

July 16, 2026

Shaneque Johnson
Township of Southgate
planning@southgate.ca

RE: Minor Variance Application – A3-26 Martin
185526 GREY ROAD 9, Township of Southgate
Municipality
Roll: 420709000211500
Owner: Stephen & Veronica Martin
Agent: Dryden, Smith & Head Planning Consultants Ltd.

Dear Shaneque Johnson,

This correspondence is in response to the above noted application. We have had an opportunity to review the application in relation to the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) and the County of Grey Official Plan (OP). We offer the following comments.

Proposal Summary (revised)

The Purpose of the application is to increase the number of nutrient units on the farm to ± 148.5 and 1.48 nutrient units per acre. The Restricted Agricultural (A2) Zone permits 100 nutrient units or more and the ratio of nutrient units to tillable acres on the farm unit is 2 or greater. This variance is in addition to the first circulated notice of application to reduce the Minimum Distance Separation II setback from the Hopeville settlement boundary from 460 metres to ± 307 metres for new livestock buildings and 500 metres required to ± 385 metres for liquid manure storage.

The Effect of the application is to increase the number of permitted nutrient units from 100 to ± 148.5 and 1.48 nutrient units per acre, in addition to previously circulated variances on MDS separation from the Hopeville Settlement, so that an existing livestock operation can expand with a new drive-in shed, chicken barn, dairy barn and liquid manure storage.

Documents submitted with the application and reviewed by staff:

- MDS calculations, prepared by Stephen Martin, dated November 6, 2025

- Site Plans, Application documents, Notice of Public meeting
- Planning Justification Memo and Addendum, prepared by Andrew Head, dated June 11, 2026
- Nutrient Management Strategy and Approval, dated November 21, 2025

Background

- County staff attended a pre-submission consultation meeting with the agent, planner and township staff on January 15, 2026
- County comment letter dated May 15, 2026

The subject lands (+/- 40 ha) are identified as the following in the County Official Plan (OP):

- Schedule A: *Land Use Types* – Rural and Hazard Lands
- Appendix B: *Constraint Mapping* – Significant Woodlands and Stream
- Appendix D: *Functional Road Classification* – frontage on Grey Road 9

Comments

Staff understand that the proposal has been revised to include a third variance seeking relief from the requirements of the Restricted Agricultural Zone (A2). The applicant is seeking to expand their livestock operation; however, the A2 zone restricts the expansion of livestock operations when the number of nutrients units would be 100 or more and the ratio nutrient units to tillable acres on the farm in 2 or greater.

The MDS II setbacks have also been revised slightly from 290 m to 307 m, where 460 m is required from the barn, and from 379 m to 385 m, where a 500 m is required from the liquid manure storage, to the settlement area boundary. Thus, resulting in slight reductions to the requested relief.

Schedule A of the County OP designates the subject lands as Rural. Section 5.2.2 (5) I) states:

Municipalities should not reduce MDS through a minor variance, zoning amendment, or official plan amendment, except where sufficient reasoning has been provided, and the intent of the MDS Guidelines has been maintained. MDS shall generally not be modified for the purposes of permitting new non-farm sized lot creation. In reviewing the rationale for a variance, there should be demonstration that the variance would:

- *not be able to be met through a modification to the development being proposed (e.g. set a building back further than proposed),*
- *make an existing situation better to reduce the potential for conflict*

- *impose undue hardship, such as major farm operation, inefficiencies, or servicing constraints, by not granting the variance, or*
 - *be small enough such that there is very limited potential for land use conflict*
1. Staff have reviewed the submitted planning rationale and appreciate the additional site-specific clarity provided. Some mitigations proposed include an organic floating cover on the liquid manure and a new tree line to mitigate visual, noise, and odour concerns. Staff also understand that the increased storage area is intended to reduce manure spreading events and that liquid manure is currently brought on to the site. The intent is to have little to no change in spreading of manure on-site. The report also mentions factors such as the typical wind direction, that all required MDS 1 setbacks can be met, that there is an approved nutrient management strategy for the property.
 2. Staff note that the proposed location of the barn and manure storage appears to be shifted slightly from the submission documents provided in May (the setback distances to the settlement area boundary are slightly increased), but an updated site plan and/or revised MDS calculations have not been submitted. Staff suggest clarification be provided.
 3. Further to the above, the report also states that “[u]nder provincial guidelines, any future residential lot creation or development establishing within the Hopeville Settlement Area will legally be required to calculate and adhere to MDS setbacks from this existing farm operation.” However, the MDS Guidelines specifically states the opposite, that MDS calculations do not apply within Settlement Areas. Guideline #36 - Non-Application of MDS Within Settlement Areas states:

MDS 1 setbacks are NOT required for proposed land use changes (e.g., consents, rezonings, redesignations, etc.) within approved settlement areas, as it is generally understood that the long-term use of the land is intended to be for non-agricultural purposes.

MDS 1 setbacks are determined between proposed new development, in rural areas, and existing barns, manure storages and/or anaerobic digesters. The MDS formula considers a Settlement Area boundary as a Type B or more sensitive land use and is therefore afforded a larger setback than a Type A land use. Should future development occur *within* the settlement area, that potential for nuisance complaints regarding odour from nearby livestock facilities could increase.

Staff recognize that the expansion of a livestock facility can be a normal part of an evolving farm operation and that agriculture continues to evolve and change. At the same time, settlement areas are the focus of growth and development. Across the County, staff are generally seeing more development occurring in those smaller, more rural settlement areas. As noted in the Township planning report (PL2026-031), the issue and challenge is balancing the impact of increasing the viability of an existing livestock operation adjacent to a designated rural settlement area.

4. As a general comment, staff note prior to the introduction of the *Nutrient Management Act* in 2002 it was common to match the land base of a farm to animal units as a nutrient management plan.

Please note the comments below from Ecology and Transportation staff are unchanged from those provided on May 15, 2026.

County Ecology staff have reviewed the proposal and provided the following comments.

5. As identified in Appendix B of the County Official Plan, the subject property contains or is adjacent to mapped Significant Woodlands, Other Identified Wetlands, and watercourse and drainage features. The property may also support or include potential habitat for Threatened or Endangered Species, Significant Wildlife Habitat, and Fish Habitat. In addition, the lands are located within a Significant Groundwater Recharge Area, as identified by the Ontario Source Protection Information Atlas. These designations are relevant to Section 8.11 of the County Official Plan, which addresses water quality and quantity protection.
6. County Ecology staff have reviewed the submitted application materials and note that the proposed expansion of the existing livestock operation, including additional barns and a liquid manure storage facility, is located within the existing farmyard and previously disturbed agricultural areas associated with the current operation. Based on the information provided, and provided that no development or site alteration is proposed within identified natural heritage features or any applicable vegetation protection zones/setbacks, the proposal is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts to natural heritage features or their ecological functions. Per 7.11.3 of the County Official Plan, County Ecology staff are satisfied that an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) is not required. As such, the requirement for an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) can be waived.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact County Ecology staff at ecology@grey.ca.

7. County Transportation Services staff have reviewed the proposal and no concerns.

Summary

Provided that clarity is given regarding the MDS II setback measurement and that Township staff are satisfied that sufficient reasoning has been provided to maintain the intent of the MDS Guidelines, staff have no further comments at this time.

The County requests notice of any decision rendered with respect to this file.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me.

Yours Truly,

Cassondra Dillman
Intermediate Planner

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