



OAKVILLE

REPORT

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 08, 2020

FROM: Planning Services Department

DATE: August 26, 2020

SUBJECT: Regional Official Plan Review - Regional Discussion Papers

LOCATION: Town-Wide

WARD: All

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report titled *Regional Official Plan Review – Regional Discussion Papers* dated August 26, 2020, be received.
2. That the report titled *Regional Official Plan Review – Regional Discussion Papers* dated August 26, 2020, be forwarded for information to Halton Region, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, Credit Valley Conservation, Grand River Conservation Authority and Conservation Halton.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key facts for consideration with respect to this report:

- Phase 2 of Halton Region's Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR) is underway and involves research, technical analysis and the development of Discussion Papers related to the key themes of the ROPR.
- This report presents an update on Halton Region's ROPR and provides an overview of town staff comments on Phase 2.
- Regional staff have prepared five Discussion Papers:
 1. Regional Urban Structure
 2. Climate Change
 3. Natural Heritage
 4. Rural and Agricultural System
 5. North Aldershot Planning Area

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- The Discussion Papers are accompanied by “Landing Pages” which present a simplified, plain language summary of the Discussion Papers that are intended to be more accessible to the general public.
- Regional staff first presented the Discussion Papers to Regional Council at a workshop held on July 8, 2020.
- At their subsequent meeting of July 15, 2020, Regional Council received the Discussion Papers and directed Regional staff to release the papers and related materials as the basis for public consultation on Phase 2 of the ROPR.
- The public consultation period for these papers is scheduled for 75 days from July 15 to September 28, 2020.
- Because of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, the engagement format during this phase of the ROPR will be primarily online through web postings, online surveys, and virtual meetings.
- Regional staff are in the process of making presentations to local municipal Councils on the Discussion Papers.
- Visit halton.ca/ropr to review the ROPR theme summaries and the complete Discussion Paper packages. Feedback may be provided by completing a general questionnaire and or technical questionnaire. Comments may also be submitted to ropr@halton.ca.
- There will be additional opportunities for public engagement through Phase 3 of the Regional Official Plan Review in 2021.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of the Regional Discussion Papers from a Town of Oakville perspective. The report is also an opportunity to respond to Halton Region on Phase 2 of the Regional Official Plan Review (ROP) within the public consultation period, July 15 to September 28, 2020.

Halton Region’s Official Plan Review – Overview

At their meeting of April 16, 2014, Regional Council approved Report No. LPS28-14 *Commencement of the Five-Year Review of the Region’s Official Plan* to initiate the Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR). The ROPR is occurring in three phases:

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- Phase 1 – now complete – set the foundation and direction of land use matters to be reviewed and analyzed;
- Phase 2 – now underway – involves in-depth analysis of data and land use policies to be delivered to Regional Council through Discussion Papers; and,
- Phase 3 will provide a Policy Directions Synthesis Report, draft official plan policies and a draft Regional Official Plan Amendment for consideration

On October 5, 2016, Regional Council approved Report No. LPS110-16, which endorsed the *Official Plan Review – Phase 1 Directions Report*. This identified key land use matters and policy directions for review, including these themes:

- Urban Systems and Growth Management Analysis
- Rural and Agricultural Systems Analysis
- Natural Heritage System
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Regional Council concluded Phase 1 of the ROPR with the endorsement of the Directions Report.

Phase 2 of the ROPR is currently underway with background research and technical analysis in support of the Discussion Papers for the themes identified in Phase 1.

