicing is being added to address growth, shall also be required to provide servicing to the existing the school within that community.
- Publicly funded schools on private servicing may be required to expand the property boundaries to support MOECC's Reasonable Use guidelines or increase capacity of the school to accommodate rural growth. Boundary adjustments to school properties may be permitted within any designation without requiring an amendment to an Official Plan.

Amendments to Official Plans

- Any amendments to Official Plans shall address the adequacy of publicly funded schools to support the development.

Neighbourhood Plans – Secondary Plans

- When considering Neighbourhood Plans or Secondary Plans, a community facility needs assessment which addresses the capacity of existing facilities including publicly funded schools must be completed. Written confirmation of how pupil accommodation is addressed by the plan is required from each school board.

Definitions

Include the following definitions:

- **Public Service Facilities** means land, buildings and structures for the provision of programs and services provided or subsidized by a government or other body, such as social assistance, recreation, police and fire protections, health and education programs, and cultural services.
- **Public Use** includes local boards as defined by the Municipal Affairs Act.

Schedule Mapping

- With regards to the request to amend the Institutional definitions and the request to permit Public Service Facilities (publicly funded schools) in all designations, **we request that the schedules be amended to depict the existing and proposed future schools permitted in a designation which is consistent throughout the Official Plan. To help convey that these parcels are in fact Public Service Facilities (publicly funded schools), we request a symbol should also be added to the mapping to denote these locations.**

The above-noted policies represent the major areas of concern. There may be additional comments/concerns upon planning staff's review of the draft documents. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Yours truly,

Shelley Crummer
Business Analyst
Shelley_crummer@bwdsb.on.ca

c.c.: Rob Cummings, Superintendent of Business Services and Treasurer (by email only)
Dennis Dick, Manager of Plant Services (by email only)