Five Discussion Papers have been prepared:

1. Regional Urban Structure
2. Climate Change
3. Natural Heritage
4. Rural and Agricultural System
5. North Aldershot Planning Area

Regional staff first presented the Discussion Papers to Regional Council at a workshop held on July 8, 2020. The meeting agenda, minutes and video may be accessed at <https://www.halton.ca/The-Region/Regional-Council-and-Committees>

In preparation for the Regional Council workshop, Oakville Council participated in a workshop with Oakville staff at a Special Council meeting held July 7, 2020. In that meeting town staff provided an update on the town's Official Plan Review and how it is feeding into the ROPR. The meeting agenda, minutes and video for the Oakville Council workshop may be accessed at <https://securepwa.oakville.ca/eams/>

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At their meeting of July 15, 2020, Regional Council received five staff reports representing the complete Discussion Paper packages (Reports LPS52-20 through LPS56-20) which may also be accessed at the above-noted link at halton.ca. In addition to the covering staff reports, the Discussion Papers are accompanied by “Landing Pages” that present simplified, plain language summaries of the Discussion Papers that are intended to be more accessible to the general public.

At that same meeting, Regional Council directed Regional staff to release the Discussion Papers and related materials as the basis for public consultation on the ROPR. The public consultation period for these documents is scheduled for 75 days from July 15 to September 28, 2020. Because of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, the engagement at this phase of the ROPR will be primarily online through web postings and virtual meetings. Public consultation will also include:

- Presentations to local municipal Councils
- Meetings with Advisory Committees and stakeholders
- Public Information Centres
- Engagement with Indigenous communities
- Online questionnaires
- Written comments emailed to ropr@halton.ca

Current materials and ongoing documentation generated as the public consultation progresses will be posted to halton.ca/ropr.

Halton Region planning staff are attending local municipal Council meetings to provide an overview and receive feedback on Phase 2 of the ROPR during the public consultation period.

Regional Council will receive a Consultation Summary Report at a future meeting following the public engagement. Comments received on the Discussion Papers and Landing Pages will be used to determine “policy directions” that will also be presented to Regional Council in advance of preparing amendments to the Regional Official Plan. There will be additional opportunities for public engagement through Phase 3 of the ROPR (Appendix A).

Oakville’s Participation in the ROPR

Oakville staff has participated in the Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR) since it was initiated in 2014. Since 2017, Oakville staff has participated in Phase 2 of the ROPR including the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, Growth Scenarios and Evaluation Framework, review and commentary on draft versions of the Discussion Papers as well as official plan policy and mapping audits.

One of the main opportunities for staff participation in the ROPR is through the Halton Area Planning Partnership (HAPP), which is comprised of planning staff from Halton Region, its local municipalities (Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville), and conservation authorities (Credit Valley Conservation, Grand River Conservation Authority and Conservation Halton).

Significant collaboration has taken place through the HAPP forum which has led to a consensus on many of the policy matters before the group. With respect to the Phase 2 Discussion Papers, the collective efforts of HAPP have helped to improve the tone and readability of the papers, to simplify and clarify the content, to streamline the Discussion Questions in each paper and to produce a more public-friendly package to use in Halton Region's public consultation.

To date, a substantial amount of time and resources has been invested in the ROPR by the Region and the local municipal and agency partners. There is a demonstrated alignment in most areas. The few outstanding matters are discussed in the balance of this report. It is expected that the hard work and collaboration will continue and town staff welcome the opportunity to participate.

Town staff anticipates that there will be considerable review and comment to undertake during Phase 3 of the ROPR.

Changes to the Provincial Planning Framework

The Provincial planning framework continues to evolve and change. During the ROPR and Oakville's town-wide Official Plan Review, there have been multiple changes and amendments to key Provincial plans and legislation such as the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement, the *Planning Act* and the *Development Charges Act* to name a few.

Oakville staff acknowledges that it has been a challenge for municipal planning authorities, such as Halton and Oakville, to advance their respective programs while responding in a timely manner to the changing Provincial planning framework.

Currently, the 2019 Growth Plan requires that Halton Region plan to accommodate 1,000,000 people and 470,000 jobs by 2041. The Regional Official Plan (ROP) does not set out where and how to grow beyond 2031. It is through the ROPR that the requirement to plan for growth to 2041 will be addressed.

On June 16, 2020 the Province released the proposed Amendment No. 1 to the 2019 Growth Plan for a 45-day public consultation period ending on July 31, 2020. Also released was a proposed Land Needs Assessment (LNA) methodology to replace the LNA methodology released in May 2018.

The proposed Amendment No. 1 would extend the planning horizon of the Growth Plan from 2041 to 2051, maintain the approved 2041 population and employment forecasts in the Growth Plan, 2019, and identify new population and employment forecasts to the 2051 planning horizon.

It is important to note that the Regional Discussion Papers were completed prior to the release of the proposed Amendment No. 1 to the 2019 Growth Plan and the proposed new LNA methodology. If these proposed changes are brought into force and effect by the Province, they will be addressed in the next stages of the ROPR.

Halton's Integrated Growth Management Strategy

The Region's Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS) is the process to determine where and how Halton should grow and develop in order to accommodate the provincially forecasted population and jobs.

On June 19, 2019, Regional Council was presented with Report No. LPS41-19 – *Regional Official Plan Review - Progress Update on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and Preliminary Growth Scenarios*. The report outlined potential growth scenarios for the Region and was accompanied by a technical paper providing information and analysis of the various scenarios along with proposed evaluation criteria. The report also contained a preliminary recommendation to proceed with the evaluation of the 'Local Plans and Priorities' scenarios, known as the 'B' scenarios.

In a unanimous vote, Regional Council deferred any decision on the report pending input from the Councils of the local municipalities. The direction was for each of the local Councils to recommend to Regional Council what evaluation criteria, and weighting of the evaluation criteria, best suit their local planning needs.

On July 15, 2019, Oakville Council received the report titled *Halton Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS): an Oakville planning staff discussion paper*. The discussion paper expressed support for the Region's comprehensive approach to growth management through the IGMS project and presented a preliminary analysis and response by Oakville planning staff to the IGMS findings from an Oakville perspective.

The discussion paper included the following key messages and considerations with respect to the implications of the Region's IGMS scenarios for the Town of Oakville:

- Oakville should accept the majority share of total Regional growth - a middle-ground or no-growth position would be detrimental to Oakville.

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- Oakville must be locally strategic in directing where and how to grow in order to protect what is valuable and to maintain the character of established neighbourhoods.
- Maintaining the current settlement area boundaries in the Region (i.e., choosing not to expand the designated greenfield area), is a vital way to combat climate change, and preserve natural heritage and prime agricultural lands.

In response to Regional Council's June 19, 2019 deferral of the IGMS report and direction to seek input from local Councils, Oakville Council directed Oakville staff at the Planning and Development Council meeting of September 9, 2019 as follows:

"to obtain feedback from Oakville residents regarding what evaluation criteria and weighting of the evaluation criteria for the proposed Halton Integrated Growth Management Strategy Growth Scenarios best suit the planning needs of Oakville and report back to Oakville Council with the results of the consultation at the Planning and Development Council meeting on December 2, 2019."

Oakville Planning staff hosted four public meetings on September 24 and 26, and October 1 and 2, at the request of Ward Councillors. Total attendance for the four meetings was 45.

Staff also conducted an online survey from September 23 to October 18 to gather additional input on the evaluation criteria. There were 36 responses to the online survey.

The overall results of the engagement indicated that all of the evaluation criteria may be considered as local planning needs for Oakville.

On May 20, 2020. Regional Council was presented with Report No. LPS44-20 - *Integrated Growth Management Strategy - Local Municipal Consultation on the Evaluation Framework and Status Update - Spring 2020*. The report gave an overview of the IGMS and outlined the process involved in the evaluation framework.

In discussion on this item, Members of Regional Council emphasized the importance of plain language during the upcoming public consultation.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

This section of the report presents the key messages from the Region's five discussion papers, as well as town staff analysis and commentary.

Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper

The Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper has been prepared as part of the IGMS and explores where and how to grow in Halton Region. It presents options to focus growth in certain areas of the existing community, or options for growing outward onto rural or agricultural land.

The aim of this paper is to facilitate a discussion and obtain feedback on the elements of a proposed Regional Urban Structure. The paper defines urban structure as follows:

“An urban structure is how the land use of a city or town is set out. It helps further the growth within our community by providing a way to guide the development of buildings, spaces or municipal infrastructure. An urban structure can consist of growth areas, employment areas, stable residential areas, and the transportation and growth corridors that connect these areas.”

In conjunction with the ROPR, the Town of Oakville's Official Plan Review has been underway since May 2015. A significant amount of work has been undertaken in this review including a number of planning studies completed and resulting in amendments to the town's Official Plan. A number of additional studies have been initiated and are currently underway.

Beginning with OPA 15 and the adoption of the town-wide urban structure in September 2017, town staff has been working to establish the growth and development vision for the growth nodes and corridors within the urban structure.

Town staff is implementing changes and refinements to these areas through amendments to the Livable Oakville Official Plan. In turn, this informs Halton Region on the ultimate development vision and growth management directions for Oakville.

Town staff is supportive of the Regional Urban Structure Review Discussion Paper since it recognizes and emphasizes the role of the local municipalities in the ROPR.

Even more importantly, town staff is supportive of the Region's approach to apply a climate change lens to growth management in the Regional Urban Structure.

Detailed town staff responses to the discussion questions from the Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper are presented in Appendix B.

Climate Change Discussion Paper

As part of the ROPR, Halton Region is reviewing land use policies in the ROP to:

“help reduce greenhouse gases and lessen the impacts of climate change by guiding the development of our communities to become walkable, energy efficient, high-density and transit supportive. The ROP policies also promote energy and water conservation and support the use of renewable resources.”

The Climate Change Discussion Paper examines these themes and explores how the Region can ensure that the ROP policies are in line with the Province’s climate change mitigation and adaptation policies.

Addressing climate change has become a priority in Halton and town staff is engaged in providing comments and contributing to the discussion around climate change in the Region.

On June 24, 2019, Oakville Council unanimously passed a motion declaring a climate emergency in Oakville. The town has been active in implementing climate change policies and programs since 2005 and has taken steps to reduce its impact on the environment. The declaration established the importance of accelerating climate change action and signaled to the community the need to take action now.

On September 11, 2019, Halton Regional Council unanimously declared a climate emergency. This declaration reinforced Halton’s commitment to protecting and improving the resilience of the economy, environment and community.

The Climate Change Discussion Paper discusses opportunities to address climate change through:

- Growth Management
- Transportation
- Energy and Utilities
- Agriculture
- Natural Heritage and Environmental Quality

In Halton, almost 90 per cent of emissions are from buildings and transportation sources. These emissions are directly tied to heating/cooling buildings and how people move in the Region. The ROP policies can have an impact on lowering

emissions by encouraging the construction of more energy efficient buildings and encouraging the development of communities with a more compact urban form, as well as provide policies and multi-modal transportation networks to reduce car dependency.

Home heating and private automobiles are the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. In general, a multiple-attached home (like a townhouse) or an apartment unit uses less energy for heating and cooling than a detached dwelling. Townhouses and apartments use even less energy when constructed using the latest in energy-efficient building techniques and technology.

When this housing is arranged in conjunction with jobs, stores, schools, parks, etc., as mixed-use, complete communities along higher-order transit corridors, residents are provided with more choices for their daily living. Residents may choose to live without a car when they can move through a safe and attractive built environment that supports walking, biking and rolling as the primary mode of transport for many of their short everyday trips. This form of city building reduces the energy used for home heating and transportation and thereby reduces carbon emissions.

Detailed town staff responses to the Discussion Questions from the Climate Change Discussion Paper are presented in Appendix C.

Natural Heritage Discussion Paper

Halton Region, like the Town of Oakville, is responsible for preserving the natural environment; this has been a key component of the ROP since the 1980s.

The goal of the Natural Heritage System (NHS) is to increase the certainty that the biological diversity and ecological functions within Halton Region will be preserved and enhanced for future generations. The Natural Heritage System now covers about 50% of Halton Region.

A natural heritage system generally consists of wetlands, woodlands, rivers, lakes, and other natural areas that have ecological significance. These locations are home to many plants and wildlife and includes green spaces, forests, conservation areas and parks.

In the Regional Official Plan (ROP), the current Halton NHS consists of two “sub-systems” each with their own policies: The Greenbelt NHS (GBNHS) and Regional NHS (RNHS).

The GBNHS must be identified in the ROP as required by the 2017 Greenbelt Plan. In Oakville, the GBNHS lands are located north of Highway 407 to the town

boundary and along Bronte Creek north of the QEW on the lands known as Bronte Creek Provincial Park. The RNHS is the designation that is used to identify the NHS across the rest of Oakville.

The NHS paper discusses ways to strengthen the long-term viability of Halton's natural heritage and water resources by reviewing and updating mapping, policies and the key actions necessary to protect the natural environment.

Refinements to Halton's Natural Heritage System policies and mapping are being contemplated. According to the Region, these refinements will be required to:

- Be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and to conform to Provincial Plans
- Improve and clarify existing natural heritage policies;
- Identify the planning objectives needed to preserve and enhance the Region's Natural Heritage System
- Improve the accuracy of the Natural Heritage System mapping through refinements to the mapping, which may result in removals or additions to the Natural Heritage System.

The draft Halton Natural Heritage System mapping is available at halton.ca/ropr.

Oakville staff has reviewed draft NHS mapping that accompanies the discussion paper and offers the following comments:

North Oakville East and West Secondary Plans

Part of the RNHS review includes the lands north of Dundas and south of Highway 407, which are governed locally by the North Oakville East and West Secondary Plans. The ROP states that the RNHS will be delineated and implemented in accordance with the North Oakville Secondary Plans.

North Oakville is an area of greenfield development where the North Oakville Secondary Plans are being implemented through the development approval process, including plans of subdivision and zoning by-law amendments.

As part of this process, the actual RNHS boundaries are being confirmed through detailed Environmental Implementation Report/Functional Servicing Studies in accordance with the policies of the North Oakville Secondary Plans.

It is important to note that lands subject to development approvals only cover a portion of the North Oakville lands. The Region is basing part of the draft RNHS on these development approvals with June 2018 as the benchmark date.

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As development advances, the portion of lands subject to development approvals grows. However, the RNHS map in the ROP would only be current as of the benchmark date.

The remainder of the draft RNHS is based on the planned NHS from the North Oakville Secondary Plans.

Town staff is recommending that the Region incorporates an annual review of the RNHS boundary in North Oakville and other greenfield lands in the Region (along with associated housekeeping amendments) to ensure that the RNHS is not out of date with current development approvals.

Livable Oakville Official Plan

Another part of the RNHS review in Oakville includes the lands south of Dundas Street and north of Highway 407, which are governed locally by the Livable Oakville Plan. In Livable Oakville, the Natural Area designation acts as the main designation identifying a natural heritage system.

At the time of Regional approval of Livable Oakville in 2009, the town's Natural Area designation matched the Region's NHS. The Region deemed Livable Oakville to be in conformity with the Regional Official Plan as amended by Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 38.

Subsequent to the approval of Livable Oakville, the town undertook a comprehensive zoning-by-law review (inZone By-law 2014-14) to implement the Livable Oakville Plan. The Natural Area designation from Livable Oakville is implemented in the comprehensive zoning by-law by the Natural Area (N) zone. The majority of By-law 2014-14 has been deemed in force by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) and remaining appeals do not implicate the N zone which implements the NA designation.

In the time since approval of Livable Oakville, there have been only a few, minor refinements to the Natural Area designation through development approvals. In fact, for most of the lands governed by Livable Oakville, the pattern of the Natural Area designation (and implementing N zone) was established in the previous 1984 Official Plan, or earlier.

The same is true for the lands adjacent to the Natural Area designation, including lands designated (and zoned) for Residential and Employment development, which have been designated and zoned as such since well before Livable Oakville was approved by the Region in 2009.

Town staff notes that the current approach in the ROP for refinements to the RNHS is through site-specific development approvals. Through this process, detailed technical study, extensive agency review and confirmation site visits are used to establish an updated limit to the RNHS. It is an approach that works well and ensures the RNHS limit is established in the correct location.

However, through the ROPR, the draft RNHS mapping shows the RNHS expanding into areas with existing and long standing development approvals. Oakville's long standing pattern of development is proposed to be changed through the ROPR process and not according to the current approach using development approvals.

Town staff is of the opinion that it is more accurate to determine any refinements to the boundary of the RNHS through the review of planning applications and the development approval process rather than through the ROPR.

Notwithstanding the concerns expressed by Oakville staff regarding the need or utility of these draft RNHS expansions, Oakville staff is pleased to see that individual property owners possibly affected by these mapping changes will be directly notified and engaged by Regional planning staff as part of the ROPR.

This is an important step for the Region to take since these changes are likely to affect a great number of properties in Oakville.

Detailed town staff responses to the Discussion Questions from the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper are presented in Appendix D.

Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper

Halton is home to an active and vibrant farming sector, including horse farms, oilseeds and grain operations, greenhouse/nursery/floriculture operations, hay producers, livestock operations, fruit and vegetable growers, and more.

As indicated in the Climate Change Discussion Paper, protection of agricultural lands is important to all of Halton as a resource for the Region's food and economic resilience.

The Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper identifies agricultural and rural policy matters to be investigated further through the ROP review, including:

- Designation of prime agricultural areas
- Mapping of prime agricultural areas
- Agricultural-related uses
- On-farm diversified uses and agri-tourism

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- Cemeteries
- Agricultural Impact Assessments
- Special needs housing in the agricultural system

This paper has an indirect importance to Oakville since there are no lands designated agricultural within the town's urban area. However, as stated, this is an important matter for the Region. Town staff has no concerns with this discussion paper and will continue to monitor as the issues progress into policy development.

North Aldershot Discussion Paper

North Aldershot, in the City of Burlington, has been identified as a distinct policy area dating back to the 1970s. This paper discusses the existing policy framework for the area and considers whether it conforms to the current Provincial policy framework.

This paper has an indirect importance to Oakville since it is a Burlington matter. Town staff has no concerns with this discussion paper but will continue to monitor as the issues progress into policy development.

Town staff notes that North Aldershot is important regionally in terms of the area's interrelationship with growth management, the natural heritage and rural and agricultural systems, and climate change for all of Halton, including Oakville.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS:

Town staff welcome the opportunity to participate and comment on the Regions ROPR and Discussion Papers. Staff also cannot stress enough the significance of using a climate change lens when planning to accommodate future required growth in Halton and achieving conformity and consistency with the Provincial planning framework.

Town staff will continue to work through HAPP and engage in the ROPR process to improve alignment among the parties and to focus on reaching consensus. As the ROPR moves into Phase 3, town staff will be providing Oakville Council with further updates, analysis and commentary.

Town staff anticipates that there will be substantial review work and comments generated during Phase 3 of the ROPR when Halton Region produces the Policy Directions Synthesis Report, draft official plan policies and a draft Regional Official Plan Amendment for consideration.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

There are no public impacts from this report and no notice requirements.

(B) FINANCIAL

There are no financial implications from this report.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Multiple town departments have had the opportunity to provide input into town responses to the Region's Discussion Paper questions. This level of engagement will continue through Phase 3 of Halton's Regional Official Plan review.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- be the most livable town in Canada

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Consideration of the sustainability goals and objectives of the Livable Oakville Plan are part of all town reviews of Regional initiatives.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Regional Official Plan Review – Public Engagement Process Chart

Appendix B - Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper – Town Responses to Discussion Questions

Appendix C - Climate Change Discussion Paper – Town Responses to Discussion Questions

Appendix D - Natural Heritage Discussion Paper – Town Responses to Discussion Questions

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